

OBITUARY

**Shôichi Francisco Sakagami
(1927–1996)**

Dr. Shôichi F. Sakagami, Professor Emeritus of Hokkaido University, passed away at the age of 69 on the 4th of November 1996 from a heart attack, leaving behind wife and a daughter. The news of his sudden death caused great sorrow among his colleagues and students who had known him, researched with him, and learned from him. Sakagami was a Catholic, and his funeral was conducted at a church in Sapporo; a small affair with only his close friends, students, and family present, which was what he and his widow wanted.

Sakagami was born in January 1927 in Chiba prefecture which is near Tokyo. He graduated from the Entomology Department, Faculty of Agriculture, Hokkaido University in 1948. He soon transferred to the Department of Zoology, Faculty of Science of the same, and became lecturer in 1954. He was awarded the degree of PhD the following year in 1955 with his doctorate thesis on the "Perception of Psychology on the Optical Learning of the Honeybees." He became assistant professor in 1956. In 1978 he transferred to the Zoological Laboratory, Institute of Low Temperature Science of the same university, and worked as professor until his official retirement in 1990.

As can be seen from the above, Sakagami spent most of his years as researcher in Sapporo, but went to Brazil as visiting professor to the University of Rio Claro (1961–63) and the University of Ribeirão Preto (1971–72), spending about three and half years in the country. He also frequently went on research to India and Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia in the years from 1966 to 1983. His stay in Brazil, in particular, although not so long in duration, had a great influence on his work as well as personal life. He enthusiastically writes about how fruitful and enjoyable his stay was in his book, "Brazil and Tiny Bees" (328 pages, 1975). For his academic contribution to Brazil, he was nominated as a member of Academy of Science of Brazil in 1976.

Sakagami was interested in the so-called "social insects", the most typical of which is the honeybee, and strove to delve into the important biological question of their evolutionary process throughout his long research career that extended over than forty years. He carefully studied the behaviors of honeybees and wild bees including stingless bees, halictine bees, and *Ceratina*, and, sometimes utilizing experimental means as well, attempted to throw light upon the evolutionary origin of social insects by analyzing the huge amount of data thus accumulated from his distinctive viewpoint of comparative insect sociology. In other words, Sakagami, throughout his career, had aimed for the modernization of natural history - which had been introduced to Japan from the West more than a hundred years ago, and yet was on the verge of being forgotten altogether without ever having taken root nor showing any development in this country - and had opened up and developed a new research field. In the forty years, he published some three hundred original papers as well as writing seven books based on his own researches. He was awarded a prize from the Zoological Society of Japan in 1967 for his outstanding work, and also Asahi Prize, one of the most