

OBITUARY

Heinz Cléménçon

**Dr. Tsuguo Hongo (1923–2007)**



Professor Tsuguo Hongo was born in Seta, Kurita-gun (later incorporated into Otsu City), Shiga Prefecture, on November 1, 1923, and died in Otsu City, Shiga, on April 2, 2007. Professor Hongo served as president of the Mycological Society of Japan from 1987 to 1989. He was made an honorary member of the Mycological Society of Japan in 1995 and of the Mycological Society of America in 2003. He was a member of the British Mycological Society and of the Societas Phytogeographica Kyoto (now Japanese Society for Plant Systematics).

Tsuguo Hongo attended Zeze Junior High School (now Zeze High School, Shiga Prefecture) and the Higher Normal School of Hiroshima before entering the Department of

Biology, Hiroshima Bunrika University (now Hiroshima University), in 1943, where he studied botany under Professor Horikawa. After graduation from that University in 1946, obtaining a B.Sc. in botany, he returned to Shiga Prefecture to teach at the Zeze High School (then still called Zeze Junior High School) in the same year. In 1951 he obtained a position as an Assistant at Shiga University in Otsu City, advanced to the position of Lecturer in 1954, and became an Associate Professor in 1959.

Working under the direction of Dr. Shiro Kitamura of Kyoto University, he prepared a doctoral thesis entitled “Agaricales of Japan” and obtained his Ph.D. degree from Kyoto University in 1961. Dr. Hongo advanced to the position of Full Professor at Shiga University in 1968, and after retirement in 1989 was promoted to Professor Emeritus. He also held several positions as a Visiting Professor at Mie University, Department of Agriculture, in 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, and 1976; at Ryukyu University, Department of Agriculture, in 1973 and 1983; and at Nara University, Department of Education, in 1986. Professor Hongo offered his services to several international mycological associations and committees and acted as an organizing committee member of the Third International Mycological Congress in Tokyo 1983.

During the course of his career, Professor Hongo traveled widely to make mycological surveys. He visited Algeria (1970), Papua New Guinea (1971–1972), Korea (1973, 1975, 1978, 1990), the United States (1976, 1977), the USSR (1979), China (1981, 1995, 1996, 1998), Taiwan (1982, 1984), New Zealand and Tasmania (1987), and New Zealand (1992).

In April 2003, he was given the Minakata Kumagusu Award for his great contributions to mycology.

As a child, Tsuguo Hongo lived in Seta, Shiga Prefecture, enjoying a country life, and went mushroom hunting with his father. Later, he took pleasure in walking in the hills and forests around Hiroshima City and was interested in mushrooms. He was very excited when he found an unnamed species of *Amanita* and, finding it again some 20 years later, in Shiga Prefecture, he named it *Amanita rufoferruginea* in 1966.

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Professor Hongo was interested in the taxonomy and biogeography of Agaricales. His publications dealt with many genera, such as *Hygrocybe*, *Lyophyllum*, *Tricholoma*, *Cystoderma*, *Boletus*, *Tylopilus*, and *Amanita*. He published more than 130 scientific papers and 9 books, describing 215 new taxa of Agaricales from Japan, Korea, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, and other countries.

His outstanding knowledge of the Agaricales, his teaching ability, and his sincere personality attracted many students to his laboratory at Shiga University. Throughout his career, he communicated extensively with mycologists all over the world and welcomed many visitors, often guiding them on collecting trips in the Japanese Alps.

After retirement from Shiga University, he traveled all over Japan to advise and encourage amateur mycologists, because he knew the important role they play in the progress of taxonomy of the Agaricales. In addition he used to hold “Hongos meetings” three times a year in his home (the meetings were named after the family name, “Hongo” and

the word “Hongos,” meaning fungi in Spanish). Every aspect of mushroom science was discussed at these meetings, which he enjoyed until he became ill. During the last 2 years of his life, he suffered from Parkinson’s disease.

I met Professor Hongo at the Mycological Congress in Tokyo in 1983. Despite his engagement as committee officer he found ample time to talk with me, not only about fungi, but also about Japan and the Japanese writing system. His enthusiasm and friendliness impressed me to such a degree that I planned to spend some time in his laboratory at Shiga University. This dream became true in 1988–89, mainly because Professor Hongo arranged everything necessary for such a sabbatical, finding grants, housing, furniture, and much time for myself and my wife, to make our visit agreeable and successful. I still warmly remember the many field trips and his explanations of Japanese fungi which I enjoyed with him.

We have lost one of the most eminent and influential mycologists not only of Japan, but of the whole world.