

Japan and the Gulf: A Historical Perspective of Pre-Oil Relations

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The Dawn

The date of Japan's first encounter with the Persian/Arabian Gulf region has so far not been established, but Aḥmad b. Mājid, an Arab navigator born in Julphar (present-day Ra's al-Khayma) in the 15th century, mentioned about Līkīwū in his famous book, *Kitāb al-Fawā'id fī Uṣūl 'Ilm al-Baḥr wa al-Qawā'id*. Its Sultān, he says, is an infidel and at war with the Sultān of China in spite of their strength and their ability. He added that its people have great might and no race has more courage and other men cannot prevail against them [Aḥmad b. Mājid 1981: 220].¹ Līkīwū is definitely Ryūkyū. It is present-day Okinawa, the southernmost prefecture of Japan, though it was an independent kingdom at that time and was later in the early 17th century occupied by the Shimazu Family, one of Japan's strongest feudal clans. Thus, Ibn Mājid must be the first Gulf Arab who mentioned the surrounding areas of Japan.

Since the Europeans *discovered* Japan in the 16th century, many Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch merchants or missionaries started to visit the country. They left their home ports for Japan most probably via the Cape of Good Hope, the Indian Ocean and the South East Asian archipelago. In order to expand their maritime power, the Portuguese had occupied some of the coastal areas along with their main shipping route bound for India, among which the Persian Gulf small littorals and islands are included, like Masqat, Bahrain and Hurmuz, so there is a possibility that the people of the Gulf under strong Portuguese influence could have had a chance to visit Japan with these Portuguese.

Petro Kasui KIBE

The Portuguese played an important role in informing the Japanese of the outside world, especially through their missionary activities. Since the late 16th century, many Japanese began to convert to Christianity, among whom there were some very pious men who became priests.

Petro (Pedro or Peter) Kasui KIBE is one of the most famous early Christians of such kind in Japan. After the Tokugawa Shogunate adopted a new foreign policy later known as

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¹ Aḥmad b. Mājid further mentioned the sharp swords made from iron in Līkīwū. It may refer to the Japanese sword or more commonly the Samurai sword, given his descriptions about Līkīwū people's might and courage are correct.

Sakoku (Seclusion), KIBE was forced to flee to Macau in 1614, to escape persecution from the government. He decided to go to Rome and left there for Europe. Regrettably, no documents have been found to trace back his long journey between Macau and Rome, but, it is believed that he would have probably sailed to Goa, India first and then chosen an overland route from there to the Persian Gulf, probably Hurmuz, which the Portuguese occupied from 1515 to 1622. According to some modern-day western scholars, KIBE seems to have joined a caravan from there to Palestine, crossing the deserts of Iran, Iraq or the Arabian Peninsula. When he finally arrived at Rome he confessed to Jesuit priests that he had visited Jerusalem. So, he is believed to be the first Japanese who visited the holy place. Furthermore, it is likely that he is the first Japanese who visited the lands of the Gulf after getting to Hurmuz.

He returned to Japan in 1630 and was arrested by the authorities. He was, then, tortured to death in 1639. One official who witnessed his last moment said that KIBE Heitoro (Pedro) had never given up his faith. KIBE was beatified by the Roman Catholic Church with another 187 Japanese martyrs in 2008.

Earliest Japanese Conversions to Islam

One of the reasons for Japan adopting its rigid seclusion policy was Portugal's evil deeds. Many Portuguese merchants or sailors had been engaged in the kidnapping and slave-trading of Japanese citizens. After accepting the suggestions of Jesuit priests stationed in Japan, a king of Portugal banned the enslavement of the Japanese. Goan citizens of Portuguese origin however, protested the new measure and sent a petition to the king in 1604, asking him to withdraw his decision to ban the slave-trade of Japanese people. Citizens of Goa said in their letter to the king that Japanese people had been sold as slaves to neighboring Muslim regions openly and they converted to Islam there.

We don't have enough knowledge about these "neighboring Muslim regions." However, judging from the area under the Portuguese rule and control at that time, the "regions" could have included South East Asia, India and the Gulf. It is thus probable that Japanese people kidnapped by Portuguese merchants would have been sold to Arab rulers in the Gulf and converted to Islam there.²

Ormuz Cape

ODA Nobunaga initiated the unification of Japan in the late 16th century. Christian missionaries had competed with one another in winning the favor of this highest authority of Japan and paid him a lot of precious tributes. Luís Fróis, a Portuguese missionary, successfully

² The first Japanese Muslim who was recorded by name in official documents is NODA Shôtârô, who converted to Islam in 1891 in Istanbul, See [MISAWA & Akçadağ 2007]. Moreover, NODA visited Aden on the way to Istanbul in 1890, see [MISAWA 2004]. It was believed among Japanese scholars that the first Japanese Muslim was YAMADA Torajirô, before MISAWA discovered NODA was in fact the first Muslim.

became a close friend of Nobunaga. He wrote about his meeting with Nobunaga in his book, the *History of Japan*. He said that when he met Nobunaga, the latter mentioned about a cape or cloak of brocade made in Hurmuz (*capa de borcadilho de Ormuz*) and asked him whether he brought it with him. Fróis answered, “I had it with me, though it was trifling.” Nobunaga saw the cape and ordered him to wear it. Then he praised the dress, saying that it was beautiful and astonishing [Luís Fróis: v.4, 208].

This must be one of the earliest mentions by a Japanese of a place name in the Gulf region. Of course, Luís Fróis’s *History of Japan* was written in Portuguese, not in Japanese. It is not clear whether Nobunaga in fact mentioned it as Ormuz, or not, but, Nobunaga is known to have been an extremely fashionable dresser so he might have heard from Fróis about where the cape had come from.

Nobunaga’s successor, TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi, is also supposed to have been interested in rare Middle Eastern products. In Kôdai-ji Temple in Kyoto, which was built by Hideyoshi’s wife, Kitano Mandokoro, in 1606 after his death, there is an Important Cultural Property called *Jimbaori* (a coat worn over armor) used by Hideyoshi. The *Jimbaori* is mainly woven with gold and silver thread. It is said to have been made from a Persian carpet, which was presented to Hideyoshi at the end of the 16th century. Lions and peacocks were woven on the original Persian carpet.

