

THE LATE PROFESSOR GESSHO SASAKI

To our greatest sorrow, we have to report the death of Professor Gessho Sasaki, who was one of the chief organisers of the Eastern Buddhist Society and President of Otani University. The lamentable event took place on March 6, this year, after a short illness, though in fact he had not been well at all ever since the last severe attack of the heart which he had about two years ago. So many important affairs required his personal and exacting attention, and he refused to shirk his duties in spite of the weak condition of his health and the strong advice of his friends. He was just a little over fifty years when he died. He was a profound scholar of the Avatamsaka school as well as of the Shin sect to which he belonged. In his later years he showed much interest in the Yogācāra and the Madhyamika school, and two of his last productions deal with Asanga and Vasubandhu and with Nāgārjuna. He had also practical and executive abilities and there were many things he had projected and left unfinished for the future of the young university over which he came to preside a short time before his last illness. He published many books on various branches of Buddhist study while alive, and yet at his death more than a trunkful of MSS was found awaiting his final elaboration. His friends remain unconsolated over the loss of such a devout and learned Buddhist scholar, and this number of *The Eastern Buddhist* with which he had such close connections, is dedicated to his spirit. Without his cooperation and constant encouragement, the Eastern Buddhist Society would perhaps have never seen the light.

Death is an everyday affair in this world, we see it in every direction and at every moment of life, there is nothing strange about it. But when a friend is taken away from among our own circles, the event assumes a thought-provoking aspect and makes us think of it as if it were a thing that

never happened before and would never happen again. There is something absolutely unique and final about death. It takes our thoughts and feelings away from things worldly and material and carries them out into another realm whose truth and reality appeals powerfully to our supersensibility. All worldly considerations melt away and we are awakened from a long dream. It is as if cold water had been poured over the fervid forehead, a new order of realities now confronts us. After all there is something of real value behind the fleeting individual existences, and it is this that is really real and eternally surviving. Our work however humble gains its meaning only when it is considered in connection with this reality.

A short biographical sketch of the late Professor Gessho Sasaki and a list of his principal works are as follows:

Born April 13, 1875, as fifth son of a Shinshu family in the prefecture of Aichi—Graduated from the Shinshu Daigaku (College of Shin Buddhism), 1901—Graduated from the post-graduate course of the same College, 1905, where the Subject of his research work was the “*Doctrine of the One Vehicle (ekayāna)*”—Appointed as professor at Shinshu Daigaku, 1905—Went abroad for the years 1921-22—Appointed as President of Otani Daigaku, 1924, which is the continuation of Shinshu Daigaku, but enlarged and recognised by the Department of Education as a fully qualified university (*daigaku*)—Died March 6, 1926.

Religion of Experience, 1903—*Life of Shinran*, 1910—*History of the Pure Land Doctrine in China*, 2 vols., 1913—*Outlines of Buddhism*, 1917—*Outlines of Shin Buddhism*, 1911—*Sacred Songs from the Avatamsaka Sutra*, 1921—*On Human Nature*, 1922—*The Twenty Verses Text of the Yogācāra School, Chinese and Tibetan Collated*, 1924—*Study of Shin Buddhism* (in English), 1925—*On Nāgārjuna's Madhyamika and its Philosophy*, 1926—*Asaṅga's Mahāyānasaṅgraha, Chinese and Tibetan Collated*, in press. Besides these about twenty minor works were left by the author.