

Wider aspects of a career in entomology.

25. Japan, concluded

Hugh V. Danks

This series of articles outlines some ancillary aspects of my entomological career. The approach includes information about insects and their environments, conclusions about scientific activities and their setting, and general observations. This article concludes my account of visits to Japan and my cooperation with Japanese colleagues.



My stay at Kurashiki (see article 24) included travel to many scientific establishments elsewhere (Figure 1), and also a short vacation. I learned much about research on diapause, anhydrobiosis, and other subjects, presented lectures (e.g., Figure 2), and discovered more about Japan. Language difficulties were pervasive, of course, although during the voyages they were mitigated by my ability to ask for essential items (like train tickets, food, and coffee!), and during the visits by very slow speech tailored to the audience.

In Kyoto, I agreed to act as special adviser to a new 5-year project at the University that was part of a Centres of Excellence program using insects as models for environmental investigations. That role involved another short visit to Japan in October–November 2005 to



Figure 1. Sites in Japan that were visited during 1992–2005. Locations for sightseeing rather than mainly professional activities are shown in smaller type. Base relief map from Bourrichon (CC BY-SA 2.0).

Danks, H.V. 2023. Wider aspects of a career in entomology 25. Japan concluded (pp. 1–12, 5 July 2023)

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Hiroyuki Iida

Figure 2. Hugh Danks presenting a lecture at Kyoto University.



Kenji Fujisaki

Figure 3. Participants in a session on the effects of environmental change on insects, part of an international symposium held at Kyoto University in 2005. Project leader Prof. Kenji Fujisaki, who organized the symposium and arranged for my visit, is at front R.

participate in a project symposium. About 30 papers were presented in three daily sessions. One was on environmental change (Figure 3), which included my own paper on climate change impacts on insects in northern Canada. In due course, work under the project in Prof. Fujisaki's laboratory studied the potential effects of global warming on range changes in insects, among other topics.

Accommodation in Kyoto was provided by the university. My host told me that the staff's English would be marginal or none, but that because they were expecting me they might recognize my name! Fortunately, there was no repeat of what had happened during my first stay in university accommodation in Japan, when the telephone rang in my room at the guest house of Hirosaki University. The lady at the front desk used such high-respect language, and my Japanese was so limited, that she had to repeat the message many times—and with each repetition it was obvious that her discomfort increased! She was asking me to come down to the desk because (unknown to me) outside calls could not be transferred to guest rooms, and Prof. Masaki was on the line.

My final sortie from Kurashiki was to Tokyo for the annual meeting of the Japanese Society for Applied Entomology and Zoology, where my paper was the only one not in Japanese. However, some of the other papers (thanks chiefly to photographs and graphs), and especially conversations in English outside the formal sessions, were rewarding.

Apart from the value of professional contacts, my experiences in Kurashiki and elsewhere revealed a remarkable number of interesting cultural habits, preferences, strictures, and other elements that stem from the unique history and regional adaptations of Japan.

Many contrasts in workplace procedures were noted in previous articles, and there were other unexpected differences. For instance, my keynote address from an earlier visit was published at the end of the proceedings volume, because in Japan the priority position for such a paper is last, not first as in North America.

Exemplified in articles 22 and 23 were some elements of language and food, the fact that proper introductions and social acceptance are as important to business as technical details, and the key role played by ranking and seniority. Other differences (noted especially in article 24) include the manner of bathing, greater emphasis on recycling, and habits (such as sitting under an electric blanket rather than in a heated room) that limit the use of expensive electricity.

It took me some time to get used to Japanese names, simply because they were unfamiliar at first. In addition, fewer family names can be made using Japanese syllables than are possible

using English letters, and several names are very common there. Japanese entomologists limited the potential confusion by referring to some colleagues according to their interests, such as “spider Tanaka” and “grasshopper Tanaka”!

Children’s given names in Japan, and the kanji used for them, tend to be carefully chosen for meaning, in the hope that each name will presage an auspicious future or an exemplary child: “great wisdom” (*Daichi*), “bright scholar” (*Akihiro*), or “little flower” (*Kohana*)¹, for example. When a colleague asked me the meaning of my given name, he was surprised to hear that many English names act chiefly as labels, that most people don’t know the original meanings, and that a name might be chosen simply because the parents like it (although names may also honour a relative or other person, or have some religious or other connotation).