Dutch traders also had a trading factory in Ormuz, where they purchased Persian carpets as gifts for the Tokugawa Shogunate. In the lists of the gifts from Dutch traders, you can find some words indicating place names in the Gulf, *alcatijff* or *alcatyven*, namely al-Qaṭīf [Vlam 1981: 491].³

Arab Horses

Tributes were not limited to clothes or textiles. Europeans brought many curious things to please Japanese rulers, among which special products of the Gulf region were included, such as a brocade made in Ormuz.

However, the most popular specialty from the Gulf region was without any doubt Arabian or Persian horses, though their exact place of origin was not known. Since the 16th century there have been many Japanese documents that have mentioned Arabian and Persian horses. As far as I know, the first Arabian horses recorded in Japanese documents were the ones which were brought to Japan by the Tensho Embassy and Alessandro Valignano, a Neapolitan Jesuit missionary. The Tensho Embassy was the first mission sent by a Japanese Christian feudal lord to European countries. On their return from Europe to Japan, they visited the city of Goa, in which the viceroy of India gave each of them a fine Arabian horse as a present. Valignano and four envoys returned to Japan on July 1590 and then visited Kyoto

³ al-Qaṭīf is a city of the present-day Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

with the horses in March 1591. Luís Fróis described the horse brought by the Embassy as follows;

A beautifully decorated horse strode forward with two Indian stablemen holding the reins. The horse was not only beautiful but also large, drawing the audiences' attention. Japanese horses [at the time were so small and] looked pathetic in comparison with that horse...*Kampaku*⁴ Hideyoshi wanted to see the Arabian horse and ordered a Portuguese to ride it... The Portuguese man rode it skillfully. Hideyoshi was very impressed by its beauty, size and speed and spoke words of praise to the horse. The horse pleased Hideyoshi more than any other presents.[Luís Fróis]

Horses were the special products of the Gulf region, either from Arabia or Persia, for many centuries and Arabian horses were reportedly sent from the Gulf to India by local and international merchants and traders. On this horse-trade from the Gulf to India, a famous Arab traveller of the 14th century, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa said in his *Travels* that genuine horses (al-khayl al-‘atāq) were exported from Zafār al-Ḥumūd (present-day Dhufar region of Oman) to India [Ibn Baṭṭūṭa 1980: 259].

Arabian or Persian horses were so popular that Japan often imported these horses from Dutch traders during the Tokugawa Shogunate. According to ISONO Naohide's study, Japan imported Persian horses in 1634, 1638, 1668, 1725, 1730, 1765, 1769 and 1778, but Arabian horses only in 1867.⁵ However, an Arabian horse was drawn in the *Catalogue of Birds and Animals Brought into Japan by Chinese and Dutch Ships* 唐蘭船持渡鳥獸之図, without reference to the year of its import. The *Catalogue* was compiled during the 17th and 19th century in order to list the birds and animals imported to Japan. These animals, when they arrived in Japan, were drawn by professional painters and the pictures were sent to Edo, the capital of Japan (present-day Tokyo), so that the Shogunate could judge whether they should be sent to the capital or not. The fact that there is a picture of an Arabian horse in the *Catalogue* suggests that in addition to the horses imported as gifts from the viceroy of India and French Emperor respectively in 1590 and 1867, Arabian horses must have been imported several times.

Four hundred years after the first Arabian horse's coming to Japan, the Japanese Crown Prince and Crown Princess made an official visit to Oman in 1994, where an Arabian horse named Ahāzīj was presented to them by Sulṭān Qābūs.

4 A chief adviser to the Emperor.

5 See ISONO. 2007. Among them, the Arabian horses brought to Japan in 1867 were presented by Napoleon, and not exported by Dutch traders [ISONO 2007: 41].

Camel Show in Japan

In the *Catalogue of Birds and Animals Brought into Japan by Chinese and Dutch Ships*, there are four pictures of two male and female camels which were imported to Japan in 1821. The Arabian camels were first imported to Japan by Dutch traders in 1646.⁶ According to the *Catalogue*, the camels were bred in Makka in the Arabian Peninsula [ISONO & UCHIDA 1992: 71, 119]. Dutch traders brought them to Japan and asked the Shogun to accept them, but the latter rejected their offer. The traders were compelled to sell them to an official translator and then to a promoter or show manager. The promoter put these camels on show first in Kyushu and Shikoku, and then Osaka, Kyoto and Nara. The camel show was successful and moved to Edo in 1824 and was also a big commercial success at the box office, despite the tickets being quite expensive. Japanese people were deeply impressed by the show and a lot of publications on camels appeared in Japan, which partly contributed to forming the Japanese public's images of the Middle East.⁷

Earliest Muslims or Middle Easterners Landed in Japan

It is known to us that the earliest Muslims to land in Japan were a peace mission sent by the Yuan Dynasty in 1275, as far as it can be confirmed by documents. An Uighur, whose name was Şadr al-Dīn 撒都魯丁, was among the mission and unfortunately was executed in Kamakura with other members of the mission, after they were arrested by Japanese authorities.

After this tragedy, there were no clear records on Muslim visits to Japan in written sources until the 17th century, but as in the case of animals and products imported from Muslim regions, the possibility that individual Muslims disembarked in Japan during the Azuchi–Momoyama period can't be ruled out. Many black slaves or servants were brought to Japan by Europeans at that time, as shown in pictures in *Byōbu*, or Japanese folding screens. Among them, there could have been Muslims from Africa or the Arabian Peninsula.

In 1634, a *Moor* merchant was allowed to go on board a Dutch ship at Hirado bound for Ayutthaya, according to the diary of the Dutch VOC factory at Hirado. This fact indicates that there was a Moor in Japan before 1634. According to NAGASHIMA Hiromu, this Moor was a Persian Muslim merchant from Thailand, as there was a Persian community in Thailand that had migrated from Mughal India.

In nearly the same period, Egyptian mummies were also imported to Japan through Dutch traders. Mummies had been used for making drugs in almost all the apothecaries in

⁶ According to *Nihon Shoki*, or Chronicles of Japan, compiled in 720, camels was imported to Japan from Kudara (百濟) for the first time, but these camels brought to Japan were thought to be Bactrian camels with two humps. A Bactrian camel was also brought in Japan from America in 1803, See [ISONO 2007].

⁷ For details on camel shows, see [KAWAZOE 2000; SUGITA 2005].

