

In Memoriam Nagazumi Akira, 1929-1987

With great sadness we inform our readers that Prof. dr. Nagazumi Akira, one of our faithful corresponding editors, has passed away at the age of fifty-eight. A protracted illness forced Prof. Nagazumi to break off his sabbatical leave in Europe last spring and to return to Tokyo for further medical treatment.

Akira Nagazumi was a remarkable man. Cosmopolitan in manner, behaviour and thinking he felt equally at ease in academic circles of the Old and the New World. Some people may actually have seen this eloquent scholar as a perfect cultural ambassador for Japan; he saw himself, and quite rightly so, as the promotor of the Southeast Asian studies in his own country and abroad. It would be difficult to exaggerate the tremendous task he fulfilled by turning the rather antiquated Japanese approach of the *Nanyo* into a modern multi-disciplinary field of studies. If nowadays young Japanese historians and social scientists have become influential through their writings on Southeast Asia, this has been mainly Nagazumi's contribution. He arranged for scholarships overseas, he planned international research programs and conferences which brought people of different nationalities closer to each other, and he served on the board of several influential organizations. With hindsight some people may even feel a bit guilty that they so often pulled Nagazumi into new plans and projects, simply because his cooperation vouchsafed determined participation and, ultimately, success.

When he realized the seriousness of his illness last spring, Nagazumi Akira told me that he had one wish: a lease of another two or three years on life which might enable him to write philosophical essays on subjects that had little to do with his day-to-day activities. Unfortunately this wish has not come true. In the 1988/2 issue of *Itinerario*, we hope to publish the incisive remarks on his own career and the field in which he was active that were made by Nagazumi Akira two years ago, when H.L. Wesseling and the undersigned interviewed him for *Itinerario*. For now we should like to express our feelings of condolence and sympathy to his children and his wife Yoko, a historian in her own right.

Leonard Blussé