As might be expected, public holidays and celebrations differ almost completely from Canada’s. While we were in Japan, these were the Emperor’s Birthday, Japanese New Year, Coming of Age Day, National Foundation Day, and Vernal Equinox Day. Celebrating the seasons is reinforced by a general preference for fresh seasonal foods. Other holidays include Children’s Day and Respect for the Aged Day.

One day, a series of loud amplified messages began outside the apartment. An election was approaching. The candidates canvass by driving around neighbourhoods in “sound trucks” (Figure 4), conspicuously labelled vehicles equipped with loudspeakers that constantly repeat “Thank you very much”.

In Japan, driving under the influence of alcohol is unacceptable. At typical “parties” after my seminars, people seldom drank much. Nevertheless, those who normally drove to work would always take the train instead, because an employee of the government (including universities) found to have been driving after consuming any alcohol at all would lose their job. This pattern in Japan contrasts with progress in some other countries, where drunk driving, carrying of weapons, and other dangerous behaviours remained (or remain) barely constrained for many years. Japanese society as a whole believes that such behaviours must be curbed, and severe deterrents are enforced.

The relative isolation of the country by history and language has led to many distinctive ways of doing things, which most Japanese regard as the only correct course of action². This belief contributes to the widespread perception that foreigners know and understand little of the country and are unacceptably strange.

One Japanese researcher said to me: “You know we call you *gaijin*” (although actually a more neutral term was in use: *gaikokujin*, meaning “foreign-country person”). *Gaijin* means “foreigner”, and is often perceived (or intended) as perjorative because it implies an outsider, highlighting the belief in Japanese exclusivity.

Another researcher asked me: “Do you find Japan mysterious.” He seemed disappointed when I said “No, but different”. A colleague asked: “Is it true you sit in dirty bath water?”, apparently because people are unaware that in the West water is used only once by the bather,



Figure 4. Japanese “sound truck” used for electioneering.

Tokumeigakarinooshima (CC BY-SA 4.0)

¹ Many names sound the same when rendered phonetically in rōmaji (as here), but have different meanings to those shown (for example, the name *Daichi* can also mean first son). Moreover, it may not be possible to pronounce names written in Japanese without knowing how, because even the same kanji may have different readings (see article 22). Prof. Masaki told me that this made things difficult when new students arrived.

² Of course, people in other countries have similar cultural opinions, at least for certain elements like cuisine.

whereas the deep, hot Japanese bath is used repeatedly by multiple people to soak in only after they have washed outside it.

At a welcome party, someone could not remember what kind of sushi he was looking at, and was astonished that I knew both what it was (mackerel) and its name in Japanese. Of course, he did not know about my experience of sushi in Japanese restaurants in Canada. Several people expressed surprise at my adequate use of chopsticks. They did not know (and were not told!) that it originated with the consumption of cheap *Chinese* meals during my student days in England.

During a visit to a karaoke bar, a faculty member declared judgmentally that most people from the West don't know songs well enough to sing them, and can't participate. My participation therefore surprised him. It was feasible because, to *my* surprise, many of the songs available on the karaoke machine were in English, and some were folk songs from the 1970s that I had played on guitar.

As a result of their perceptions about outsiders, most Japanese are wary of foreigners. Moreover, unexpected events and unfamiliarity make them uncomfortable. Once we were out walking, and cut through a neighbourhood that was not on a main street. A furious resident came out to confront us. "What are you *gaijin* doing here?" he said. "You must be here to steal something." When told we were only walking (Japanese that I both knew and managed to interject), he seemed somewhat mollified—though still not happy!

Like prejudices everywhere, such attitudes can be offset by familiarity and tolerance of differences on both sides. International experience is very helpful, as for many of the Japanese scientists I met. Moreover, Prof. Masaki, Dr Harada, Dr Numata, and other entomologists attempted to broaden the perspectives of their students by exposing them to English and to foreign visitors, not just to diverse entomological themes.

The value of this approach was confirmed at a farewell party held near the end of one of my visits to Kochi. Dr Harada invited comments, and a student to whom I had given a couple of references and abstracts relevant to the subject of his thesis spoke up. He said that he used to hate foreigners and their strange ways that made him uncomfortable, but now he could see that they were just people.

