

# THE STATE OF TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES IN JAPAN

## INTRODUCTION

Not only did the suicide attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 change the position of the Middle East and the Islamic world in international society and its relationship with it, but they also stimulated wide-ranging discussion among governments, citizens, scholars, and educators about the importance of research and training on the Middle East. This discussion focused more and more on the importance of the role of education, as Islam and Muslims were increasingly equated with an image of terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

This article summarizes and analyzes two surveys made concerning the state of training and research in Japan about the Middle East. The first, in 2002–2003, surveyed the 620 members of the Japan Association for Middle East Studies (JAMES) using the membership database to get an overview of trends among researchers and research fields. This survey was part of a four-nation study (USA, France, Russia, and Japan) sponsored by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) of the United States. The present author reported on the results of the JAMES survey at the 2003 MESA (Middle East Studies Association of North America) annual meeting and published his report in the *Annals of the Japan As-*

*sociation for Middle East Studies (AJAMES)* [Miura 2004]. A similar survey was made in April 2005, to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of JAMES's foundation. I will compare these results with data collected in 2011.

The second survey was conducted by JAMES in 2005 under the auspices of the Japan Foundation to assess for the first time the state of Middle Eastern studies in Japan. Questionnaires were sent to universities, research institutes, and other institutions involved in research or training about the Middle East. Based on this survey, I will describe changes in research and training, and look at subsequent trends.<sup>2</sup>

## **1. RESEARCHERS AND RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS (ACADEMIC SOCIETIES)**

There are three academic associations in Japan concerned with Middle Eastern studies: the Society for Near Eastern Studies (founded in 1950, membership about 770), the Association for Islamic Studies in Japan (founded in 1963, membership about 420), and JAMES (founded in 1985, membership 718, as of March 2011). The Society for Near Eastern Studies is concerned with the study of West Asia and North Africa and focuses on both the pre-Islamic and the post-Islamic Middle East. The Association for Islamic Studies in Japan is not restricted to the Middle East but includes in its field of interest Islam in South and Southeast Asia. JAMES is the most recently established of the three (1985); as an association concerned with Area Studies focused on the Middle East, it has doubled its membership in the course of its 25 year history, from an initial 322 members to over 700 at present. It has been proactive about achieving an international academic presence and making contacts abroad, and in 1991 joined with the Chinese Association of Middle East Studies and the Korean Association of Middle East Studies to form the Asian Federation of Middle East Studies Associations. The Mongolian Association of Middle East Studies joined it in 2004. The Federation holds a biennial conference; the eighth was held in 2010 in Beijing.<sup>3</sup> It works with the European Association for Middle Eastern Studies (EURAMES) and the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) to hold the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES), and has organized panels at, and sent delegates to, previous WOCMES meetings in Mainz (2002), Amman (2006), and Barcelona (2010). JAMES publishes the *AJAMES* twice a year as an international journal, accepting contributions in languages other than Japanese; articles and

book reviews in English and other languages occupy more than half the page count. *AJAMES* is published as an electronic journal and is carried on the digital library site (CiNii) of the National Institute of Informatics. It can be downloaded from here anywhere in the world.

JAMES can be considered the representative body for Middle Eastern studies in Japan, and its membership gives a good idea of the state of Middle Eastern studies in that country. According to membership data supplied by JAMES,<sup>4</sup> there are currently 697 names listed (as of July 1, 2011). Let us first compare this data with the above-mentioned surveys conducted in 2002–2003 and April 2005, to identify what changes have occurred over the last decade.

1.1 Age, gender (Fig. 1)

The survey listed the age of members in five-year increments between the ages of 25 and 70. In 2005 the age groups 30–34 and 35–39 occupied

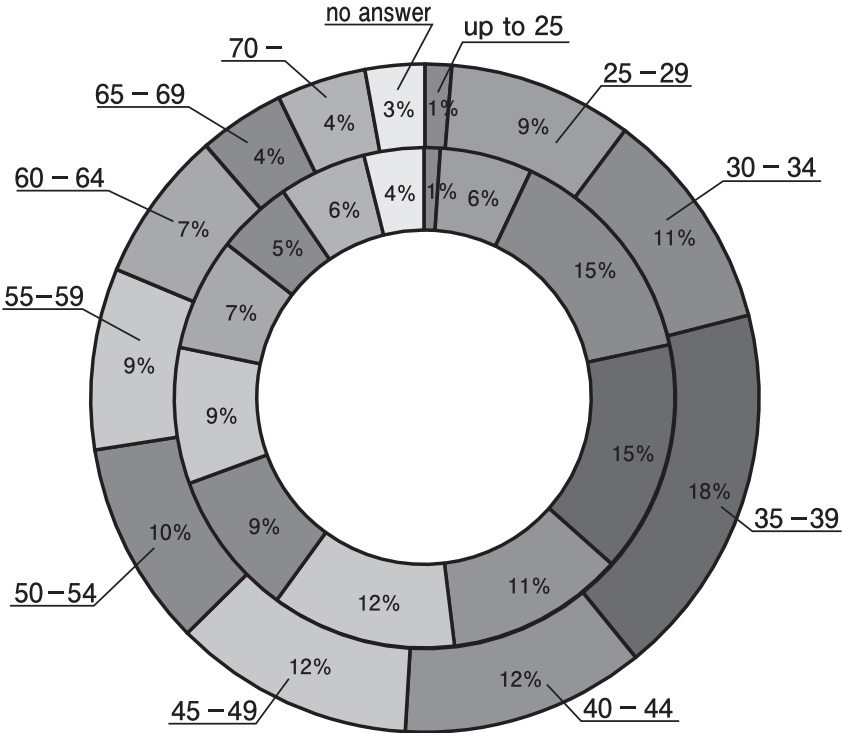


Fig. 1 JAMES Members (Age)  
(Inner circle 2005, Outer circle 2011)

15 % each of the total. In 2011 the age group 35–39 comprised 18 % of the total and the age groups on either side 11 %–12 % each. There was a gradual decline in percentage after this peak age group. Thus despite the fact that Japanese society as a whole is aging, JAMES is seeing an increase in young scholars, with more than half the membership aged 44 and less.

