

## JEFFREY P. MASS (1940–2001)

Jeffrey P. Mass, Yamato Ichihashi Professor of Japanese History and Civilization at Stanford University, died at Stanford University Hospital on Friday, March 30 after a short illness. He was sixty years old. Widely recognized as the leading American scholar of medieval Japanese history, he transformed the field not only through his own work but also through the attentive mentoring of a younger generation of scholars, many of them his own students.

Born in New York City on June 29, 1940, Jeff Mass first developed an interest in East Asian history, and more specifically in Japanese history, during his undergraduate years at Hamilton College where he was inspired by Professor Edwin Lee. After graduating from college in 1962, he made his way to Japan on an American aircraft carrier. A local radio station had dispatched him to interview hometown crewmembers. As he wryly observed later in life, it was not his destiny to become a foreign correspondent. Instead, he taught English in Japan for a time before returning to the United States, where he worked as a high school teacher and took an M.A. in History at New York University in 1965.

Although his original interest was Meiji diplomatic history, it was his encounter with Professor John W. Hall at Yale University that kindled his lifelong interest in medieval Japan. Like many others, he was profoundly impressed by Professor Hall's *Government and Local Power in Japan, 500–1700*, a work that took a sweeping look at more than a millennium of premodern institutional history. Inspired by the work, he decided to make an elaboration of that history his life's work. As he later said, he "never stopped looking back." But unlike many graduate students with early enthusiasms, he set a long-term plan for himself. As he told his fellow graduate students at the time, he intended to write a series of five volumes covering the Kamakura period. By the time of his death he had more than fulfilled this goal.

While carrying on dissertation research at the Historiographical Institute at Tokyo University, Jeff Mass became the first foreign student to study the reading of primary legal and other documents with Professor Seno Seiichiro, who was to become a lifelong colleague and friend. Jeff's passion for documents was legendary, and his own library of published medieval documents was probably the most extensive private collection outside of Japan. It was not enough, he felt, for Western historians to rely on secondary works by Japanese scholars or literary sources; they should confront history through the documents themselves.

It was his fierce devotion to the principle that the historical study of medieval Japan should be firmly grounded in archival research that enabled him to reshape the field. By relying on administrative documents, wills, land transfer documents, diaries, and other similar sources in his own work, he demonstrated that it was possible for a foreign scholar to master the same challenging sources that Japanese scholars worked with. His first work, *Warrior Government in Early Medieval Japan: A Study of the Kamakura Bakufu, Shugo and Jito* (1974), a revision of his dissertation, not only overturned conventional wisdom about the founding of the Kamakura bakufu, it also established him as a coming leader in the field.

After receiving his Ph.D. in 1971, Jeff Mass served for a year as a lecturer at Yale, where he worked with Professor Hall and G. Cameron Hurst, a young scholar from Columbia University, to organize the first American scholarly conference on medieval Japan. The resulting conference volume, *Medieval Japan: Essays in Institutional History* (1974), became a standard work in the field and was reissued in 1988 by the Stanford University Press.

Job prospects for early Japanese historians were not bright in the early 1970s, and for a time Jeff Mass contemplated an alternative career. By a stroke of good fortune, both for himself and the institution, he received an offer of an assistant professorship at Stanford in the spring of 1973. He served as a member of Stanford's faculty for the rest of his career. In 1992 he was named the first Yamato Ichihashi Professor of Japanese History and Civilization, a chair established to honor one of the pioneers of Japanese Studies in the United States.

During his years at Stanford, Jeff Mass wrote five more books on the institutional and legal history of Kamakura Japan, published a collection of his own essays on medieval Japanese history, edited two conference volumes, and published numerous articles and book reviews. His work dealt with the central governing institutions of the Kamakura period as well as the nature of law, justice, inheritance, and kinship practices during the same period. Familiar with European medieval history, he was concerned that historians often made superficial comparisons between Western and Japanese developments. Instead he insisted that developments in Japan be treated on their own terms. In his early work he argued that the institutions of the Heian period remained intact during the Kamakura period, and in recent years he promoted the idea that Japan's "medieval era" did not really begin until the establishment of the Muromachi bakufu.

