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Mamluk Studies in Japan: Retrospect and Prospect

Islamic and Middle Eastern studies in Japan has a long history dating back to the beginning of the Meiji Era (1868–1912), when research was first based on information received through China and translations of treatises by European scholars of Islam. From the 1930s on, Japanese scholars began to form various research associations and institutions, such as the Institute of Islamic Civilization Studies (Isuramu Bunka Kenkyujo, 1932), the Institute of the Islamic World (Kaikyoken Kenkyujo, 1937), and the Institute of Oriental Culture (Toyo Bunka Kenkyujo, 1941) in order to study Islam and Islamic civilization on their own. However, during World War II, they were directed by the Japanese government to investigate the contemporary situation of Muslim populations in such Asian countries under Japanese occupation as China, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The aim was clearly to utilize the sense of solidarity existing among these Asian Muslims in the war effort. After such research activities ceased with the end of the war in 1945, some scholars who chose to continue Islamic studies turned toward classical studies regarding medieval Islamic civilization, forsaking their research on contemporary Islam.

After World War II, a new era of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies was opened in Japan under the leadership of Maejima Shinji, Izutsu Toshihiko, and Shimada Johei. Maejima Shinji (1903–83) studied cultural exchange in the history of contact between East and West, making use of the available Chinese and Arabic sources. His major work was collected into the voluminous *Various Aspects of Cultural Exchange between East and West* (Maejima 1971). He is also known for his original translation of *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* into Japanese under the title *Arabian Nights* (Maejima 1966–92).

Izutsu Toshihiko (1914–93) utilized the methodology of semantics in his study of the Quran, as revealed in such works as *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*¹ and *God and Man in the Koran*.² He translated the Quran into Japanese,³ which is widely read even today due to its accuracy and clarity. In his later years

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¹In English (Tokyo, 1959).

²In English (Tokyo, 1964).

³3 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1957).

Article: http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/MSR_X-1_2006-Sato-Tsugitaka_1.pdf

Full volume: http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/MamlukStudiesReview_X-1_2006.pdf



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Izutsu took great interest in studying the history of Sufism and Taoism in comparative perspective.

Shimada Johei (1924–90), who had pursued the fields of Arabic and Islamic history under ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dūrī, Bernard Lewis, and others at the University of London, made serious efforts to introduce European Islamic research methods into Japan. He wrote many articles in Japanese on the social and economic history of the early Islamic period, based on such Arabic sources as *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* by al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb al-Kharāj* by Abū Yūsuf, and *Futūḥ al-Buldān* by al-Balādhurī. His collected articles, entitled “Studies on the Early Islamic State”⁴ is regarded as a masterwork completed after his many years’ labor.

These pioneers, however, mostly focused on the study of Islamic history and civilization in the classical ages, not extending their interests to the Seljuqid, Ayyubid, or Mamluk periods. It was only from the end of the 1960s on that Japanese scholars started to investigate seriously the various subjects related to the Ayyubid and Mamluk dynasties.

THE BEGINNING OF MAMLUK STUDIES IN JAPAN

Before World War II, Kobayashi Hajime had studied the mamluks in Islamic history (Kobayashi 1939); however, his work was not concerned with the Mamluk dynasty, but with mamluk soldiers as a social and political phenomenon peculiar to Islamic civilization. I myself, after studying the methodology of Islamic history under Shimada, turned to the history of Mamluk Egypt and Syria which is favored with ample historical sources in Arabic. My intention was to see how the Mamluk period might be understood in the evolution of Arabic history since the early Islamic period, so I was stimulated by the article of Claude Cahen entitled “L’évolution de l’iqṭā‘ du IXe au XIIIe siècle,”⁵ which traced chronologically the evolution of the *iqṭā‘* system in medieval Islamic history.

I too took up the subject of the *iqṭā‘* system to disclose the relationship between state and society during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, but differed in approach from Cahen and Shimada, who had mostly studied the landholding and taxation systems. I first paid attention to cadastral surveys (*rawk*) conducted in Egypt and Syria during the years 1298–1325. I wrote two articles on this subject originally in Japanese (Sato 1967, 1969a), then revised and enlarged them into an English translation (Sato 1979). From these studies on the cadastral surveys, I found that very little research had been done on rural life and the peasantry in medieval Egypt and Syria. After collecting the sources related to this subject through a search of Arabic manuscripts in Cairo, Damascus, and Istanbul, I wrote

⁴In Japanese (Tokyo: Chuo Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1996).

