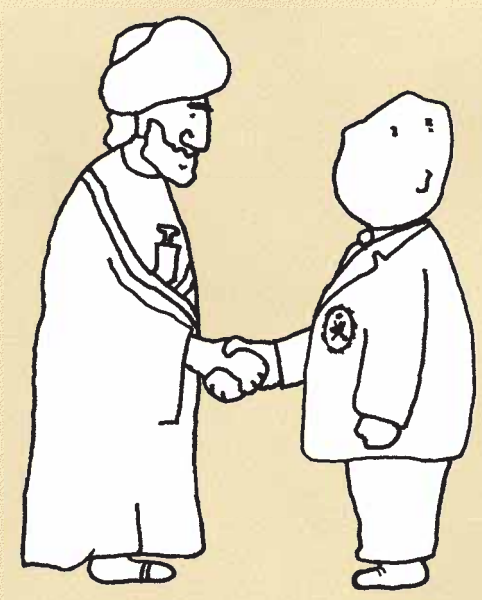




Oman and Japan

Unknown Cultural Exchange between the two countries



Haruo Endo



This book is basically a translation of the Japanese edition of “Oman Kenbunroku; Unknown cultural exchange between the two countries”

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Haruo Endo



Haruo Endo (b.1933), Oman Expert, author of “Oman Today” , “The Arabian Peninsula” , “Records of Oman” and Japanese translator of “A Reformer on the Throne-Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said”. Awarded the Order of HM Sultan Qaboos for Culture, Science and Art (1st Class) in 2007.

Preface

In 2004, I was requested to give a lecture in Muscat to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Oman-Japan Friendship Association, sponsored jointly by the Oman-Japan Friendship Association, Muscat Municipality, the Historical Association of Oman and the Embassy of Japan. It was an unexpected honour for me to be given such an opportunity. The subject of the lecture was “History of Exchange between Japan and Oman”.

After I had started on my preparation, I learned that there was no significant literature on this subject. I searched for materials from scratch. I then organized the materials relating to the history of human exchange, the development of trade since the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the cultural exchanges between both countries.

The lecture meeting was a success with over 140 attendees, including dignitaries such as the Chairman of the Oman-Japan Friendship Association cum Advisor to HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University, the Japanese Ambassador and distinguished guests.

Having been recognized for my caretaking activities towards Omani students in Japan, my contribution to the promotion of exchange between students of Japan and Oman, publication of books on Oman and assistance in the promotion of business between both countries, I received the “His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Order for Culture, Science and Arts – First Class” in 2007. It was really a greater honour than I deserve.

After receipt of the honourable Order, I collected the drafts of the lectures and reorganized and elaborated them into a book entitled “Oman Kenbunroku” (literally, “Records of Oman” in Japanese) and published it in Japan in 2009. It is with my great pleasure that I can now publish this English book entitled “Oman and Japan” (basically the translation of “Oman Kenbunroku”), strongly recommended by my Omani and Japanese friends so that Omani people and peoples of other nationalities as well can get acquainted with the history of exchange between Japan and Oman.

I shall be delighted if the readers find the book useful and instructive.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to HE Said bin Khalfan al Harthy, Advisor on Information Affairs, Ministry of Information, for making the publication of this book possible; Ms. Rosemary Hector, Ministry of Information, for her coordination role; and HE Sayyid Ali bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, former Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, for giving me the chance initially to write a book in Japanese on the history of exchange between Oman and Japan; HE Salim bin Nasser Al Maskri, Secretary General of the Council for Higher Education, for his continuous suggestions and support; Sheikh Mohamed Bahwan and Mr. Akira Okabe, Senior Managing Director of Toyota Motor Corporation, for inspiring me to publish the book in English.

Moreover, I would like to thank Dr. Rosalind Buckton-Tucker for her elaboration of my draft manuscript; Messrs. Mike Kanagawa and Yutaka Endo for their helping hand in the translation work.

Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to my beloved wife, Setsuko, for her continued support.

Haruo Endo

May 2012

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Chapter 1: What is Oman like?

1. Geography

Rich in diversity

Oman is located between 16°40 and 26°20 latitude north, and 51°50 and 59°40 longitude east. It lies on the north-eastern coast of the Oman Sea and on the Arabian Sea in the south and shares borders with the UAE in the north and the north-west, Saudi Arabia in the west, and Yemen in the south-west. The coastline extends 700 kilometres towards the south-east along the Oman Sea from the Musandam Peninsula and 1,000 kilometres towards the south-west along the Arabian Sea, totalling totalling 3,165 kilometres, including islands. It is about 309,500 square kilometres in area, two-thirds that of Japan. About 3% of the land area consists of plains, about 15% is mountains and the rest, about 82%, consists of barren desert.

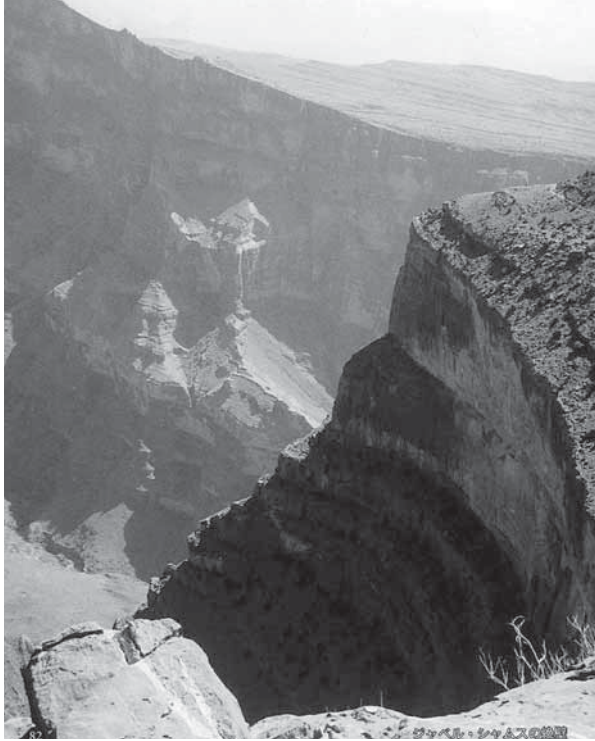
Although most people think of desert landscape in connection with the Arabian Peninsula, Oman's geography is rich in diversity, featuring mountains and plains as well as deserts. The Western Hajar and Eastern Hajar mountain ranges extend along the Oman Sea; there is also the Dhofar mountain range consisting of the Qamar, Qara and Samhan mountains. The Musandam Peninsula, facing the Strait of Hormuz and the starting point of the Western Hajar mountain range, is comprised mostly of mountains of over 1,800 metres high, some of which soar straight from the sea. As the landscape is just the same as the fjords of Northern Europe, the region is sometimes called the 'Norway of Arabia'. The Musandam Peninsula and Madha within the borders of the UAE are enclaves of Oman.

Peaks higher than 2,500 metres lie in the Western Hajar mountain range. The highest peak is Jabal Shams in the Jabal al Akhdhar mountains (Green mountains), which is 3,017 metres high. In the Arabian Peninsula, it follows An-Nabi Shuayb in Yemen, 3,760 metres high, and Jabal Soudah in Saudi Arabia, 3,133 metres high. In comparison, the highest mountain in Japan is Mt. Fuji, 3,776 metres high. To the north of Muscat lie the Batinah Plains, 15-80 kilometres wide and more than 300 kilometres long, a coastal strip between the Western Hajar mountain range and the Oman Sea. People there are engaged in agriculture, taking advantage of the groundwater discharge through the unique irrigation system of Oman, called Falaj in Arabic, and well water pumped up from underground, which originates from rainfalls on the Western Hajar mountain range with moisture from the Oman Sea adding to it. There is arable land also on the plains surrounding southern Salalah, the second largest city in Oman. To the west and the south-west lie the deserts that continue to the Rub al Khali Desert in Saudi Arabia, the largest in the Arabian Peninsula. Another desert is Rimal al Sharqiyah to the south of Muscat. It is a comparatively small one, but is well-known for various features of its geology, geography, fauna and flora and so on.

A Geologist's paradise – its Ophiolite

The geography of Oman can be divided into the Hajar mountain ranges extending along the Oman Sea and the comparatively flat rocky deserts of the rest of the country. The Hajar mountain ranges are made up of nappe (a large sheet-like body of rock that has been moved intact far from its original position) of ophiolite.. On the other hand, the comparatively flat desert region, including the Dhofar region, is made up of foundation rock of the stable Arabian table land created during the pre-Cambrian period (Palaeozoic era) and covered by the geological layer of the late Cretaceous period to the Tertiary period. [1] The Pangea supercontinent split into northern Laurasia and Gondwana continents and the split created the Tethys Sea, at the central oceanic range of

which marine crusts are produced through volcanic eruption and hydrothermal activities. About 9,500 years ago, the plate on which the African continent and the then contiguous Arabian Peninsula were based started moving towards the north, separated from the Gondwana continent. This plate and the ocean plate of the Tethys Sea collided violently and the upturned ocean plate overlapped part of the later Arabian Peninsula. The lithified plate of this is the ophiolite in Oman. Ocean plates consist of ocean crust lying four to seven kilometres below the bottom of the sea and the underlying mantle. We can see the upper ocean plate almost in its original form because it has overrun the land.



The cliffs of Jabal Shams

Moreover, ophiolite in Oman is the biggest example in the world, with a thickness of 15 kilometres, and Oman has become a paradise for geologists around the world. A great number of researchers visit Oman annually from Japan. It was announced recently by researchers that the rock, identified as 'peridotite', has the potential to absorb massive volumes of carbon dioxide and to serve as a 'carbon sink' that is potentially far more effective than the Amazon rainforests. According to them, peridotite reacts with atmospheric carbon dioxide to form solid carbonates such as marble and limestone. It is an interesting finding. [2]

2. Climate

Half a year 'Hell', half a year 'Paradise'

The country's climate varies according to region. In Muscat and Batinah, it is hot and humid; it almost never rains in summer, and only a little in winter. The summer season is between April and October; between May and August in particular, the maximum temperatures soar to over 45 degrees Centigrade and the minimum rise to 30 degrees. It is so hot that we could fry eggs on the bonnet of a car. The temperatures start dropping in November, and especially during December and February, it is fine every day and there is a comfortable climate like that of Japan in Autumn, with temperatures between a maximum of 27 degrees Centigrade and a minimum of 14 degrees. This is the reason why the author explains the climate as half a year 'Hell', half a year 'Paradise'. In the interior, it is hotter in summer and comparatively cooler in winter and the humidity level is always low. In the Jabal al Akhdhar mountains, the winter temperatures plunge below 0 degrees Centigrade. Moreover, between August and January, it rains more there than in other places.



Wadi Darbat in the Dhofar region

The temperatures in the Dhofar region are in the range of 30 degrees Centigrade throughout the year. They rarely exceed 40 degrees Centigrade. It is thought that between June and September air is cooled down by the cold waters in the depths of the Indian Ocean which are propelled upwards to the surface by the strong monsoon. Moreover, it drizzles

every day during this period and all the mountains turn green. Many tourists from both home and abroad visit the region, the pleasantest resort in Arabia in this season. Like Muscat, it is humid throughout the year.

Cyclone Gonu and the snow-covered mountain

Cyclone Gonu, formed in the east of the Arabian Sea on 1st June 2007, hit the south-eastern part of Oman on 5th June and caused massive devastation in the surrounding areas. It was the first time in thirty years that a cyclone had made

a landfall and the first time in 100 years that a cyclone as strong as this had hit the land.

On 4th February 2008, with the temperature sinking below minus four degrees Centigrade, Jabal Shams was covered with snow and pictures appeared in the local newspapers. The snowy landscape in Arabia was uncommon, although I had heard it usually sleeted there in winter. It snowed also in the deserts of Abu Dhabi several years ago. In June 2007, sixteen camels were killed by lightning in an incident which occurred on the top of a sand dune. While the owner was sending camels to graze, it suddenly grew dark and started raining. When the camels, surprised and separating from the rest of the herd, climbed up the sand dune, lightning suddenly flashed and struck them and sixteen died. This was an incident I had never heard of.

On reflection, it has often been cloudy in Arabia. Having checked the daily temperatures in Muscat in 2007, I found that the maximum temperature was 42 degrees Centigrade and there was never a day with a temperature as high as 50 degrees Centigrade. I do not know whether the phenomena are only temporary or perhaps permanent, influenced by global warming or affected by the artificial elements such as the afforestation program or urbanization. It seems to me that the climate of Arabia is changing.