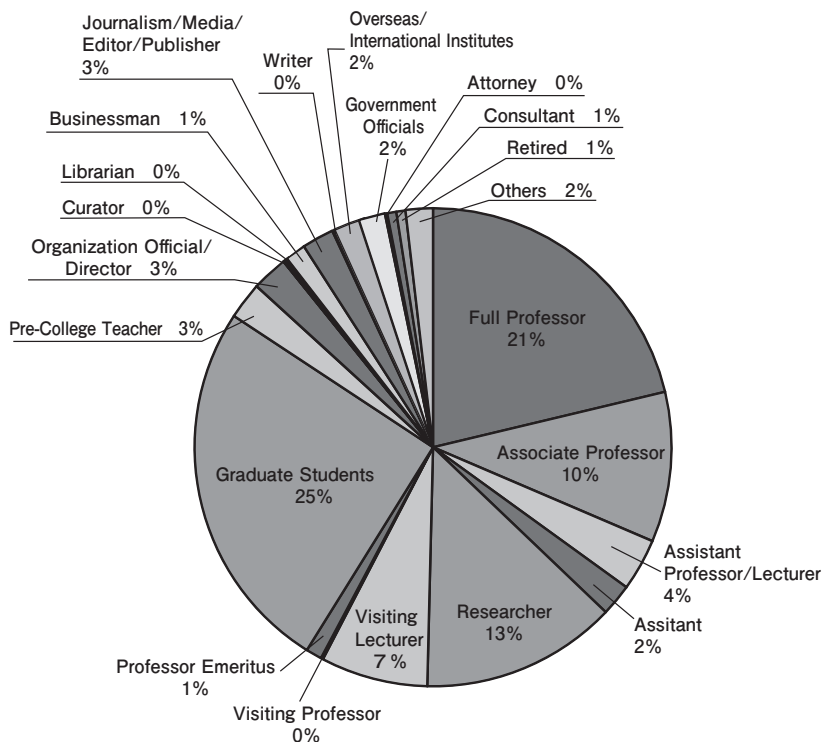
Women made up 28.1 % of the membership in 2002–2003, 32.2 % in 2005, and 38.1 % in 2011. In the age group 40–44, they comprise over half, at 54 %. In younger age groups, the proportion is 41 %–45 %, meaning that there is almost no difference in numbers between men and women. As a whole, Middle Eastern studies is a late-starting but up-and-coming academic field and as such it has attracted lively participation from undergraduates, graduate students, and women. In fact, the participation of young scholars and women in conferences and workshops is commonplace.

## 1.2 Affiliation, position (Fig. 2)

There has been almost no change since 2002–2003 in the numbers and ratios of the full-time staff of universities (professors, associate professors, lecturers, assistants). While around 240 members are employed at universities, their ratio to the whole has decreased because of the growing number of members. They comprised 55 % of the total membership in 2002–2003 and 49.7 % in 2011. On the other hand, the number of researchers has increased from 38 in 2002–2003 to 86 in 2011. These include full-time research staff in research institutes like the Institute of Developing Economies and the Institute of Energy Economics, as well as researchers on fixed terms in institutes attached to universities, as well as part-time staff. Part-time and fixed-term research staff, as well as part-time university lecturers, have generally finished their doctorates and can be considered the reserve, waiting for full-time academic positions. Little change was seen in the ratios of those associated with government departments, the diplomatic service and international bodies (5 %), media and publishing (3 %), and primary and school teachers (about 3 %). Thus, though the need for Middle Eastern studies has grown in these practical divisions, this growth is not reflected in increasing member numbers.

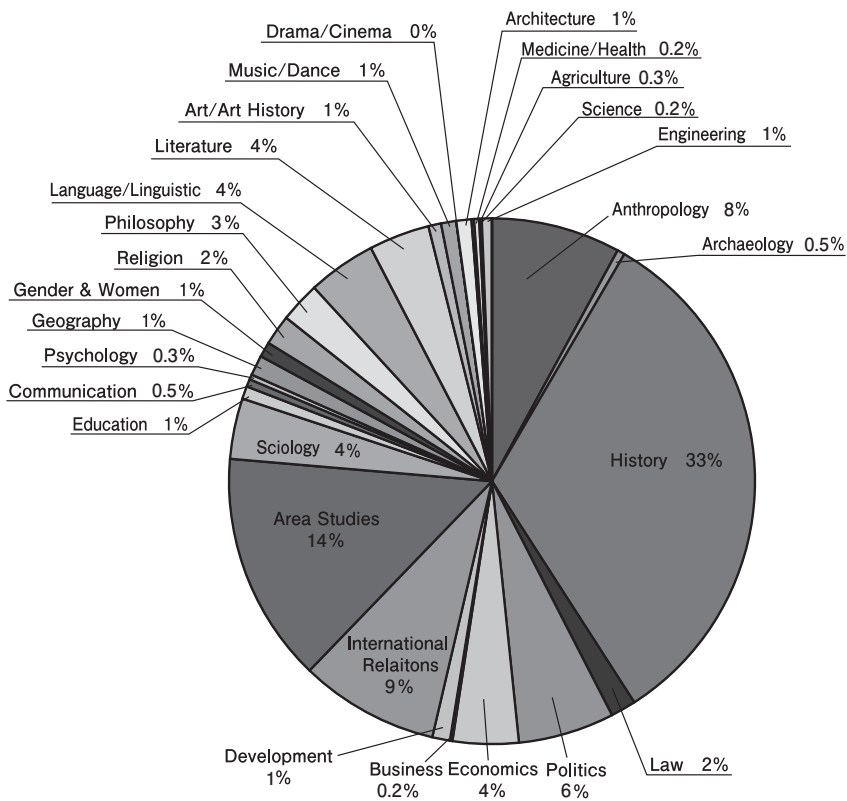
## 1.3 Disciplines (Fig. 3)

Respondents chose one main discipline and a sub-discipline from a pre-



**Fig. 2 JAMES Members in 2011 (Position)**

pared list of subjects. In the surveys of both 2005 and 2011, about one-third of members gave history as their main discipline. Broken down, there was an almost equal distribution between premodern and modern history. The next most numerous disciplines indicated were area studies (14.2%), international relations (8.6%), and anthropology (7.9%) in 2011; area studies showed an increase from 9% in 2002–2003 to 14.2% in 2011. Since JAMES is an association that promotes area studies, the high concentration of historians seems unexpected. Nevertheless, the study of history involves both language and culture, and a person needs to acquire language skills of the appropriate area and understand the local society and culture in order to study the Middle East as a region. Similarly, historians also make up approximately one-third of the membership of MESA. Humanities scholars specializing in language (4.2%), literature (3.7%), and philosophy (2.5%) are in relative decline, but such scholars may belong to other associations, like the Society for Near Eastern Studies. There are extremely few scholars of the natural sci-