⁵*Annales, économies, sociétés, civilisations* 8 (1953): 25–52.

a major article on rural society and the peasantry in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt (Sato 1973). A collection of my articles on the evolution of the *iqṭā'* system was published in Japanese in 1986, then in 1997 I published an English book entitled *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam: Sultans, Muqta's, and Fallahun* (Sato 1997), which included the above-mentioned Japanese research in revised and enlarged form. My empirical work on Egyptian rural society during the medieval period served as a stimulus to the appearance of a book *Al-Qaryah al-Miṣrīyah fī 'Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk*⁶ by an Egyptian scholar, Majdī 'Abd al-Raṣhīd Baḥr.

Kobayashi Seiichi, following his study of commercial policy under the Mamluk government (Kobayashi 1973a), took up the study of the formation of Sufi orders and their activities in medieval Egypt (Kobayashi 1973b, 1975). After that, however, his interest changed to the modern history of Egypt, particularly religious movements there during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Yajima Hikoichi, who had studied Arabic and Islamic history under Maejima Shinji, intended to examine commercial and cultural activities in the Islamic world during medieval times. Basing his work on the original Arabic sources, Yajima disclosed various aspects of Egyptian commercial policy during the Bahri Mamluk period (Yajima 1980). In his study of the commercial activities of the Kārimī merchants, he made clear the trade route connecting the Nile valley with the Red Sea coast, focusing on the Qūṣ-'Aydḥāb route (Yajima 1986). He then published a valuable work describing historical change in international commercial networks of medieval Islam, although not touching on the causes of such changes (Yajima 1991). After a long-term study of the Arabic manuscripts of the travel accounts by Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, Yajima translated *Tuḥfat al-Nuẓẓār* into Japanese with very learned annotations (Yajima 1996–2002). Now he is preparing a new critical Arabic text of *Tuḥfat al-Nuẓẓār*, based on the collected manuscripts.

Yukawa Takeshi, who was also a student of Maejima, has studied the social and cultural activities of the ulama in Egypt during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. He published several articles on such subjects as the ulama community in medieval Upper Egypt (Yukawa 1979a), the activities of the Maghribi and Andalusi ulama in Egypt (Yukawa 1980), and Ibn Jamā'ah's ideas on education (Yukawa 1990a). In particular, Yukawa became interested in the political thought of Ibn Taymīyah (Yukawa 1983a, 1985, 1988, 1990b), translating *Al-Siyāsah al-Shar'īyah* into Japanese in collaboration with Nakata Ko (Yukawa 1991; Nakata 1991b).

Morimoto Kosei began his research on the taxation system in Egypt during the early Islamic period, based mainly on Greek and Arabic papyrus documents. His results were published under the title of *The Fiscal Administration of Egypt in the*

⁶Cairo, 1999.

Early Islamic Period.⁷ He then became interested in the historical views of Ibn Khaldūn and translated the *Muqaddimah* into Japanese (Morimoto 1978–87), and wrote an article on judicial corruption during the Mamluk period, utilizing the original sources describing what Ibn Khaldūn saw in Egypt (Morimoto 2002).

Ohara Yoichiro, who had worked at the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published a book in Japanese entitled *The Mamluk Dynasty in Egypt* (Ohara 1976). However, it is not an original work, but a collection of academic research done by modern Arabic scholars. Mutaguchi Yoshiro is a journalist who has contributed considerably to attracting general readers to Islamic and Middle Eastern issues through books on the medieval and contemporary Arab world (Mutaguchi 1972, 1986a). His Japanese translation of *Les Croisades vues par les Arabes* by Amin Maalouf (Mutaguchi 1986b) is still widely read by university students.

THE NEW ERA OF MAMLUK STUDIES IN JAPAN

Yajima, Yukawa, myself, and other scholars initiated the field of Mamluk studies in Japan and oriented the research toward a new era of prosperity since the 1980s. Kikuchi Tadayoshi, who had studied Oriental history at Waseda and Osaka Universities, took up the study of the social life of Mamluk Egypt, focusing on the personal histories of *muhtasibs* in Cairo (Kikuchi 1983). He then wrote several articles on the Arabic manuscript *Al-Rawḍ al-Bāsim fī Ḥawādith al-‘Umr wa-al-Tarājim* by ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ al-Ḥanafī (d. 1514), who was a son of Khalīl ibn Shāhīn, author of *Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik* (Kikuchi 1997, 2000, 2002). Kikuchi’s intent was to describe a vivid history of Mamluk Egypt by comparing the accounts of ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ, Ibn Taghrībirdī, al-Sakhāwī, Ibn Iyās, et al.

