

Nobrou Karashima: An Inspired TAMILIAN Historiographer

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Professor Noboru Karashima was born in Tokyo and grew up in Kamakura, Kanagawa Prefecture. The experience of being under American occupation after the Second World War drove him to study about Asia where people shared similar experiences. He majored in Indian history at the Department of Oriental History, Faculty of Letters in the University of Tokyo. When he was enrolled at the graduate school of the same university, Professor Karashima became one of the few Japanese exchange students to South India, and studied at Madras University. After returning home, he has devoted himself to research and education at the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies as well as at the Faculty of Letters, the University of Tokyo. There are many researchers and students who have received Professor Karashima's training. Meanwhile, Professor Karashima has promoted international collaborations in South Asia area studies with scholars at Madras University and Epigraphist Office, Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India. Domestically, he has also played a major role among many scholars in organizing and promoting academic circles in area studies on South Asia. Since he retired from the University of Tokyo in 1994, Professor Karashima has been teaching at Taisho University and serving to create a new base for South Asian area studies.

Noboru Karashima¹ was a Japanese historian, writer and Professor Emeritus in University of Tokyo, Japan. He also served as Professor Emeritus at the Taisho University Japan. He was a prominent scholar of Asia in the studies of South Indian and South Asian histories. He has rewritten historical accounts on medieval South India and published a number of writings. Professor Karashima played a critical role in developing Indo-Japan cultural ties and was conferred the Padma Shri award in 2013, one of India's highest civilian awards, for his contribution in the field of Literature and Education². In a rare gesture the Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh handed over the award personally to Professor Karashima in Tokyo³.

He was an authority on the life and literature during Cholas regions in Tamil Nadu. He used scientific methodology to study Cholas villages. His researches threw light on the tax system that prevailed during the Cholas period and also limelight some social issues prevailed in that period. According to Karashima caste system in Chola's era was intruded during the period of Rajendra Chola. In 1966 Karashima presented his groundbreaking study "Allur and Isanamangalam: Two South Indian Villages of Chola Times" at the first International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies held in Kuala Lumpur. Of

the two villages near Tiruchirappalli, Allur is a non-Brahmin dominated village with its village assembly called the *ur*, and Isanamangalam, a *brahmadeya* or Brahmin-dominated village with the assembly of landowners called the *sabha*. He showed that private landownership had developed in Isanamangalam, the Brahmadeya village, whereas in Allur most of the land was held by the village community or jointly by a group of people. Further, in Isanamangalam, landlords either rented out or engaged cultivators to till the land, whereas in Allur the owners were themselves the cultivators. South Indian agrarian economy was dynamic, Karashima argued, and not static, as some historians had argued. Karashima's paper showed how differing agro-ecological conditions in two villages were associated with different socio-economic institutional arrangements⁴. "Kingship in Indian history", "Towards a New Formation: South Indian Society under Vijayanagar Rule", "A concordance of the names in Cōla inscriptions", "History and society in South India: The Cholas to Vijayanagar: Comprising South Indian History and Society, Towards a New Formation", "Ancient to Medieval: South Indian Society in Transition", "A Concise History of South India. Issues and Interpretations" were his commendable works published in the form of books to revealed the life and culture of our Tamil Society.

Based upon scrupulous reading and analyzing materials on Tamil inscriptions and the statistical processing of collected data, Professor Karashima has developed studies on the history of South India in Japan. His academic achievements in this field have been highly evaluated not only in India, but throughout the world. In 1980, he received the Best Publication Award from the Dravidian Linguistics Association. The 1985 appointment to presidency of the Epigraphical Society of India the activities he has demonstrated since his 1989 inauguration as President of the International Association of Tamil Research and he was instrumental in setting up also, proved how highly he has been evaluated and holding his position till 2010. He was the principal organiser of the 8th Conference of the International Association of Tamil Research in January 1995 was held in Tanjore, although he dissociated himself from its 9th edition on the ground that the conference had been hijacked by the political establishment. He had been the president of the vibrant and scholarly organisation of Japan Association for South Asian Studies from 1996 to 2000. He gained his popularity in the masses of Japan through his commented on South Asian Culture especially with Indian cuisine through television. Professor Karashima was one of the world's leading scholars and an excellent organizer. In addition to these academic accomplishments, Professor Karashima has edited and published general books of high standards such as *Introducing India* (1977) and *The Dravidian World* (1994), thus contributing to Japanese people's understanding of South Asia.

His ground-breaking essay that he published almost 55 years ago on land control in the two Cauvery delta provinces of Allur and Isanamangalam villages based on the study of Chola inscriptions. He explored deeper into understanding land relations and social relationship in Medieval Tamil Nadu. His seminal contribution to South Indian history was his use of statistical technique to distil information from a mass of inscriptions, thereby lending his interpretations and conclusions a more sound reliable base. Prof Noburo

Karashima was died at the age of 82 in the year 2015⁵. He was an authority on life and literature of Chola's era in Tamil Nadu, and it was a great loss for Tamil Literature and Tamil Historiography. A steadfast friend and admirer of Tamil Nadu, he has exercised a strong intellectual influence on a generation of Tamil Scholars all over the world.

References & Notes:

1 "Tamil scholar who inspired a generation", An Article Published by Parvathi Menon, in The Hindu, Dated: 27 November 2015.

2 "Manmohan presents Padma Shri to Japanese Scholar", The Hindu, Dated: 16 December, 2016.

3 Ibid.,

4 "Noboru Karashima: An Obituary", by Parvathi Menon, Review of Agrarian Studies, The Journal of the Foundation for Agrarian Studies, Vol 6, No:1, January to June 2016, ISSN 2248-9002, Bangalore.

5 "Japanese Tamil Scholar Noburo Karashima dies age 82", The Times of India, Dated: 26 November, 2015.