3. People

64% nationals; nearly one fourth are less than 15 years old

The population of Oman is 3,173,917 (Mid-Year Estimate in 2009). Omanis comprise 2,017,559 (63.6%) of the population and foreigners 1,156,358 (36.4%). In addition, children less than 15 years old accounted for 24.3% (Mid-Year Estimate in 2009). Compared to the figure of 13.3% (as of 1st of October, 2009) in Japan, it is nearly twice that of Japan. [4]

4. Ibadhism

Ibadhism commands a majority

Ibadhism considers it ideal to realize the early Muslim society. Their doctrine is considered to be the original form of Sunnah; both are closely related. The founder is Jabir ibn Zaid al-Azdi, who was born at Firq near Nizwa. It is reported that he travelled between Basra and Medina and Mecca several dozen times and met the Companions and Aisha, the Prophet's wife. He learned about the Holy Koran, the traditions of the Prophet, the history of Islam and even the private life of the Prophet and became the most outstanding theologian in Islam in Basra.

The name of the Ibadhi derives from Abdullah ibn Ibadh al-Tamimi. Although he was a follower of al-Azdi, it is thought that the sect took its name from

him because he attested to its doctrine and the opposition to the Kharijites in public when hitherto the Ibadhis had been operating behind the curtain. As the crackdown by the Umayyad caliphate intensified, the Ibadhis left Basra for Nizwa, Jabir's birthplace, and established there the Ibadhi regime, which is the dominant form of Islam in Oman. Nowadays, as well as in Oman, Ibadhism dominates on the coast of East Africa, in Tripoli in Libya, in southern Algeria and in part of Morocco. It is estimated that the Ibadhis account for 50-60%, the Sunnis for 30-45% and the Shiahs for 3 to 4% in Oman.

Features of Ibadhism

Ibadhism is moderate and tolerant towards other sects and religions. It should be added that there are Hindu temples for Hindus and Christian churches for Christians in Oman because of the culture of religious tolerance.

5. Brief history of Oman

Magan and Arabia Felix

Located in the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman is on the crossroads with Africa, Europe and East Asia and has long had contacts with the outer world. Oman was known to Sumerians by the name of Magan in 3000 BC. It was recorded on a tablet in 2300 BC that King Sargon (2371-2316 BC) boasted that ships from Magan as well as Dilmun lay alongside his wharves. Magan denotes 'a seafaring people' in Sumerian and its shipwrights were specifically mentioned in Sumerian inscriptions of 2050 BC. [5] On the other hand, the term of SIM.GIG, which is translated as 'frankincense', is found in Lagash texts, ca. 2350 BC. It means that frankincense was then imported from the Dhofar region to Mesopotamia. Earlier than that, the term SIM, meaning 'incense', is recorded. If incense means frankincense, we can date the import of frankincense to Mesopotamia more than one thousand years earlier. In those days, frankincense was transported from the Dhofar region to Gela near present-day Qatar across the Rub Al Khali Desert and shipped from there to Mesopotamia. [6] It is recorded in the Old Testament that the Queen of Sheba brought frankincense as a gift when she visited King Solomon in about the 10th century BC. Thereafter, in the Greek and Roman periods, the demand for frankincense for purposes other than rituals for worshipping gods increased and Southern Arabia prospered by its export. The region was known as 'Arabia Felix' (Happy Arabia) at that time.

The coming of the Azd

Legend has it that the Azd, presently the main tribal group in Oman, migrated from Yemen to Oman, led by Malik ibn Fahm. This wave of immigration was due to the bursting of the great dam at Marib and to troubles among family members, among other reasons. Malik landed near Qalhat, to the south of Muscat, and requested the Persian King's representative, residing at Dastajird near Sohar, to donate land for his people to settle in, but his request was rejected.

Therefore, the Azdis, who relied heavily on their cavalry, and the Persians, who used elephants, went to battle near Nizwa. Malik slew the representative in a single encounter and the Persians sued for a truce. In fact, the Azd must have first arrived in Oman much earlier, with waves of immigration continuing thereafter over several centuries.

The Azd settled firstly around Qalhat and the Jaalan on the south-eastern coast but made inroads much deeper into the interior. A formal treaty was concluded between the Arabs and the Persians in the first half of the 6th century. According to this, the Persians withdrew their forces to Sohar and the Arabs started governing mountain areas, deserts and other western parts under the Julanda dynasty. [7] The Azd belonged to the Arabs from the south, and the present royal family of Oman follows in the wake of this tribe.

Advent of Islam

Oman embraced Islam in 630 AD during the lifetime of the Prophet. It was in 610 that the Prophet Mohammed, at the age of 40, had received a revelation from Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, on Mt. Hira. In 614 the Prophet openly started his mission work and in 622, the first year of Hegira, the Prophet moved from Mecca to Medina, suffering persecution. Omani conversion to Islam was then in a relatively early stage. As soon as the messenger came to Oman bearing the letter of the Prophet, the rulers of Oman did not take long to embrace Islam. [8] Islamic forces conquered most of the Arabian Peninsula during the reign of Abu Bakr, the first Caliph of the Patriarchal caliphate, and extended their turf to the outside of the Peninsula during the reign of the second Caliph Omar. In order to join the operations, many Omanis started moving to Basra, a dynamic centre for the Arab conquest of the Persian Empire. In the crowd were the Azdis that took little Jabir ibn Zaid by the hand. Omanis participated in the land and sea attack on the southern part of the Persian Empire and contributed to a victory which led the Sassanian Persians (226-251) to their downfall.

Through taking a leading role in the expansion of Islamic forces, the Azd Oman grouping emerged in due course in Basra. This group attained great prosperity there between 665 and 673 with the support of the Governor appointed by Muawiyah and reached the apogee of their power, enhancing Omani standing. [9] After the death of their leader in 702, however, their fortunes changed for the worse. The new Governor had a profound distrust of the Azd and set out to break their clan. This led to the return of the Azd to Oman, their home country, and to the spread of Ibadhism to Oman. [10] The governor attempted to deal with Oman, which was becoming an increasingly important refuge for dissidents, by attacking the country. Having realized that further resistance was useless, the then rulers of the Julanda dynasty departed to one of the districts of Zanj. [11] It was at this time that Islam was introduced to East Africa.

Imamate

The control of Oman by the Umayyad caliphate was relaxed thereafter and the first Imam was elected in Nizwa in the interior of Oman in 751, one year after the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate. The early Imamate arose out of an idealistic wish to create a true and perfect Muslim state in Oman based on the trials in Basra. [12] The Imams took the role of not only a spiritual pillar but also a political and military leader, in keeping with the then state of the country. The Imamate continued thereafter for more than a millennium in Oman.

Prosperity of Sohar

Severe disturbances between the Nizar (northern or Adnan) and the Yemeni (southern or Qahtan) broke out in Oman in the 9th century. The Caliph's Governor in Bahrain intervened in the incident at the request of the former and Oman underwent a reign of terror. However, the elections of the Imam continued even during this period. As the Governor in Bahrain withdrew thereafter and the influence of the Abbasid caliphate declined, Omani maritime activities, which had been well-known from ancient times, revived, and Sohar prospered as "the emporium of the whole world". Omanis dominated the Gulf and the Indian Ocean and the ships were engaged in trade with Africa, Madagascar, Asia, and other countries. [13] Sindbad is thought to have set sail from the port of Sohar during this period. Sohar was invaded by the Buyids, who substantially controlled Iraq after occupying Baghdad at the end of the 10th century, and thus declined, with its many ships destroyed and many inhabitants killed. Sohar became merely a village in ruins, invaded thereafter by Seljuk Turks, Persians and Omanis from the interior.

Occupation by the Portuguese

It was in 1497 that Vasco da Gama, who was to revolutionize the trade routes of Europe, sailed around the Cape of Good Hope. It was Ahmed bin Majid, a famous Omani navigator, who piloted him and helped to discover the new sea route; ironically, the supremacy of the Arabs over the Indian Ocean was thereby lost. It was in 1507 that Afonso de Albuquerque, appointed as Governor of India by the King of Portugal, arrived at the coastal towns of Oman, including Qalhat and Muscat. His ambitions were to dominate the two main channels, the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf. He occupied Hormuz as a base for trade in the Gulf and built a fort there. There remain Mirani Fort and Jalali Fort, built by the Portuguese in Muscat in 1587 and 1588 respectively. [14]

Expulsion of the Portuguese

Nasir ibn Murshid, the first Imam of the Yaruba dynasty elected in 1624, led the task of uniting the country. Based in his fort at Rustaq, he integrated in succession Nakhal, Samail, Izki, Nizwa and Ibri in the interior and even Buraimi,

located on the border with Abu Dhabi. He then targeted Muscat and Muttrah on the coast, Sohar in the north and Sur in the south, but this project was left to Sultan ibn Saif, his cousin, who succeeded him in 1649. Imam Sultan completed the capture of Muscat in 1650 and expelled the Portuguese to India and East Africa, where Mombasa and



The Portuguese Fort of Mirani

their last outposts eventually fell into Omani hands in 1698 under the reign of Saif ibn Sultan, the fourth Imam of the Yaruba dynasty. With the captured ships, he built a very powerful navy and the country prospered hugely. [15] The famous forts of Nizwa, Jabrin, Hazm and others were built during this affluent period.

In the latter reign of the Yaruba dynasty, internal strife over the succession broke out and expanded to involve two powerful families of the north and south, leading to the division of the country. The Imam asked Persia to send reinforcements, with the result that Muscat and Muttrah were captured by the Persians. [16]

The Al Bu Said Dynasty – Oldest in Arab countries

It was only Ahmad ibn Said, governor of Sohar and the founder of the Al Bu Said dynasty, who had endured the Persian attack. He was well-known as a man of outstanding courage, vigour, enterprise, generosity and integrity, and was elected Imam in 1744 (there are various views on the year), supported by the Ibadhis. The reign of Ahmad lasted for about 40 years until 1783. He kept the country under his control, defeating opposition forces, and managed to increase Omani influence abroad. His fleet expanded to thirty-four warships by 1775, and he succeeded in expelling the Persians from Basra and annihilating the pirates on the west coast of India. [17] He utilized these warships for commerce during the period of peace and promoted trade, mainly with the east coast of Africa. [18] Since the Yaruba dynasty's expulsion of the Portuguese, Kilwa and Zanzibar had been under the control of Oman. The reign of the Al Bu Said dynasty succeeded to Sultan Qaboos, and the dynasty became the oldest in Arabia.

Reign of Said the Great

Said bin Sultan, often referred to as ‘Said the Great’, is a grandson of Ahmad, the founder of the dynasty, and the third descendant and the fifth ruler of the dynasty. His reign continued for over half a century from 1804 to 1856, and Oman enjoyed a striking level of prosperity as one of two dominating countries in the Indian Ocean, the other being Britain. Britain wished to have the co-operation of Oman, then dominant in the region, to compete with France for hegemony over the region and to subdue the troublesome Qawasim of Ras al Khaymah. Likewise, Oman needed the power of Britain, uneasy at the struggle for power with Ras al Khaymah and the infiltration by Saudi Arabia with its Wahhabi beliefs. Said extended Oman’s influence to the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Gulf and the east coast of Africa, thanks to the annexation of Gwadar in Pakistan by the fourth ruler, as well as Zanzibar and Bahrain, albeit temporarily. Bandar Abbas also came under its influence.

Having had a particular fondness for Zanzibar, Said the Great made it his second capital and amassed enormous wealth by planting cloves and through the slave trade. [19] Zanzibar still accounts for 90% of the world production of cloves. At that time, Omani influence extended not only to the east coast of Africa but also to the Congo, and the prosperity of the Al bu Said dynasty reached its zenith. During the reign of Said the Great, Oman was on good terms with Queen Victoria of Britain and concluded the Treaty of Commerce and Amity with the US in 1833. Moreover, Said sent a friendship mission there in 1840, the first from an Arab country. The commercial ship *Sultana* carrying the mission arrived in New York in May 1840 and became the first Arab ship to reach the United States.

Division and decline of Oman

After Said the Great died in 1856 at the age of sixty-two on the sea voyage from Muscat to Zanzibar, a dispute over the succession broke out among the sons accompanying him and the sons who were left in Muscat, half-brothers to the former. Later, Oman was divided between Zanzibar and Muscat through the mediation of Britain. Due to the separation of wealthy Zanzibar, the ensuing turmoil in domestic politics, the loss of competitiveness of Omani ships with the start of the service of British steamships in 1862, the abolition of the slave trade in 1873 and other factors, Oman’s influence as a maritime empire declined in a short period of time. For many years thereafter, Oman continued to degenerate into a pattern of struggles for power and betrayal among the royal family.

Chapter 2: Oman Renaissance

Enthronement of Sultan Qaboos bin Said

Sultan Qaboos was born in Salalah on 18 November 1940 as the eldest son of the former Sultan Said bin Taimur and Miyzun bint Ahmed Al Maashani, chief of the Maashani tribe in the Dhofar mountains. [1] He is the only son of the then Sultan and is from the 8th generation of the Al Bu Said dynasty and the 14th ruler. After receiving his primary and secondary education in Salalah, he attended a private educational establishment in Suffolk, England from the age of 16 at his father's wish, and entered the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as a cadet in 1960. After graduating from Sandhurst in 1962, he joined a British Infantry regiment, the Cameronians, and served in the 1st Battalion in Germany as staff for six months. After his military service, Sultan Qaboos studied the administrative system at Bedford County Council in England and returned to Oman. [2] He called in at Japan, where it is believed that he stayed at the Hotel Okura for two nights, on his way back to Oman via the United States.

