

## In Memoriam: Syoziro Asahina (1913–2010)

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Dr Syoziro Asahina (Fig. 1), honorary member and a past President of the Japanese Society of Systematic Zoology (1982–1983), passed away quietly on 28 November 2010 in Tokyo at the age of 97. He was a distinguished entomologist and authority on Japanese odonatology, and taught most of the current dragonfly specialists in Japan and other countries. He was also an outstanding taxonomist of the Japanese Blattodea and some other small orders of insects.



Fig. 1. Dr Syoziro Asahina (1913–2010), photograph taken on 13 January 1997, provided by his family.

Dr Asahina was born on 10 June 1913 at Sendagi, Tokyo, near the campus of Tokyo Imperial University. His father Yasuhiko was a professor of Pharmacology at the university and also a noted lichenologist. As Dr Asahina remembered, his

first step toward zoology was insect collecting with his father at age six.

Dr Asahina entered middle school in Tokyo in 1926. When he was a boy, there were habitats rich in lentic and lotic dragonfly species in the western suburbs of Tokyo, and he became fascinated with these insects. During his three years of senior high school, he began to seriously study the Odonata, carrying out surveys in Hokkaido, South Sakhalin, and Taiwan as he accompanied his father on collecting trips.

He entered the Zoology Course in the Faculty of Science, Tokyo Imperial University, in April 1935, received a Master's Degree in Zoology in 1938, and subsequently began the Ph.D. Course. The exigencies of the pre-war period, however, obliged him to change his course to medical entomology. He left Japan in October, 1939, for a nearly 6-year stay in Manchuria as a member of the Civil Service, married Miss Terue Yoshioka in 1940 during his brief stay in Tokyo, and returned home safely from Manchuria to Japan in December, 1945.

After his return, Dr Asahina lived with his families in Mishima for a few years before moving to the Tokyo house that had been his father's. Miraculously, both the house and his own entomological references survived the bombing in World War II, so he had the resources necessary to resume his study of dragonflies. In 1950, he joined the Department of Medical Entomology, National Institute of Health (now the National Institute of Infectious Diseases), Tokyo, and in 1952 was appointed Department Chief. In 1953, he made one year stay in London under the governmental scientific and technological programme and visited the British Museum (Natural History) (now the Natural History Museum, London) for the identification and investigation of the Japanese material of insects and also institutions in and around London related to public health pests. In the same year he submitted his Doctoral Thesis, a morphological study of the relict dragonfly *Epiophlebia superstes* (Selys, 1889) in Japan, to Hokkaido University, Sapporo, and was awarded the Degree of Doctor of Science in April that year. He won the 1956 Prize of the Zoological Society of Japan for this work.

Dr Asahina spent almost his entire career as Chief of the Department of Medical Entomology. In those days he made enormous contributions to entomology. After retiring in 1979, he continued working as a guest member of the Institute.

One of his most important contributions to the entomological world was to found the Japanese Society of Odonatology and the Society's journal, *TOMBO* (*Acta Odonatologica*) (renamed *Acta Odonatologica Japonica* in 1998), the world's first scientific journal devoted to odonatology. The journal has remained in publication since 1958.

His more than one thousand publications from 1928 to 1998 include many works on dragonflies and cockroaches, the most significant of which are Asahina (1954, 1991, 1993). A list of his works has been compiled recently by Eda *et al.* (2011).

During his long life, Dr Asahina became the doyen of Japanese entomological societies. He served as President of the Entomological Society of Japan (1971–1972), the Japan Society of Sanitary Zoology (1959, 1970–1971), the Society of Odonatology, Japan (Tokyo) (1967–1997), and the international society of odonatology, *Societas Internationalis Odonatologica* (Utrecht) (1981–1983), in addition to the Japanese Society of Systematic Zoology.

He is survived by his wife, Terue Asahina, in Tokyo.

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