Many strangers were kind to us, echoing the universally diligent hospitality we received (a social obligation in Japan, of course, but genuine too). During our initial journey, a fellow railway passenger helped to carry the baggage up some challenging stairs. On an earlier visit, a taxi driver happily chatted about Canada on the way to the airport ("fine views," he said).

Most encounters with the local inhabitants in Kurashiki were positive. A business owner who sold live eels was happy and grateful when we notified her that one of her charges had escaped and might soon slither down the drain.

When spring had barely started and it was still cool, a small shop-front booth opened on the main street to sell soft ice cream, but had almost no customers. We decided to patronize it, and sat on the nearby bench to eat our ice creams. (Eating whilst walking is frowned upon in Japan.) Our presence attracted approving glances from passers by, and led to a stampede of people who had concluded that ice cream was a good idea too!

During our stay, I needed a haircut, and went to a salon in the local department store. The staff coped well with the unexpected appearance of a *gai(koku)jin*, although seeing my name written on the booking sheet in katakana (Figure 5) seemed to reduce their anxiety!

Caucasian hair and Asian hair differ greatly in texture and lie, as well as in response to trimming, but the haircutter did a very good job with a positive spirit. In response to my question afterwards (in Japanese): "Was it difficult?", she said: "It was a little difficult."... undoubtedly an understatement.

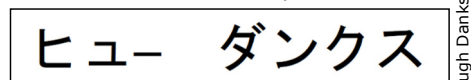


Figure 5. Hugh Danks written in katakana (*hyu[hiyu]-u da-n-ku-su*). (See article 22 for more about the Japanese language).

A final example of positive interactions comes from a visit to Okayama. After many hours in a museum, we sought refreshment, and fortuitously came across a tiny shop, tucked away on a side street behind the building, that sold coffee and antiques. The single proprietor, who spoke no English, painstakingly prepared excellent coffee in a scrupulously clean system of glass vessels (which resembled the set up in a chemistry laboratory), whilst equally excellent classical piano music played in the background, albeit with occasional skips, on a sound system of exceptional quality. I asked the proprietor who the pianist was. “*Goren Gorudo desu*,” he said. *Goren Gorudo*—Glenn Gould transliterated into the closest available Japanese syllables³—was Canadian, allowing us to say that we were too.

One of the most pervasive elements of Japan is the strict adoption of fixed procedures, which everyone tries to follow closely to meet the expectations of employers, customers, and society. The vast majority of citizens carry out their jobs, at whatever level, with great diligence. Government is highly structured, and programs deemed worthwhile are well supported. Among developed nations, Japan spends a higher-than-average 3.3% of Gross Domestic Product on research and development, compared with a much lower-than-average 1.5% for Canada.

The rigidity of systems means, however, that implementing change in a typical Japanese organization requires everyone affected to register approval by marking a memo outlining the proposed action. This procedure helps to optimize the plan and its acceptance. Such norms result in a high level of organization and tenacity, but there is less capability to adapt on the fly. For example, companies in North America expect to solve some problems as a project develops, whereas in Japan no one is comfortable until every possible problem has been identified and solved in advance. Therefore, North Americans are prepared to begin well before Japanese would consider doing so.

By the same token, change is relatively difficult in the Japanese system. During one of my visits to a research institute, a foreign postdoctoral fellow kept protesting (even during a gathering after my seminar) that it was insulting that he could not book a car for fieldwork himself, but had to do so through a staff member. The Director pointed out that, despite this rule, he could have a car whenever he wanted. The pdf continued to protest⁴, and eventually the Director turned to me and asked if I could explain that “this is Japan”!

Given this setting, it is not surprising that every detail of most of my visits was minutely planned, especially for “official” visits, or if formal interactions with people outside the main host institution were scheduled. Professional activities, official meetings, official functions, transportation, meals, sightseeing, and informal gatherings or discussions would be listed and occupy every minute of the day and evening. Some international participants in the textbook workshop (article 23) missed having significant “down time”. Indeed, there was barely time for me to prepare for my role in the round-table discussions there as well as sleep!

Despite many such cultural differences, people have great similarities across the world, and I got on well with most individuals, sharing enjoyable times, good conversations, and work-related discussions with many people, especially if we had met more than once (e.g., Figure 6).