For six years, Qaboos was forced to live a confined life in Salalah by his father, who was concerned about his pro-British and pro-western attitude. There he was given his own house and put to work studying Islamic law and the history of his country. Since personal contact with his father was rare, Qaboos tried to persuade his infrequent visitors to ask the Sultan to give him a responsible position. Having seen his father's dismissive attitude and the people's suffering under his oppressive rule, he arrived at the conclusion that he had to ask the Sultan to abdicate from the throne. [3] Dissatisfied with the conservative and autocratic attitude of Sultan Said, people in Salalah and the interior revolted in 1965. At the same time as the change of the British government's attitude towards Qaboos with the retirement in January 1970 of the Military Secretary who was loyal to Said, the network of co-operation with Qaboos expanded to Salalah and Muscat. Finally, the coup d'état was carried out at dawn on 23 July 1970. The former Sultan, injured in the coup, reluctantly signed the abdication document and was flown in a British airplane to Bahrain, where his wounds were tended, and thereafter left for England. [4]

"I was in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, working as a supervisor in a travel agency. The day was just like any other until the BBC carried the news on its 10 pm bulletin about the tremendous event that would forever change the face of Oman."

"The news of the takeover by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos came to us at the British Bank in Muttrah. As it was the peak of summer, the day was bright and warm and the sea breeze from the Corniche did little to stifle the heat. Yet that day would prove to be memorable. I was working as a machine operator."

“I was a school-boy doing my O levels in a Southampton school in England. I remember hearing the takeover news through my cousin, who worked in the UAE but was in England for a visit. Young as I was, I comprehended its significance.”

“I was a student at the Dar-es-Salaam Technical College in Tanzania...A friend telephoned me from Bahrain to give us the wonderful news which we had all wanted to hear for decades but thought would never materialize.”

The above are excerpts from the recollections of readers collected by and published in the features column of the Oman Daily Observer dated 23 July 1992, under the headlines of “The day when a new life began for Omanis”, “The beginning of a golden period”, “Euphoria everywhere”, “Boundless excitement” and so on.

The Observer’s reports continued: “An Omani living in Tabora [central Tanzania], threw a big celebration, complete with music and the slaughter of goats for the feast. Over 200 people attended the party. He announced he would be leaving soon for Oman. I told him I would follow soon...I came to Africa at age 13. We sailed from Oman, but before we could step aboard our dhow at Mahout we had to travel 15 days on camel-back. The journey from Al Mudhaibi to Mahout takes about two hours by car...In 1973 I returned to Muscat, this time by air.”

“At first I could not believe it, so I rushed to the corner in Muttrah where we used to have a Government notice board. It confirmed what I had heard. I was immensely happy and, along with my friends, gathered at Nasr Club to celebrate the occasion.”

“I will never forget the scene as I left my office at around 6.00 that evening. There were crowds, people were jostling and going this way and that. Everyone seemed to be speaking in loud and merry voices, congratulating one another. Some folks began singing and dancing as if a festival had started...A few found it so incredible, they kept asking: ‘Is this really true?’ They had to pinch themselves to believe that this was no dream but a real-life event.”

“When I learned that His Majesty had taken over the leadership of Oman, I was more than thrilled. I had big hopes inside me. I had always wanted to lead a normal life, which you cannot when you are in a foreign country.”

“I was a secondary student in Kuwait. When my father broke the news to me, I felt very happy and I said to myself that my country was coming out of darkness...I phoned all my friends. Suddenly I felt very proud to say that I was an Omani.”

We can understand the happy feelings of the Omani people then. From that day,

their new life began. It was the start of the Renaissance, when Omani people said goodbye to ignorance and barbarity and started working with hope. On the 26 July, the new Sultan made a brief announcement to the country and the world:

“In the past, I had been watching with mounting concern and intense dissatisfaction the inability of my father to control affairs. Now my family and my armed forces have sworn their allegiance to me. The old Sultan has left the country and I promise you to proceed at once with the task of creating a modern government.” [5]

The new Sultan visited Muscat several days after the coup d'état and outlined a clear vision for the future of the country and the happiness of the Omani people in a speech to the masses, who gave him a fanatical welcome:

“My people, I will proceed without delay to transform your life into a prosperous one with a bright future.



Modern Muscat

Every one of you must play his part towards this goal. Our country was a strong country known to the world in the past. If we work in unity and cooperation, we will regenerate that glorious past and we will take our rightful place in the world.” [6]

The new Cabinet was inaugurated in August and the name of the country changed from ‘Muscat and Oman’ to ‘The Sultanate of Oman.’

The way towards a modern state

The urgent task that Sultan Qaboos faced immediately after his enthronement was to establish diplomatic relations in international circles from scratch, in addition to building a modern government and administration and maintaining domestic security. These were issues of critical importance to Oman, which had been isolated under the former Sultan Said. After having submitted an application to the League of Arab States, the new Sultan energetically visited Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, London, Paris, Washington and elsewhere with Tariq, his uncle, who was recalled from abroad and installed as the prime

minister, and succeeded in participating in the League of Arab States on 29 September 1971 and in the United Nations on 7 October of the same year. Oman became successively a member of IMF (International Monetary Fund), IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), WHO (World Health Organization), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and other organizations. As for bilateral relations, Oman was successful in obtaining recognition from various countries such as Britain and the United States as well as Arab and other nations. Nowadays, Oman enjoys diplomatic relations with more than 150 states and is a member of 105 regional and international organizations. Its foreign policy is based on specific principles including respect for the sovereignty of all nations, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, a commitment to good neighbourly relations and the resolving of differences and disputes by peaceful means, respect for the principles of international law and sincere co-operation in the common interest of present and future generations.

The following bilateral relations can be singled out for special mention:

“Unlike other GCC countries, Oman had maintained a diplomatic relationship with Iraq and did not close its Embassy in Iraq even after the latter’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990.”

“Oman remains a staunch supporter of the Palestinian people. However, it established its trade office on a reciprocal basis with Israel (it was closed in 2000).”

“Oman completed the demarcation of the border with Saudi Arabia in 1990, with that of Yemen in 1992 and with that of the UAE in 2002.”

The first domestic measure which Sultan Qaboos adopted was to abolish unreasonable rules, for example the closing of the Muscat main gate three hours after sunset, the compulsory carrying of lanterns at night inside the Muscat walls and the imposing of tax on the transfer of cargo between the interior and Muscat, as well as other restrictions on personal freedom.

There were more than 50,000 Omanis living in various Gulf countries such as Kuwait and Bahrain in the 1960s. Those living abroad came back to Oman after the coup d’état. The new Sultan also welcomed Omanis who had been expelled from Zanzibar in the 1964 revolution and had been refused entry to the mother country by Sultan Said. In addition, he welcomed the surrendering Dhofari rebels who had fought against him. The revolt in Dhofar which broke out in 1965 was virtually suppressed in 1975 due to external assistance, mainly from Britain, and conciliatory measures such as the appointment of influential persons from among the rebels to government positions and the prioritization of Dhofar development programs. Also, the Sultan immediately began the establishment of a modern government as promised. As early as 8 August

1970, Sayyid Tariq inaugurated four ministries: Education, Health, Interior and Justice. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economy, Communication and Public Services, Information, Social Affairs and Labour, Land Affairs, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the Sultan's Diwan were set up soon afterwards.

On National Day in 1974 the government was reorganized into the Ministries of Defense Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Information, Interior, Education, Legal Affairs, Commerce and Industry, Agriculture, Fisheries, Oil and Mineral Resources, Health, Labour, Society and Welfare, Awqaf and Religious Affairs and the Sultan's Diwan, and two ministers without portfolio were appointed. The basis of the present government was established at this time.

Sayyid Tariq submitted his resignation from Germany in December 1971 and retired from the front line of politics. Thereafter, the present form of government in which the Sultan concurrently serves as the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Finance and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces was established. Oman, under the system led by Sultan Qaboos, embarked initially on a program of upgrading education and health service facilities, improving the modern infrastructures of roads, electricity and communications and developing domestic resources such as oil and gas.

The Sultan himself talked about his experiences in England as follows:

“The values that I absorbed have remained with me forever afterwards. I have learned that discipline is not just something one imposes on others; it is something that one has, above all, to apply to oneself, if one is to be a worthy leader of men. I also learned the true meaning of service: that is, to give and not to expect to receive, and that it is the team and not oneself that matters. I have learned that with responsibility comes obligation.” [7]

In line with this experience, he explains his position as follows:

“I am working for Oman -the country and its people...For me it is a delight to see my country and my people in the situation I imagined from the very first day I assumed power. I feel that I am a man with a mission rather than a man with authority.” [8]

Sultan Qaboos has been working for forty years with this belief in his mind.

In the early 1990s, when I was assigned to Oman for the first time, I heard directly from the Omani people that when you happened to see a long-bodied car it might be carrying Sultan Qaboos. Having heard that Sultan Qaboos made an incognito reconnaissance visit to the hotel in Nizwa where Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Japan were to stay in 1994 and that he unexpectedly visited the construction site where a Japanese company was building a new refinery in Sohar, I was convinced that Fukuda's

story was not unusual. Sultan Qaboos, who has transformed Oman in the Arabian Peninsula, hitherto closed and undeveloped, into a modern country, is receiving wholehearted love and respect nowadays as Father of the country from the Omani people, and winning respect as a ruler of virtue from not only the Arab world but also the entire globe.

There were only three schools, a small hospital and one ten-kilometre-long paved road in Oman in 1970 when Sultan Qaboos ascended the throne. Nowadays, in 2009, there are 1,407 schools, colleges and universities, nearly 36,000 kilometres of asphalt paved and graded roads and 60 hospitals. GDP per capita reached nearly \$19,000 in 2009 (IMF). Oman's changes are nothing short of eye-opening. The progress since the enthronement of Sultan Qaboos is known as the 'Oman Renaissance' and is an ongoing process. Steps continue to be taken in politics, economy and other fields.

Meet-the-People tours

One of the interesting measures that Sultan Qaboos has introduced since 1976 is the Meet-the-People tours in which he travels round the country. One can



Royal tours enable His Majesty to meet his people

assume that a month-long royal tour of this type is almost unique. His Majesty, travelling around the country, driving his car himself and camping out in the desert, is accompanied by many ministers and advisors. The philosophy of the tour is that those related to government will see how people live and not lose touch with ordinary citizens.

During the tour, all Omanis have the

right to see HM face to face, express their views and question him on various subjects. The ministers concerned are called in and decide promptly on the action to be taken, if possible.

I have encountered the Meet-the-People tour twice and have first-hand knowledge of how Omani people welcome His Majesty. A multitude of people from the neighbouring towns and villages, carrying Omani flags, HM's pictures and welcome signs, fill both sides of the road when His Majesty's car is to pass by. Groups of school children, led by their teachers, stand side by side. Soon,

HM's car with white decorations on the front passes in front of the crowds. Flags are waved and HM's pictures and welcoming boards are hoisted high. Some people run out into the road and throw flowers at the car. In short, people give him a royal welcome. I remember that, on my way from Nizwa to Muscat on that occasion, I was equally excited by the event and moved into the front row without realizing.

While I was working for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, I received a young Omani who had met HM face to face when he was staying in the desert on the Meet-the-People tour. He was visiting the Ministry for advice on the project of establishing a car maintenance shop, as recommended by HM. Asking him whether he really saw HM, I was quite amazed to find that even an ordinary youth like him could see the Sultan in person.

My visit to the University College of Buraimi to give a lecture in February 2005 happened to coincide with HM's Meet-the-People tour. The then Wali of Buraimi was a friend of mine from my time at the University of Exeter in England. When I called him several days beforehand from Muscat, he told me that he would attend my lecture; however, he did not appear. Although sorry not to see him, I understood the situation readily, realizing that the Wali needed to accompany HM to act as a bridge between himself and the local people. I also heard when I took up residence in Oman in 1992 that Omani people could consult with HM by fax and that they were sure to receive replies.

Progress towards democracy

Few Japanese know of the existence of the parliament in the Arabian Sultanate, but there is a parliament in Oman. The Council of Oman is made up of the State Council (Majlis A'dawla) and the Consultation/Shura Council (Majlis A'shura) as stipulated in Article 58 of the Basic Law of the State. After a review, the State Consultative Council (SCC) was first formed in November 1981 by Royal Decree. The aim of the SCC was to debate in public the government's efforts and to encourage the government to follow through with its proposed policies. 45 members, including the chairman, were appointed by the Sultan. My personal friend held the position of the first chairman when I visited Oman for the second time in 1985, and I remember vividly that his office was grandiose. The Majlis A'Shura (Oman Consultative Council - OCC) was set up to replace the SCC in November 1991 in order to systemize and broaden public participation. At the time of its formation the new OCC had a chairman and 59 members representing 59 wilayats. Although the Royal Decree decided the election of the members, they were elected under a slightly different system.