**Fig. 3 JAMES Members in 2011 (Discipline)**

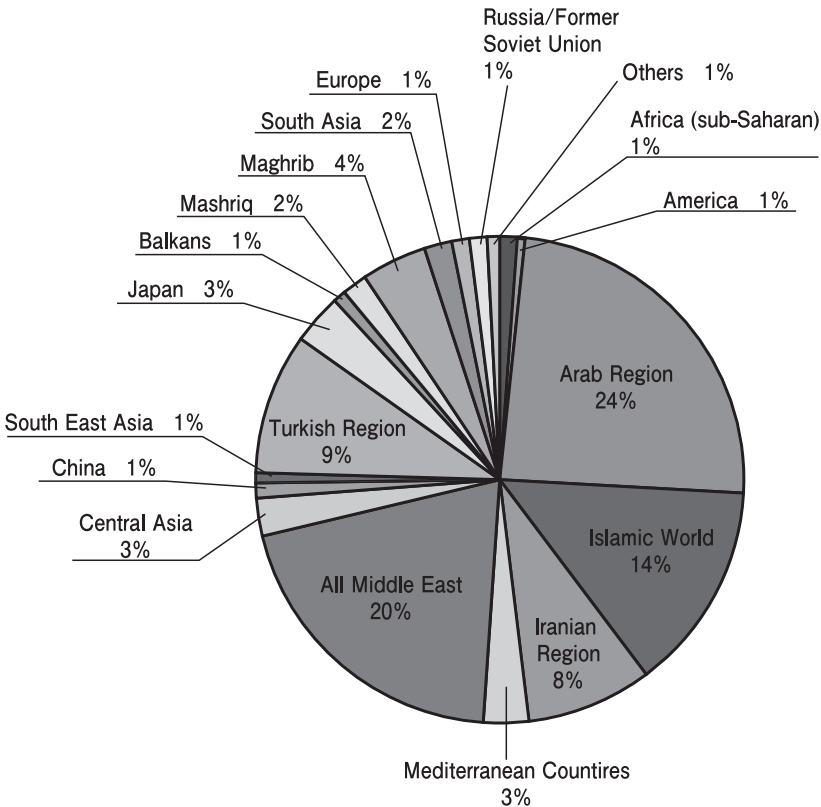
ences and psychology, and relatively few from the more practical fields, like development studies, but annual meeting reports have recently been seeing an increase in themes connected with these subjects.

**1.4 Regions studied (Figs. 4, 5)**

Two categories were given: large regions (Category A) and countries and areas (Category B). Various alternatives were given to answer from. In the surveys of both 2005 and 2011, under “large region,” respondents chose the Arab region (about one-quarter), then the Middle East as a whole (about 20 %), the Islamic world (about 12–14 %), and the Turkish and Iranian regions (each about 8 %–9 %). No great changes were observed, though there has been an increase in the number of those who chose “the Islamic world” (9.5 % in 2002–2003 and 13.9 % in 2011),

which indicates the emergence of Islam as a focus for research. There is also a growth in the number of scholars of South Asia and Europe who are joining JAMES, and this demonstrates that it is strengthening its identity as an association for Islamic studies.

Category B (countries and areas) allowed two choices, a main and a sub. The main countries studied were Egypt (17.8%), Iran (13.0%), Turkey (10.0%), the Ottoman Empire (6.3%), Israel (6.1%), Syria (5.6%), and Palestine (4.5%) (2011 percentages). Compared with MESA, there was a high proportion of scholars studying Egypt, Turkey, and the Ottoman Empire in JAMES, and this is an important feature of Middle Eastern studies in Japan. Interest in the Palestine-Israel problem has been growing since the 1970s, and the number of scholars who replied that their main interest was Israel has doubled, from 15 in 2002–2003 to 33 in 2011. Those studying the Gulf States have also doubled, from 13 in 2002–2003 to 25 in 2011.



**Fig. 4 JAMES Members in 2011 (Large Regions studied)**

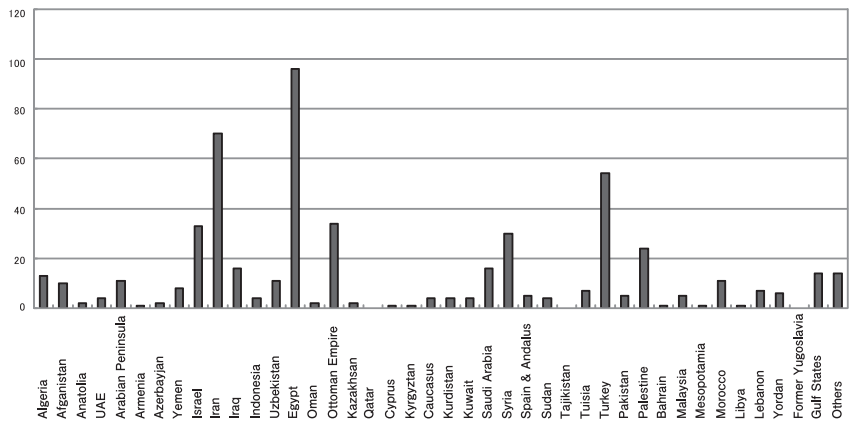


Fig. 5 JAMES Members in 2011 (Countries studied)

2. HIGHER EDUCATION FACILITIES OFFERING TRAINING ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST

2.1 Survey of institutions offering Middle Eastern studies

A questionnaire was drawn up by JAMES consisting of the following items: institution, type of study and enrollment numbers, teacher numbers, language training, study abroad, employment opportunities, and research activities. It also asked about lectures and courses run by universities using part-time staff, in order to get an idea of how widespread education about the Middle East is.

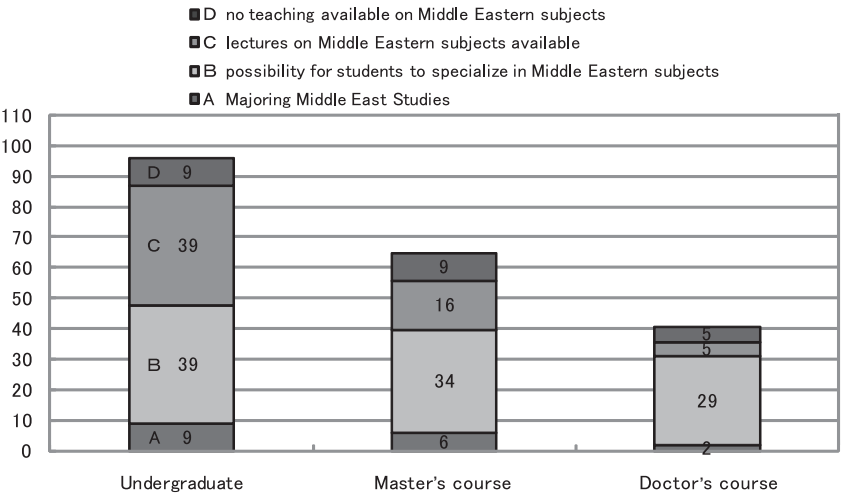
The questionnaire was sent to members of JAMES, asking them to report on the institution they were affiliated with (including part-time lecturers). A total of 188 survey forms were distributed and replies were received concerning 97 undergraduate facilities, 65 graduate schools (master’s level), and 42 graduate schools (doctor’s level). The survey itself was carried out between December 2005 and January 2006.