Miura Toru, who had the unique experience of working at a publishing company for about ten years, began his research activities on the urban history of Damascus during the Mamluk period under my guidance. His research on the suburb of Damascus, al-Ṣāliḥīyah (Miura 1987, 1989d, 1995b) intended to describe the urbanization process of al-Ṣāliḥīyah during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, based mainly on *Al-Qalā’id al-Jawharīyah fī Tārīkh al-Ṣāliḥīyah* by Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 1546). He then extended his research interests into the social activities of outlaws called *zu’r* in al-Ṣāliḥīyah during the Mamluk period (Miura 1989a, 1989c). On the other hand, Miura has made serious investigations into the court documents preserved at Markaz al-Wathā’iq al-Tārīkhīyah fī Dimashq. Based on his detailed study on these documents, he shed light on the actual situation of the Islamic legal system from the late Mamluk to the Ottoman period (Miura, 2000b). *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa*, edited by Miura and John E. Philips (Miura and Philips 2000) is also a useful contribution to the comparative study of mamluks in

⁷In English (Kyoto: Dohosha, 1981).

Islamic history, including the Mamluk period.

Hasebe Fumihiko, stimulated strongly by Boaz Shoshan's article "Grain Riots and the 'Moral Economy': Cairo, 1350–1517,"⁸ studied the food riots that occurred in the later Mamluk period through the Arabic source materials (Hasebe 1988). He extended his interest to studying the characteristics of Egyptian society in the abnormal weather, famine, and epidemics that occurred during the fourteenth century (Hasebe 1989). His research on food riots attempts to explain the actions of the Mamluk government when faced with such severe disturbances as well as to disclose the actual conditions of grain price fluctuations and food shortages in Mamluk Cairo (Hasebe 1990, 1993, 1994, 1999a). Recently, Hasebe has taken up the relationship between the sultan's kingship and the Sufi saints during the end of the Mamluk period (Hasebe 1999b, 2002), and has edited an interesting book entitled *Poor Relief in the Medieval Mediterranean Cities* (Hasebe 2004b), which includes two articles on the relief efforts in medieval Cairo and Jerusalem (Hasebe 2004c; Miura 2004).

Matsuda Toshimichi, who was a student of Shimada, has made efforts to study the useful documents of St. Catherine's Monastery. Based on his elaborate decipherment of these documents, he has written many articles on such subjects as nomads in the Sinai Peninsula (Matsuda 1989, 1991a), the dissolution of *waqfs* (Matsuda 1991b), the *dhimmīs* in medieval Egypt (Matsuda 1990b), *mazālim* institutions under the Mamluks (Matsuda 1990a), and the oath (*qasāmah*) found in the proclamations of Sultan Qāyṭbāy (Matsuda 1995b). Recently, he expanded his research interest to the Ḥaram documents in Jerusalem and introduced several sources related to the qadis in Jerusalem and the Christian pilgrims who traveled there during the Mamluk period (Matsuda 1997, 2004).

Ohtoshi Tetsuya, who studied Arabic and Islamic history under my guidance at the University of Tokyo, took special interest in communicating with Egyptian poor people, living among them in Old Cairo for two years. His first article (Ohtoshi 1993a, 1993b) describes concretely various aspects of popular visits to al-Qarāfah (the City of the Dead) in Cairo, utilizing the Arabic manuscripts of the *ziyārah* books, travel guides (*mashāyikh al-ziyārah*) written between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Then he discussed several phases of development and the social function of al-Qarāfah during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, by analyzing the accounts of chronicles, *waqf* documents, and biographies in addition to the *ziyārah* manuscripts (Ohtoshi 1994, 1996a). Ohtoshi then extended his research interest gradually into considering the conceptualization of "Egypt" as reflected in visits to the holy tombs in Muslim society (Ohtoshi 1998, 2001b), the relationship between the Copts and Muslims in twelfth- through fifteenth-century Cairo (Ohtoshi

⁸ *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10, no. 3 (1980).

2001a, 2003), and the aspects of *taṣawwuf* as revealed in the *ziyārah* books and the visits to al-Qarāfah (2004a, 2004b).