The Deputy Prime Minister for Legal Affairs chose one member to represent each wilayat from among a list of three candidates selected in caucuses held in the wilayats in which hundreds of prominent citizens participated. The Minister submitted the list to the Sultan, who made the final choice of the 59 members and also appointed the chairman. Membership was for a three-year period. In

November 1994 more reforms were implemented. The number of council seats was expanded to 79 plus a chairman. According to the new regulations, a wilayat with a population of less than 30,000 was entitled to have one representative and a wilayat with a population of more than 30,000 was to have two representatives. Two female members were elected to this session for the first time in Oman. Thereafter, the involvement of the government decreased and in 2003 the system changed, with representatives being elected solely by the votes of men and women over 21 years of age.

The State Council was set up in 1997. It reviews matters referred to it by the Sultan and draft laws before promulgation and also prepares studies on development-related issues including human resources. Its chairman and members are appointed by Royal Decree. Members have often included former ministers, ambassadors and under-secretaries serving with the government, managers of private enterprises and intellectual figures.

Stipulation of the Basic Law

Although many Japanese might think there is no constitution in an Arabian Sultanate, there is a constitution in Oman. The Basic Law of the State was promulgated in 1996 by Royal Decree. The Basic Law consists of seven chapters and 81 articles. The seven chapters are 'The State and the System of Government', 'Principles Guiding State Policy - Political, Economic, Social, Cultural and Security Principles', 'Public Rights and Duties', 'The Head of State, The Council of Ministers, The Prime Minister, His Deputies and Ministers, Specialised Councils and Financial Affairs', 'The Oman Council', 'The Judiciary' and 'General Provisions.' Article 5 in the first chapter stipulates, "The system of the government is a hereditary Sultanate in which succession passes to a male descendant of Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan. It is a condition that the male who is chosen to rule should be an adult Muslim of sound mind and a legitimate son of Omani Muslim parents." Article 6 in the same chapter, as amended by Royal Decree 99/2011, clarifies, "The Royal Family Council shall determine the successor to the throne within three days of the throne falling vacant" and moreover, "if the Royal Family Council does not agree on the choice of the successor to the throne, the Defence Council together with the Chairmen of the Majlis A'Dawla, the Majlis Ash'shura, the Supreme Court and two of its oldest deputies, shall confirm the appointment of the person designated by His Majesty in his letter to the Royal Family Council."

Sultan Qaboos is single and has no heir. Many Middle East experts think disputes might occur over the decision as to the successor, but I believe the successor will be smoothly appointed without any difficulties according to the stipulation of the Basic Law. Article 17 stipulates, "All citizens are equal before the Law, and they are equal in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, sect, domicile or social status." There are usually comments on television and in

newspapers that Islam and tribalism dominate the Arab society, but we should remember this stipulation regarding the Omani people.

Economic development

Oman's economy, previously based on the export of dates, limes and fish and the import of foodstuffs and cotton products, shifted dramatically to an oil-dependent one on its first production of oil in 1967. Taking advantage of the oil revenue, Sultan Qaboos initially played an active role in building basic infrastructure such as airports, ports and schools and has steered the economy since 1976 by drawing up the five-year plans. The year 2010 falls in the fifth year of the seventh five-year plan.

Steadiness is a feature of Oman's method of government. In the field of economy, Oman has achieved consistent economic progress by persistently abiding by the five-year plan. At an international conference held in Muscat in 1995, the last year of the fourth five-year plan, Oman drew up the Oman Vision 2020, with the aid of invited experts at home and abroad, to steer the Omani economy in the right direction. As the main pillars of policies, the following four measures, Maintenance of economic balance and sustainable growth, Human resources development, Economic diversification and Private sector development, were defined. The five-year plans since 1996 have been drafted and managed according to these principles. Oman's economy has been expanding steadily in accordance with the Vision. Macro-economically, despite the temporary decrease in oil production, the GDP is steadily increasing with the soaring of LNG (liquefied natural gas) and oil prices. While the GDP totalled RO5,262 billion in 1995, it expanded to RO7,439 billion in 2000, RO11,882 billion in 2005 and RO22,778 billion in 2010 (provisional) respectively.

Regarding private sector development, privatization of the management of power plants, the sewage system, Muscat International Airport and communications has been implemented, and other large-scale private projects are steadily undergoing implementation. As for diversification of the economy, it is envisioned in 'Oman Vision 2020' that the contribution to the GDP of the oil sector is likely to decrease from 41% in 1996 to 9% in 2020 and those of the gas and industrial sections to increase from 1% in the same year to 10% and from 7.5% in the same year to 29% respectively. Although a little behind schedule, the plan is securely on the way to its realization, with progress in both national and private projects. Some examples are the expansion of LNG plants at Qalhat; the construction of a fertilizer plant, a petrochemical complex, the second refinery in Oman, a methanol plant, an aluminium smelter and a steel plant respectively at Sohar; the construction of a fertilizer plant at Sur; the construction of a petrochemical plant in the free zone at Salalah. In the tourism section, which also plays an important role in economic diversification, many projects for the construction of large-scale resorts and hotels are under way. A long-awaited green golf course finally opened in Oman in 2009.

I had a chance to visit the Sohar Industrial Complex in 2007. The port, large-scale refinery, petrochemical plant and aluminum smelter were already in operation. Witnessing the magnificent scale of the complex and feeling its energy, I was firmly convinced that the Sohar Industrial Complex would develop into one of the largest industrial zones in the Arabian Peninsula.

The development of human resources means Omanization. While Oman still depends highly on the foreign workforce, Omanization in the commercial banks exceeds 91% and is 86.2% in the government and 75.6% in the oil sector as of 2009. The government is set to reserve for Omanis some specific jobs such as fruit and vegetable retailing and transportation to give them job opportunities, and is also endeavouring to upgrade Omani capability by subsidizing various vocational schools.

Social advancement of Omani women

Oman has the national character to accept readily the social advancement of women. Sultan Qaboos has been specifically seeking women's contributions to society from an early stage of his reign. Politically, voting rights, although limited, were given to women for the first time in 1994 and expanded to include all Omani women in 2003. As a result, two women were elected to membership of the Oman Consultative Council for the first time in 1994; nowadays, there is just one female members of the Consultation Council and 15 female members of the State Council. There are also three female ministers, namely the Minister of Higher Education, the Minister of Education and the Chairperson of the Public Authority of Craft Industries. Additionally, there is a female under-secretary with the Ministry of Manpower as of 2011.

The rise in the presence of Omani women in the workplace has been remarkable. They accounted for 42.4% of all the Omanis in the Government (Civil Service) in 2009, and many have become prominent in banking. Compared to the situation in the 1990s, when I often inspected factories, we can see more women in the garment factories these days. Moreover, Omani women are increasingly making their mark in the hotel trade at the reception desks and in the restaurants, as well as at the cash desks of supermarkets. This scenario is not common in most other GCC countries. Female chairpersons have also emerged to head companies' boards of directors. While it is prohibited for women to drive cars in Saudi Arabia, it is usual for women to drive in Oman. An Omani female undertook flight training in 2000, and an Omani female pilot and an Omani female avionics engineer have now joined Oman Air.

The Oman Women's Associations are contributing to the enlightenment of women, the campaign against illiteracy, care for handicapped children, development of local societies and conservation of traditional crafts. It should not be forgotten that these associations have contributed to the improvement of women's position in Omani society.

Towns Meeting in Japan

Even more so than the Prime Minister himself, 'Towns Meeting' and 'Mail Magazine' were innovative and popular in Japan under the cabinet led by Junichiro Koizumi. Seeing them as beneficial in principle, I wondered whether the idea came from the Prime Minister himself or whether it was proposed to him by someone else. The 'Meet-the-People' tours, where ordinary people can discuss issues face to face with the Sultan, are a well-known feature of the reign of Sultan Qaboos. However, there are some differences in form between the tours and the 'Towns Meeting' held under the Koizumi cabinet, where the questions to be raised were sometimes pre-arranged. In Oman, as mentioned, people are free to send faxes and letters to the Sultan and reportedly get answers without fail. 'Towns Meeting' and 'Mail Magazine', of which the Koizumi cabinet was proud, were measures implemented more than 30 years ago in Oman, which was why I had wanted to know how they were launched in Japan. I was satisfied to find that Japan had at last reached the level of Oman in its facilities for the exchange of views between the people and the ruler.

Sultan Qaboos is 71 years of age, born on 18 November 1940; Mr. J. Koizumi and the Sultan are of similar ages. They both studied in England in their youth; both have stayed single. Although some Japanese were worried about the absence of a First Lady on Koizumi's appointment as Prime Minister, I thought that these concerns were absurd, having seen the Sultan's reign. The Sultan is famous worldwide for his wise leadership and for carrying on his official duties without a First Lady.

One of the Sultan's interests is Western classical music, with which he became familiar during his stay in England; he established the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra in 1985. Koizumi shares this interest. In view of the above, I had been looking forward to a meeting between them. However, there is unfortunately no way to arrange this at present due to the retirement of Koizumi.

Chapter 3: Oman and East Asia

My visit to the Silk Road

In the afternoon of 30 August 2000 I was on the top of the Burana Tower, which stands in the ruins of Balasagun in Kyrgyzstan. Balasagun is one of the metropolitan ruins of the Kara-Khanid khanate that prospered between the 10th and 12th centuries. The Kara-Khanid khanate was the first Turkish dynasty to convert to Islam. The tower was originally 45 metres high, but is now only 24 metres high because of the collapse of the upper part in the earthquakes of the 16th and 17th centuries. Nevertheless, it was so high that I could barely recognize my wife, the size of a pea, who was looking up at me from the ground, having declined to climb the tower. During our stay in Kazakhstan that summer, my wife and I made a side trip to our long-sought destination of Lake Issyk Kul and dropped in at the ruins of Balasagun on our way to the lake from Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. Lake Issyk Kul is the lake called ‘The pearl of Central Asia’ which lies deep in the Tian Shan mountains. It is nine times as large as Lake Biwa, the largest in Japan, and is located at an altitude of 1,600 metres. Xuanzang, a Chinese Buddhist monk who left Ch’ang-an for India in 627 to seek the truths of Buddhism, visited here, and Tokujiro Nishi, who entered Central Asia between 1880 and 1881, the first Japanese to do so, passed by it and introduced the lake as a “warm lake” (unfrozen even in the winter) in his book *Naka AjiaKiji* (The state of things in Central Asia). [1] During the Soviet-Russian period, visits by foreigners were restricted because of the military facilities there, and it is said that Yasushi Inoue, the famous Japanese novelist, could not realize his long-cherished dream of visiting the place, much to his chagrin. [2]

The rays of summer sunshine were shining brilliantly on the top of the tower. These rays were especially bright to me, as I had just climbed up the dark stairs at the side of the tower. The agreeable breeze of Kyrgyzstan swept past my body. Stretched out fully on the tower top, feeling liberated, I could enjoy a 360 degree view. The nearby Zailisky Alatau mountain range soared dominantly to the north, and I could command a view of the Kyrgyzsky Alatau mountain range far to the south-west. To the far south-east, the Tian Shan mountains, between 4,000 and 6,000 metres in height, were towering in the sky. Although it was summer, the peaks were covered with snow and shimmering in the sun.

The idyllic scenery expanded below my eyes as far as I could see. Leaves of poplars planted along the agricultural roads in every direction were glinting brightly in the sun, moved by the wind. I stood frozen on the top of the tower facing the Silk Road and recollecting its long history of several thousand years. The ruins of Ak Beshim, the site of the castle of Suyab where Xuanzang was welcomed by a king of Tujue, are also near here, only six kilometres to the north-west. Suyab is said to be the birthplace of Li Bai, a famous Chinese poet

during the Tang dynasty. Xuanzang must have passed along the road I could see below. The pastoral landscape and being rocked up and down on horseback must have soothed his mind. Xuanzang encountered innumerable dangers and difficulties during his two-year journey to India, as described in a Chinese book *XiYou Ji* (Journey to the West). The Silk Road conjures up a strong image of vast deserts and weird fiery mountains (the Tian Shan mountains in mid-winter) as well as spectres. I was thus very surprised that the Silk Road boasted such a peaceful and pastoral landscape.

Beginning of exchanges between the East and the West

The history of exchange between China, Central Asia and West Asia goes much further back than the era of Xuanzang. A number of artifacts have been discovered which bear witness to the exchanges during the Neolithic Age and Yin dynasty (1600-1046 BC) between the above areas. Painted items of pottery are thought to have been exported 3500 years ago from West Asia to China through the Eurasian continent. Links with West Asia can be assumed from the walled city, chariot, use of letters, yuanqiu (circular mound altar), lunar calendar and duo decimal system in China. Moreover, bronze wares transferred from Mesopotamia and gems from East Turkistan have been found in China. Ironware, which was invented in the Hittite empire in around 2000 BC, was introduced to China in 600 BC. It is thought that the iron wares were passed on to Assyria in around 1000 BC and thence to China.