2.2 Undergraduate education

Question 2. Institution (Fig. 6)

Of the 97 replies received, 9 institutions (10 %) offered specialist education, with the whole course being connected with the Middle East (Group A). The majority of the institutions surveyed (39, occupying 40 %) had students who were specializing in the Middle East within their courses



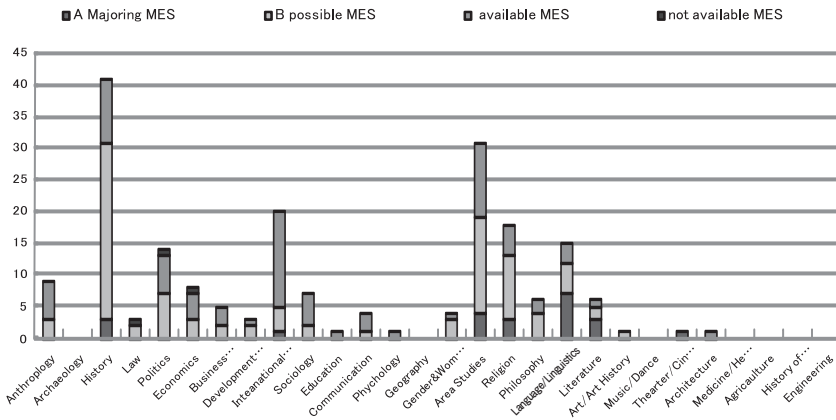


**Fig. 6 Educational Organizations**

(Group B). A further 39 institutions had staff specializing in the Middle East and offered lectures on Middle Eastern topics. However they did not have any students specializing in the Middle East (Group C). Despite the fact that Middle Eastern studies have expanded considerably in the last twenty years, there are still only a very few institutions that teach it as an independent specialist subject, and it tends to be taught within the higher disciplines, such as history, religion, and thought.

**Question 3. Type of study and enrollment numbers (Fig. 7)**

Regarding the main subject areas of each institution, 28 choices (based on the research fields on the JAMES members' database) were given, and each respondent could mark up to three. The most numerous subjects were history (41 institutions, 48%), area studies (31 institutions, 36%), international relations (20 institutions, 24%), religion (18 institutions, 21%), and languages/ linguistics (15 institutions, 18%). In Group A, three subject areas came above history: languages/ linguistics (7 institutions), literature (3 institutions), and area studies (4 institutions), while history dominated Group B (28 institutions). The most numerous specialist fields of members of JAMES in 2005 were history (35.5%), area studies (9.6%), and international relations (8.4%). Thus it is clear that the research fields of teaching staff correspond with the subject areas taught by the institution, and that students are taught according to the research area of the teaching staff. The higher relative importance of area studies demonstrates the heightened interest in this subject. Under-

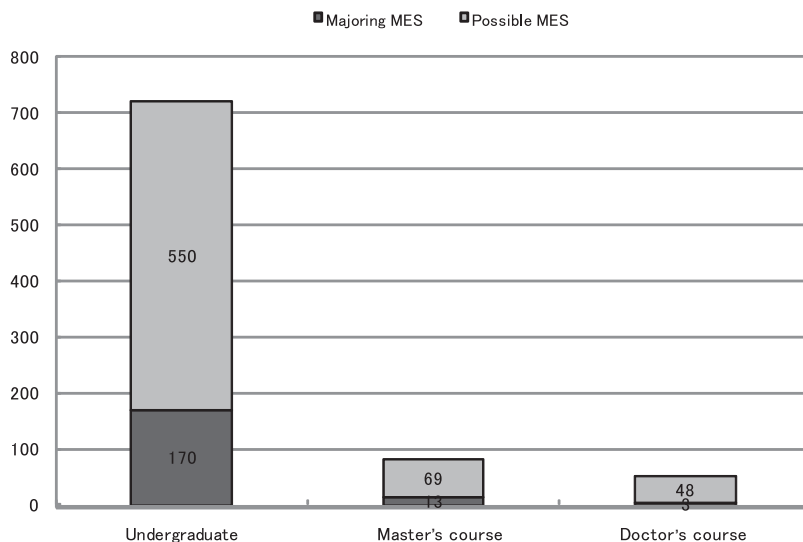


**Fig. 7 Subject Areas (undergraduate)**

represented subject areas include art and science and technology.

To ascertain enrollment numbers, respondents were asked approximate numbers of students who had studied Middle Eastern subjects between 2003 and 2005 (Fig. 8). The 9 institutions in Group A had around 170 enrolled in specialist courses about the Middle East, while the 39 institutions in Group B had about 550 students studying subjects concerning the Middle East. Thus there were around 700 undergraduates at universities studying the Middle East as their main subject. Most of them had chosen, or were required, to write their graduation dissertation on the Middle East (7 institutions in Group A, 31 institutions in Group B). The 39 institutions in Group C had 2,500 enrollments for lectures on Middle Eastern topics (institutions in Groups A and B also provided such lectures for the general student, and numbers would rise further if the number of those students was added). The Open University of Japan, which provides lectures through television, has held two courses, “An Introduction to Arabic” and “The Historical Development of the Muslim World,” and in the first year each course attracted more than 800 students. This demonstrates the rise of a general interest in the Middle East.

There was no great change in student numbers among those specializing in the Middle East in Groups A and B between 2003 and 2005. However an increase of around 300 persons was noticed in Group C. Question 3-3 asked whether there had been any increase or decrease in student numbers after the 9/11 attacks of 2001. There were 76 valid replies, of which 58 (77%) indicated no change; 13% indicated there had been an increase, and 9% indicated there had been a decrease. In other words, though there was no great change overall, there was both



**Fig. 8 Number of Students studying the Middle East**

an increase in students interested in the Middle East as well as an indication of disinterest and disregard, in the opposite direction. The ratio of female students was between 40 % and 60 % in 32 institutions (42 %), and between 61 % and 80 % in 18 institutions (24 %). Overall, women display a higher interest in the Middle East than men.

#### *Question 4. Teacher numbers*

The 89 valid replies revealed that about half the institutions had only one full-time member of staff teaching Middle Eastern subjects (51 institutions, 58 %); there were 14 institutions (16 %) with two full-time staff members, 6 institutions (7 %) with three, 8 institutions (9 %) with four, and 1 institution (1 %) with five or more. There were 135 specialist teachers. The main institutions with four or more specialist teachers were the Osaka University of Foreign Studies<sup>5</sup> (specialist courses in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish), the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (Arabic and Persian), and Shitennoji University/ International Buddhist University (Arabic and Linguistics). The institution with the largest number of such staff (six) was the Faculty of International Relations, Daito Bunka University. Ninety-four full-time staff affiliated with institutions in Groups A and B were in direct contact with students specializing in the Middle East, giving a student-teacher ratio of 7.7:1 on an annual average.