Taṣawwuf is one of the main subjects studied by Japanese scholars. In addition to Ohtoshi's and my work (Sato 2001), there is Kisaichi Masatoshi's book entitled *Isuramu seija* (Muslim saints),⁹ focusing on the Sufi saints in the Maghrib countries. Tonaga Yasushi, who has seriously examined the methodology of *taṣawwuf* studies, has clarified the position of *taṣawwuf* in Sunni thought during the Mamluk period (Tonaga 1990b) as well as the controversies over the orthodoxy of *waḥdat al-wujūd* during the late Mamluk period (1990a). In contrast to Tonaga's work, Nakata Ko turned to the study of the religious and political thought of Ibn Taymīyah, including the significance of *ijmā'* (Nakata 1987), the theory of Quranic exegesis (Nakata 1988), and a refutation of metaphor (*majāz*) theory (Nakata 1990a).

The field of Islamic archeology was pioneered by Kawatoko Mutsuo at the Middle Eastern Culture Center, who published a voluminous work entitled *The Egyptian Islamic City* (Kawatoko and Sakurai 1992), which includes the survey results of his elaborate excavation work done at al-Fuṣṭāṭ for seven years beginning in 1978. Kawatoko also clarified the international coffee trade in south Sinai between the late fifteenth and the early eighteenth century, utilizing the Arabic documents excavated at the port of al-Ṭūr (Kawatoko, 2001). Shindo Yoko, who participated in the excavations at al-Fuṣṭāṭ and al-Ṭūr along with Kawatoko, took special interest in glassware throughout the Islamic world. Classifying and analyzing the pieces unearthed from al-Ṭūr and Rāyah, she has written several articles on Islamic marvered glass (Shindo 1993), glass bracelets (Shindo 1996), and glass beakers (Shindo 2004b), and recently has published a book in Japanese entitled *Arts and Crafts in Islam* (Shindo 2004a), which is a general history of the subject.

SOME CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF MAMLUK STUDIES IN JAPAN

First of all, it should be mentioned that the third generation of Japanese scholars studying the Mamluk dynasty appeared in Japan during the first half of the 1990s. They study various subjects related to state and society in the Mamluk period, based on the Arabic, Turkish, and Italian documents. Kondo Manami, following the publication of an article on the practice of law in Mamluk Syria (Kondo 1994), took up Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī and his family in relation to the activities of ulama during the Mamluk period (Kondo 1995, 1999). Horii Yutaka, who studied the Ottoman conquest of Egypt as a turning point in the history of the Eastern Mediterranean world, has examined the commercial relationship between Italian cities and Islamic states during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Based on the Arabic and Italian source materials, he has described the situations of the Venetian

⁹Tokyo: Kodansha, 1996.

consul and residents in Egypt under the Ottoman conquest (Horii 1997a, 1997b) as well as under late Mamluk rule (Horii 1999, 2003). Igarashi Daisuke first studied the Syrian financial policy during the late Mamluk period (Igarashi 1999), and then, after a stay in Syria for two years, considered the legal opinions about the *bayt al-māl* by al-Balāṭunusī, a Shafi‘ite scholar in Mamluk Damascus (Igarashi 2003). Recently, he is studying the establishment and development of the *dīwān al-mufrad* under the Circassian Mamluks to clarify the transformation of the Mamluk regime during the fifteenth century (Igarashi 2004).

Another newcomer, Nakamachi Nobutaka, who first studied Armenian in his graduate work, took an interest in examining the peace treaties that Baybars concluded with the Franks and the Armenians (Nakamachi 1996). Following the publication of an article on military refugees from the Ilkhanids to the Mamluk sultanate (Nakamachi 2000), Nakamachi realized the importance of studying the Arabic manuscripts of *‘Iqd al-Jumān* by al-‘Aynī to understand Mamluk history during the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries (Nakamachi, 2003). Ito Takao has noticed that the social mobility of the Egyptian ulama was rather limited between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries through investigating the activities of two influential families, Banū al-Bulqīnī and Banū al-Shiḥnah (Ito 1996). He also examined in detail the historical sources al-Sakhāwī referred to in his *Al-I‘lān bi-al-Tawbīkh* (Ito 1997). Finally, let me add that three young scholars have joined us recently: Ota Keiko in an article on the Meccan Sharifate and its diplomatic relations during the Bahri Mamluk period (Ota 2002), Ishiguro Hirotake in a discussion about the administrators of *Wafā’ al-Nīl* during the Burji Mamluk period (Ishiguro 2002), and Yoshimura Takenori in an analysis of the water supply administration in the suburbs of Cairo under the Bahri Mamluk government (Yoshimura 2003).

