



A Preliminary Announcement

The Dynamism of Muslim Societies: Toward New Horizons in Islamic Area Studies*An International Symposium of the Islamic Area Studies Project*

It is our pleasure to inform you that the Islamic Area Studies Project will hold an international symposium from October 5 to 8, 2001 at the Kazusa Arc, Kisarazu, Chiba-ken, Japan. This is the final and concluding international symposium of our project that was inaugurated in April 1997 under the leadership of Prof. Dr. SATO Tsugitaka (University of Tokyo) with the support of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. We would like to present the results of five years of comprehensive and multidisciplinary research in the seven sessions described below. In this symposium we aim not only to evaluate the results of our cooperative research but also to bring up new themes for investigation.

All of the panelists have been nominated by the session leaders, and we will announce the detailed program in July 2001. However, our symposium is open to all colleagues and students who are interested in Islamic Area Studies, and we hope that many people will participate in the discussions.

The Kazusa Arc is located an hour from Tokyo Station by a direct bus service and provides a pleasant and quiet setting for the symposium. The symposium management office will accept hotel reservations from April 1, 2001.

We are looking forward to seeing you at our international symposium.

Organizing committee:

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General Program # Click session's titles. (Jump to abstracts)

First Day (5 Oct. 2001)

Registration 12:00-14:00

Opening Address 14:00-14:30

Opening Lectures 14:30-17:00

Reception 17:00-19:00

Second Day (6 Oct. 2001)

<Room A>

Session 1: 10:00-13:00

Islam and Secularism in the Contemporary Muslim World

Session 2: 14:30-17:30

The Public and Private Spheres in Muslim Societies Today: Gender and the New Media

<Room B>

Session 3: 10:00-13:00, 14:30-17:30

Ports, Merchants and Cross-Cultural Contacts

Third Day (7 Oct. 2001)

<Room A>

Session 4: 10:00-13:00, 14:30-17:30

Sufis and Saints among the People in Muslim Societies

<Room B>

Session 5: 10:00-13:00, 14:30-17:30

Social Protests and Nation-Building in Muslim Societies

Fourth Day (8, Oct. 2001)

<Room A>

Session 6: 10:00-13:00

Contracts, Validity, Documentation: Historical Research of the Sharia Courts

<Room B>

Session 7: 10:00-13:00

Islamic Area Studies with Geographic Information Systems

Concluding Discussion: 14:30-17:30



Abstracts of the Sessions

(1) *Islamism and Secularism in the Contemporary Muslim World*

This session focuses on the ongoing conflict between Islamism and secularism in the contemporary Muslim world. Here we use the term "Islamism" to mean the political activism based on the belief that all human life must be guided by Islamic principles, and we define "secularism" as a philosophical trend that seeks to separate political and civil affairs from the religion. While it is true that such conflict existed during most periods in Muslim history, it has become more and more serious since 1979, when the Islamist government of Iran was established by popular revolution. During the 1980s and 1990s, Islamism occupied a central position in both political discourse in Muslim countries and scholarly discussion among Islamic area studies scholars.

Two topics will be discussed in this session. The first will be the nature of Islamist political challenges against secular national governments. The current situation and dynamism of Islamist movements in Turkey, Central Asia (post-Soviet Union), and other Muslim countries will be discussed, with special reference to intellectual, sociological, economic, and political backgrounds.

Our second topic will be concerned with the philosophical and political struggles over Islamic law in contemporary Muslim nation-states. Without any doubt, it is the central issue of the conflict between Islamists and secularists. As is well-known, from the early nineteenth century, most of the Muslim countries took up the Western civil code as their model. Although a lot of religious conservatives opposed the import of such legal policies, the governments succeeded in replacing most of their traditional laws with those of Western origin. But with the dramatic growth of Islamism during the 1980s and 1990s, Islamic law and its codification, especially family law, became popular in most Muslim countries. We will have two case studies on this topic; one for Arab countries and the other for Southeast Asian Muslim countries. Panelists may discuss also the differences in the concept of law between Islamic and Western legal thoughts, and the role of public opinion, 'ulama, and mufti in the process of policy-making.