Europe since the 16th century on, so Japanese also began to import them and use them as something like a panacea, after knowing the efficacy of mummies. At the end of the 17th century, there was Mummy Boom in Japan. According to NIIMI Denzaemon, a low level official of the Shogunate, a medicine called *Miira* (a Japanese equivalent of mummy) became very popular at the time. Many people from *Daimyō* (feudal lords) to the lower classes were eager to purchase mummies and use them as an effective drug. They believed drugs derived from mummies were effective for cramps, pressure in chest or fatigues. Most of these Egyptian mummies imported to Japan are supposed to have been made from the dead bodies of contemporary Egyptians of the Mamluk period, and were not the embalmed corpses of ancient Egyptians. So, these mummies are supposed to be the earliest Egyptians who arrived at Japan, although of course they were not alive.

As the above discussions indicate, the relations between Japan and the Middle East or the Gulf region were always indirect, through the hands of Europeans. Japan's knowledge of the Middle East, the Gulf or Muslims was also indirect. Japanese people were only able to know about them through the eyes of Europeans. For example, the publications of ARAI Hakuseki or NISHIKAWA Joken, both of whom represented the highest level of Japanese views on the outside world depended heavily upon knowledge gleaned from European informants.⁸

As far as I can establish, the earliest direct and firsthand account of Japanese on Islam in the Edo period was made not by such intellectuals but by Karadomari Magotarō, a mere sailor who drifted from Kagoshima, Southwest of Japan, in 1763. He was washed ashore at the present-day Mindanao in the Philippines, captured by local pirates there and sold as a slave to a Chinese resident in Borneo (Kalimantan). During his stay in Borneo, he witnessed the manners and customs of the local Muslims.

Black people are performing daily religious duties. [They believe] there is a sacred god in the west called "ARATAARA." Every morning and evening, they wash their hands and ears by fresh water, raise their hands, prostrate themselves on the ground, and turn their face towards the west, reciting the phrase "ARARAARAARAIRARAA ARAIRAIRARAA" hundreds times. [AOKI 1968: 643]

The name of god, "ARATAARA," is obviously "*Allāh Ta 'ālā*" in Arabic, which means "Allah, exalted is He," in English. Furthermore, "ARARAARAARAIRARAAARAIRAIRARAA" must be the Japanese transcription of "*Lā ilāh illā Allāh*," or "there is no God but Allah," in English.

⁸ For the relations between Japan and the Middle East or Islamic World in general, see [KOBAYASHI 1975] and [SUGITA 1995].

First Arabs and People of the Gulf in Japan?

Johann Ludwig Heinrich Julius Schliemann, a German businessman and archaeologist famous for his discovery of Troy, visited Japan just after the opening of the country, or *Kaikoku*. He embarked from Shanghai on a steamship of the *Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company* usually known as P&O and left for Yokohama in 1864. P&O was a British shipping company originally established in the early 19th century and had just started its Shanghai-Yokohama line in that very year. Schliemann mentioned about crew of the steamship he boarded at Shanghai, as follows:

L'equipage de notre pyroscaphe se composait de Chinois, de malais, de lascars (Hindoas des environs de Bombay), d'indigenes de Manille, d'Anglais, d'Arabes de Moka et de negres africains de Zanzibar. [Schliemann 1867: 81]

Here, we read that Arabs of Mocha (*al-Mukhā'*) were among the steamship's crew. I am not sure whether these Arabs or Yemenis really landed at the port of Yokohama, but if so, this must be the first Arab visit to Japan confirmed by contemporary documents. In addition, black Africans of Zanzibar were also on the ship with Schliemann. Zanzibar had been ruled for many centuries by *Sultāns* of Oman, but, after the death of Sa'īd b. Sultān, *Sultān* of Oman and Zanzibar in 1856, the latter became an independent sultanate ruled by a cadet branch of the Āl Bū Sa'īd Dynasty of Oman. This means that black Africans of Zanzibar, crew members of P&O ship, were still the subjects of the Sultān of the Gulf origin.⁹

Interestingly, about 150 years later, P&O was purchased by a Gulf company, Dubai Ports World for £3.9 billion in March 2006.

Japan's First Official Mission to the Middle East

At the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Shogun government sent special envoys to the United States and European countries. Some of the envoys left records of their travels to the West and other areas on their way between Japan and the West, including the Middle East. However, their main concerns were the Western countries which they envisaged as models for Japanese development in the future, and they didn't show any particular interest in the Asian and Middle Eastern countries they passed through, even sometimes looking down on them as uncivilized regions.

Japan, however, joined the international community after the Meiji era and tried to be on an equal footing with Asian and Middle Eastern states, including Persian and Ottoman Empires. YOSHIDA Masaharu was born in Tosa (present-day Kochi Prefecture) in 1851 and

⁹ As for Japanese prostitutes in Zanzibar in the early 20th century, see [SHIRAISHI. 1995]. According to SHIRAISHI, Japanese prostitutes had already arrived at Africa in 1890s.

entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. In 1880, he visited the Persian and Ottoman Empires via Karachi, Bandar-e ‘Abbās, Baḥrayn, Bū Shahr and Baṣra as the head of Japan’s official delegation. Members of the delegation other than YOSHIDA were, FURUKAWA Yoshinobu, a staff officer, five Japanese trade merchants, an Indian interpreter, a Persian cook and others. The purpose of the delegation was to research the situation and to obtain permission for trade in Persia. After returning to Japan, FURUKAWA published an account of his journey to the Middle East in 1881 entitled *Travels of Persia*, and YOSHIDA also wrote a book in 1894, the title of which was *Exploring the Muslim World: Travels of Persia*.¹⁰

The travels of Yoshida and other members of the mission are a very important indication of the relationship between Japan and the Gulf region, because they were the first direct eyewitnesses of the Gulf. YOSHIDA left Japan for the Middle East in April 1880 and entered the Persian /Arabian Gulf after stopping at Mumbai and Karachi. He said about Bahrain:

The chief of the island is living in a big residence surrounded by date trees near the port. He holds the power of life and death over his subjects. It is famous for pearls which are fished by divers off the islands. It exports these pearls to Europe every year, the value of which is more than four or five hundred thousand dollars. Bahraini pearls are brilliant and the most honorable jewels known to the European notables. However, the pearl fishing methods of Bahraini locals are unsophisticated. If they could use modern equipment, their profits would be much higher.