A book entitled *The Story of Zhou Muwang*, which is a record of Zhou Muwang's expedition to West Asia, recounts that the emperor arrived at the equivalent of present-day Almaty in Kazakhstan and Lake Issyk Kul in Kyrgyzstan after journeying along the foot of the Kunlun mountains. [3] Zhou Muwang was the fifth Emperor of the Western Chou dynasty which reigned over China between about 947 BC and 927 BC. I wonder if the route leading to the western regions had actually been opened then and whether information on them had been transmitted to China. *Yiz Houshu* (History of the Chou Period) and *Chuqiu Zuoshinzhuan* (a classic work of Chinese literature of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods), compiled thereafter, refers to the names of Da-xia and Da Yue-shi which were located to the west of the Ili River. [4]

Da-xia (246 BC-138 BC) was a country founded by ancient Greeks in Bactria to the north of Afghanistan (the present-day Balkh region in Afghanistan). Da Yue-shi was a country created by Iranian nomads who had extended their influence in the northern base of the Quilian Shan mountain range (the present-day Gansusheng province in China) after the Warring States period. Having made an escape from the Xiongnu, nomadic tribes who had increased their dominance over the high plains of Mongolia, the Da Yue-shi people crossed over the Pamir region in around 176 BC and moved to the Amu Darya River areas, bringing Da-xia under their control.

Zhang Qian and Bang Chao

There are different views on the authenticity of *The Story of Zhou Muwang*. Nowadays, it is said to be the oldest novel written during the Warring States period, and the view that Zhou Muwang actually visited the western areas is the minority one. According to majority opinion, it was Zhang Qian (?-114 BC) who visited the areas for the first time in the history of China. Zhang Qian was appointed by Emperor Mu Di of the Han dynasty (206 BC–8 AD) as the ambassador to Da Yue-shi and dispatched to the western areas in 138 BC, accompanied by more than a hundred followers. The purpose of his visit was to form a confederacy with Da Yue-shi to launch a pincer drive against the Xiongnu, by whom the Han dynasty had been oppressed for a long time. The Xiongnu was a confederation of nomadic tribes, centred in the high plains of Mongolia, that had become a predominant power in North Asia between about the 5th century BC and the 5th century AD.

It is said that the Xiongnu king drank alcohol from the skull bone of the former king of Da Yue-shi and that Emperor Mu dispatched Zhang Qian to Da Yue-shi, presuming that the humiliated Da Yue-shi king was consumed with revenge. Zhang Qian originated from a Da Yue-shi tribe, and his wish to see his relatives also inspired this journey. However, he was arrested by the Xiongnu soon after he departed and held at Longcheng, the capital of the Xiongnu, for over ten years. Although he lived happily during the period, marrying a woman from Da Yue-shi and fathering a child, he determinedly set off towards the west again. He passed through Wu-sun in the Ili River, an area well-known for supplying 'Pegasus' (fleet horses), and Kang-ju, a country in the south of present-day Kazakhstan, located in the midstream and the downstream areas of the Sildar'ya River. He then visited Da-wan (a country which was founded by Iranians in the Fergana district of Central Asia and expanded over parts of the present-day Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and was well-known for its good horses which produced blood-coloured sweat), Da Yue-shi and Da-xia, returning to Chang-an in 136 BC. The journey was full of trials and tribulations and only two of the party of one hundred returned safely, including Zhang Qian himself. This adventure, the purpose of which was to form a military alliance, ended in failure because the queen of Da Yue-shi, who lived peacefully in the fertile land, had no interest in fighting against the Xiongnu. However, detailed information on the western areas was brought back by Zhang Qian to the Han dynasty, though it did not contain precise knowledge of the whereabouts of individual western countries.

Emperor Mu Di of the Han dynasty, who was keenly interested in the reports based on the various experiences of Zhang Qian, especially those with the 'Pegasus' of Wu-sun, ordered him to return to the western areas in 115 BC. On that occasion, Zhang Qian himself stayed at Wu-sun, not going any further west but instead dispatching his followers to Da-wan, Kang-ju, Da Yue-shi, Da-xia, Shen-du and An-xi. An-xi was a kingdom of Baltia, a country formed by

Scythian nomadic tribes in the northern part of Iran. Shen-du was present-day India. Thus, at this juncture, the Han dynasty was in contact with Iran and India for the first time. Zhang Qian returned to Ch'ang-an with dozens of envoys of Wu-sun and horses but died just over a year after his return. Thereafter, his followers, who had been sent to Da-xia and other countries, returned one after another with a number of representatives from the various countries, and the route between the Han dynasty and the countries in the west was thus opened.

Perhaps Zhang Qian and his followers might have known about the Arabs through the Persians. In *Shi-ji* (Historical Record, c.91 BC) and *Qian Han-shu* (History of the Former Han dynasty c.84 AD), we can find the records of these travels. There is also a description of Tiao-Zhi, the present-day Syria. [5] This is the first record of Arabs in Chinese historical books. We can also find the names of Yan-cai (the present-day Cremlia Peninsula) and Li-xuan (present-day Alexandria) in these books. [6] Later, the Han dynasty sent more missions consisting of between one hundred and several hundred people to An-xi, Tiao-zhi, Shen-du, Yan-cai and other countries, sometimes more than ten times in a year. These missions, carrying silk, gems and other treasures, travelled through the region west of the Yellow River, crossed the Pamirs, came to Central Asia, An-xi, Shen-du and Tiao-zhi and transported the commodities to eastern Europe. Conversely, grapes, pomegranates, alfalfa and 'Pegasus' horses, among other items, were conveyed to the Han.

Thus began the famous Silk Road. It is believed that it took eight to nine years for the representatives to make a round trip. During the confused period of Wang Ming (9-23AD), the road was once blocked. When the second Han dynasty came to power (25-220 AD), another explorer, Bang Chao (31-102 AD), opened it again. According to *Hou Han Shu* (History of the Later Han Dynasty, written c.445 AD), Bang Chao conquered the Yanqi (part of the present-day Sinkiang Uighur region) again in 94 AD and more than fifty countries offered hostages. It is recorded also that other countries such as Tiao-zhi and An-xi offered gifts. [7] Gan Ying, who was ordered by Bang Chao to go to Da-qin (the Roman Empire), became the Chinese representative who reached the remotest western country at that time. He arrived at the Mediterranean coast of Tiao-zhi (Syria), where no Chinese had ever been before, in 97 AD. It is said that, although he tried to go to Rome, he gave up his plan and returned, frightened by the danger of the sea journey which the Persians had exaggerated. Incidentally, it is written in the *Hou Han Shu* that, if one goes westward from An-xi for three thousand and four hundred li, one comes to A-man (Oman). [8] While Japanese scholars presume 'Oman' to be Hamadan, Chinese scholars see it as Oman. This was the first time that the name of Oman appeared in Chinese historical books.

Exchange between the East and the West by the Sea route

The Chinese opened a land route from East Asia to West Asia, the so-called 'Silk Road', during the Han dynasty, and the Arabs later opened a sea route from the

Red Sea and the Gulf across the Indian Ocean to the Malay Peninsula and to south China. The shipbuilding technology of Oman had been very famous since ancient times, and Omanis also contributed a lot to the development of this sea route. In *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (of unknown authorship, perhaps by a Greek sailor), written in the first century, it is stated that ships sailed from Egypt and Yemen to north-west India, taking advantage of the monsoonal wind 'Hippalus' [9], that Chinese silk and silk cloth were delivered by land to east India and then transported to south-west and north-west India by sea, and that it was not easy to reach China. [10] The book refers also to the places now known as Masirah Island in Oman, the town of Qalhat to the south of Muscat and the green mountains (Jabal al Akhdhar). [11] *The Natural History* (by Pliny the Elder, c.77-79) also refers to the sea route from the southern coast of Arabia to the south-western coast of India. [12] Up until then, the sea route from Arabia through to China had not been utilised.

According to Masakatsu Miyazaki, trade activities by Roman merchants extended to south-east Asia beyond India. [13] It is written in the *Hou Han Shu* that a representative of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Roman Emperor, found his way to Ri-nan (near present-day Hue in the middle of Vietnam), then under the control of the Han dynasty, and delivered ivory, rhinoceros horn, turtle shell and other commodities. [14] The scope of the voyage was extended from Arabia to Vietnam. Ammianus Marcellinus (325/330-391 and after), Roman historian, refers in his book entitled *Roman History* to Chinese merchandise at the annual fair of Batanea on the Euphrates in around 360 AD. [15] It is assumed that Arabia and China were connected at that time, even if only partially.

Fa Hsien, a Chinese Buddhist monk who left Ch'ang-an in 399 seeking for Buddhist scriptures, arrived in central India after a six-year-long journey and spent six years there. Masakatsu Miyazaki writes in his book entitled *Zipangu Densetsu* (Zipangu legend) that Fa Hsien went down the Ganga River, set sail from present-day Tamul in north-east India and returned to the east of present-day Tsingtao via Ceylon in 412 after three years. [16] It is recorded also that there were many 'Sappa' merchants who may have been Sabah merchants from Yemen. [17] It is obvious that the sea route which extended from Egypt to the eastern coast of India around the Arabian Peninsula was linked to China via India.

Al-Masudi (896-956), the famous Arab historian nicknamed 'Herodotus of the Arab', writes in his book entitled *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems* that Chinese trading ships visited the harbours of Oman, Siraf (near present-day Bandar Bushehr), Bahrain, Basra and others during those days. He adds that they sailed up the Euphrates, anchored near Hira, three kilometers away from Babylon, and traded with Arabs there. [18] It is not known exactly which period 'those days' means. An article written by a Chinese researcher asserts that ancient Chinese historical books recorded that Chinese ships anchored in the Gulf no later than the 5th century during the reign of the Liu-Sung dynasty(420-79

AD). [19] It can be surmised that Chinese ships could sail directly to Siraf, Obollah (near present-day Abadan), Basra, Bahrain and the harbours of Oman in considerably earlier times and that Arab ships sailed from their harbours to China.

At this point I will refer briefly to the 'Silk Road'. The term was first used when Ferdinand von Richthofen, the German geographer, coined the word *Seidenstrassen* (road of silk) in his book of 1877. The road was so named because the silk, an indigenous product of China in ancient times, was transported to the west. His 'Silk Road' consisted of two roads, one from Ch'ang-an to Samarkand and the other from Ch'ang-an to present-day Balkh in northern Afghanistan. It was Albert Hermann, the German orientalist, who identified the Silk Road as the road up to Syria. It is believed that the silks were transported from Syria to Constantinople and Rome by sea. Thereafter, the concept of the Silk Road, initially just an extension of the oasis road, now commonly includes the steppe road which passes the steppes of northern Asia and the sea route across the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, in addition to the oasis road through central Asia, as proposed by Hermann.

Ancient Omanis' maritime activities

Here, I will introduce Omani maritime activities of ancient times in more detail. Bahrain and Oman were well-known places in the Gulf in those times. It is possible that people could have lived there because of the presence of water. It is said that rain water that has fallen on the mountains in the south-western part of the Arabian Peninsula flows as underground water across the desert of the Peninsula and emerges at ground level in Bahrain or in the sea nearby. On the other hand, the water supply in Oman is comparatively plentiful because of rainfall in the mountainous areas, which account for 15% of the total land area there.

While there are springs and wells everywhere in Bahrain, I clearly remember that I was very surprised to see the Adhari pool, with abundant water and torrents flowing from it, when I visited there for the first time in 1973. This was a view I had never imagined in the Arabian Peninsula. Oman is famous for over 4000 aflaj and springs scattered over the country. The falaj system distributes water for irrigation from its source. Although the ruins of aflaj more than 2500 years old have been excavated, some of them, built more than 1500 years ago, are still in use, while others were built at the beginning of the 20th century. Agricultural products harvested on the Batinah, the so-called 'green belt region', are the blessings of aflaj and underground water flowing down from the Hajar mountains.

Bahrain and Oman had prospered from ancient times as the trading centres of commodities such as wood, intermediating between Mesopotamia and India.

The geography of Oman, which is located at the south-eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula facing the mouth of the Indian Ocean, was not conducive to overland traffic because of the surrounding craggy mountains and deserts, and hence trade routes shifted to and focused on the sea.

As mentioned, the Sumerians called Oman 'Magan' and King Sargon of Akkad referred to the ships from Dilmun and Magan. Oman suddenly ceased its maritime activity around 2000 BC and nothing was heard about it for some time thereafter. However, with the rise of the Assyrian Empire Oman prospered again as an entrepôt port for trade between Mesopotamia and India. A thousand-year-long blank period in the history of Oman remains an enigma. It is said that the decline, due to the cessation of maritime activity, forced people to emigrate from Oman to the Levant and that the Phoenicians might have originated from Oman. This is an intriguing viewpoint. In fact, there are places by the name of Sur in both Oman and Lebanon.