*Question 5. Language training*

This question asked about the main languages of the Middle East—whether or not they were taught, and if so at what level (elementary, intermediate, advanced). Arabic was the most popular language taught. Fifty institutions taught it at elementary level, 36 at intermediate level, and 19 at advanced level. If we consider that there were 48 institutions with students specializing in the Middle East (Groups A and B), this means that virtually all of them taught Arabic. Around the same number taught Persian and Turkish: elementary (20 and 24 respectively), intermediate (14 each), and advanced (6 and 7 respectively). Hebrew was taught at 13 institutions. Twenty institutions had native-speaker teachers conducting language training. There is clearly a heightened interest in, and a demand for, training in Middle Eastern languages, but there is also a lack of basic grammars and practice texts, as well as AV materials, for language training. It is hoped that institutions will in the future co-operate to develop teaching materials. Sumi Akiko and Sumi Katsunori have been conducting an ongoing survey by questionnaire among those learning Arabic at university, and have found that there is a correlation between an interest in the culture and a desire to study the language. This suggests the direction in which both teaching content and methodology may be improved [Sumi and Sumi 2010].

*Question 6. Study in the Middle East*

In the period 2003–2005, an annual average of around 30 students spent more than one year abroad, while around 80 students spent a shorter amount of time (less than one year) abroad. Most of those who studied abroad for more than a year appear to have been students at universities of foreign studies who were studying language. Twenty institutions had an exchange student program based on exchange agreements between universities. Institutions with which agreements were existed included Cairo University and Ain Shams University in Egypt, Mohammad V University in Morocco, Ankara University and Boğaziçi University in Turkey, and Teheran University and Shiraz University in Iran. Eighteen institutions had a scholarship scheme for studying abroad; this number did not change during the period surveyed.

*Question 7. Employment opportunities*

Generally very few students attained employment directly concerned with the Middle East. Thirty-two institutions (49 %) replied 0 %, and 30 institutions (46 %) replied 1 %–20 %. However, 2 institutions (the Kansai University of Foreign Studies and the Osaka University of Foreign

Studies) reported 21 %–40 %. Since both institutions specialize in languages, this figure may indicate that an employment route is opening up for those with linguistic abilities.

In 2002–2004, 40 to 45 students continued on to graduate school within their present university (specializing in the Middle East), and 24–39 went to graduate school in another university. This represents a figure of around 10 %, based on a total student number of around 700 (Question 3).

#### *Question 8. Research activities*

Regarding research activities centering on the particular institution, 14 institutions (17 %) held regular study meetings and lecture meetings on the Middle East; 8 institutions (11 %) had a budget for doing so, and 7 (9 %) published works. Inevitably, research activities are quite difficult to carry out, since the focus of these institutions is on education and training.

#### *Question 9. Lectures by part-time staff from other universities*

The questionnaire asked respondents about whether they taught part-time at other universities, in order to gauge the degree to which subjects related to the Middle East were taught outside the institutions covered. The results showed that a further 43 universities offered 49 general and specialist subjects related to the Middle East. The boundaries of education about the Middle East are thus continuing to expand.

#### *Question 10. Social activities*

This question asked about lectures on the Middle East and Islam in the form of public lectures and seminars. Respondents gave 190 lectures or seminars in 2003–2005. Sponsoring bodies included universities, municipal bodies, culture centers, and community groups. Lectures covered a broad area of interest—from current issues such as the Iraq question, to history, culture, and religion. Audiences were generally in two figures but lecture meetings attracting two or three hundred people were also reported. These seminars were run by lecturers on an individual basis, but social activities to encourage an understanding of the Middle East will be more effective if networks of lecturers can be formed.

### 2.3 Postgraduate education

Responses to a questionnaire following the same layout as the undergraduate questionnaire were received from 65 institutions providing

master’s and doctor’s level education, and from 42 institutions providing a doctor’s program. We will compare the results with those of undergraduate education and analyze points of difference.

*Types of institution*

Most universities divide their postgraduate education into two sections, the master’s program and the doctor’s program, though a number (7 universities) combine the two (including Humanities and Social Sciences at Tsukuba University and Asia-Africa Area Studies at Kyoto University). A large number of institutions have established graduate programs on top of their undergraduate specialist areas, but an increasing number are setting up graduate schools independent of the undergraduate faculties, like the above-mentioned Asia-Africa Area Studies at Kyoto University, International Development Studies at Nagoya University, and International Cultural Studies at Tohoku University.

*Classification*

Courses specializing in the Middle East (Group A): master’s courses 6, doctoral courses 2. Courses with students specializing in the Middle East (Group B): master’s courses 35, doctor’s courses 28. There is no drastic narrowing of access to graduate education, considering there were 9 institutions in Group A involved in undergraduate education and 39 in Group B. In fact, the independent graduate schools offer a broadening of access to specialized education. (See, Fig. 6 & 8)

*Type of study (Figs. 9 & 10)*

Like at undergraduate level, study of the Middle East takes place in history (master’s 46 %, doctor’s 42 %), area studies (master’s 41 %, doc-

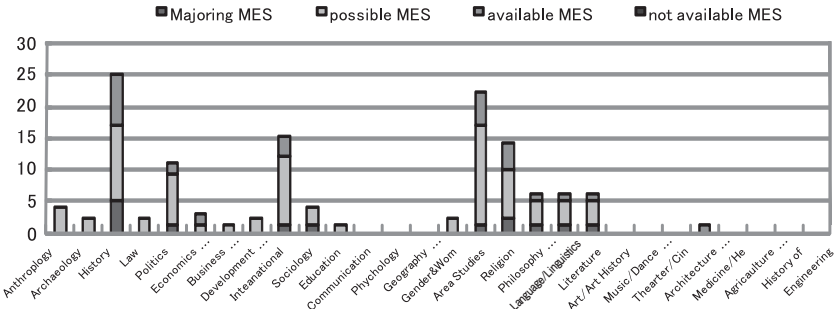
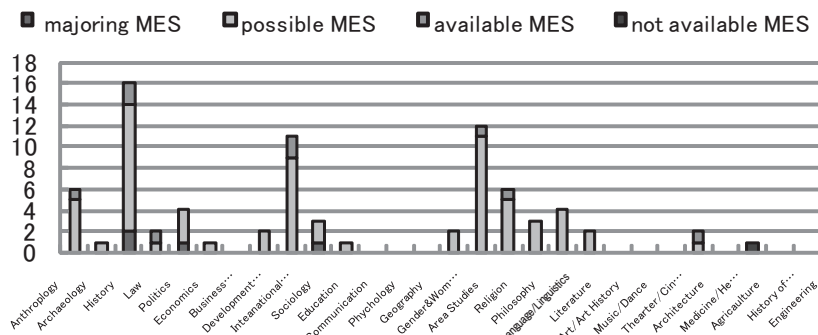


Fig. 9 Subject Areas (Master's)



**Fig. 10 Subject Areas (Doctor's)**

tor's 32 %), and international relations (master's 28 %, doctor's 29 %). At master's level, there is an increase in religion (14 institutions, 26 %) and politics (11 institutions, 20 %). In both the master's and the doctor's course, the gap between history and area studies narrows. However psychology, the arts, and science and technology remain under-represented.

