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The Middle East: The Economy

Hiroaki Suzuki

Japanese Studies of Middle Eastern Economies

Before going into an examination of Middle Eastern economic studies at the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE), I will quickly review the general trends in Japanese studies of Middle Eastern economies from two perspectives: the characteristics of research institutes other than the IDE, and themes put forward by Japanese specialists in Middle East studies. Research institutions all have their own characteristics and can be divided into the following three groups according to the types of research that they carry out.

First, there are semi-governmental organizations, such as the Japan External Trade Organization (Nihon Bōeki Shinkōkai), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Kokusai Kyōryoku Jigyōdan), the Export-Import Bank of Japan (Nihon Yushutsunyū Ginkō), and the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (Kaigai Keizai Kyōryoku Kikin). These organizations conduct surveys and research that are essential to the implementation of government policy. Their research has practical significance in terms of the aims for which the organizations were established. Formats vary widely, from feasibility studies to country reports, and in all cases the work is linked directly to government policy in such areas as trade and foreign aid.

The second group consists of private or joint private sector-governmental research institutions. Many of these were established in response to demands from the business community or government administration. Examples

include the Japanese Institute of Middle Eastern Economies (Chūtō Keizai Kenkyūsho), the Japan Cooperation Center for the Middle East (Chūtō Kyōryoku Sentā), the Middle East Institute of Japan (Chūtō Chōsakai), the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan (Nihon Enerugi Keizai Kenkyūsho), and the International Development Center of Japan (Kokusai Kaihatsu Sentā). Each of these organizations has its own unique features. They carry out extremely practical work, and their findings exhibit the characteristics of contract research carried out for the business sector or the government.

In the third group are research institutions attached to educational institutions or education and research organizations. Among the organizations involved to some extent in Middle Eastern economic research are the Institute of Oriental Culture at the University of Tokyo (Tokyo Daigaku, Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūsho), the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (Tokyo Gaikokugo Daigaku, Ajia Afurika Gengo Bunka Kenkyūsho), the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies at the International University of Japan (Kokusai Daigaku, Chūtō Kenkyūsho), and the National Museum of Ethnology (Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan). In general, these organizations conduct purely academic research and are not directly involved in government-level foreign aid policy. The scope of their research includes such areas as economic history, rural surveys, and Islam.

Moving on to an analysis of trends in Middle East studies in Japan according to the various fields of study, agriculture has been one of the most important areas studied. As far back as the mid-1960s, Morio Ōno, an expert in Iranian agriculture, proposed a unique rural survey method through which researchers examined data first-hand while immersing themselves in the real conditions of the villages being surveyed and trying as much as possible to discard their own prejudices. Ōno used this method as the basis for his work. He lived in a number of villages and studied the actual conditions in rural areas. In his 1971 study, he not only portrayed the characteristics of Iran's rural landownership system, which is based on a unique landowner-peasant relationship known as *malik-raiyat*, but he also examined the impact of land reform on social life. In this way he sought to provide a typological and structural analysis of the Iranian rural sector as a whole.

Shōkō Okazaki,* who also specializes in Iranian agriculture, has approached the Iranian rural sector from a different perspective. Okazaki focuses on the natural limitations imposed on agriculture due to arid geographical conditions and classifies Iranian agriculture into three types according to the natural environment: the Caspian Sea type, the Gorgan Province type, and the plateau type. He has studied Persian-language sources

about rural communities in each category and conducted extensive field surveys in rural areas in order to identify changes in such aspects as landownership and the social class structure. As will be mentioned in the following section, he has published numerous papers (see also Okazaki 1968a, 1969).

Hiroshi Katō has researched rural economic and social structures in Egypt and closely examined Egypt's nineteenth century land law system. He has also studied the formation of private landownership and the effect that it has had on rural society (Katō 1981). Regarding his analytical framework, Katō is critical of applying the concept of communalism to the analysis of Egyptian society, and he has often brought this issue up for debate.