Thereafter, Oman expanded its trade activities to the Gulf countries, the Red Sea and Africa in the West and to India, the Malay Peninsula and China in the East. It is thought that Oman used mast and sail for the first time in history. Omanis, who had vast experience in navigation as well as knowledge and understanding of the bottlenecks of the sea route, tidal and current patterns, seasonal variations in wind direction, islands, refuge harbours and water supply points, opened the sea route to China and contributed considerably to the transportation of Chinese silk to the West.

Arabic literatures in the latter day (written by Al-Istakhri and Al-Masudi, Arab historians and geographers in the 10th century) refer to this trading activity in detail. [20] According to them, large vessels that loaded cargoes from small ships at Basra or Siraf sailed out to Sohar and from there to Muscat. The vessels departed for Kolham Mele, located on the southern coast of India, and, after replenishing their water supply in Muscat, crossed the Bay of Bengal via Ceylon and arrived at the Andaman Islands and Canton in China via the Straits of Malacca. Besides this route, there was the route from the Andaman Islands to Java and another that linked the Gulf and Sind (present-day Pakistan).

The Tang dynasty and Da-shi (Arabs)

Relations between China and the Arabs developed during the Tang dynasty (618-907AD) and then during the Sung dynasty (960-1279 AD) and the Yuan dynasty (1279-1386 AD). The relations between the Arabs and China made substantial progress because there was a strong Tang dynasty in the east, and a great empire was built in the west after the Arabs were united by Islam, which originated from Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula. Prophet Muhammad refers to China in one of his hadiths. Da-shi (Arabs were called thus in the Tang dynasty) sent its formal representatives there in 651 AD during the reign of Uthman, the third Caliph of the Rashidun caliphate, and a further thirty-nine times from 651 AD to 798 AD during the reigns of the Umayyad caliphate (661-750) and the Abbasid caliphate (750-1256).

Japanese envoys to China in the Tang dynasty were appointed eighteen times from 630 to 689 and actually dispatched to China fifteen times. Prior to this, Japanese envoys to the Sui dynasty were dispatched four times. It was two years later that the first representative of the Abbasid caliphate was sent to Ch'ang-an as Japan sent the second envoy to the Tang dynasty in 653.

The Arabs and Tang had a decisive war in 751, the battle of Talas, in which a general of Abu Muslim defeated the army of Gao Xian-zhi. Curiously, this battle did not weaken the relationship between the Tang dynasty and the Arabs. Just one year after the battle of Talas, the Abbasid Caliph sent his representatives to China for the first time and also his army to help the Emperor Su Zong of the Tang dynasty suppress the rebellion of An Lu-shan. At that time, many Arab soldiers settled in China, getting married to Chinese women and becoming the ancestors of Huizus.

It is well known that paper-making technology was transmitted from China to the Arabs as a result of the battle of Talas. The Arabs, using captive Chinese soldiers who were skilful paper-makers, set up the first paper mill in Samarkand. In 793-4, the second and third paper mills were set up in Baghdad and Damascus and the products were supplied to Europe. It was in the 12th century that Europe began its own paper-making.

Besides the Arab soldiers, many Arabs visited China by land and by sea as merchants and travellers in those days. The major trading ports in the Tang dynasty were Canton, Quanzhou and Yangzhou. Canton was the gate through which one entered China by sea, and it is recorded that foreigners consisting of about 120,000 Muslims, Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians lived in Canton in the 8th century. It is also recorded that a large number of foreigners lived not only in Quanzhou and Yangzhou but also in Ch'ang-an, the then capital. Unfortunately, the nationalities of those foreigners are not recorded, but it seems certain that there were a lot of Arabs among them.

As regards trade between Oman and China, Oman was not only an important market for Chinese products but also had some significant ports. The name of Muscat appears repeatedly in Arab literatures, indicating that Muscat was the leading port for trade with China, paralleling Siraf. Abu Obeida Abdullah bin Al-Qassim, an Omani trader, made the first voyage to China in the middle of the 8th century. He became a famous merchant of frankincense and lived there for a long period before finally returning to his homeland. Another Omani businessman, Al-Nadhar bin Memoun, who formerly lived in Basra and sailed to China where he joined Al-Qassim, is also well-known. In addition to these two, many Omanis emigrated to China, got married to Chinese and produced offspring, thus contributing to the diffusion of Islam in China.



The Dhow named Sohar

The Dhow named *Sohar*

The Al Bustan Palace (a Ritz-Carlton Hotel) is in the south-east of Muscat City. Driving from the airport and passing through the Ruwi and Wadi-Al-Kabir districts, you will come to a steep hill. Climbing this hill to the top and driving down the other side, you will see a large dhow on the

roundabout below you outside the hotel entrance. It is the *Sohar*, built under the sponsorship of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos by Tim Severin, the famous English adventurer, which actually sailed from Sohar to Canton with 20-odd Omani sailors and experts on an eight-month voyage in November 1981. Sohar, located 280 kilometres to the north-west of Muscat, prospered in ancient times and many ships headed from there to Canton. In the 10th century, Sohar became the largest port in the Islamic world and its prosperity attained its zenith. It is the port from which Sindbad the Sailor, the well-known character in the Arabian Nights, is said to have set sail.

The *Sohar* was built in the town of Sohar in 165 days for the purpose of recreating Sindbad's voyage. The dhow was made from Malabar timbers and barks of coconut trees held together with coconut rope and without any nails, according to the method adopted in old days. Its 1981 voyage was recorded in detail in the book by Tim Severin entitled *The Sindbad Voyage*.

Chapter 4: Japan's discovery of the Arabs

The first West Asian who came over to Japan

It was during the Jomon period (about 12000 BC-1000 BC) in Japan that contacts between China and West Asia began. These coincided with the early Yayoi period (1000 BC-300 AD) in Japan, in which Zhang Qian visited West Asia twice, and in the middle of the Yayoi period when Bang Chao reopened the Silk Road. At that time many small independent countries defended their territories by themselves in Japan, as is mentioned in a Chinese historical book. "There are Japanese living in the sea of Lelang, forming over one hundred independent countries. They come over to China at fixed intervals and have an audience with the Emperor, bringing gifts." [1] Even after being separated by the sea and divided into small independent countries, Japan had traded with the Korean Peninsula and China since ancient times. However, it was a long time before Japan had contact with West Asia, let alone Arab countries and their peoples. The contacts began in the Asuka period (542-694) in Japan, which is during the Tang dynasty (618-907) in China.

Nihon-Shoki (The Chronicles of Japan), Vol. 25, describes how, in the time of the Emperor Kotoku, two men and two women from Tocharis and a woman from Satti drifted down in a storm to Himuka (in the south-western part of Japan, the present-day Miyazaki prefecture) in April 654. [2] Vol. 26 of the book tells us how, in the time of the Emperor Saimei, the Empress visited Yoshino and hosted a big banquet there on 1st March 659. It also relates that she visited Hiranoura (located on the coast of Lake Biwa) on 5th March and that a Tocharian man and his Satti wife called on the Empress. [3]

There are various views as to the location of Tocharis. The view that it is the country whose name translates as the Dvaravati kingdom, located on the lower Chao Phraya River in Thailand, seems to be dominant among the scholars concerned. Nevertheless, here I will follow Fujio Komura's view [4] that the country of Tocharis was located in the north-eastern corner of present-day Iran along the border with the north-western part of Afghanistan, and that Iranians escaped to the east to reach Ch'ang-an after the downfall of the Sassanid dynasty in 641, thereafter drifting ashore in Japan. The above might be the first description in Japan of West Asians. Satti is today known as Shravasti and is situated on the middle stream of the Ganga River in India. Moreover, *Shoku-Nihongi* (a continuation of the *Nihon Shoki*) contains the following description:

Ason Nashiro Nakatomi, ranked in the senior fifth grade and the Japanese deputy ambassador to the Tang dynasty, and others had an audience with the Emperor on 23rd August, 736, greeting him on their return from China and bringing with them three Chinese and a Persian [5]. On 3rd November of the same year the Emperor attended the office and awarded the rank of junior fourth grade to Ason Nashiro Nakatomi and the rank

of junior seventh grade to Sukune Obina Otomo. He also made awards to Huangfu Dongchao, a Chinese, and Li Miyi, a Persian, according to their positions in society. [6]

As the capital was shifted from Fujiwara to Heijyo by the Emperor Genmei in 710, the above took place during the Nara period. This might be the first reference in Japan to the visit of a Persian to Japan. In the same year, Senna Bodai, an Indian Buddhist monk who was later naturalized in Japan, came over to Japan at the request of Mahito Hironari Tajihino, the then ambassador to the Tang dynasty. Senna Bodai subsequently lived at the Daianji Temple in Nara and was promoted in 751 to the rank of Sojyo, the third highest of the ten ranks of Buddhist monks. He took the role of leading priest at the dedication services of the Buddha's statue held at the Todaiji Temple during the following year.

Moreover, it is recorded in the book *Todaiwajo Toseiden* (Travels to the East by a Great Chinese Buddhist Monk), that Jianzhen, Chinese master Buddhist monk in the Tang dynasty, was accompanied by twenty-four followers, twenty-one Chinese and three non-Chinese, when he arrived in Japan in 754. Among the three was An Rubao. [7] It may be assumed that he was from West Asia because people from Ansokukoku (An-xi) usually had the surname of An. The other followers are assumed to have been Malaysian and Vietnamese.

Japanese who went to West Asia

According to *Shosoin* (Treasure Repository) written by Haruyuki Tono, no Japanese left Japan for West Asia and India during the 7th and 8th centuries. It reads:

As far as West Asia is concerned, no Japanese dared to travel to the west of Ch'ang-an, capital of the Tang dynasty. On the sea route, we can find only the name of Hironari Hegurino, chief envoy to China in the Tang dynasty, who drifted ashore in Rinyu (the southern part of present-day Vietnam) on his way back from China to Japan in 734. In the Chinese literatures, too, we cannot find any mention of the Japanese, although they refer to a Korean Buddhist monk who travelled to South-East Asia and India. [8]

As for travel to India, it was in the early 9th century that the Japanese appeared on the historical stage of exchange with India, as far as we now know.

A Chinese book entitled *Youyan Zazu*, written in ca. 860 by Duan Chengshi (803-863), records that the author saw Zanmai Kongo, a Japanese Buddhist monk who had returned to China from central India presumably in the early 9th century, although it is not clear when he went to India. [9] The book mentions further that Prince Shinnyo, son of the Emperor Heizei, entered China at the old age of 63 in 862. He departed from Guangzhou for India in 865 but died when approaching Singapore. [10]

Prince Shinnyo was once appointed as the Crown Prince. However, he resigned and became a Buddhist monk when the Emperor Heizei lost his position, defeated in the struggle of the so-called Rebellion of Kusuko with the Emperor Saga in 810. There was no Japanese who went to West Asia at that time.

Incidentally, Shosoin is the treasure repository at Nara, which is under the administration of the Imperial House Agency. It houses artifacts connected to the Emperor Shomu (701-756) and the Empress Komyo (701-760) as well as arts and crafts of the Tempyo period (710-794) of Japan.

The first Japanese who saw Arabs

Komaro Otomo, the Japanese deputy ambassador to the Tang dynasty, together with other foreign envoys, attended the New Year celebrations held in Tang in 753 to pay tribute. He found that Silla (part of present-day South Korea) had priority in the seating arrangements over Japan. Komaro Otomo objected strongly to this order of precedence and claimed that Japan should have precedence over Silla. As a result, the order of precedence was changed so that Japan was given a higher-ranked seat than Da-shi on the east side and Silla was given the seat next to Tibet on the west side. *Shoku Nihongi* offers the following details in Vol. 19 under the heading ‘Emperor Koken: other foreign envoys’.

One hundred Tang officials and foreign ambassadors paid tribute on New Year’s Day in 753. The Chinese Emperor Xuanzong received the tributes at the Hanyuan Hall in the Penglai Palace. On this occasion, the Tang dynasty had Komaro Otomo seated next to Tibet on the west side and Silla seated in the seat on the east above Taishoku-koku. Komaro then expressed his opinion as follows: “Silla has long been paying tribute to Japan. However, today, Silla is given the highest seat of precedence on the east side, while Japan is placed in the lower seat. This is unreasonable.” Then, Wu Huaishi, general of the Tang dynasty, recognizing that Komaro would not accept the seat of precedence offered, immediately guided the envoy of Silla to the seat next to Tibet on the west side, and had Komaro seated in the seat above Taishoku-koku on the east side.[11]

Komaro Otomo was the deputy ambassador of the 12th Japanese envoy to the Tang dynasty among fifteen envoys in total. Arab countries started to dispatch their envoys in 651. Therefore, it is conceivable that the Japanese might have seen the Arabs on earlier occasions than this. However, Komaro Otomo was the first Japanese on record as seeing the Arabs. Moreover, it seems to be an established view among Japanese researchers that the word ‘Taishoku-koku’ which means ‘Arab country’ then appeared for the first time in Japanese books. The word ‘Taishoku’ originated from ‘Tajik’ which is what the Persians used to call the Arabs. The Chinese of the Tang and the Sung dynasties used the word to name Muslims, which meant the Arabs in a narrow sense and the Arabs and Persians in a broad sense. Here, I argue that ‘Taishoku’ in this case meant the Arabs in a narrow sense.