Secondly, we may indicate the efforts of Japanese scholars to study Arabic manuscripts and documents abroad other than the published primary sources. As mentioned above, I myself have searched for Arabic manuscripts related to the *iqṭā’* system in Cairo, Damascus, and Istanbul, Yajima on the travel account of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, Matsuda on various subjects related to the St. Catherine’s documents, Ohtoshi on the guidebooks for visitors to al-Qarāfah, Kikuchi on the writings of ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ, and Nakamachi on the chronicle by al-‘Aynī, to mention a few cases. It is noteworthy also that Miura and Horii have tried to compare the Mamluk and the Ottoman periods in their work utilizing Arabic and Italian documents.

As to the published materials related to Arabic and Islamic studies, not a small number of universities and institutes, including the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tokyo, The Institute of Oriental Culture (The University of Tokyo), Keio University, The National Diet Library, The Toyo Bunko, Hokkaido University, Kyoto University, and Kyushu University, for example, have collected them since

the 1960s. However, the collections are still small and insufficient for scholars and students who want to use the primary sources in earnest. Among the universities and institutes mentioned above, The Toyo Bunko (Oriental Library), which was established in 1924 by the Mitsubishi Company to promote Asian studies in Japan, has the best collection on the Middle East in Arabic (20,000 volumes), Persian (15,000), and Turkish (18,000), and source materials related to the Mamluk period account for a large part of the Arabic collection there.

Following World War II, Japanese scholars, who were freed from the historical view of imperial absolutism, were stimulated considerably by Marxism, which puts stress on the social and economic factors in the development of history. For example, Shimada Johei chose to study the taxation system in the early Islamic period with the intent of participating in similar discussions with historians working in other fields. As mentioned above, Morimoto Kosei followed him, but I differed slightly from them and took up the subject of the *iqṭā'* system to examine the relationship between state and society during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods (Sato 1967, 1969b, 1979, 1997a). The commercial activities of the Kārimī merchants were also considered of a major importance to understanding social and economic mobility in international trade networks (Kobayashi 1973a; Yajima 1980, 1986, 1989, 1991). The study of the monetary system in medieval Islam by Kato Hiroshi (Kato 1976) is regarded also as an achievement in the same field of research.

I had already started my study of rural society and the peasantry in Egypt (Sato 1972, 1973, 1977) prior to the introduction of the social history method developed by the Annale school in the 1980s. From around that time on, the study of social history was conducted eagerly in relation to the Mamluks as seen in the work on food riots by Hasebe (Hasebe 1988, 1990, 1994, 1999a), the *zu'r* of Mamluk Damascus by Miura (Miura 1989a, 1989c), and Ohtoshi's work on popular visits to al-Qarāfah in Old Cairo (Ohtoshi 1993a and others). Active studies on the social roles of ulama by Yukawa (Yukawa 1979a, 1980, 1981), Kikuchi (Kikuchi, 2002), Miura (Miura 2000), Kondo (Kondo 1994, 1995, 1999), and Ito (Ito 1996, 2003) have greatly improved our understanding of urban life during the Mamluk period.

Consequently, the above discussion demonstrates that the field of Mamluk studies in Japan has developed steadily since the end of the 1960s. Most of the younger scholars hope to visit the Middle East both to search for source materials and communicate with local scholars. Due to the appearance of the second and the third generations of expert since the 1980s, research has been greatly diversified to include such subjects as the relationship between kingship and Sufis, political and judicial ideas of the ulama, various aspects of urban life, international trade networks, etc. However, we find only a few scholars working on the fields of architecture, history of science, or arts and crafts during the Mamluk period.

Furthermore, we have another important subject to consider, "What is the Mamluk state?" in comparison to other Islamic states in history. As to the languages used in the research literature, we now face a serious problem. As revealed in the Select Bibliography, the number of books and articles written in English (and including one article in German) amounts to only 30 (17%) of the total as of the end of 2004. We should recognize the fact that the works written in Japanese cannot be understood by most non-Japanese scholars. In order to contribute to international academic activities, it is necessary for us to publish more of our research achievements in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and the European languages.

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