### *Student numbers (Fig. 8)*

The graph above compares undergraduate and postgraduate numbers. It is estimated that about 700 undergraduates specialized in Middle Eastern subjects, between 70 and 80 in the master's program, and around 50 in the doctor's program (in all cases, including graduate students who may be abroad that academic year). The numbers indicate that one-tenth of undergraduates go on to post-graduate study, and 70 % of those who complete the master's course go on to the doctor's course. Around 300 students are enrolled in graduate school, 150 in each course. Since student members of JAMES in 2005 were around 150, this means half the graduate students joined the association. No great change occurred in graduate numbers, in either master's courses or doctor's courses after 9/11, 2 institutions showed a tendency to decrease and 7 institutions to increase. Whereas women were predominant at an undergraduate level, at the postgraduate level, in 21 institutions their ratio to men was even or above in the master's course and in 31 institutions in the doctor's course, but overall their ratio in the majority of institutions was below half.

### *Teacher numbers*

There were 108 full-time staff for the master's course and 65 for the doctor's course. Full-time teachers directly supervising graduate students

specializing in the Middle East and affiliated with institutions in Groups A and B numbered 93 for master's courses (virtually the same as for undergraduate education) and 58 for doctor's courses. In both parts of the course there was an average ratio between teachers and students of 1:1. More than half the institutions (35) had fewer than one full-time teacher for the master's course; for the doctor's course, 18 institutions had fewer than one teacher, and 16 more than two (totaling 24 institutions). In some cases, where the number of full-time teachers was given as 0, there were graduate students specializing in the Middle East, but no full-time staff. The scope of study undertaken by graduate students is broad and the fields a single full-time teacher can cover are limited, which makes it very difficult to provide a systematized graduate-level education. Down to the present, graduate students in the Tokyo and Kansai areas have been able to remedy this deficiency by auditing courses at other universities, but in the future it will be necessary to build a cooperative education system, where units of study from different institutions will be recognized and joint supervision will be possible.

### *Study abroad in the Middle East*

There was no great change in numbers and times abroad between 2003 and 2005. Around 10 students spent more than a year abroad during the master's course and around 15 a period less than a year; and 12 students spent more than a year abroad during the doctor's course and around 10 a period less than a year. In total numbers, fewer graduate students study abroad compared with undergraduates. Around one-third of the total number of students study abroad, either long term or short term, during the master's course, whereas about half study in the Middle East during the doctor's course. Some institutions have a support system for those studying abroad in the form of an exchange program (14 for the master's course, 12 for the doctor's course). Others have a scholarship system (11 for the master's course, 10 for the doctor's course). In any case, only a quarter of the institutions support studying abroad. There is a need to strengthen systems to promote study abroad.

## **3. SURVEY OF RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS CONNECTED WITH THE MIDDLE EAST**

JAMES drew up a questionnaire about the types of research, language use, foreign field trips, and research activities and forwarded it to members to be answered concerning the research facility with which they



themselves were affiliated (including part-time teachers). It was sent to 32 institutions, and replies were received from 26.

### *Question 1. Organization*

Four institutions (the Middle East Research Institute of Japan, the Middle Eastern Culture Center of Japan, the Institute for Cultural Studies of Ancient Iraq of Kokushikan University, and the Institute of Islamic Sciences, Waseda University) were devoted to research on the Middle East as a whole (Group A). Seven institutions had departments conducting research on the Middle East (Group B). The remaining 15 had researchers specializing in the Middle East but no specialist research division. Institutions in Group B had a greater number of full-time researchers than those in Group A: the Institute of Developing Economies (10), the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan (11), the Institute of Asian Cultures, Sophia University (5), the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (5), and the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo (5). In 2006, the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) started an Islamic Area Studies program to promote area studies and six full-time staff members were employed and deployed to research units (see below).

### *Question 2. Type of research*

Like with the questionnaire on educational institutions, up to three fields of research could be chosen from a list of 28. In order of popularity, the fields were area studies (10 institutions, 38%), international relations (8 institutions, 31%), economics (8 institutions, 31%), history (8 institutions, 31%), and politics (7 institutions, 27%). Compared with educational institutions, there was a smaller number of research institutions dealing with history, while there was an increase in those dealing with modern economics and politics.

### *Question 3. Researchers*

Twenty-three of the institutions had full-time researchers specializing in the Middle East and also conducted research activities using part-time researchers and teams of researchers brought in from outside for specific research programs. Thirteen of the institutions had visiting researchers invited from abroad.

### *Question 4. Middle Eastern language use*

This question asked the number of researchers who used the languages

of the Middle East for their research: first was Arabic (39 full-time and 35 part-time researchers), followed by Persian (20 full-time and 4 part-time researchers) and Turkish (18 full-time and 5 part-time researchers). It is clear that local languages are vital for research, whether history or modern politics and economics.

*Question 5. Fieldwork in the Middle East*

Long-term fieldwork (longer than one year) was undertaken by two or three people annually, far fewer than would be expected. However, short-term projects were actively carried out annually by an average of sixty to seventy people (in total). The fact that there are so few long-term surveys is probably due to the fact that the numbers of full-time staff are limited in whatever institution, so that it is difficult to send researchers away for a long period without jeopardizing regular activities.

*Question 6. Research activities*

Fourteen institutions held regular study meetings. Between 8 and 10 institutions held meetings within Japan five times a year or more, while an average of between 13 and 14 international symposia were held each year. Fourteen institutions published research reports. Various types of research project were in progress. In terms of budget, 6 projects had a budget of between 5,010,000 yen and 10,000,000 yen, while 18 went above 10,010,000 yen. Conspicuous among such large projects as the latter are those connected with economics and petroleum energy. Many of these projects are carried out by project teams with researchers from outside the sponsoring institution, rather than internally from within the institution.