The first Arab who lived in Japan

According to *Daijyoin Jisha Zojiki* (*Miscellanies on Daijyoin Temple and Shrine*), it was in the 14th century that an Arab came over to Japan for the first time. An excerpt of the description is as follows:

There lived an Arab who came over from Ming (China) to Japan, to the centre of Kyoto, the then capital of Japan, more than six hundred years ago. The place was Sanjyo Bomon Karasuma...It was during the reign of Yoshimitsu Ashikaga, Shogun [head of Samurai warriors] of the early Muromachi shogunate, and the Arab was generally called 'Hishiri'. Hishiri got married to a Japanese woman living in the suburb of Kusuha in Settsu [present-day Kusuha, Hirakata City, Osaka Prefecture], and fathered two children, so-called half-blood. The eldest son was named 'Musul'. Later, Musul named himself 'Kusuha Nyudo Sainin' after his mother's name, and the second son was called 'Mimbunokyo Nyudo'...Musul, the eldest son, fathered three sons. Musul was given an important post by Yoshimochi, the fourth Shogun after Yoshimitsu, because he was well versed in foreign affairs, with a special knowledge of the Ming dynasty, and was well acquainted with navigation. He had held the post of foreign trade advisor since he was 36 years old and made voyages to Ming with which his father was associated. He changed his place of residence to Furuichi in Yamato (present-day Nara Prefecture) when he retired after the death of the Shogun Yoshimochi and where he also died naturally at the age of 93. [12]

Daijyoin Jisha Zojiki is a diary written for 49 years from 1450 to 1508 by Jinson, the 17th chief priest of the Daijyoin of the Kofukuji temple. As personal relations between Sainin and Jinson continued for 46 years, the diary very often refers to Sainin. It is written in the original book that Hishiri, Sainin's father, was a 'man from Tenjiku', instead of 'Da-shi' (Arab). 'Tenjiku' usually means India. Thus, was Hishiri an Indian? Kyoji Morita, a professor of Japanese history, writes, "Although we can consider him as an Indian, it is possible that he was an Arab or Persian". [13] Shinji Maejima, a leading authority on Middle Eastern Studies in Japan, writes, "Sainin seems to have been a Muslim." (14). I, an unlearned and ungifted person, cannot make a decision on it, but prefer to identify Hishiri as an Arab, following Komura's assertion and based on Morita and Maejima's interpretations.

Arrival of the Portuguese in Japan and Arab lands

The Japanese exchange with foreign countries expanded as far as Europe during the Azuchi and Momoyama periods (1568-1603). Specifically, Japan made contact with Portugal. A Portuguese ship drifted ashore on the island of Tanegashima on its way from Siam (present-day Thailand) to China in August 1543 and guns were introduced to Japan for the first time. In 1497 Vasco da

Gama, who was to bring about a revolution of the European trade route, sailed around the Cape of Good Hope located in the southernmost part of Africa. It was several years later that Alfonso de Albuquerque visited the coasts of the Red Sea, Oman, Hormuz and India. A Portuguese ship arrived in Japan 40 years after Oman had been reached.

It was Ahmed bin Majid, the famous Omani sailor, who took the role of pilot for Vasco da Gama; an Omani sailor also piloted the fleet led by Afonso de Albuquerque. The author checked whether or not there were Omanis on board the first Portuguese ship to Japan, but there was no trace of them. The more than one hundred passengers on board the junk that drifted ashore on Tanegashima are assumed to have been Portuguese, Chinese and Southeast Asians.

Francisco Xavier arrived at Kagoshima on 3rd July 1549. Again, there is no record of Arabs aboard the ship Xavier took on his way to Japan. It is well-known that Yajiro accompanied Xavier from Goa to Japan and helped him propagate Christianity in Japan. Yajiro was from Satsuma (the present-day Kagoshima Prefecture). He committed a murder in his youth, escaped to Hong Kong and visited Xavier there to confess his sin. He was later sent to Goa and baptized by a priest there in 1548. He went as far as India but did not visit the land of Arabs. Five Japanese accompanied Xavier when he left Japan in 1551. Of them, only Bernard reached Portugal; he is assumed to be the first Japanese to visit Europe. He called at Goa via Macao, crossed the Indian Ocean in a straight line, went around the Cape of Good Hope and arrived in Portugal. They did not have any chance to see the land of Arabs.

A Christian Daimyo (a feudal lord in Japan) in Kyushu dispatched four boys to Rome in the so-called 'Tensho (name of an era) boy mission to the West'. They reached Rome after three years, had an audience with the Pope, and returned to Japan in 1590. They also visited Macao and Goa, crossed the Indian Ocean, journeyed around the Cape of Good Hope and arrived in Rome. As they took the same route on their way back to Japan, they did not see the land of Arabs either.

The ship that left the Philippines for Mexico was boarded by Don Rodorigo, the former Viceroy of the Philippines, and drifted ashore at Isumi, Kazusa (the present-day Chiba Prefecture). When Don Rodorigo was due to depart for Mexico on a Mexican merchant ship, a mission headed by Katsusuke Tanaka, a merchant from Kyoto, was dispatched at the order of Ieyasu Tokugawa, the first Shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate. Tanaka and his followers are assumed to be the first Japanese to cross the Pacific Ocean.

Mexico was then a Spanish territory. Taking advantage of the above incident, Masamune Date, a Daimyo from the north-eastern part of Japan, dispatched the Keicho (name of an era) mission to the West, headed by Tsunenaga Hasekura, in order to promote trade between the Sendai clan and Mexico.

Hasekura and his party set sail in 1613 from Tsukinoura harbour on board the western sailing ship built in the territory of the Sendai clan, crossed the Pacific Ocean to Mexico, then crossed the Atlantic Ocean to Spain and came safely back to Japan in 1620. Having returned to Japan via Mexico and Manila, they also never saw the land of Arabs. Hasekura and his party were the first Japanese to cross both the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans.

The first Japanese who visited an Arab land – Oman

The Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1867), which initially accepted Christianity for the purposes of promoting trade, banned it due to political reasons and also decided to isolate the country to prevent Daimyos from getting richer and stronger through foreign trade and to monopolize the trade. In fact, the shogunate banned Christianity in 1613 and expatriated 105 foreign missionaries, monks and Japanese Christians to Manila and Macao, putting them on board five junk ships. Ukon Takayama and Jyoan Naito, well-known Christian Daimyos in Japan, their families and retainers were given a passage on the ship for Manila. Among those expatriated to Macao was Petro Kibe. His father was Romano Kibe, who, originating from the Kibe maritime warriors, served under Otomo, a Christian Daimyo, having earlier been baptized. His mother was Maria Hata. For Petro Kibe, born Christian, his childhood dream was to become a Jesuit priest.

It might have been happier for him to be expatriated. Having left Macao, where he had not been altogether content, he went to Rome and realized his long-cherished dream of becoming a priest with exceptional speed in 1620. His most impressive act was to return at the risk of martyrdom to Japan, where the number of martyrs was increasing due to the severe suppression of Christianity. He left Lisbon in 1623, sailed around the Cape of Good Hope via the Canary Islands, called in at Mozambique, crossed the Indian Ocean and arrived in Goa. Thereafter, he moved to Macao and stayed there for some time. During this period, he went all the way to Ayutthaya in Thailand, stayed for two years at 'Nippon Machi' (a Japanese town) where four hundred Japanese Christians were thought to be living then, and saw Nagamasa Yamada (a Japanese adventurer who gained considerable influence in Thailand and became the ruler of a province in southern Thailand). Three thousand Japanese were believed to be living in Ayutthaya at the height of its prosperity.

Petro Kibe left the Island of Lubang in the Philippines for Japan in 1630 at the risk of his life and, unfortunately, encountered a typhoon when he reached the Tokara Retto Islands. When the wrecked ship ran ashore on the rocks of Kuchinoshima Island, he was rescued by the islanders and sent to Bonotsu in Satsuma. In Bonotsu, he managed to pass through the severe surveillance of the Satsuma clan and succeeded in returning to Japan for the first time in 16 years. He was thereafter given refuge at the house of a Christian living in Nagasaki, posing as 'a fisherman from Kuchinoshima', but left there in around

1633 and continued to propagate Christianity while hiding in Mizusawa in the Tohoku region (the northern part of Japan, a long way from Nagasaki). He was, however, finally arrested in 1639 and sent to Edo (present-day Tokyo) bound with iron chains. In Edo, he was subjected to the hardest torture, 'Anazurushi' (hanging upside down), and finally burnt to death at the age of 52. He was martyred believing in God to the end, at a time when many Japanese Christians abandoned their faith, unable to stand the tortures. Goichi Matsunaga writes in his book entitled *Petro Kibe* that he is struck with awe at Petro Kibe's purity and courage in believing in God. [15] It should be mentioned here that most of my information under this heading is based on Matsunaga's book.

My purpose here is not to introduce the faith and the way of living of Petro Kibe. The reason why I refer to him is that he is thought to be the first Japanese to set foot in the land of Arabs. I mentioned that he left Macao in order to become a priest in Rome; thereafter, he left Goa for Rome overland by himself, parting from Mancio Konishi and Migel Minoes who chose the sea route. Matsunaga writes, "Petro Kibe arrived in Muscat from Goa aboard a ship for Muscat as a seafaring man. I assume he went to Bandar Abbas by boarding another ship in Muscat and entered Jerusalem via Bandar Bushehr, Abadan, Baghdad and Damascus... It was in the autumn or at the end of 1619." [16]

There was a Japanese man during this period who crossed the Arabian desert by himself and walked the distance of 3,000 kilometres, an amazing feat. Matsunaga, who says that there remains no record of Petro's trip from Muscat to Jerusalem, continues: "A Portuguese priest recorded that, if he had kept his diary, it would have been more interesting than detective stories." [17] "While the rich Marco Polo made a great expeditionary journey riding on camel-back, our Petro, to be called Marco Polo in the East, went the whole distance to Jerusalem, crossing the deserts on foot and without money. His journey took about a year and a half, complete with all sorts of hardships after he departed Goa, and was an example of a way of life leading to a splendid world." [18]

One imagines that he stayed at Bedouin villages while crossing the extremely hot desert at the risk of his life. He must have seen one-humped camels (dromedaries), drunk camel milk and tasted dates for the first time in his life. It is a pity that there is no record of his impression of Muscat. At that time, Muscat was under the occupation of the Portuguese. It was about thirty years later that the Portuguese were expelled by an uprising of the Omanis.

Information on Arabs during the Edo period

After the expulsion of Petro Kibe and others, the Tokugawa shogunate limited the entry of European ships to Hirado and Nagasaki and prohibited Spanish ships from entering Japanese ports in 1624. Thereafter, they banned voyages abroad of Japanese ships other than 'Hoshosen' (ships bearing both 'Shuinjyo' - a permit with vermilion seal - and 'Rojuhosho' - a permit from the councilors

of the shogunate), and prohibited the Japanese altogether from going abroad and returning to Japan. Furthermore, Iemitsu Tokugawa, the third Shogun, banned Portuguese ships from entering Japanese ports in order to reinforce measures against the propagation of Christianity, two years after the 1637 revolt by Japanese Christians that occurred at Shimabara in the Kyushu district. He also moved the Netherlands trade office at Hirado to Dejima in Nagasaki. Thus, the trade port was limited to Nagasaki, and only ships from the Netherlands and China were allowed to enter Japan.

