

ARAB-JAPANESE RELATIONS

MISHIMA SYMPOSIUM

Japan National Committee for the Study
of Arab-Japanese Relations

ARAB-JAPANESE RELATIONS MISHIMA SYMPOSIUM

PREFACE

The Second International Symposium on Arab-Japanese Relations was held at the College of International Relations of Nihon University in Mishima-Shizuoka, Japan, September 9 - 11, 1981 and was attended by some 40 participants and observers, including five Arab scholars. The symposium was sponsored by Abu Dhabi Oil Co. Ltd., IDEMITSU KOSAN Co. Ltd., Institute of Developing Economies, Japan Oil Development Co. Ltd., Japan Foundation, Kuwait-Japan Society, Saudi Arabia-Japan Society, Toyota Foundation and United Arab Emirates-Japan Society, in cooperation with the Nihon University and Middle East Institute of Japan.

The present report contains the papers submitted which focus on either "Mutual Perception-Japanese Image and Arab's Image-" or "Cultural and Economic Relations between Japan and the Arab World". We believe that this report will be very useful to further our joint study project.

Finally, we wish to express our warmest thanks to the above organizations whose generous aids helped make the symposium itself and this report possible.

October, 1982

Shinji Maejima
Chairman, Japan National Committee
for the Study of Arab-Japanese
Relations

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PROGRAM

274372

Opening Session and Reception

September 9 (Wednesday), 18:00-20:00
Mishima Plaza Hotel
(14-31, Hon-cho, Mishima-shi, Shizuoka-ken.
Phone: 0559-72-2121)

First Session: Mutual Perception, Japanese Image and Arab's Image

September 10 (Thursday)
Mishima Campus, Nihon University
(2-31, Bunkyo-cho, Mishima-shi, Shizuoka-ken.
Phone: 0559-86-5500)

Chairmen: M. Safey Abulezz
Yoshiro Mutaguchi

10:00-11:00 Japan and the Arab World - Images and Relations.
Hanna Nasir

11:00-12:00 Perception of the Arab World in Japan.
Yoshiho Maeda

Lunch Break

14:00-15:00 The Image of the Japanese as perceived by Arab University Students.
Mohammad Issa Barhoum

15:00-16:00 Some Aspects on Understanding Arab Culture.
Nobuaki Nutahara

Second Session: Cultural and Economic Relations between Japan and the Arab World

September 10 (Thursday)
Mishima Campus, Nihon University

Chairmen: M. Safey Abulezz
Ootori Kurino

16:30-17:30 Recent Economic Relations between Japan and the Arab World.
San-eki Nakaoka

September 11 (Friday)

10:00-11:00 The Commercial Relations between Kuwait and Japan.
Abdullah Youssef al-Ghunaim

11:00-12:00 The Economic Development and Technology Transfer.
Masuo Tomioka

12:00-13:00 Introduction to Arab-Japan Mutual Image and Culture -Personal Experience and Analysis-
Seif al-Wady al-Romahi

Lunch Break

Concluding Discussion and Closing Session

September 11 (Friday), 15:00-17:00
Mishima Campus, Nihon University

Chairman: Michitoshi Takahashi

Rapporteur: Yuzo Itagaki
Takeji Inoh

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

ABULEZZ, M. Safey	Chairman of Geography Department, Faculty of Arts, Kuwait University
AOKI, Kazuyoshi	Professor, College of International Relations, Nihon University
BARHOUM, Mohammad Issa	Professor, Sociology Department, Faculty of Arts, University of Jordan
GHUNAIM, Abdullah Yousef	Dean of Faculty of Arts, Kuwait University
HORI, Tasuku	Director, Library, Institute of Developing Economies
INOH, Takeji	Area Studies Department, Institute of Developing Economies
ITAGAKI, Yuzo	Professor, University of Tokyo
KAGAYA, Hiroshi	Professor, Osaka University of Foreign Studies
KIMURA, Yoshihiro	Area Studies Department, Institute of Developing Economies
KURINO, Ootori	Professor, Hiroshima University
MAEDA, Yoshiho	Professor, Kanazawa University
MATSUMOTO, Hirokazu	Professor, College of International Relations, Nihon University
MIKI, Wataru	Professor, Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