After agriculture, the next most important research topic concerning the Middle East is oil. Many people have taken an interest in the economic aspects of this topic. Seijirō Matsumura* was a central figure at the IDE in the study of oil problems. Shigeki Koyama (1981), who until 1995 was president of the Japanese Institute of Middle Eastern Economies, forecasted petroleum supply and demand in the 1980s through the examination of petroleum demand in OECD countries and the petroleum export capacity of the OPEC countries. He focused in particular on developments in the petroleum policy of Saudi Arabia, which occupies a crucial position among oil-producing countries.

Toyoo Nakamura, who like Koyama was attached to the Japanese Institute of Middle Eastern Economies, has also specialized in Middle Eastern economies. However, his area of interest is the economic problems of oil-producing countries that are heavily dependent on oil revenues. After the fourth Middle East war in October 1973, soaring oil prices caused the revenues of oil-producing countries to balloon. These funds were channeled into domestic economic development, but it was found that there were inherent limits to the scope for investment in oil-producing countries because of the small size of their markets. Nakamura (1976) pointed out that this would be a major problem to achieving sustained economic growth in these countries.

In addition to research in these areas, Manabu Yamane (1986) has worked energetically to analyze the political and economic structure of Egypt in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although Yamane's work has focused primarily on "Arab socialism," he has conducted research across a wide spectrum, including the colonization process, the formation of the local bourgeoisie, the Muslim Brotherhood, and land reform. Susumu Ishida (1974) analyzed the processes that led to Egypt's bankruptcy in the nineteenth century within the context of its colonization.

Middle Eastern Economic Studies at the IDE

In this section we will trace the development of Middle Eastern economic studies at the IDE and examine their characteristics.

1. *Research Staff Expansion and Diversification of Research Themes*

The IDE's geographical scope of research extends from Iran and Iraq in the east to the Maghreb countries in the west, but there has been an overwhelming emphasis on Egypt. The weight of research themes has been toward the agricultural sector and oil-related issues, but analyses have also been carried out on such themes as population, labor, industry, trade, finance, and fiscal policy.

During the institute's nascent period in the late 1950s and early 1960s when its staff suffered from a paucity of experienced researchers, the IDE had to commission academics from outside to carry out surveys on its behalf. They include such academics as Shinji Maejima (1961) and Shirō Tōmine of Keio University, Hiroshi Iwanaga of Hosei University, Terutarō Nishino of the National Diet Library, Yūzō Itagaki and Morio Ōno of the University of Tokyo, Jitsuzō Tamura of Kyoto University, and Hajime Kobayashi of the Middle East Institute of Japan. They organized joint research committees with young IDE researchers or they conducted research individually. Their work covered basic general knowledge about the Middle East, as well as such aspects as history, society, politics, and economics.

Within several years, as a growing number of researchers experienced their two-year stint of conducting field research in Middle Eastern countries, the IDE's own research staff became capable of producing their own original studies in their respective fields. San'eki Nakaoka,* Takeshi Hayashi,* Seijirō Matsumura,* and Shōkō Okazaki* started to publish findings from their surveys. It was a watershed for the institute's Middle East studies in that the IDE graduated from doing desk research based on documentary and archival sources (which were mostly in English) and moved up to the stage of empirical research that reflected actual conditions in the field.

Researchers who subsequently became involved in Middle Eastern economic studies include Hiroaki Suzuki,* Masaaki Itoga,* Kazumasa Ōiwakawa,* Katsumi Andō* (1968), Takehiko Haraguchi,* and Kazuo Miyaji.* There was diversification in both the countries studied and fields of specialization during this period, and researchers brought a variety of perceptions to the issues that they studied. This was reflected in the diverse

content of research reports published at this time.

Since the 1970s, researchers have been active in a wider range of fields, including politics, economics, and sociology, as well as studies of documentary materials. People involved in these areas include Yoshihiro Kimura* (1977), Hiromasa Kanō* (1990), Eiichi Sekine* (1988), Manabu Shimizu* (1985), Takeji Inō,* Toshikazu Yamada* (1989), Tetsuo Hamauzu* (1987), Eiji Nagasawa* (1986), Katsuhiko Satō,* Akifumi Ikeda,* Hiroshi Satō,* Keiko Sakai,* Yasushi Hazama,* Hitoshi Suzuki,* Hiroshi Nagaba,* and Kumiko Izumisawa.*

With a few exceptions, most of the recent Middle Eastern economic studies at the IDE have focused on analyses of the contemporary situation in the Middle East.