After Bahrain, YOSHIDA moved to Basra and Baghdad, but, before getting to Basra, he visited the port of Kuwait. He reports:

The next day, we arrived at Kowaito (Kuwait),¹¹ a port at the mouth of the Arabia River (Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab). It is worth mentioning a marvelous sight on board as we happened to be sailing with a chief (*shūchō*)¹² of this Kowaito who had been visiting Bombay (Mumbai) with his two children. The chief had a sturdy physique. He wore a Muslim turban of cashmere embroidered with gold thread on his head and was clad in a reddish yellow woolen *abasu* (*abā’*), a long robe with broad sleeves and without

10 There are two other editions of the book, one published in 1988 and the other in 1991. In addition, a Persian translation was published in 1994 in Tehran.

11 Arrival at Kuwait was on June 22nd, 1880. YOSHIDA started his travels from Bū Shahr to Kuwait, Basra and Baghdad on June 21st. Only YOSHIDA, YOKOYAMA Magoichirō, a merchant, and an Indian interpreter joined the trip. Other members remained in Bū Shahr.

12 *Shūchō* means the chief of a tribe in Japanese. YOSHIDA does not specify the name of the chief, but the then ruler of Kuwait was ‘Abdullāh whose reign was from 1866 to 1892. Of course, other possibilities, however, cannot be ruled out. If you think about the relations of the ruler with Bombay, you might think that he could be Mubārak al-Kabīr.

a collar. He was walking with bare feet. One of the two children was about eleven or twelve years old, the other seven or eight. They were really adorable, wearing hoods embroidered with beautiful velvet. They were walking on deck with seven or eight servants, some of whom were wearing crescent-shaped daggers in their belts. The servants surrounded the children and had a long chat with each other. I, however, could not understand what they were talking about. The chief occupied the first class passenger cabin, but did not sit with others at meals. Instead, he ordered a carpet to be put down on the deck, then sat on it and ate with his fingers from a dish of rice and meat with curry. For worship, he prayed, standing and bowing on the same carpet in an Islamic way. He did not care about the roll and pitch of the ship.

By the way, the ship stopped [at the port] and two barges approached from the front simultaneously. Some ten women were sitting in a circle on the barges in order to welcome the chief at the port. All of them had veils over their faces. They looked like the *katsuki*¹³ of ancient Japan. The chief left the ship hand in hand with the two children and went onto the barge. The servants carried the luggage and finally loaded the big baskets full of plantain fruits,¹⁴ which were probably their provisions. A ferryman chanted loudly, “Ali Mahomet [sic]!” and the people on board started chanting Buddhist-like songs with one voice and then disembarked composedly. I looked on as some hundreds of boxes of cotton and crops were unloaded from the ship and noticed that that there were many houses standing in a row along the distant harbor of yellow sands. I recognize from the landscape that [Kuwait] must be an important trading port. It stands to reason that there is a plan to build the Arabian Railway in this place, though I have not heard any reliable reports yet on the start of the project.

Our ship made its way from Kowaito toward the mouth of the Arabia River, which was called Shaṭṭ al-‘Arab by the locals. [YOSHIDA 1894: 28-29]

After returning to Japan, YOSHIDA visited European countries as a member of the entourage of ITÔ Hirobumi, the first Prime Minister of Japan in 1882. Later, he left the Foreign Ministry and started to publish his own newspaper and participate in political activities. YOSHIDA Masaharu died in 1921 at the age of 71.

13 Or *kinukazuki*. In the Heian Period (794-1192), noblewomen usually put the garment over their heads to cover the faces while going out.

14 In Japanese, *bashô* fruits or banana plant. The *bashô* means possibly dates in this context, but not sure, because he mentioned dates in some other paragraphs.

Japanese Navy and Oman

The Japanese Government sent the battleship *Hiei* to the Indian Ocean for naval maneuvers in 1880. The YOSHIDA Mission was on the same ship at first but they got separated at Hong Kong. YOSHIDA Mission transferred to the commercial ship there and headed for Bū Shahr, Bahrain and Iraq. *Hiei*, on the other side, was bound for Oman via Mumbai and arrived at Muscat on July 3, 1880.

Some of the Japanese crew disembarked at the port of Muscat and were granted an audience with the Sultan of Muscat, who must have been Turkī b. Sa‘īd of Āl Bū Sa‘īd, and other high ranking officials. The Sultan gave the Japanese crew a lot of presents such as a cows, sheep, and many fruits. *Hiei*, on their hand, gave Japanese chairs and vases to the Sultan in return and sent a navy doctor to him for treatment at his request.

One of the crew, Lieutenant HONJUKU Ienori, wrote a record of his visits to Muscat and Bū Shahr which has recently been translated into English. He described the country and its ruler in detail for the first time as a Japanese observer. His report is also very important as one of the earliest eyewitness accounts by a Japanese on the Gulf region. As the translators of his travelogue indicate, his account “gives us a rare opportunity to observe how the Meiji Japanese perceived the Islamic world at a very early period in the establishment of direct contact” [HONJUKU 2007: 42].

“Arabians” in Japan in the early Meiji era

Early in the Meiji era, a Japanese newspaper had already reported about “an Arabian” who lost his way in Tokyo. According to the *Yomiuri Shimbun* published on October 20th, 1881, an Arab was hanging around the Tsukiji Settlement in central Tokyo and the police took him into protective custody. He explained to the police he had arrived in Japan on October 14th for the propagation of Islam but he was at a loss because he could not understand Japanese at all.

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* also reported another case of an Arab resident in Japan on January 14th 1883. According to the newspaper, the Arab got into some trouble with his Japanese mistress who was living together with him in the Yokohama Settlement. The Arab had failed in business, their intimate relationship had changed to hardship, and he began to use violence against her. She escaped from his violence and took refuge in her friend’s house. The matter came to light because the Arab reported it to the police, saying that she had stolen his money. But, that was not true. He lied because he was consumed with jealousy.

It is known that in the early 20th century, especially after the Russo-Japanese War, many Arabs were becoming interested in Japan and its rapid development. Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm and Muṣṭafā al-Kāmil of Egypt wrote famous and emotional poems on Japan and praised its development and modernization as a non-Western country. Furthermore, some Arab

and Muslim intellectuals actually visited Japan in search of the secrets of its abrupt growth, expecting it could be a model for modernizing their own countries. However, we should not forget that, before these trends, Arabs had already visited Japan for genuinely religious and also commercial purposes, although unfortunately, we have not found so far any clue as to these Arabians' identities, nationalities, or countries, etc.¹⁵

Pre-Oil Relations

The 20th century is a landmark in the history of Japan-Gulf relations. Needless to say, the discovery of oil in the Gulf in the 1930s was the most important aspect in creating direct relations between the two regions, but even before the establishment of oil-based relations between Japan and the Gulf, we have to understand that both regions had built a steadfast relationship.