## 4. GRANTS

The database provided through the National Institute of Informatics gives information about projects receiving Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research awarded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), listing the “research project selected” and the “annual research report.” We searched the database using the keywords “Middle East,” “Islam,” and “Arab” and drew up a table dividing the data found into two four-year periods, 1998–2001 and 2002–2005. We also did an additional study for projects selected in the period 2007–2010. Middle East-related subjects increased remarkably from 75 in 1998–2001 to 124 in 2002–2005, an increase of about 66 %. In monetary terms, the grants

increased twofold between the two periods, from 278,000,000 yen to 544,000,000 yen. Of note is a research project in the grants category “Scientific Research on Innovative Areas” that was carried out between 1997 and 2001, entitled “A Dynamic Study of the Contemporary Islamic World—Islamic Area Studies” (annual grant of 100,000,000 yen over five years). However, as can be seen in the table below, most of the grants-in-aid were received for projects under 2,000,000 yen (40 %–60 %). The number of projects receiving grants in the period 2007–2010 had further increased by 3 times to 368, and the total value of the grants had increased nearly 3.3 times, to 1,805,500,000 yen. This can be attributed to the influence of grants-in-aid policy as a whole, with an overall increase in research funding and greater funding for young researchers, as well as the influence of the fact that Islam and Muslims, not only in the Middle East but also in South Asia, Southeast Asia, China, Africa, Europe, and the United States, have become a hot issue. Also, as I will describe in more detail below, since 2006 two large programs have been running side-by-side, the Islamic Area Studies program of the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) and the Need-Based Program for Area Studies of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

**Table 1 Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research**  
(Distribution according to budget amount)

Total budget (yen)	1998–2001	Ratio	2002–2005	Ratio	2007–2010	Ratio
Under 1,000,000	19	26 %	18	14 %	59	16 %
1,000,001–2,000,000	27	38 %	33	27 %	85	23 %
2,000,001–3,000,000	9	13 %	31	25 %	58	16 %
3,000,001–5,000,000	5	7 %	20	16 %	87	24 %
5,000,001–10,000,00	5	7 %	9	7 %	30	8 %
10,000,001–20,000,000	4	6 %	8	6 %	35	10 %
20,000,001–50,000,000	3	4 %	5	4 %	11	3 %
Over 50,000,001	0	0 %	0	0 %	2	1 %

As Table 2 below makes clear, a large number of the grants were made under the category of Scientific Research, with projects classified as Scientific Research B and C doubling in number between 1998–2001 and 2002–2005. Grants for JSPS Fellows are awarded to JSPS Fellows

both within Japan and abroad. In 2007–2010 there was a sharp rise in awards in the categories Scientific Research A and B for grants over 5,000,000 yen.

**Table 2 Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research  
(Distributions according to Category)**

	1998–2001	%	2002–2005	%	2007–2010	%
For Scientific Research (A)	2	3 %	7	6 %	22	6 %
For Scientific Research (B)	4	5 %	19	15 %	57	15 %
For Scientific Research (C)	18	24 %	35	28 %	89	24 %
For Young Scientists (B)		0 %	17	14 %	76	20 %
For Scientific Research on Priority Areas		0 %	4	3 %	3	1 %
For JSPS Fellows	27	36 %	34	27 %	106	29 %
For Exploratory Research	6	8 %	8	6 %	13	4 %
For International Scientific Research/ Scientific Research (S)	5	7 %		0 %	1	0.3 %
Others	13	17 %		0 %	1	0.3 %
TOTAL	75		124		368	

As Table 3 below detailing grants in terms of field of study shows, Asian history (of whatever period) holds a dominant position, but in proportional terms it fell around 10 % between 1998–2001 and 2002–2005. In contrast, 11 projects (9 %) about the Middle East were selected in the new category of area studies in 2002–2005. In terms of subject, there was an increase in topics focusing on the Middle East and Islam in Europe and the United States, and in South and East Asia. Thus researchers were not limited to those studying the Middle East but included those studying neighboring regions. In 2007–2010, we saw the establishment and expansion of area studies as a field of study, with a sevenfold increase in the number of projects chosen (72). There has also been an increase in the projects applied for and selected in hitherto under-represented fields such as science and technology, and sociology. The number of projects selected within the area of fieldwork-based an-

thropology and of the languages and literatures of the Middle East, and their proportion to the whole, have also shown an increase.

**Table 3 Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research  
(Distributions according to Field of Study)**

Field of Study	1998–2001	%	2002–2005	%	2007–2010	%
Anthropology	8	11 %	8	6 %	37	10 %
Asian History	21	28 %	21	17 %	84 (Including western history, history in general)	23 %
Economics	5	7 %	5	4 %	9	2 %
Religion	5	7 %	10	8 %	15	4 %
Politics	2	3 %	5	4 %	8	2 %
Literature/ Languages	3	4 %	5	4 %	31	8 %
Thought	2	3 %	5	4 %	18	5 %
Area Studies	0	0 %	11	9 %	72	19 %
International Relations	0	0 %	7	6 %	15	4 %
Art	2	3 %	4	3 %	15	4 %
Archaeology	1	1 %	3	2 %	5	1 %
Education	1	1 %	4	3 %	14	4 %
Sociology	3	4 %	11	9 %	20 (Including Gender)	5 %
Others	21	28 %	25	20 %	25 (Law 7, Science and Technology 14)	7 %
TOTAL	74		124		372	

## 5. ISSUES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

In the years 2002–2003, JAMES joined with partner institutions in an initiative of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) of the United States to survey the state of Middle Eastern studies in the United States, France, Russia, and Japan. The study of the Middle East in France and Russia strongly reflects the position of Oriental studies within the humanities in Europe, whereas in the United States, while the Middle East continues to be taught at an undergraduate level in the form of Oriental (Asian) studies, the establishment of centers to study it on a regional ba-

sis, where scholars from different fields within the university are brought together, has boosted interdisciplinary and integrated approaches, financially supported by the government. In Japan, Middle Eastern studies fall between the European and American patterns, and while the humanities (history, literature, thought, and religion) form their main stream, interdisciplinary area studies have appeared in recent years.

Though Middle Eastern studies have spread among institutions throughout Japan, there is no single, independent institution that acts as a focus for their teaching and research. Important results have been attained through large-scale research projects (such as “Urbanism in Islam” (1988–90) and “Islamic Area Studies”) that have been conducted among networks of scholars that cut across institutional lines. As the 2005 survey made clear, such cross-institutional teaching networks are necessary in order to be able to respond to long-term interest in the subject among students and the public at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and public seminars.