2. Middle Eastern Economies in General

As used here, the term “Middle Eastern economies in general” covers two categories. The first is that of economic relations within the entire Middle East region as a single unit. The general themes analyzed within this category include intra-regional trade theory, the common market concept, and the Arab common food security concept. Another issue that falls within this category is the migration of expatriate labor from non-oil-producing to the oil-producing states. The second category covered under the term is that of cross-sectional comparative studies of Middle Eastern countries focusing on specific economic systems or policies such as financial systems, specific industries, or industrial development plans. The IDE has not yet been extensively involved in research on topics in the first category which are likely to be a major target of study in the future. Since the 1970s, however, it has formed numerous research groups to conduct joint studies that have fallen within the realm of the second category. Studies conducted by these groups have included the “Economic Development of the Middle East” (conducted during 1971–73), “A Statistical Survey of Middle Eastern Countries” (1975–77), “A Survey of Economic Development Plans and Economic Growth in the Middle East” (1978–79), “Development and Integration in the Middle East” (1984), “Economic Stabilization in the Middle East” (1987), “Economic Stabilization and External Relations in the Middle East” (1988), and “Prospect for Political and Economic Stabilization in the Middle East” (1989).

The IDE has thus conducted joint research projects that combine the regional concept of the Middle East with mainly economic themes. However, this approach has not been without problems. Joint research is certainly a useful method for a research organization like the IDE, but in practice the

themes for joint research have frequently tended to be summed up in concepts that are relatively inclusive. This tends to result in research without a strictly defined target.

Another problem relates to the actual implementation of joint research. There is a desperate need for economic research experts specializing in the Middle East region, and who combine what the author calls “three integrated perspectives” of (1) local experience in the region, (2) knowledge of local languages, and (3) knowledge of social science methodologies.

3. *Land Reform and Agricultural Problems*

IDE studies on Middle Eastern economies are dominated by a wide range of agricultural research. They are concentrated on (1) landlord systems and land reform, (2) kibbutzim and cooperative farms, and (3) irrigation.

In the first area, San’eki Nakaoka* gained a reputation as an expert on land reform through his two papers on the subject. The first (1959) analyzed the landlord system in Egypt under imperialism; it was the first study of the Egyptian landlord system ever to be written in Japanese. The other paper (1960) dealt with theoretical issues on agrarian reform in the United Arab Republic. Nakaoka’s papers are characteristic of the theoretical approach. The former, in particular, is one of Japan’s most important papers on this subject.

Shōkō Okazaki’s* 1968b paper analyzed the Iranian landlord system, and its subject has elements in common with his other paper (1966) that dealt with landlords in the Caspian Sea area. Okazaki (1976b) also studied changes in landownership in rural areas caused by agrarian reform. His research centered on Teheran’s suburb of Taleabad.

Within the second area dealing with kibbutzim and cooperative farms, the following three papers deserve mention. First is Kazumasa Ōiwakawa’s* paper (1966) on the economic characteristics of rural areas in Israel, a theme which he analyzed from the perspective of the process of Jewish settlement in Palestine. Ōiwakawa reviewed the process of settlement in the old kibbutz of Degania from the perspective of the capital providers and from that of the workers immigrating from Eastern Europe. He then analyzed such problems as kibbutz management, labor shortages, and capital insufficiency.

Takehiko Haraguchi* (1969) dealt with the Maghreb countries in his essay on agricultural reform in Tunisia. His study looked at the actual situation of agricultural production cooperatives (*l’unité coopérative de production agricole*) operating under the Tunisian way of socialism. He took as his example the Methline Farm and reported on the actual management of an

agricultural cooperative where the farm land under administration consisted of state-owned land as well as land to which the cooperative held rights.

Likewise, Kazuo Miyaji* (1978) reported on his field surveys of Kacem Ali Farm in Algeria. Miyaji pointed out some problems in the structural reforms and management of self-managed farms (*exploitation autogérée agricole*), and ascribed the difficulties in farm management, albeit under relatively favorable conditions, primarily to the instability in management policies resulting from external influences such as the socialist policies of national governments.