According to British reports on the trade of the Gulf countries, the first references to Japanese ships entering the Gulf ports were in 1913–14 in Kuwait and in 1916–17 in Bahrain.¹⁶ Japan was listed in the trade table by countries for the first time in *Report on the Trade of Kuwait for the year 1916–17*. It disappeared in 1921 but appeared again in 1934. From then on, Japan occupied the position of the second or third largest exporter not only for Kuwait but also for Bahrain until the 1940s, after which Japan suddenly disappeared from the trade table of the Gulf countries probably due to its involvement in the Sino-Japanese War and World War II. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, even in the pre-oil era, Japan had built strong commercial relations with the Gulf countries, including the Iranian side.

The situation was the same in Bahrain. Japan was making her presence felt among Bahrainis by exporting many goods. Most of the Japanese products imported by the Gulf countries were textiles and machinery.

The British *Report on the Trade of Kuwait for the Year 1934–35* mentioned the penetration of Japanese-made goods into the Kuwaiti market. According to the *Report*, Japanese products “retain their popularity almost to the exclusion of those of all other nationalities.” It added that “[t]he quality of most of their goods is inferior and often bad but they possesses the all-important advantage of extreme cheapness.” Namely, Japanese products were believed to be cheap and nasty by many people in the Gulf. Charles Belgrave, who served as Adviser to the rulers of Bahrain from 1926 until 1957, said in his book as follows;

Japanese goods had the reputation of being cheap, showy and shoddy, and the term

¹⁵ The name of the Arab who had trouble with his mistress was transcribed as *Atsuson* by the Japanese newspaper. I could not recreate an original Arabic name from this *Atsuson*, which does not sound Arabic.

¹⁶ An India Office document shows that the ruler of Bahrain was worried about visits of Japanese ships in Bahrain, because of “murderous assault made on cargo landing personnel by crew of last Japanese ship to visit port.” The incident happened in 1917 [R/15/2/553].

‘Japanese’ came to be used to describe a lady of light morals. I often used to hear the word used with this meaning in cases in the court. [Belgrave 1972: 101]

Interestingly, the British Political Agent of Kuwait, H. R. P. Dickson, analyzed the commercial success of Japanese products from a different angle and said the Japanese seem to have made a point of thoroughly studying their markets before sending goods. The Japanese, as Dickson pointed out, sent their travelling agents to observe minutely the tastes and peculiar needs of the people of the particular place (*Report on the Trade of Kuwait for the Year 1934–35*). These remarks remind us of the recent commercial success of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, which have overwhelmed the Gulf markets. Dickson also added that, for the well-to-do class, the term “Japanese” had come to be a synonym for *inferior quality*. Because of their low quality, Japanese goods had sometimes been forbidden to enter into the Gulf market. For instance, the import of Japanese wiring material was banned in Bahrain in 1933–34 due to its dangerous nature.

Japanese exports to Bahrain had almost doubled from Rs.777,520 in 1933 to Rs.1,342,610 in 1935. These covered a wide range of commodities, including building materials, hardware, spare parts, and foods. The flood of low quality and cheap priced Japanese goods into the Gulf markets resulted in severe losses for high quality British or Indian goods from the Gulf markets (*Bahrain Government Annual Report for the Year 1353 (1934–35)*). This flood also contributed to a decline in the price of consumer goods of other nationalities, which harmed local merchants accordingly.

After the long absence of Japanese goods in the Gulf during World War II, the negative reputation of Japanese products as ‘a lady of light morals’ or ‘inferior quality’ was completely forgotten and Japanese consumer goods became a synonym for high quality, especially after Japan’s post-war economic miracle became known to the people of the Gulf.

Advent of the Cultured Pearl

In the British reports of the trade of the Gulf countries, there are some important references to Japanese products other than cheap and nasty goods, that is, cultured pearls produced in Japan. The Gulf has relied overwhelmingly upon the pearl fisheries or pearl diving for centuries. So, the cultured pearls from Japan would be a grave threat to the Gulf’s most important industry. The modern-day cultured pearl industry was born in Japan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries after MISE Tatsuhei and NISHIKAWA Tōkichi discovered the method of producing pearls artificially.

The *Report of the Trade of the Bahrain Islands for the Year 1909-10* mentioned ‘the artificial pearl’ for the first time, saying that “[i]t does not appear probable that the artificial pearl, however well made, will ever take the place of the natural one.”

The cultured pearls industry was firmly established in Japan when the method of producing round pearls was invented in 1910s. These round pearls became a real threat to the Gulf's traditional economy. *The Star*, a London evening daily, published on May 4th, 1921, reports the discovery of 'faked pearls' in a jewelers in London. This caused some big scandals among the rich in Europe. The British *Trade Report for Kuwait for the Year 1921–22* said that "[c]onsiderable nervousness is felt amongst the pearl merchants regarding the Japanese 'culture' pearl trade." This statement must have been influenced by the "swindle" in London. In 1924, cultured pearls were detected in the Gulf countries including Bahrain. Furthermore, the *Report on the Trade of the Bahrain Islands for the Year Ending 31st March 1927* said several cultured pearls were detected in Bahrain in the former season. One of the cases which attracted much attention was the case of Abdulla Al Zaid, a Bahraini pearl merchant and a brother-in-law of the brother of the Ruler. He was convicted of importing cultured pearls, knowing at least one of them to be cultured. He was sentenced to a fine of Rs. 3,000 and a two-year ban from pearl trading in Bahrain (*Bahrain Government Annual Report for the Year 1348 (1929–30)*). The Bahrain Government finally prohibited the import, transport, sale, possession or manufacture of cultured pearls in 1930 as King's Regulation No.1 of that year.

Sayf al-Shamlān said in his famous book on pearl diving that the spread of Japanese cultured pearls in Kuwait and Arabian Gulf countries would be a grave threat to the natural pearl trade for two reasons. First, it would have a huge effect on the price of pearls, which was one reason for the depression of trade in natural pearls. Second, some unreliable pearl traders might cheat by mixing the cultured and natural pearls for their profit [Shamlān 1986: v.1, 177]. According to Shamlān, the cultured pearl was called the *Japanese pearl or the imitation pearl* in Kuwait and pearl divers and merchants avidly followed news about it [Shamlān 1986: v.1, 181].

