

REMEMBERING DR. SEIJI OHSUMI: A DREAM FOR ESTABLISHING A RESEARCH CENTER OF MARINE MAMMALS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Nobuyuki MIYAZAKI¹

*Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute, The University of Tokyo,
5-1-5 Kashiwanoha, Kashiwa, Chiba 277-0882, Japan
Corresponding author: nmiyazaki2184@gmail.com*

Dr. Hiran Wasantha Jayewardene, adviser to the Minister of Strategic Planning and Development in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka invited me and Dr. Seiji Ohsumi to the International Workshop of Marine Mammals to be held at Colombo in Sri Lanka during 5–9 April 2003. He, the nephew of Mr. Junius Richard Jayewardene who was the second President of Sri Lanka, had a chal-



Fig. 1. International Workshop of Marine Mammals held in Colombo, Sri Lanka during 5–9 April 2003.



Fig. 2. Group photo taken with staff of the Sri Lanka National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA).

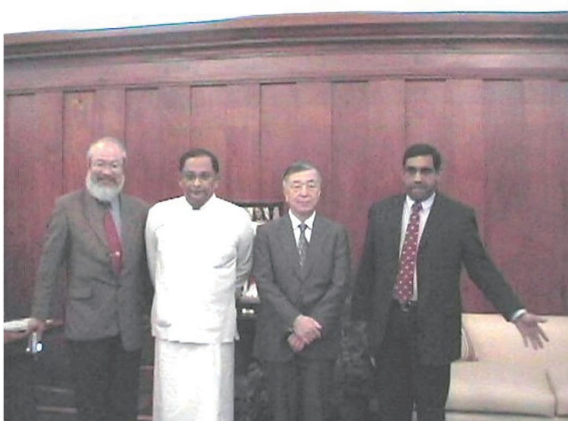


Fig. 3. Photo taken with Mr. Tyronne Fernando, Minister Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka: Author, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, Dr. Ohsumi, and Dr. Jayewardene (left to right).

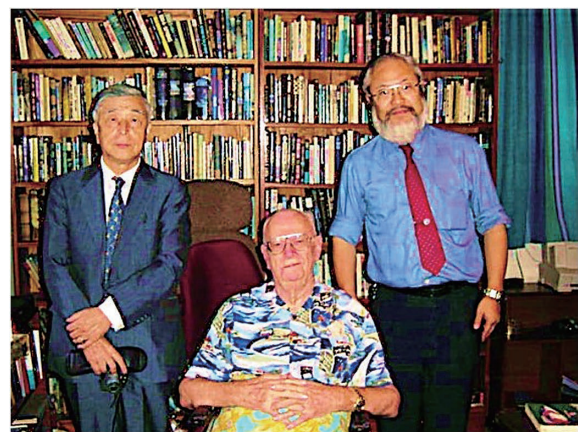


Fig. 4. Photo taken with Sir Arthur Charles Clarke: Dr. Ohsumi, Sir Clarke, and Author (left to right).

¹Professor Emeritus, AORI/UT.

lenging idea to improve the economy through ecotourism such as whale watching and to establish peace and stability at Trincomalee in the northeastern Sri Lanka, where a lot of refugees had illegally moved from neighboring India.

Sri Lanka is located in one of the most valuable and important areas for geopolitical and scientific study in the Indian Ocean. Thus the establishment of a “Research Center of Marine Mammals in the Indian Ocean” would be very useful for mutual collaboration in marine science between Japan and Sri Lanka. In the workshop, we exchanged significant scientific information on the behavior of marine mammals and their environmental condition and discussed a cooperative research plan and education system for young scientists between Japan and Sri Lanka (Fig. 1).

Since the Conference on the Treaty of Peace with Japan was held in San Francisco on 4 September 1951, Japan has had a close relationship with the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon). In spite of attack by the Japanese navy to Colombo and Trincomalee in 1942, Mr. Junius Richard Jayewardene, who participated in the conference as a representative of Ceylon, made a historically impressive speech including the following words: “Hatred ceases not by hatred but by love” and “Sri Lanka didn’t receive any war reparation from Japan”, and did not officially request to Japan for the World War II Reparations. Up to this day, the Japanese government has been continuing strong support Sri Lanka through the program of Official Development Assistance (ODA).

After the workshop on marine mammals, Dr. Hiran W. Jayewardene took us on a trip to Trincomalee, where many species of marine mammals such as sperm whales and blue whales often came close to the coast of this area and the people enjoyed whale watching from the cliff on a hill. In addition, as this place is close to the naval station of Sri Lanka, this area is considered to be the best location for improving marine science including whales’ observation and their environmental study in the Indian Ocean. This area is also a memorial place for us, where the late Professor Masaharu Nishiwaki, Director of the Ocean Research Institute of the University of Tokyo, attended the International Conference of *Dugong dugon* in 1972. On the way back to Colombo, we visited the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), where a lot of skull and skeleton samples of the stranded marine mammals were preserved and discussed future research of marine science there (Fig. 2).

In order to encourage research activity of marine science with mutual collaboration between Japan and Sri Lanka, Dr. Ohsumi, Dr. Jayewardene and I officially met Mr. Tyonne Fernando, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time (Fig. 3). Through fruitful discussion with him, we obtained a good feeling for the future research plan on marine mammals with mutual collaboration of both countries. As the support program of ODA was one of the most useful ways for establishing our plan, Mr. Seiichiro Otsuka, Ambassador of Japan, advised us to submit our research plan to the Japanese government through the government of Sri Lanka. However, in 2005 the government of Sri Lanka started to fiercely fight again against the anti-government group of Tamil (LTTE), thus our plan had to be stopped unfortunately. Now, as the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka becomes a peaceful and politically stable country, it is just time for establishing the cooperative research plan on marine mammals between Japan and Sri Lanka.

Finally, we met the late Sir Arthur Charles Clarke, a famous writer of science fiction and fantasy, and talked about our dream (Fig. 4). He had great interest in the “Biologging Science”, through which we can obtain wonderful knowledge of marine mammals and their environmental condition without killing animals. He strongly recommended that we should improve the new science and supply the fantastic knowledge to the public people in not only both countries but also all over the world. Now, it is just time to realize our dream of establishing a “Research Center of Marine Mammals in the Indian Ocean” under the brilliant spirit of the late Dr. Seiji Ohsumi.

Press hands in prayer.