Irrigation has been the third area of major IDE research interest. The Middle East being largely an arid region, irrigation is of fundamental importance in sustaining agricultural production. A variety of irrigation methods have been developed using the best of human ingenuity. This fact undoubtedly prompted Shōkō Okazaki,* Masaaki Itoga,* and Hiroaki Suzuki* to focus their attention on this subject.

Shōkō Okazaki* mentioned at an early date the characteristics and importance of Iran's *qanats* (artificial underground watercourses) in his papers (1973, 1976a). He is of the opinion that the water resources nationalization law of 1968, along with land reform, has profoundly affected agricultural management in that country.

Masaaki Itoga* directed his interest at the relationship between agriculture and irrigation in Iraq, and in his paper (1975), he divided Iraqi agriculture into the rain-fed type in the north and the irrigated type in the south. He emphasized the need to construct drainage facilities for the reclamation of salt-affected soils in southern Iraq.

Hiroaki Suzuki* (1986) reviewed the contribution by Sir William Willcocks, a British irrigation engineer, to the construction of riparian and irrigation projects in Egypt and Iraq during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Willcocks knew better than to blindly and mechanically apply modern irrigation techniques developed in Europe and the United States to rivers in the Middle East. He started with a thorough investigation of the weather and the topographical and geological characteristics of rivers in the region. He also found a measure of rationality in the irrigation methods practiced locally since ancient times, and it is highly significant that he gave his attention to the centuries-old native irrigation techniques which ensured the maximum rationality at the minimum cost.

All these works indicate that in the study of Middle Eastern economies at the IDE, research efforts on agriculture have yielded relatively fruitful results. It may be worthwhile to compare these studies with similar ones done by European, American, and Middle Eastern researchers.

When compared with their Japanese counterparts, Western researchers have dealt with a wider variety of subjects and the quality of their studies is relatively high. Local Middle Eastern researchers, on the other hand, have access to government data and statistics usually unavailable to Japanese researchers. This fact has serious implications and imposes limitations on studies carried out in Japan, and Japanese researchers have little recourse in overcoming these limitations than to continue efforts to carefully read primary data and maintain their critical approach with clear perceptions that can delve deeply into the issues. An example of the situation facing Japanese researchers can be found in the issue of land reform in Egypt.

The 1959 study of the Egyptian landlord system and land reform by San'eki Nakaoka,* a Japanese pioneer in the area of Middle East economies, came out only slightly before the publication of a book, *A History of Landownership in Modern Egypt, 1800–1950* (1962), by Gabriel Baer, an Israeli researcher on Arab affairs. Compared with Nakaoka's theoretically-oriented study, Baer's book is an embodiment of plain empiricism based on the full use of primary data. Doreen Warriner, who had previously studied the land system in Eastern Europe, published three books that examined the social and economic impact of postwar land reform in the Middle East. This subject has also been dealt with by S. Marei, M. Riad El Ghonemy, S. M. Gadalla, G. Saab, and A. E. Dessouki. Only when Japanese researchers were exposed to the whole picture of Egyptian land reform brought out in the studies by local researchers, were they able to confirm their previous supposition that there were serious limitations in Egyptian land reform. In fact, the clearest piece of data illustrating the shortcoming of land reform in Egypt is a statistical table quoted by A. E. Dessouki in his 1985 article published in the *Journal of the Middle East*. The figures in this table show that even after land reform took place, 43 per cent of all land was still under tenancy, and sharecropping was still practiced in Egypt. It is quite evident that on the issue of the landlord system and land reform in their country, Egyptian scholars have more opportunities for access to primary data, government statistics, and the actual situation than do Japanese researchers and the in-depth studies they have carried out are too numerous to count.

4. *Oil Economies and Multinational Enterprises*

In Japan the two major organizations engaged in the study of the oil economies are the Japanese Institute of Middle Eastern Economies and the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan. In view of the importance of oil in the Middle East and its great impact on the Japanese economy and other

economies of the world, the IDE also organized a study group in 1963 under the direction of Yūichirō Noguchi to conduct research on the exploitation of oil resources in North Africa. The following year the IDE began to organize a study group chaired by its own researcher, Seijirō Matsumura,* to study policy trends in the oil-producing countries.