Some graduate students even trusted me enough to repeat the nicknames that (just as in North America) may be given to faculty members. Most of the names proved to be apt rather than perjorative. An entomologist who was thin with a precise manner was called “mantis professor”. However, another who was demanding and unstoppable had the nickname (applied during his graduate days) of “animal”.

A less positive similarity stems from the perceived ranking of individuals, a parallel to the establishment of classes or castes in other cultures. One older person even made a dismissive comment that someone came merely from the merchant class, rather than Samurai like the speaker.

³ There is no “l” sound in Japanese, but the pronunciation of “r” in Japanese syllables shares features of both the English r and the English l. In English, r is said as the tongue touches the roof of the mouth just behind the teeth; for l, the tongue touches farther back. In Japanese, the tongue touch for r lies between these locations.

⁴ His continued protests were likely to make everyone uneasy, and to reduce the likelihood of future cooperation.



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Figure 6. Inside the private booth of a Japanese restaurant in Kochi, 2005: Dr [now Prof.] Tetsuo Harada (centre L), Osugi [*Osugi*] junior high school principal Mr Yasuhiro Yamashita (centre R) and teachers Mr Yoshito Akiyama (L) and Mr Sumito Okamoto (R), who had been involved earlier with the biology textbook (cf. article 23).

arranged officially through the relevant administrative officer, and the appropriate ledger duly filled out.

The journey exposed us to additional cityscapes (Figures 7–9). There were also sombre atomic bomb memorials and museums in Hiroshima (en route) and Nagasaki, of course, although a discordant note was struck by a few insensitive tourists posing in front of them and smiling for the camera.

These and earlier visits gave us a fuller appreciation of the many cultural assets of Japan. Striking features include architectural

In Japan, a level is set by birthplace, school, or other elements. Prestigious universities accept only people of the proper status; top companies hire only employees from those universities ... a reminder of the parallel roles, once more prevalent, played by Eton School and Oxford University in England.

Nevertheless, one entomologist had broken this mould, becoming the first person from his village to go to university. He had sent an impressive essay to Prof. Masaki, who then encouraged and trained him.

After working at the Institute for several months, I learned accidentally that my status as a visiting professor was earning me vacation time. Therefore, about a month before leaving Japan, we were able to travel to the southwesternmost main island of Kyushu (see Figure 1). Of course, the leave had to be



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Figure 7. View of Fukuoka city, showing one of many urban areas.



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Figure 8. View of Nagasaki city, showing the harbour.



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Figure 9. View of Kagoshima city, showing the still-active volcano Sakurajima in the background.

and other components of temples (Figures 10–12) and shrines (Figures 13–17). Many other detailed features of these places are significant, such as the use of bells (Figure 18).



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Figure 10. Temple gate in the Chinese style. There are different styles of temples; this one, like many of those in Nagasaki, shows Chinese influence. Each progressively more sacred area may have its own gate (Sanmon, Sōfuku-ji, Nagasaki).

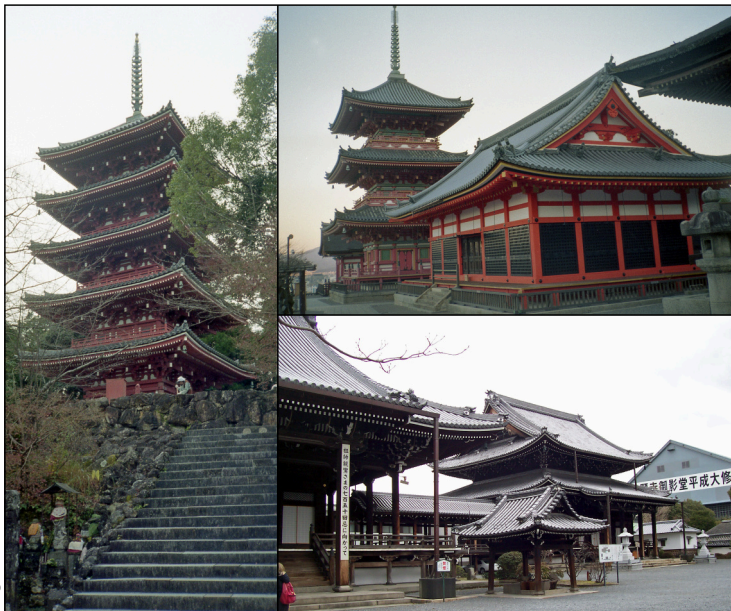
Figure 11 (right)). Temple-gate and its two guardians. Nio guardian statues, found at Buddhist temples throughout Japan, are installed to protect the temple from evil spirits and demons as well as human robbers (Niomon, Kotai-ji, Nagasaki).