In 2006, the National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU) launched an “Islamic Area Studies” program, as a continuation of the “Islamic Area Studies” project conducted between 1997 and 2002 at the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology at the University of Tokyo under the leadership of Sato Tsugitaka, and funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Joint research is conducted by a network of research centers, consisting of Waseda University (the hub center), the University of Tokyo, Sophia University, Kyoto University, and the Toyo Bunko (Oriental Library). The program, which is under the direction of Sato Tsugitaka (died in April 2011), seeks to promote research activities on a network basis and to form, and reinforce, a base for Islamic Area studies. The promotion of area studies is one of the aims of the NIHU, and it has since inaugurated two further programs, Contemporary Chinese Area Studies and Contemporary India Area Studies. Young scholars from the fields concerned are employed as full-time researchers and deployed among the various research centers for a five-year term. During the first stage, which ran from 2006 to 2010, international conferences were held in Kuala Lumpur, Cairo, and Kyoto, and a large amount of research results was published, in both Japanese, English, and other languages. The second five-year stage of the program began in 2011. The IAS Center at the Toyo Bunko, in cooperation with JAMES, is in the process of compiling a data base catalogue of Middle Eastern studies in Japan since 1868, and it is available online ([http://www.tbias.jp/document\\_research.cgi](http://www.tbias.jp/document_research.cgi)). The number of items has been increasing by about 1,500 items every year

since 1989 and 46,700 items had been registered by the end of 2010, as shown in Fig. 11).

Also, in the period 2006–2010, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has been operating a “Program for Area Studies Based on the Needs of Society.” It promotes research and training in Japanese universities of areas in which Japan has national interests and fosters research to meet such needs. A distinctive feature of the program is that it is not limited to scholars in the narrowest sense of the word but includes NPOs, journalists, and others working in the designated area. In 2005, it focused on the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and in 2006 included Central Asia and South Asia. It funds 11 programs. Those concerning the Middle East are “The Middle East within Asia: Law and Economics” (project leader: Professor Kato Hiroshi, Hitotsubashi University) and “Searching for Coexistence and a New Regional Concept in Connecting the Middle East and Asia” (project leader: Professor Sakai Keiko, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies), which ran for a five-year period. In addition, in 2006 the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies inaugurated its own Research and Educational Project for Middle East and Islamic Studies, which sponsors seminars aimed at graduate students and provides information about the Middle East by translating newspaper articles from local sources into Japanese and distributing them in the form of an internet magazine (News from the Middle East).

We have seen from the above that research and teaching about the Middle East and Islam is making active progress through the assistance

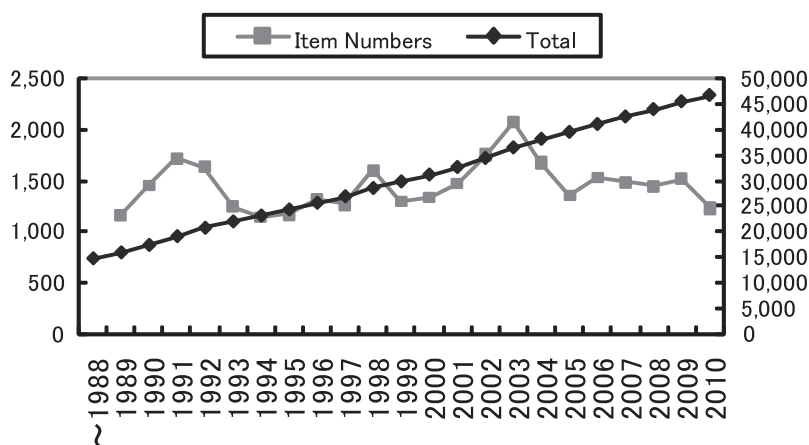


Fig. 11 Number of Articles and Monographs on the Middle East<sup>6</sup>

particularly of grants-in-aid from the Japanese government (especially the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). On the other hand, there has been little discussion about the organization of research activities or research and teaching methodologies. For example, the late anthropologist Otsuka Kazuo asked whether “Islamic area studies” means “area studies on Islam” or “studies on the Islamic area.” Haneda Masashi discusses the concept of the “Islamic World” in a number of works including *Isuramu sekai no sozo* (The creation of the Islamic World) [Haneda 2005] and “Modern Europe and the Creation of the Islamic World” [Haneda 2007]. He points out that the concept of the “Islamic World” did not exist historically but was created in the modern period and criticizes the type of historiography that focuses solely on a specific nation-state or region. He has organized a research project (“Eurasia in the Modern Period, Towards a New World History”), working on a cross-sectional historical study (world history). I have defined “Islamic area studies” as “area studies paying attention to Islamic factors.” Because an area is not considered a fixed entity, a comparative study between different regions is necessary to identify how Islamic factors work [Miura 2002]. In her presidential address at MESA 2009 entitled “How Do We ‘Know’ the Middle East?” Virginia Aksan spoke of the spirit of utility and efficacy that has been given priority in area studies (humanities and social sciences), and of the growing “fractionalized marketing” of our disciplines. “We need,” she said, “to define and disseminate unique imaginaries of Middle Eastern societies that can be understood by academic and public audiences,” in order to overcome the barriers set up by individual specialist disciplines and regions, while engaging in “curiosity research,” the evidentiary explorations which are at the heart of academic life [Aksan 2010]. The environment in Japanese universities and research institutes since 2001 is very similar: the expansion of research funding has simultaneously encouraged both fractionalization and hypertrophy. The methodology and content of research and teaching are very closely connected with the funding and structures that support them physically. I will be happy if the data gained from the surveys outlined in this report proves useful for thinking about how research and teaching should go ahead in Japan as well as in the countries of Asia, Europe, and America.

—Originally written in Japanese



## NOTES

- 1 Morgan and Walker studied descriptions and pictures in four representative textbooks (world history, world cultures) used in public schools in the United States. They pointed out their concern that Islam was portrayed as a backward and violent religion that repressed women and that there were no photos of women in modern dress or of people of the middle class [Morgan and Walker 2008]. The National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education (NITLE) created a website, the Arab Culture and Civilization Website, in 2002, to provide on-line resources about Arab culture in order to correct the stereotypical image of Arabs and Islam and foster an unbiased understanding. This website is now managed by the Middle East Policy Council (<http://acc.teachmideast.org/>). In Japan, a questionnaire to gauge the perception of Islam among high school students found that students saw it as backward, restrictive, aggressive, and impractical, even though Japanese textbooks described both its distinctive features and the universality of Islamic culture. There was a clear gap between knowledge and perception [Miura 2006].
- 2 The Japan Foundation holds the copyright of this survey report. I would like to express my gratitude to the foundation for permission to use the report in my paper.
- 3 JAMES published a special issue concerning the 4th AFMA Beijing Conference in its journal *AJAMES* 18(2) in 2003. Lee Hee Soo contributed his paper, "The Present Situation of Middle East & Islamic Studies in Korea: 2001–2006" in *NART*, no. 2 in 2007 [Lee 2007].
- 4 I would like to express to JAMES Board of Directors for the permission to use this data.
- 5 This university was incorporated into Osaka University in 2007.
- 6 The data is given by Goto Atsuko, who has been engaged in editing this bibliographical database since 1990.

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