The later documents published in the Gulf expressed concerns over the Japanese cultured pearls and often criticized MIKIMOTO Kōkichi by name as a leading icon of the Japanese cultured pearl trade which had destroyed the local pearl industry. However, during the 1920s, the people of the Gulf, including British officials there, did not seem to be as pessimistic about the future of natural pearls. These feelings reflected the estimate of British Political Agents. Dickson, who was very optimistic, for instance, gave several reasons for the decline of natural pearls. The first is, of course, the long economic depression subsequent to World War I, and the second, Japanese cultured pearls. He, however, thought that Japanese pearls could never oust the natural pearls of the Gulf, because the former could never compare with the best rose-pink pearl of the Gulf [Dickson 1951: 484].¹⁷ Thirdly, the taste of Western women for luxury goods changed from extravagant jewels to more useful automobiles. "Give

¹⁷ Dickson said signs of improvement were well reflected by the marked recovery of the local boat-building trade, and there were hopes that a permanent revival of the industry was at last in sight as of 1937.

me a car first, and afterwards a pearl necklace” was, he said, the cry of the day [Dickson 1951: 485].

In addition, when MIKIMOTO’s right-hand man, KATÔ Toranosuke opened a branch in Mumbai in 1925, he immediately started studying the situation regarding pearls from the Gulf. After that, when he actually visited Bahrain and Kuwait and inspected the pearl industry there at the end of 1929, British authorities didn’t reject his visit. Rather, he obtained excellent facilities for his visit to Bahrain from a British official, Captain L.L. Parke, whom KATÔ described as Britain’s highest authority in Bahrain.¹⁸

Generally speaking, reference to Japanese cultured pearls as a negative factor to the pearl diving was not so frequent during the 1920s. The situation, however, deteriorated during the 1930s. In 1930, the situation of pearl diving in Bahrain had gone from bad to worse. The pearl market was deplorable and a lot of merchants and *nakhudas* (ship captains) were in financial difficulties. Nevertheless, the British authors of the *Annual Report* and *Trade Report* for 1930-31 didn’t attribute the reasons for the natural pearl trade depression to cultured pearls. However, a few years later, they pointed out:

In viewing the future with the most optimistic eye it is difficult to see any likelihood of the pearl industry reverting to its former state of prosperity. As the improvement and increased production of cultured pearls continues so the demand for real pearls decreases.

Japanese cultured pearls had a negative impact not only on the diving communities in the Gulf but also on European jewelers. Leading jewelers in London confessed their businesses had been severely hit by these cultured pearls. They did not display cultured pearls in their shops, but they always had to keep some Japanese pearls in stock, because many of their clients demanded them (*Bahrain Government Annual Report for the 1353 (1934–35)*). Even a famous French pearl merchant, Leonard Rosenthal who once called the cultured pearl his ‘enemy number one’ had to shift his business from Oriental natural pearls to Japanese cultured pearls [Rosenthal 1952: 111–120].

Oil Era and Japan’s Military

As we have discussed in the former chapters, Japanese cultured pearls became a threat to the Gulf’s vital economic structure in the 1930s. At the same time, cheap and nasty Japanese products also posed a menace to British economic interests in the Gulf. For Japan, however,

¹⁸ L. L. Parke must be L. S. Parke. Belgrave, the Adviser to the Bahraini Ruler, engaged him to serve as a police officer [Belgrave 1972: 38]. Thus, he was in fact not the highest authority in Bahrain when KATÔ met him on board after KATÔ’s return from Bahrain. Parke said to KATÔ with a laugh that he would have arrested him if he had known that KATÔ was working for MIKIMOTO in advance.

the nature of the importance of the Gulf countries changed drastically in this period. Oil was discovered in Bahrain in 1932 for the first time in the Arabian Peninsula. Two years later in 1934, Japan started to import oil from Bahrain. This was the commencement of oil-based relations between Japan and the Gulf countries.

After the Manchurian Incident broke out in 1931, Japan was militarized rapidly and almost all industrial and economic activity was placed under military control. The Petroleum Industry Law came into force in 1934 under the strong influence of the Japanese military. The new Law stipulated there should be a large quantity of oil reserves. Being in a state of emergency, Japan's Nippon Oil Corporation¹⁹ wanted to lay the foundation for purchasing foreign oil by tenders under the pressure of the new Petroleum Industry Law. Importing oil from Bahrain was the first such attempt [*Asahi Shimbun*, July 6, 1934].

Since then, Japan's policy toward the Muslim countries in general and the Gulf region in particular was deeply influenced by its dark military ambitions. Japan was getting to be so isolated from the outside world that gaining natural resources became more difficult and the oil shortage became more critical. Thus, the Gulf region, including Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, became an important focal point to secure Japan's energy supply.

In July 1937, the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out. Later in the same year, the Japanese military tried to import a large quantity (£200,000) of opium from Pahlavi Iran, using a famous Japanese trading company, Mitsui & Co. [SANO 2005: 205]. Japan had already started military activities in China. In order to continue their activities in China, the Japanese military, especially the Kwantung Army, desperately needed financial resources. They occupied some areas in the Northern part of China, in which a lot of opium was produced, and they sold it in China in return for a huge amount of money. Consequently, it was not long before the opium produced in these areas almost dried up, and so they directed their attention to Iran as another source of opium.

Even before the beginning of Sino-Japanese War, Japan seemed to feel a strong desire for Iranian opium. According to an official cable sent from the British Consul in Bū Shahr dated March 10th, 1937, a Japanese steamship, *Sangbee*, left Bū Shahr for Macau in the early morning of March 8th. The British Consul said its freight was 800 cases of opium, adding that he doubted the ship got permission for its freight, and the dispatcher was the Irano-Japan Trade Company [R15/2/553].

KAWAMURA Kyôdô, or Japanese Mujahidin?

As the Japanese involvement in Gulf affairs increased during the 1930s, the attention of the Japanese people to the Middle East or the Gulf also increased. In 1931, a mosque was built in Nagoya, central Japan, which was the first mosque in Japan, though it was unfortunately

¹⁹ The company was established in 1888, present-day JX Nippon Oil & Energy Corporation.

burned down during World War II. But, after Nagoya, two mosques were built in Kobe in 1935 and in Tokyo in 1938 one after another.