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Figure 12. Some temple components. All temples consist of numerous architectural elements: L, 5-storey pagoda (Chikurin-ji, Kochi); top R, 3-storey pagoda and hall of writings (Kiyomizu-dera, Kyoto); bottom R, other buildings (Hongan-ji, Kyoto).



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Figure 13. Shrine popular with visitors (Jishu-jinja, Kyoto). Many shrines are associated with temples, and this one at Kiyomizu-dera (see Figure 12, top R) is focussed on love and relationships, one of the reasons for its popularity!

(The Ise shrine complex near Tsu, which is especially significant to Japanese, is also popular and receives about 9 million visitors per year.)

Figure 14. Shrine steps. Typical shrines are accessed by stone-step paths, some of them very long (Yoshida-jinja, Kyoto). One we visited on Shikoku had 785 steps, which seemed endless.



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Figure 15. Multiple torii. The characteristic gates (torii) of Shinto shrines, which mark the entrance to sacred areas, may be single or multiple (Kinkō Inari-jinja, Hiroshima).



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Figure 16. Fox statues. The red torii of Inari Shinto shrines are protected by a pair of fox statues (*kitsune*); the god Inari is associated with foxes, as well as rice, prosperity, and other elements. One third of all Shinto shrines in Japan are dedicated to Inari (Yoshida-jinja, Kyoto).



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Figure 17. Small shrine. There are shrines of many different sizes, and shrine complexes have one or more small shrines in addition to the main shrine. The forked roof finials seen here are characteristic of buildings for the sole use of kami [see footnote 4 in article 22] (Yoshida-jinja, Kyoto).



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Figure 18. Bell and striker. All shrines and many temples have bells used for various purposes, notably to attract the attention of the gods (Nagasaki).

Few original Japanese castles remain, even with more recent renovations (e.g., Figure 19). Most others were destroyed by fire, by orders to demolish such fortifications in the late 1800s after the feudal system was overthrown, or by World War II. A few of them have been reconstructed in their original form (e.g., Figure 20).

Some castles were restored inside to show their great opulence, as in Nijo-jō, built for the Shogun at Kyoto. Despite impressive art and luxury, the defensive features—including squeaking floors to detect intruders, and discreet compartments for bodyguards who



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Figure 19. Original castle in the hilltop style: Kochi-jō (completed in early 1600s, rebuilt in original style in mid 1700s).

could leap out instantly to defend the Shogun—reveal a darker aspect too.

These and other buildings are now protected as cultural treasures. Statues (e.g., Figure 21) are among other valued historical artifacts.

Japanese gardens provided many highlights of our time in Japan. On the southern journey, spring had just arrived in the excellent garden at Kagoshima (Figure 22), the southernmost city in mainland Japan. Many Japanese gardens are enhanced by exploiting the surroundings, such as a treed hill with a waterfall (Figure 23). Also used as a backdrop in Kagoshima is the local volcano (cf. Figure 9).

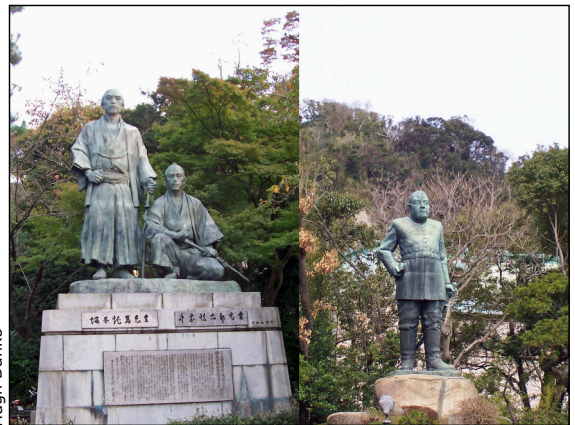
The garden at Okayama provides a perspective of the castle (Figure 24). Water features are key thematic elements in most places (e.g., Figure 25).

