

PREFACE

When The Toyo Bunko began its new Asian studies program in 2003, one of the aims was to select two “supradisciplinary” areas of study as major academic activities in the Research Department. They are (1) Contemporary Chinese Studies, conducted under a research agenda calling for analysis, including historical and cultural, of the whole specter of contemporary China and (2) Contemporary Islamic Studies, concentrating on the development of parliamentarism and comparative constitutional systems in the Middle Eastern countries of Egypt, Iran, and Turkey. This present volume in the TBRL series has been compiled in relation to the latter and its research efforts over the last six years (2003–2008).

These efforts have been concerned with analyzing source materials available in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish regarding parliamentary politics in the Middle East and comparing the related ideas and resulting constitutional systems established in the nations of the region, in an effort to come to some integrated understanding of the historical role and contemporary significance of the nation-state in the Islamic Middle East. In 2003 three groups covering Egypt, Iran, and Turkey, respectively, were organized to begin collecting the extant parliamentary records preserved in those countries and catalogue them into a database. The next step in the work was to read the documents and analyze them for the purpose of comparing parliamentary ideas and the constitutional systems in Egypt, Iran, and Turkey. However, since the document styles of the three languages were quite different, it was initially very difficult for us to understand the relative meaning of the key terms related to parliamentarism and constitutional systems in each country, but through joint discussions among the three groups held at the end of every fiscal year, we were gradually able to deepen our understanding of the parliamentary records and their respective systems in comparative terms.

As a result of these activities, the Toyo Bunko was able to publish three volumes of research, *Agenda Index of the Minutes of the Iranian National Assembly* (in English, 2005), *A Guide to Egyptian Parliamentary Records* (in English, 2007), and *Toruko ni okeru gikaisei no tenkai* トルコにおける議会制の展開 (The Development of the Turkish Parliamentary System) (in Japanese, 2007). This volume, which is based on these preliminary publications, can be called a culmination of our achievements over the last six years and will hopefully prove to be a cornerstone for further developments in the comparative study of parliamentarism and constitutional systems in the Middle East and Central Asia.

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