It was equally Jeff Mass's accomplishment to produce a cohort of graduate students who now dominate the Western-language field of medieval Japanese history: Mikael Adolphson (Harvard), Bruce Batten (Obirin Daigaku), Thomas Conlon (Bowdoin), Karl Friday (Georgia), Andrew Goble (Oregon), Thomas Keirstead (Indiana), Thomas Nelson (Oxford), Joan Piggott (Cornell), and Hitomi Tonomura (Michigan). In all of them he instilled his passion for the investigation of primary sources. The rigor of his courses on reading medieval documents was legendary. No one who took those courses, even those who did not specialize in medieval Japanese history, was likely to forget the importance of this basic tool of the historian's craft.

Determined to build and broaden the field, Jeff encouraged his students to explore periods and topics other than those of primary interest to himself. He constantly encouraged them to challenge and question received historical wisdom and interpretations. A careful and often demanding mentor, he insisted that they meet his own high standards for scholarship, and he always took the same pride in their success as in his own work. But he understood that inevitably his students' work would force him to revise his own scholarship, and toward the end of his career he completely rewrote his own first monograph, which was published in 2000 as *Yoritomo and the Founding of the First Bakufu: The Origins of Dual Government in Japan*.

In 1987 Mass was appointed a visiting professor of Japanese at Oxford University, where he was affiliated with Hertford College. Every spring after completing his teaching at Stanford he traveled to Oxford to give a series of lectures on early Japanese history attended by enthusiastic audiences. He then spent the rest of his summers on writing and research and enjoying the pleasures of life in a village nearby Oxford, where he had acquired an eighteenth-century cottage. He delighted in taking visitors on walks through the English countryside or on tours of the Oxford colleges.

A lifelong collector of things, from Lincoln pennies to comic books, he developed a keen interest in medieval English coinage during his visits to England. At first interested in Anglo-Saxon coins, he began to collect pennies minted during the reign of Richard II—or what he liked to call "pennies of the Kamakura period." Indeed, he embraced this hobby with such intense interest that he established himself as an authority on the subject and was made the first American member of the British

Numismatics Society. Shortly before his death he was putting the finishing touches on *The English Short Cross Coinage, 1180–1247* (forthcoming in 2001), a book about mints and money in early twelfth- and thirteenth-century England, based on his coin collection.

While Jeff Mass devoted his energies primarily to teaching and scholarship, in 1995 he agreed to serve as executive secretary of the Inter-University Center for Advanced Language Studies at Yokohama, the most important advanced language training center for Western-language students in Japan. With his customary intensity and attention to detail, he helped see the Center through one of its recurring periods of financial difficulties. And shortly before his death, even though suffering from early symptoms of the illness that was to end his life, he traveled to Japan to oversee an important transition in the Center's leadership. He also performed service to the profession as a member of the advisory boards of the *Journal of Japanese Studies* and *Japan Forum*.

In recognition of his lifelong contribution to the development of medieval Japanese Studies in Europe, Jeff Mass was made an Honorary Fellow of Hertford College in March 2001. He received the news of this rare honor in the hospital shortly before his death. And in June 2001 his alma mater, Hamilton College, awarded him a posthumous honorary degree. His untimely death has deprived the field of Japanese medieval studies of an outstanding figure, but in his published work and in his students he has left a rich legacy.

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### PRUDENCE ROYCE MYER (1920–2001)

At the age of eighty-one, my beloved friend, teacher, and mentor, Professor Prudence Myer, died peacefully at home in Santa Barbara, surrounded by friends and family. Hers is the story of a life fully, elegantly, and courageously lived.

Diagnosed at the age of three with polio, Dr. Myer walked with difficulty; activities taken for granted by most of us, like lugging books from the library or even crossing the street, must have been exhausting for her. Her boundless energy, fierce intelligence, and indomitable spirit made her eminently suited for the life of the mind. She received a B.A. from Oberlin College in 1943, got her M.A. from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, five years later, and completed a doctorate at Harvard in 1956 under the legendary Benjamin Rowland. At that time degrees for women were issued under the aegis of Radcliffe College. Dr. Myer specialized in the art of India, then a field in its infancy. I remember her describing research conditions that I could not begin to envisage: at one point she was spooled up a cliff, canes and all, in a basket to the entrance to the Ajanta Caves. What a sight that must have been!