Many Japanese gardens, including some temple grounds, contain tea houses. They were used for highly ritualized ceremonies that developed in the past for the consumption of *matcha* (powdered green tea). Unfortunately, some modern ceremonies sold to tourists provide somewhat rudimentary and rushed experiences.



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Figure 20. Reconstructed castle in the hilltop style: Hiroshima-jō (built in late 1500s; replica of main tower, mainly concrete, built in 1958).



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Figure 21. Statues of Samurai: L, Ryoma Sakamoto and Shintarō Nakaoka, two activists seeking the modernization of Japan (and opposing the feudal rule of the Tokugawa shogunate), who were assassinated in Kyoto in 1867 (Maruyama Park, Kyoto); R, Saigō Takamori, one of the last samurai, who helped to usher in the modern era in Japan (Kagoshima, near the site of Takamori's last battle in 1877).



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Figure 22. Japanese garden in spring (Sengan-en, Kagoshima).



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Figure 23. Japanese garden using a hill as a setting (Sengan-en, Kagoshima).



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Figure 24. Castle view used as one backdrop for a Japanese garden (Okayama-jō seen from Kōraku-en, Okayama).

After our trip to southwestern Japan, it was time to prepare for departure⁵, as well as to plan for the conference in Tokyo a few days before we left. The journey back to Canada would prove much easier than the journey out, because

⁵ Preparation included disposing of most of our furnishings and other items, because in Japan no one else would have space for them anyway.



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Figure 25. A few water features of Japanese gardens: top, Island (Ritsurin Kōen, Takamatsu); bottom, Pond with rocks, bridges, and *koi* (decorative carp) (Sengan-en, Kagoshima).

some baggage could be sent ahead, reducing the difficulty of changing trains on the way to the airport⁶.

My experiences in Japan prompt several broader conclusions. First, there are many different ways of doing things, but all of them work as long as the local norms are accepted. For example, in Japan people wash before bathing, and drive on the left rather than the right side of the road. I was tempted to draw a parallel with insect adaptations. Organisms solve identical ecological challenges in many different ways, as shown particularly clearly by the range of adaptations for insect seasonal timing and winter survival that were my focus in Japan! However, as noted already, the many cultural differences do not conceal the great similarity in human responses.

My visits also served to reinforce the importance of cultural elements and interpersonal relationships for scientific work. Most endeavours rely not only on their scientific merit, but also on their general setting in the country and on cooperation with others, just as for the Biological Survey of Canada.

There are still broader lessons here too, of course. Entomological activities are strengthened when people with diverse ethnicities and cultures (including foreign scientists and minorities), backgrounds (depending on previous interests, education, and experience), specialities (e.g., faunistics and molecular biology), and involvements (e.g., amateurs and professionals) are included.

At the conference in Tokyo, I was especially glad to see Professor Sinzo Masaki (Figure 26) again. He and his colleagues and students, and their students, made many contributions to the study of seasonal adaptations in insects. Prof. Masaki's important legacy also includes the international cooperation and understanding that he fostered through his openness and wide perspective. And it was Prof. Masaki who arranged my first visit to Japan, the basis for the interesting and productive stays, spanning more than 13 years, outlined in these articles.



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Figure 26. Professor Sinzo Masaki (1927–2017), photographed at the Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society for Applied Entomology and Zoology in Tokyo in 2005.

⁶ At the airport, we were treated, as usual, with great politeness and deference by the Japanese staff. Our long journey across the Pacific Ocean remained; but we were brought back to North American reality before the plane even took off. As we walked along the aisle towards our super-economy seats in the “cattle stalls” at the rear, we saw the Canadian Museum of Nature’s CEO—returning after a brief visit to represent the Museum—sitting contentedly in the luxury cabin at the front of the aircraft.

Hugh Danks retired in 2007 after many years as head of the Biological Survey of Canada. In that role, he helped to coordinate work on the composition and characteristics of the arthropod fauna of the country, and to summarize the results. In addition, his research studied cold-hardiness, diapause, and other adaptations to seasonality in northern regions.

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