MUTAGUCHI, Yoshiro	Senior Writer, the Asahi Shimbun
NAGABA, Hiroshi	Library, Institute of Developing Economies
NAKAOKA, San-eki	Professor, International College of Commerce and Economics
NASIR, Hanna	President, Birzeit University
NUTAHARA, Nobuaki	Professor, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies
ODAKA, Masanao	Councilor, Bank of Tokyo
al-ROMAHI, Seif al-Wady	Director, Diplomatic Training Programs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates
TAKAHASHI, Michitoshi	Professor, College of International Relations, Nihon University
TOMIOKA, Masuo	Professor, Kanagawa University
YOSHIDA, Goro	Professor, Seikei University
- Guests and Observers -	
ABE, Masao	Professor, Tokai University
AZHARI, Khelil	Director, League of Arab States in Tokyo
HOTTA, Kenji	Professor, Nihon University
IZUMISAWA, Kumiko	Library, Institute of Developing Economies
KATAKURA, Motoko	Professor, National Museum of Ethnology
KAWATOKO, Mutsuo	Researcher, Middle Eastern Cultural Center

KOBAYASHI, Kayo	Institute of Developing Economies
KURANAMI, Shoji	Professor, Nihon University
NISHIDA, Hiroko	Professor, Nihon University
OKUDA, Yoshiro	Mayor, Mishima City
QURESHI, M. Naeem	Professor, Quai-i-Azam University
SATO, Hiroshi	Current Affairs Department, Institute of Developing Economies
SEKIBA, Riichi	PLO Office of Japan
SHIMIZU, Manabu	Current Affairs Department, Institute of Developing Economies
TANADA, Hirobumi	Waseda University
WANIBUCHI, Kazuo	Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

OPENING SESSION

The opening ceremony was held under the chairmanship of Dr. San-eki Nakaoka. After his cordial thanks to several organizations for their financial support to this symposium, Dr. Michitoshi Takahashi delivered an opening address on behalf of Dr. Shinji Maejima, chairman of the Japan National Committee for the Study of Arab-Japanese Relations. He expressed his hopes that this second symposium could make a great contribution to the mutual understanding between the Arab and the Japanese.

Then Dr. Hanna Nasir of Bir-Zeit University made a speech, representing the Arab participants. After introducing his colleagues, he emphasized that this symposium could map the strategy for further relations between Japan and the Arab world. After his speech, his Excellency Mr. Khelil Azhari, Director of the League of Arab States in Tokyo, made a congratulatory message, expressing his hope that we, Japan and the Arab, should develop cultural and political relations more and more. Then a message of greeting from Mr. Fathi Abdul-Hamid, Director of the PLO office of Japan was announced by Dr. Nakaoka. This was followed by welcome speeches by Mr. Yoshiro Okuda, mayor of Mishima city, and Professor Shoji Kuranami, on behalf of Nihon University.

JAPAN AND THE ARAB WORLD - IMAGES AND RELATIONS

Hanna Nasir

Over the past decades, there has been many exchanges on many levels between Japan and the Arab World, mostly on the economic and to a less degree on the cultural level. High volume of trade, however, does not touch the average citizen. An Arab asked about Japan, will immediately say "transistor radios, TV, car-amazing economy" and yet hardly know more about Japanese people, their history, their needs, hopes and daily life. I am sure the same is true of the Japanese outlook towards the Arabs. Take me as an example-before I visited Japan last year to participate in a conference on Jerusalem, I had an impression of Japan as a purely business oriented nation - but what I saw in the short time that I stayed there was a culture of deep tradition and sensitivity. This is just an example - what about the millions of Arabs in all spheres of life who know next to nothing about Japan? It is clear that this conference must try to map a course for exchange between these two important worlds at the opposite extremes of Asia.

1. Guidelines

What guidelines can we adopt to map out such a strategy. May I suggest two main guidelines which are needed: 1 - sober realism: there are many differences as well as many similarities

between the two peoples. For best results these factors have to be taken fully into consideration. 2 - To benefit from the experience of the Arab World with the other developed countries of the world; to avoid the pitfalls where they have occurred, and to adopt successful policies where they have succeeded.

In my brief paper, I will try to be guided by these points and as I see the situation from my perspective and experience - not as a social scientist, who normally deals with such matters - but as a person involved in education and politics as well. This will be my limited contribution to this conference. In a sense it is inevitable: the very lack of experience I have vis-a-vis Japan is a symptom of the barriers between the two worlds which this conference is trying to bridge.