In 1966 Matsumura also joined another study group (chaired by Yasuo Takeyama) studying the development of international petroleum industries. He provided many observations in his papers: one (1966) on the oil-refining sector in the Middle East discussed the pros and cons of introducing oil-refining plants into oil-producing districts; another one (1974) focused on the relationship between the OPEC countries and multinational oil enterprises. In the former paper, Matsumura argued that the decision to invest in oil refining is based on two principles, economies of scale and the economic viability of transportation, and because of this the prospect of investment in oil refineries to be located near production sites will be contingent upon the oil price trends in the main consumption area. This is because the role of resource-oriented refineries remains a buffer (or a balance refinery) for consumption-oriented refineries which are set up near places of consumption. In the latter paper, Matsumura examined the vertical division of labor practiced within huge oil multinationals and analyzed the process of participation in this division of labor by oil-producing countries.

Tetsuo Hamauzu* (1987) pointed out, as Matsumura did, that the petrochemical industry is concentrated in developed countries. However, Hamauzu also detailed the rationale of oil-producing countries which have endeavored to use cost advantage to enter the petrochemical industry. Referring to the oil-producing Gulf countries, Hamauzu argued that harsh labor and market constraints do not allow their petrochemical industries to shift from the upstream sector to the downstream (labor-intensive, finished production) sector. He suggested that the only way for the Middle East petrochemical industry to develop further is by the production and export of ethylene and its derivatives by utilizing cost advantages. He also maintained that future decisions about the construction of ethylene plants will depend not only on domestic factors but also on the acceptability of world markets.

5. Problems of Industrialization

The IDE has also turned its attention to issues of industrialization in the Middle East. Industrialization at the present stage in Middle Eastern countries is oriented largely toward import substitution. Even in the countries like Egypt and Turkey, where consumption goods industries are relatively developed,

the industrial sector faces many problems, including the difficulty of raising funds, the lack of management ability, poor quality of labor, low wage levels, shortages of skilled workers and engineers, inadequate diversity of products, and the need to nurture small businesses.

At the IDE, two researchers, Eiichi Sekine* and Hiroaki Suzuki,* studied the issue of industrialization since their early days of research. Sekine dealt with Turkey and Egypt, and Suzuki with Egypt. Sekine (1988) reviewed structural reform and industrialization undertaken by the Turkish government. He did this by focusing on the government's redirection of development strategy in the 1980s from that of nurturing import substitution industries led by closed state-run enterprises to that of promoting open and competition-based export-oriented industries.

Suzuki (1983) started with a study of the Egyptian cotton industry; he then reviewed the historical and economic significance of the Misr Group, an indigenous business group, and discussed problems of import substitution industrialization. Masaaki Itoga* and Toyoo Nakamura analyzed the industrial development of Iraq and Iran. Manabu Shimizu* published an English report (1986) on a comparison of the Egyptian public sector with that of India.

Recent Research Results

Recently the results of many studies on the Middle East have been published in Japan. However, if the topic is limited to Middle Eastern economies, the number of studies is small. This has been inevitable because of the limited number of Japanese researchers working in the area of Middle Eastern economies; also the range of specialized fields has not yet diversified enough. Some notable recently published research results include, in the area of agriculture, Shōkō Okazaki's* book (1988) on the importance of *qanats* in Iran, and in the area of the history of Egyptian agriculture, Hiroshi Katō's review (1993b) of the issue of private landownership. Katō's other works include an analysis of the weekly markets held in rural districts of modern Egypt (1993a), an essay on social changes from the standpoint of peasant movements in modern Egypt (1990), and a study of a riot by villagers in Kafr Shubrahur Village (1988). Manabu Shimizu* (1991) discussed recent structural adjustment in Egypt. Toshikazu Yamada* (1991) examined economic reforms in Egypt and Turkey, and Yamada and three Egyptian researchers (1995) coauthored an English-language report on economic reform, financial liberalization, and privatization in Egypt.

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