The opening ceremony of Tokyo Mosque (Tokyo Camii) was held in the presence of high ranking officials and princes invited from Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Leading military officers and right-wing nationalists also attended the ceremony. First, TÔYAMA Mitsuru opened the door of the mosque. TÔYAMA was the head of Gen'yô-sha, a very influential ultra-nationalist political group of Japan and was not a Muslim. After an address made by Abdürreşit İbrahim, a Tatar Muslim politico-religious leader, and the singing of the Japanese national anthem, Aixīnjuéluó Pūguāng 愛新覺羅溥儀 from Manchuria shouted “Long live the Emperor!” Pūguāng was a cousin of the Manchurian Emperor, Pūyí, who was also known as the Last Emperor. He was a Muslim convert, a minority among the Manchurian imperial family. Then, again non-Muslim MATSUI Iwane,²⁰ Army General, chanted “Long live Muslims!” The presence of Japan’s non-Muslim military and ultra-nationalists in the opening ceremony indicates how Japan’s policy towards Muslim countries had been deeply affected by Japanese militarism and nationalism. The life of a man called KAWAMURA Kyôdô²¹ could be said to be one of the symbols of the relations between Japan and Islam in this period. It was when I was doing research on Gulf history in the India Office Library that I noticed his name for the first time. An unofficial memorandum from the Intelligence Bureau of the Indian Government, dated May 18th, 1939, said that KAWAMURA was trying to secure permission to visit Makka and Madina in the guise of a Chinese [R15/2/539].

Derk Bodde, a prominent American historian of China, said the Black Dragon Society (Kokuryû-kai) of Japan, a sister society of above-mentioned Gen'yô-sha, sent KAWAMURA to China to investigate Islam there [Bodde 1946: 312]. According to the memorandum, KAWAMURA who “became a Moslem in Sinkiang (present-day Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) about twenty years ago, has recently arrived in Peking (Beijing) from Japan with a considerable sum of money to extend anti-British propaganda under the cloak of religion,” and “was admitted into the Mohamedan fold at Chengtu, Szechuan (Chéngdū, Sichuān Province) in 1912.” The document also referred to the leading role played by KAWAMURA in instigating the Muslim riot in Gānsù Province located in Northwestern China in 1919.

A confidential document of the Japanese Government in 1919 said KAWAMURA left Yúnnán Province for Gānsù to investigate mosques, but was arrested by the Chinese

20 He was the commander of the expeditionary forces sent to China and was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to death by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East for his responsibility in the so-called Nanjing Massacre.

21 For KAWAMURA, see [HOSAKA 2008a] and [Asian Cultures Research Institute 2008].

authorities as a suspected Japanese military spy. He was transferred to the Japanese Consulate General in Tiānjīn and interrogated by Japanese diplomats. They found KAWAMURA had a letter of introduction from a high ranking officer of Japan's General Staff Office and asked the military about his identification, but the latter answered what KAWAMURA claimed was groundless. Of course, you have to be careful about the statements of the military, taking into consideration the military's solid relations with ultra-nationalist societies like Gen'yô-sha and Kokuryû-kai.

In 1931, KAWAMURA started maneuvering for the unifying of Muslims in Manchuria and established the Islamic League in Manchukuo in 1934, just after Manchu State was founded as a puppet state of Japan [KOMURA 1988: 76]. And in 1935, while KAWAMURA was Chairman of the Islamic League, Pūguāng of the Manchurian imperial family, as mentioned before, converted to Islam [Bodde 1946: 313]. Pūguāng's wife was Xuě Yànqín, who was a famous Chinese Opera actress and belonged to the Huí Muslims. It is probable that the marriage between Pūguāng and Xuě Yànqín was one of the reasons that led to the conversion of the former to Islam. At the same time, judging from circumstantial evidences, we cannot rule out the possibility that KAWAMURA, as Chairman of the Islamic League of Manchuria could intermediate this marriage between a member of the Manchurian imperial family and a famous Muslima actress.

After quitting as chairman of the Islamic League, KAWAMURA continued maneuvering for anti-British movements among Muslims in China and Manchuria as a Japanese Muslim leader and a pawn of the Japanese military. His attempt to enter Saudi Arabia in 1939 must have been related not only to his Islamic duty, but also to his religio-political activities. Interestingly, the Japanese Foreign Ministry almost simultaneously sent a mission to Saudi Arabia for secret oil concession negotiations, although the negotiations failed. As yet I have found no evidence to show that these two events, both related to Japan and Saudi Arabia, might have had some mutual connections.²²

Japan's Activities in the Gulf during the 1930s

The Japan-Saudi oil negotiations were doomed to fail. The diplomacy of Saudi Arabia was under the strong influence of Western countries like the U.S. and the U.K. The contents of secret negotiations between the two countries were leaked out to Japan's Western rivals, before the negotiations had even started [R15/2/539].²³ Some influential Westerners in Riyadh warned the King and other notable politicians of the danger posed by Japan's offer [Twitchell

²² One of the members of the mission, NAKANO Eijirô, published a book on Saudi Arabia entitled *Travels of Arabia* after returning to Japan, which was later translated into Arabic as *al-Rihla al-Yābāniya*.

²³ For secret oil negotiations, see [TAMURA 1976]. TAMURA Hideji was chargé d'affaires ad interim when the Embassy of Japan was established in Jeddah in 1960 and was later assigned as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia in 1968.

1947: 154]. and Saudi Arabia at last declared war against Japan on March 1st, 1945.

Other Gulf countries like Bahrain also stood by the Allies as they were British Protectorates. The Bahrain Government, for example, banned people from listening to radio news from Japan in public places in December 1941. According to the announcement of the Government, if the people sent information supporting the Axis Powers like Japan and Germany, they would be punished [Zayānī 1998: 129].