2. Differences and Similarities

A look at the map will immediately reveal the source of many of the problems we face in this conference. The great landmass of Asia separates our two peoples and nations. Japan is a relatively small isolated island set away from the traditional trade routes of antiquity. The Arab world - on the other hand - is a vast stretch of land spread between Africa and Asia, and acting as a hub linking these two continents with Europe. Since time immemorial, traders, armies and travellers have criss-crossed the region, giving rise to an amazing history of cultural and political diversity. Besides these different geographical and

historical backgrounds, not to mention the great difference between Japan, with its lack of resources, and the Arab world with the most important resource, oil, there is the difference in the state of development. The Arab world flourished in the middle ages giving rise to a great civilization which then faced a dark period of decay. Only now we are struggling, against many fierce odds, to rise from this level. Japan's experience is quite different, and it is at this moment perhaps at the peak of its development, rivalling the worlds largest and best economies and technologies. Any relations between such different groups must be difficult: on the one hand Japan must be aware of the temptations of power - the very human weakness of thinking that might is right. It is a subtle and unfortunate idea that has spoiled the relationship between the Arab world and the West- this is the experience of imperialism. Fortunately Japan has no such history of direct imperialism, but it must be aware of other hidden forms of the same historical disease - e.g. economic imperialism.

Fortunately there are many similarities between the two peoples and cultures: We are both vaguely oriental, or at best non-western; our cultures are based on ancient traditions- primarily on a religious basis- which permeated our lives. Also it has been remarked that both the Japanese and the Arabs are deeply emotional: the difference is how we show these emotions. The Arabs are extroverts, dreamers, interacting on the level

of the individual man to man. The Japanese are perhaps much more practical, organizing themselves into groups to achieve their realistic aspirations. The hand is the symbol of the Japanese, whether it is the hand of the craftsman or engineer or even the karate expert. The Japanese seem to function in a practical tangible way in harmony with their surrounding. For the Arabs, the eye is a much more apt symbol: from the eyes of the Arab astronomers of the desert who gave Arabic names to the stars (still in use in the West today), to the eyes of Zarqa' El-yamama, the Arab poetess who was famous for keen vision, to the eyes of the poor Arab children, looking for future hope they can only dream about.

A hand without vision is useless - a mere tool that works automatically just for the sake of production, with no sense of the reason it is working; is this not the danger facing Japan? An overheated productive economy invading the world without an integrated vision of Japan's place in the world? An eye without action, on the other hand, shows the problems of the Arab world - a burning vision for independence and development, but without concerted action to achieve these goals. Clearly Japan and the Arab World can learn a lot from each other.

3. Arab World Relations with the West: How Relevant is it to Arab-Japanese Relations

The Arab World- deep rooted in Eastern culture finds it-

self almost abnormally swayed towards the West. Our mode of life has been heavily influenced by Western attitudes. Our economic system is by large Western and our educational systems borrow heavily from the West. Moreover, most of our high level manpower has been trained in the West. At the same time, score of Western institutions exist in the Arab world, whose primary objective is to expose the Arab world more to the western culture.

Yet, all these influences have not been able to create a healthy and confident relation between the West and the Arab world. Some of the reasons are historical: The Crusades and the resulting occupation of parts of the Arab world from 1096 to 1291 continues to be a sour reminder of the imperialistic attitudes of the West. The Arabs view the Crusaders as a political movement engulfed in a religious cover, and reminds them of a similar present day movement - i.e. zionism.

Other factors which strains relations between the Arab world and the West are purely religious. The Arab world is by far Moslem, and the Christian West has been unable to understand the full significance and impact of Islam- not only as a religion, but also as a social culture that has lifted the Arabs during the early days of Islam from a backward society into a highly intricate and sophisticated one.

True the Arabs at present are in a state of underdevelopment, but the reason is certainly not religious in nature.

Islam was also misunderstood by the western orientalist who were unable to expose its true nature to the West.

A third factor which contributes to the causes of strained relations is a modern political one. The West has associated itself with the arch enemy of the Arab world, namely Israel. Moreover, the West has been unable to conceive the justice that lies behind the Palestinian cause and has been most insensitive towards the political aspirations of the Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular.