The diversity of styles and backgrounds of the Islamism-secularism conflict is well-known; therefore we will not seek to put them within any single understanding. But bringing together the various perspectives of the panelists with concentrations in political science, sociology, history and area studies, will create a multidisciplinary paradigm for the research of the Islamism-secularism conflict. And that creation answers one of the main purposes of our Islamic Area Studies Project, that is, to pursue multidisciplinary area studies on the Muslim world.



(2) ***The Public and Private Spheres in Muslim Societies Today: Gender and the New Media***

The public/private dichotomy has been widely accepted as a useful framework of analysis in the circles of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, and in social thought in general. Although some scholars have questioned the utility of the public/private dichotomy, most recognize it as complementing other basic categories of social thought such as male/female, political affairs/domestic affairs, and others.

This session, composed of six panelists, is planned to probe the validity of the public/private distinction through the empirical and theoretical examination of recent socio-cultural transformations among Muslim societies in the Middle East. We focus our discussion on two related topics.

The first is specifically concerned with gender issues. Conventionally, women's activities appear confined to the private sphere and, when women enter the public sphere for some purposes, they have to put on some form of the "veil". Such a dress code is said to have been observed more strictly by the so-called re-Islamization or Islamic revival since the 1970's. We have to remember, however, that women started to appear in the streets in many cities in the Middle East to attend schools or work in offices at nearly the same time. Even in the rural areas, the recent penetration of cash economy has transformed traditional styles of women's domestic work into a kind of a small-scale capitalistic production to sell products in markets as commodities. These specific forms of entry into the public sphere is key to rethinking the theoretical implications of the public/private distinction.

The second and related topic is the recent remarkable spread of new communications media in the Middle East and in Muslim-majority societies, contributing to the emergence in these regions of a new "public sphere," as Eickelman and Anderson (1999) have recently argued. Our goal is to ask a question complementary to theirs: how does the newly emerging public sphere relate to the complementary emergence of privatization, or a "private" sphere, in the Middle East and the Muslim-majority world? In answering this question, the issues of gender roles and the public/private distinction converge and link to some of the main currents of contemporary anthropological thought.

(3) ***Ports, Merchants and Cross-cultural Contacts***

As is well-known, a great number of works concerning the activities of European people in the so-called Orient after the 17th century has been produced (here, the word "Orient" is used in its broadest sense, that is, the non-European world as a whole.) The studies of their commerce, missionary work, wars, colonization process of Asian countries and so on, have advanced remarkably these last twenty years. There still remain, however, many points to be clarified and which await our research.



Cross-cultural contacts in the Orient are certainly among these points. When one faces different ways of life, belief, and thought, how does the person react? Acceptance, compromise, or refusal? Obviously, we can find various cases depending on the conditions of the encounter. Who met whom? And where and when did they meet? These are certainly very important factors in deciding the outcome of the encounter. If we compare and analyze the different ways of contact, we may be able to understand better the character of an area, a people, or an age.

Two keywords chosen for this study are: ports and merchants. It would be ideal therefore to compare the activities of merchants and people's attitudes to them at a certain port with those at another port of approximately the same period. However, we do not have to be so strict, and papers relating either to ports or to merchants are acceptable. In order to make it easier to compare several examples, every paper should touch upon the topography of the city during the time in question.

In this session, contacts between European and "local" people will be examined. At the same time, we cannot be but interested in the contacts and relationships between people of different backgrounds in the Orient itself. What was the influence of differences in ethnicity and religion on their activities, such as trade, customs, and immigration? All these topics will be discussed.

(4) *Sufis and Saints among the People in Muslim Societies*

In Muslim societies since the early Islamic period, the people have played a politically and socially important role. If one were to consider Muslim societies from the standpoint of the people, what would be the characteristics that would most likely come to light? We would probably discover that there are many popular groups which stand out in the political and social arena: the Sufis, the saints, minority religious sects, urban outlaw groups, guilds, and so on.

This session will concentrate especially on the importance of Sufi saints and Sufi orders both in historical perspective and in contemporary times. There is agreement among most scholars with regard to the following points, namely that a) Sufi saints and Sufi orders were central actors in Muslim societies until the pre-modern period (19th century), and b) in the process of European colonization and modernization of the Muslim countries, they declined rapidly and lost their politically and socially important functions.