However, Bahrain had a special reason for their anti-Japanese attitude. In 1917, when a Japanese ship visited Bahrain port, a murderous assault was made on cargo handling personnel by the crew of the Japanese ship. As a result, the ruler of Bahrain refused to give permission to Japanese ships to enter Bahraini ports [R15/2/553]. Anti-Japanese sentiments were so widespread, even among the ordinary Bahrainis, that during the Sino-Japanese War, many people supported China. In spite of this, Japanese ships were being favorably received because of the large number of tariffs they were expected to pay on entering the ports, though only cargo and commercial ships were welcomed. Fishing boats were still unwelcome guests because the British authorities suspected that Japanese fishing boats would try to indulge in secret pearling in the Gulf maritime territories. In 1937, the British authorities in the Gulf received information about the coming of a Japanese trawler, Shinkyō-maru, which had informed the British that its main object was deep-sea fishing observation. However, the British doubted it and started to follow its moves in the Indian Ocean carefully. The Gulf, or exactly speaking its pearl banks, was supposed to be shared only by the Arabs on both sides of the Gulf. The British, who were in charge of the diplomacy and security of the Gulf countries under their protection, considered the Gulf's maritime territories were exclusive to them and were very cautious about foreigners entering their territories.

In addition, a Japanese navy tanker, *Sata*, arrived at Bahrain in 1938. The Japanese Navy purchased oil from Standard Oil Company of California and entered Bahrain in order to load the oil there. The British, of course, were cautious about the military activities of Japan and obstructed *Sata*'s coming to Bahrain, mainly due to the timing as the outbreak of the World War was expected.

Tenri-kyō and Makka

Japan's image in the Gulf was ambivalent, having negative and positive aspects both of which exactly reflected trade, cultured pearls and the military activities of Japan in the region. In contrast, the Middle East or the Gulf's image in Japan was mostly positive, though their knowledge about the Gulf was limited to a narrow area. Among the interesting aspects of cultural exchanges between Japan and the Gulf was the case of Tenri-kyō.

Tenri-kyō is now one of the strongest religious organizations in Japan, having more than 2 million believers according to their official statistics. It was established by NAKAYAMA

Miki in the 19th century, inevitably influenced by Japanese traditional Buddhism and Shintoism, but was and still is monotheistic in its nature. Its adherents believe in one god, *Tenri Ōno Mikoto* as the creator of all human beings. The spiritual concept of Tenri-kyō, which is located in Tenri City, Nara Prefecture is, in the Tenri-kyō terminology, *Axis Mundi* or *Jiba*. It has many branches in Japan and overseas as well. All their churches were built facing the direction of the headquarters of Tenri-kyō in Tenri City. The believers, while praying in their church, wherever it might be, inevitably face *Jiba* inside the headquarters of Tenri-kyō in Nara, just as the *qibla* of Islamic mosques all over the world are facing Makka. This design of their churches is supposed to have been influenced by Islam. NAKAYAMA Shōzen, second *Shimbashira*, or Supreme Leader of Tenri-kyō, was a grandson of the founder of Tenri-kyō, NAKAYAMA Miki and a graduate of the University of Tokyo, in which he studied religions and most probably knew about Islam and gave an instruction to church designers and builders that all the churches should face *Jiba* of Tenri City in 1934 so that all the believers can face the center of Tenri-kyō while praying.

Sulṭān Taymūr and Dīwān of Abū al-Ṣūfi

In 1924, SHIGA Shigetaka, a Japanese geographer, visited Muscat and was granted an audience with Sulṭān Taymūr b. Fayṣal. Taymūr abdicated the throne in 1932 in favor of his son Saʿīd and visited Japan around 1935 and lived there for a while, probably influenced by the meeting with SHIGA. Taymūr married a Japanese woman in Kobe, having one daughter, Buthayna, who is now living in Muscat. After the death of his wife, he left Japan and died in Mumbai, India.

As discussed above, the 1930s was a remarkable period in the relations between Japan and the Gulf. The opening of the mosques and this royal marriage are the most impressive events in history of the two regions. As in the case of Taymūr, many notable guests were coming to Japan from the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. Ḥāfiẓ Wahba, then Saudi Ambassador to London, came to Japan to attend the inauguration of the Tokyo Mosque. This is the first official contact between the two countries.

From Yemen, Prince al-Ḥusayn Yahyā and the accompanying delegation visited Japan for the same purpose as the Saudi envoy. The Yemenis prolonged their stay in Japan; the Prince left Japan on January 1939 and Ḥusayn al-Kibṣī, Minister of Endowments, spent about two years in Japan.²⁴ The Omani Sulṭān Saʿīd visited Kobe to see his father, too. The presence of the Yemeni delegation, and the Omani royal family as well, became the focus of media attention. Japanese newspapers reported interesting, amusing and sometimes sensational news about them during their stay in Japan.

However, from an academic point of view, the most interesting story about the cultural

²⁴ His grandson, Aḥmad al-Kibṣī, Vice Rector of Sanʿāʾ University, visited Japan in 2007.

encounter between Japan and the Gulf could be the publication of an Arabic book in Japan. In 1937, a printing house run by a Yemeni resident in Osaka published a *Dīwān* of Abū al-Şūfī Sa'īd b. Muslim, a famous Omani poet and politician. This book must be one of the earliest books published in Arabic in Japan, though, unfortunately, it was unknown to the Japanese and has been ignored for a long time by Japanese scholars on the Middle East. Those who were involved in publishing the *Dīwān* are Abū al-Şūfī, the author, al-Shaykh al-Azdī, a publisher, and Maṣṣūr b. Sulaymān al-Kathīrī al-Hadramī, who was running a printing house in Osaka.²⁵

I learned of the *Dīwān* only through the quotations in the book written by a Bahraini author, Khālid al-Bassām, and could not find an original copy in Japan. There have been so far no persuasive discussions on the publication of the *Dīwān* in Japan, the relations between the *Dīwān* and ex-Sultān Taymūr as well as the relations between the official delegation from Yemen and the Hadrami-Yemeni resident in Osaka.

Concluding Remarks

With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War and especially World War II, Japan disappeared from the Gulf in an instant. The Gulf countries' relations with Japan were also severed. The good and bad events and images of the Gulf and Japan vanished from people's memories like the case of the *Dīwān* of Abū al-Şūfī. Now would be a suitable occasion to dig up the old history of the mutual contacts between these two regions once again, while the economic presence of Japan is in decline in the Gulf. We have to fill in the blank left by the wars in order to forge multi-layered relations beyond oil with the Gulf states.

As we have seen in this article, multiple aspects of the relationship between Japan and the Gulf have been highlighted, while these features have been either unnoticed or ignored in previous studies. It goes without saying that for the later decades after the period of investigation in this article there is much more to be discovered about the relationship between the two, and we should also delve further into the period we have studied in this article.

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25 On this Arabic book, see [al-Bassām 2002: 117-123].

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