As has been mentioned earlier, Japan has fortunately a clean history in its relation with the Arab world. It has none of the historic residues of imperialism vis-a-vis the Arab world and thus the ground is healthy and well suited for fruitful relations that are based on mutual respect and the understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses.

4. Practical Matters

Inspite of the presence of oil in the Arab world, yet we as Arabs do realize our present state of underdevelopment. Initiatives for fruitful relations would possibly come more from Japan towards the Arab world rather than in the other direction. At the same time, the Arabs should not expect miracles- because building relations, as well as getting developed is a process that takes more than money. It simply takes time and what is important is to pave the way for such a process. Certain

suggestions will now be made on the practical level:

a) Educational and Cultural: Fruitful relations are best strengthened through educational and cultural means. It is actually surprising to note that Japan - as a developed nation - is not yet involved seriously in the educational or cultural life in the Arab world. The Arab world is full of American, British and German culture centers. But one has still to see one Japanese cultural center. Arab universities have scores of Europeans and Americans on its staff but extremely few Japanese. Arab students study mostly for their higher degrees in the West and few go to Japan.

A program of scholarships for Arabs to study in Japan would be very valuable to bridge the cultural differences. Faculty and student exchange programs are a two way communication channel which also bring the two cultures together. Of course there are now several training programs set in the Arab world by the Japanese industry (eg. maintenance and repair of electronic equipment), but these are usually commercially oriented and have a limited purpose. I am sure the Arab world will look most positively at educational exchange programs. As a person involved in higher education in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel, I can assure you of our great interest in such an exchange program. Not only will it help us in our educational challenge, but it will have political overtones that can be very relevant for the future.

Because of the military occupation, educational exchange programs in the West Bank and Gaza are not very easy to implement. However such programs have been implemented by national and international organizations and the results have been worth all the efforts taken.

b) Another practical suggestion is the holding of specialized conferences and seminars in Japan and the Arab world for a better understanding of the two cultures. The Jerusalem conference that was held in Japan last year was certainly a step in the right direction and it addressed itself to some of the particular political problems in the area. Conferences on cultural issues would be also excessively valuable and I would like to take the opportunity to suggest a general seminar on Islam to be held soon in Japan, and to be attended by Japanese, Arab and international scholars. Such a conference can give a thorough exposition of Islam to the Japanese people and possibly clear some of the misconceptions about it.

c) A third suggestion is a political one: At present the Arab world is in a major conflict with Israel. Although the problem looks localized, yet it is international in magnitude and several countries are involved, one way or the other in that serious conflict.

At present, the issue seems to be controversial. However, deep analysis of the causes can clearly indicate that the roots of the conflict are rights vs wrongs. The Palestinian, who were

thrown away out of their own country in order to make way for the Jews who suffered on the hands of the West, refuse to pay for the sins of the West. At the same time the Palestinians realize the difficulties of solving the problem on the basis of solely our historic rights. That is why we constantly look at the international world to help in defusing the volatile situation. Of course, Japan could play a vital role in that direction. We do realize the constraints placed on Japan by the USA, but similar constraints have been placed on the European countries and they were able to come up with independent solutions. Japan could possibly do a similar gesture.

At the same time one should realize that such gestures should be a first step towards more positive stands. Let me elaborate on one aspect only. The full recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization is a step that has to be taken. The significance of the recognition is that it makes it clear who the representatives of the Palestinian people are and with whom one is to negotiate concerning a possible solution. Such a recognition is undoubtedly a necessary condition, but certainly not sufficient towards the solution. Other steps have to follow, but it is extremely difficult to bridge relations with nations, if they do not recognize you. That is why I stress at this moment the importance of full recognition of the PLO. It is only after such recognition that further steps can be taken towards a positive solution of the Palestinian problem.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have made several observations on the differences and similarities between the Japanese and the Arabs. I have also indicated some of the reasons for our strained relations with the West and given suggestions for healthy and strong relations between the Arab world and Japan.

I have tried to steer away very clearly from the vital issue of oil. This I conceive is a very complex issue which unfortunately could be used as a weapon. I prefer to think of it as a lubricant for human relations. Besides, oil is basically a transitory commodity: very soon it will be depleted. What we should strive for are the values that make us better human beings.

