Erythema nodosum leprosum (ENL), one of the most frequently used terms in hansenology, was proposed by Mosuke Murata in 1912. He wrote an original paper, ‘Over erythema nodosum leprosum’ in Japanese with five photographs1 (Figures 1–3).

It was characterised by its occurrence only in the nodular type of leprosy, a temperature elevation over 39 degrees and the appearance of polymorphs in histologic pictures. He wrote that it

Figure 1. Dr. Mosuke Murata, surgeon at the Tama Zenshoen Hospital, the first person from the right on the front row; the center is Dr. Kensuke Mitsuda, the director of the Hospital.
was called ‘netsukobu’ or hot nodules which are still used in sanatoriums in Japan today. He named it erythema nodosum leprosum because there was need to differentiate it from other types of erythema nodosum in dermatology; which is usually seen in the lower parts of the body. In his original paper, he thanked Dr. Kensuke Mitsuda, his senior, who allowed him to study a total of 67 cases.

William Jopling wrote his autobiography ‘Recollections and reflections’ in the Star that he had long wanted to know the person who first named this condition erythema nodosum leprosum when he worked in Jordan Hospital. He asked this question of every visitor to this short-lived leprosy hospital and finally in 1956, Yoshinobu Hayashi, the director of Tama Zenshoen Hospital in Tokyo, brought this information to him. Hayashi was on his way from a leprosy conference in Rome.

Jopling wrote that the occasion was a visit from two illustrious Japanese visitors in 1958 who not only told him that it was a Japanese doctor named Murata, but promised to send a translation of this classic paper.

Mosuke Murata was a surgeon in the Tama Zenshoen Hospital where Kensuke Mitsuda worked as a senior with him. However, Murata soon went into private practice. It is to be noted that there was another leprologist by the name of Murata; his name was Masataka Murata.

Yoshinobu Hayashi, the director of the Tama Zenshoen Leprosarium, wrote about doctors working at this hospital in his book ‘Looking back to 50 years’. In 1909, Dr. Kensuke Mitsuda was chief of the medical section, and under him was an elder doctor named Chin. The third doctor was Mosuke Murata, who worked there between November 1909 and March 1914 and then went into private practice. At the start of the leprosarium, there were only three doctors. Murata appeared a little younger and shorter than Mitsuda, but was strongly built, and studied very hard. Most famous was his study on erythema nodosum leprosum but including it, he wrote six papers under his single name. In 1911, Mitsuda wrote the first study on serum reactions with Murata. Since Mitsuda had been interested in this

Figure 2. Dr. Murata undertaking an operation.
problem later leading to the Mitsuda reaction, it is conceivable that Mitsuda recognised the ability of Dr. Murata. Mitsuda continued to find doctors and later he found Dr. Fumio Hayashi who completed the Mitsuda reaction.

Ai Raifu Uchinomaki, Aso-shi
Kumamoto-ken
869-2301 Japan
e-mail: gah03306@nifty.ne.jp

ICHIRO KIKUCHI
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