But Sufi saints and the Sufi orders came into resurgence in Muslim regions in the 1970's, and especially in the independent Muslim states in Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In these new states, national identities were formed and nationalism kindled by the rediscovery of historical heroes. Sufis and saints became popular with Muslim commoners once again.



We need to reconsider Sufi saints and Sufi orders in new contexts and dimensions, from both the historical and contemporary points of view, so that we may discover clues to a new interpretation of Muslim societies from the viewpoint of the people.

(5) ***Social Protests and Nation-Building in Muslim Societies***

In modern times, people in Muslim societies have organized various kinds of social and political movements against the invasion of Western powers on one hand, and against state control on the other. These movements could be considered as protests against the political system and affairs of the time, in tandem with the formation of nation-states in modern times.

This session aims to examine the continuity and discontinuity of two important ages, that is, the Age of Imperialism (the modern age from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century) and the Age of Globalization (the contemporary age since the end of the Cold War). Special attention should be paid to the Islamic elements, for they played a significant role in the peoples' movements and reflected the ideological circumstances in Muslim societies.

In this session, the Middle East and Central Asia will be compared. The session is composed of two parts, "The Historical Perspective" and "The Contemporary Perspective", which deal with the peoples' movements in the Age of Imperialism and the Age of Globalization, respectively.

(6) ***Contracts, Validity, Documentation: Historical Research of the Sharia Courts***

For a long time, the judicial organization of Muslim societies has been managed, in general, according to Islamic law (shari'a). The documents which were drafted, validated, and recorded at Islamic courts were made available to scholars in the 1970's, and they opened up the possibilities of Middle Eastern studies. Now they are regarded as one of the most important sources for the study of the social, economic, and cultural history of Muslim societies. Recent studies based on Islamic court records achieved admirable results, for example, in the studies of Muslim women, peasants, and minorities.

Let us now reconsider these Islamic court records carefully. As Dror Ze'evi said, "these records are often regarded by researchers as a single, homogeneous source and treated as a simple account of facts", but "shari'a court records are a complex source... researchers should be cautious about accepting the information they contain at face value." In other words it is dangerous for us to treat the records as almighty and unbiased sources.



This session aims for two goals. The first goal is to confirm the kinds of functions Islamic courts carried out in Muslim societies. The courts of the Ottoman Empire are relatively well known: the Islamic courts executed official documents, validated contracts, and settled lawsuits. But even here we should re-examine their basic roles and compare them between different times and places.

The second goal is to reconsider the validity of Islamic court records as historical sources. Their usefulness for quantitative history, narrative history, and micro-history has already, to some extent, been proved. However we should be conscious of their limitations at the same time, and move towards another methodology in order to make this field even more productive in the future.

(7) ***Islamic Area Studies with Geographic Information Systems***

This session focuses on several topics of Islamic Area Studies enhanced by the use of modern information technology, Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Islamic Area Studies, more or less, deals with geographical factors for the word 'area' connotes a geographic notion. In Islamic area studies, we have to manage spatial data, i.e. attribute data associated with locations. A decade ago, this management was difficult due to poor computer performance in treating geometrical functions. In recent years, however, this difficulty has been overcome by GIS, a computer processing tool for constructing, managing, analyzing, and visualizing spatial data. In this session, we will show several applications of GIS to Islamic Area Studies.

We studied three areas: India, Turkey/Syria, and Central Asia. In India, we will show the effect of the Muslim reign on native communities in Ponnary over 200 years. We will also show the spatial distribution of castes in the same period. In Turkey/Syria, we analyzed architectural as well as city-wide spatial structures in several cities. We will propose new models for the analysis of historical/spatial multi-layers using GIS and apply them to the old city of Damascus. We also analyzed the street network in Istanbul, taking into account the three-dimensional topography. In the case of Central Asia, we will show demographic and socio-economical changes during the 20th century on a detailed map of the Ferghana Valley, where the resurgence of Islam has been observed since the collapse of the Soviet Union.