Originally, Dutch merchants gained profits by going up the Rhine River and selling in inland Europe the oriental goods which were brought into Europe by the Portuguese and which they had obtained in Lisbon in Portugal. When the Netherlands, where Protestants dominated, became independent from Spain, a Catholic country, in 1581, they were no longer able to obtain the goods because Spain banned Dutch ships from entering the port of Lisbon in retaliation for their independence. At that time, Spain also governed Portugal. Therefore, the Dutch were forced to find their way into Asia by themselves in order to secure the goods. [19]

The contact between Japan and the Netherlands began when William Adams, an Englishman, had an audience with Ieyasu at Osaka in place of the captain who had become ill after *De Liefde*, the first Dutch ship to reach Japan, barely managed to cross the Pacific Ocean and drifted ashore in Bungo (the present-day Oita Prefecture, Kyushu). Partly because trade with the Netherlands was not accompanied by propagation of Christianity and because the Dutch aggressively presented Shoguns with gifts, the Netherlands obtained the Shuinjyo from Ieyasu and became the only European country to have a relationship with Japan after the ban on Spanish and Portuguese ships entering Japan. The English mission also had an audience with Ieyasu and Hidetada (the second Shogun), obtained the same Shuinjyo as that given to the Netherlands and opened its Mercantile Office at Hirado, but abandoned its business in 1623 due to poor trade results and withdrew from the Japanese market. [20]

Incidentally, as earlier mentioned, Ieyasu Tokugawa was the founder and first Shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate which had ruled Japan from 1603 to the Meiji Restoration in 1867. Under the above situation, there was no direct contact between Japan and Arab countries during the Edo period. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of information on them was available through contacts with the Netherlands and China at Nagasaki even during the period of national isolation. *Zoho Kai Tsushoko* (Supplementary Studies on Trade with China and Other Foreign Countries), written by Joken Nishikawa and published in 1708, refers to Arabia as follows:

There is a desert with the expanse of over 300 ri (=1,200 kilometres) in the Japanese unit of measurement. Once a strong wind blows, the sand flows like waves. Once travellers chance to be involved in it, they are immediately buried in the sand. [21]

The book continues by referring to the Red Sea: “To the west of this country lies a landlocked bay about 800 ri (3,200 kilometres) long. The seawater is as red as blood. The sea is called the West Red Sea.” It also refers to Babilonia: “To the west of the Sea is a country called Babilonia.” [22] In *Zoho Kai Tsushoko*, Joken describes the foreign situation, mainly from the viewpoint of trade, based on what he saw and heard in Nagasaki. Considering that he refers to the colour of the Red Sea as being as red as that of blood, he might have imagined Arabia as a strange place. *Wakan Sansai Zue*, an encyclopedia compiled during the Edo period by Ryoan Terajima in ca.1712, contains articles related to ‘Taishoku’ (a collective term for Arabs) and Arabian countries. In the paragraph regarding Taishoku, it explains:

Taishoku is located 1,000 ri (4,000 kilometres) to the west of the sea and lies between mountains and valleys... Taishoku consists of more than one thousand countries, namely Mirbat, Baghdad, Gazna, Misr and so on. There is no information on other countries. [23]

While there are descriptions of each country, I will mention here only those related to Oman. In the paragraph regarding Daishimoha (Sohar), the author refers to frankincense, whales and ambergris as follows:

It is extremely hot at Daishimoha, which is located on the coast, and frankincense trees grow there. The people incise the barks with knives and collect the milk (sap) during a certain period. A beautiful bird flies down from the sky like a white thread. It is fat and delicious. There are big fish, six metres long and 30 metres wide. People dare not eat them. They take out oil from them by scooping the fat and use the muscle and bone for house beams, the backbone for gates and the muscles of the back for mortar. There is also ambergris in the shape of a ball. People on the coast vie to collect and sell it. The big fish could be a whale. [24]

Ambergris, which is collected from a sperm whale, is an expensive form of incense similar to a resin. Frankincense is mistakenly described as the product of Sohar, where it is not collected. Although the way of collection, by incising the branch and trunk with a small knife, is correctly described, the identification of the collection point is wrong. Japanese knowledge of the Arab then was incomplete.

Moreover, in the paragraph regarding ‘Mirbat’, the turban is referred to as follows:

“It takes 40 days for a ship to reach land from Guangzhou, assisted by the north wind. The land is called Ranritan. People buy sappan wood, white tin and other items there. Leaving there in the next winter with the north wind, they reach Mirbat in 60 days. Traders, government officials and rich people wear beautiful filigreed turbans on their heads and trade using gold and silver as the currency”. [25]

There is also a description of myrrh as a souvenir.

Seiyo Kibun (Report on the West,) written by Hakuseki Arai and completed in around 1715, explains the continents, the seas and the countries around the world. While it refers to the West Red Sea, which designates the Red Sea, in the paragraph about Africa and to Harsia (Persia) in the paragraph about Asia [26], there is no description of Arabia. The book was written by Hakuseki to introduce the world situation and to criticize Christianity after his own interrogation of Giovanni Battista Sidotti, an Italian missionary, who dared to sneak into Japan and thus violate the interdict against Christianity. However, *Sairan Igen*, which was also written by Hakuseki Arai as his report to the Government after his interrogation of Sidotti, makes references to Arabia not only with regard to the West Red Sea but also on the topics of horses and frankincense. [27]

Arabian articles presented by the Dutch

The Netherlands, which was permitted to engage in trade in Japan together with China, devoted themselves to presenting the Shoguns, high officials of the shogunate, the Governor of Nagasaki and others with a variety of rare articles. Later, the Japanese began to order the articles that they wanted. Such requests were kept in records such as the *Eisch Boeken* (Order Book). A variety of articles was included in the requests, namely various textiles, animals (e.g. camels, horses, musk cats), plants, daily wares (e.g. mirrors, cruet stands, spectacles, glassware, dishes, lamps), medical articles (e.g. medicines, bottles for medicines and drugs), stationery (e.g. knives, ink, paper), foods (e.g. butter, liqueur, wine, saffron), jewels (e.g. diamonds, lapis lazuli, amber), scientific apparatus (e.g. timepieces, telescopes, microscopes, octants), munitions (e.g. pistols, gunpowder), books (e.g. dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, literature in specialized fields), maps, celestial and terrestrial globes, drawing instruments, a diving bell, and so on. [28] These items included articles related to the Middle East such as saffron, camels, maps, terrestrial globes and theriaca. I imagine that the Dutch referred to Arabia when they explained the related articles.

Late Edo period and the Arabs

The isolation of Japan since 1639 ended at last with the conclusion of the Japan-U.S. Friendship Treaty in 1845, one year after the arrival in Japan of Commodore Perry. Following this, the Japan-U.S. Amity and Trade Treaty was signed in 1858 with Townsend Harris, the Consul-General of the U.S., and similar treaties were signed with the Netherlands, Russia, Britain and France in succession. Thereafter, the pro-Emperor and anti-foreigner movement heightened and the domestic turmoils continued as a result, for example 'Ansei no Taigoku' (Mass Arrest in 1858), 'Sakuradamongai no Hen' (Assassination outside the Sakuradamon Gate in 1860) and frequent incidents of stabbing of foreigners.

Even under the circumstances, the first mission to the U.S. (with Buzennokami Niimi as the Ambassador and Kozukenosuke Oguri as the Inspector), well-

known in Japan for being accompanied by the guard ship *Kanrin Maru* (with Settsunokami Kimura as the Commander-in-Chief and Kaishu Katsu as the captain), was dispatched to the U.S. in 1860 to ratify the Japan-U.S. Amity and Trade Treaty. The mission crossed the Pacific Ocean, passed through the Panama Canal and visited New York and Washington and, on its way home, called in at Rwanda in Africa, crossed the Indian Ocean straight to Batavia (present-day Jakarta) and returned to Japan via Hong Kong. It did not stop in the land of Arabs. As *Kanrin Maru*, the guard ship, arrived at San Francisco via Hawaii and came straight back to Japan, this ship too had nothing to do with Arabia.

A mission to Europe (with Yasunori Shimotsukenokami Takeuchi as the Ambassador) was dispatched in 1861 to negotiate the postponement of the opening of the markets of Edo and Osaka and the ports of Hyogo and others. Another mission (with Nagaoki Chikuzennokami Ikeda as the Ambassador) was dispatched to France in 1863 to negotiate the closing of Yokohama port. Furthermore, a mission to France (with Takenaka Hyuganokami Shibata as the Ambassador) was dispatched in 1865, and a mission to the U.S. (headed by Yugoro Ono) and another mission to Russia (with Hidezane Yamatonokami Koide as the Ambassador) were dispatched in 1868.

As the route to Europe was then via Aden, Suez, Cairo, Port Said, Alexandria and so forth, the Japanese who participated in the missions saw Aden, the land of Arabs, for the first time in recorded Japanese history. What they saw and heard then has been documented in several books. *Saikoki* (Records of a voyage to the West) written by Yukichi Fukuzawa, *Onawa Oko Manroku* (Writings on a journey to Europe) by Wataru Ichikawa, *Okoki* (Records of a journey to the West) by Shunjiro Masuzu, and *Okoki Nikki* (Diary of a journey to Europe) by Tokuzo Fuchinobe all refer to the first mission to Europe in 1861.

Fukuzawa writes:

“Local people are much the same as Indians.” [29] To me, they look quite different from each other. Having been to the United States on board the *Kanrin Maru*, he could not identify the difference. It might have been, however, inevitable that Arabs and Indians looked alike to him, considering that he took just a glance at them while on his journey. Fukuzawa is a well-known writer, educationist and enlightened thinker in the early Meiji period and also a founder of Keio University.

Ichikawa writes as follows:

13 February. Fine, 82°F. The ship arrived in Aden at two o'clock in the morning and came to anchor five hundred metres off the coast. The harbour opened to the west and had a coastline of less than four kilometres. As it is extremely hot, the mountains and the rivers look like scorched land. There are no trees or grass growing, no streams and not a drop of water. There is a storage facility for drinking water supplied by

distilling the sea water. There are about five hundred houses standing and only three ships at anchor. There is no hotel, but there is a storage depot for coal on the seaside. I have learned that Britain has established a guard-house and stationed 2,700 soldiers here. Local people are hairy and have black skin, similar to Indians. They seem to be rather vulgar and lazy' Local people came to us in small boats to sell baskets made of the fronds of palm trees, matting, eggs of ostrich and dry fruits called 'Reitto', which taste like dried Kaki [persimmon]. At ten o'clock in the morning, three representatives landed as fifteen salutes of guns were fired. They returned to the ship after two o'clock in the afternoon. At four o'clock in the afternoon, with vigorous bursts of steam, the ship left the harbour towards the northwest... [30]

Their surprise at seeing the bare mountains and the waterless river (wadi), which looked like scorched land due to the hot temperature, is vividly described.

'Reitto' might be 'date', an English word. The pronunciation of 'date' by Englishmen might sound like 'Reitto'.

According to Ichikawa, those who landed at Aden were three representatives, namely Yasunori Takeuchi, Ambassador, Yasunao Matsudaira, Deputy Ambassador, Takaakira Kyogoku, Superintendent, and their attendants. They were the first Japanese on record to set foot in the land of Arabia. Considering that fifteen salutes of guns were fired from the British position, it appears that Britain treated them with due respect.

Masuzu writes as follows:

It is particularly hot. The temperature is eighty to ninety degrees Fahrenheit... There is a fruit called 'deido'... It tastes sweet and similar to that of dried Kaki [persimmon] in Japan. We hear that 'Deido' is their daily food and that they do not eat grains. They live on this fruit... They have few cows and horses but have many camels. As the former cannot live without water and the latter can survive with less water, they use camels for transportation of commodities and for daily chores... I could not accompany the three representatives who landed. Therefore, I cannot record Aden's geography in detail. I am writing this according to what I have heard. It is my great regret that I could not experience Aden with my own eyes and ears. [31]

Ninety degrees in Fahrenheit is equivalent to thirty-two degrees in Centigrade. Surely, it must have been hot.

Fuchinobe writes:

Local people have black skins and wear a cloth on barely half of the body. They all transport goods by camels. Horse carriages sometimes pass by.

Local people come to us by boat or barge to sell goods, among which are eggs of ostrich, fifteen to sixteen centimetres in diameter and as solid as ceramic ware, and fine bird feathers, purchased by European ladies for head decoration. [32]

Fuchinobe seems to have landed, accompanying the three representatives. He must have been very excited to see camels.

Taro Iwamatsu, who participated in the mission to Europe dispatched in 1863, writes in his book, *Kokai Nikki* (Diary of a Voyage) as follows:

The wind had stopped after dark but it was still very hot. Everyone had a hard time and I could not sleep until dawn... Three representatives went ashore, accompanied by Tomesaburo. I have heard that on his landing Nakura could locate many camels and donkeys on his right and left sides and that there are sodomites. According to him, local people all have wavy hair burnt by the sun, with some heads close-cropped and others uncared for. The bodies were as black as Chinese ink. The representatives returned to the ship around two o'clock in the afternoon. According to the attendants, the local people all seemed to be thieves. The Japanese were robbed of fans and whips by them while riding in the horse carriage... It is very hot. The thermometer designated eighty-six degrees in Fahrenheit. I went up to the deck but I could not cool myself because of the humidity. I was forced to go to bed. [33]

The heat seems to have been unbearable, and the travellers report that they could not sleep until dawn. Incidentally, Fuchinobe's description of local people as wearing a cloth on barely half of the body and Iwamatsu's comment that they all seemed to be thieves are, to my surprise, very similar to remarks about the Japanese by the foreigners who came over to Japan during the Meiji period. Sir Ernest Mason Satow, an English diplomat, writes in his book entitled '*A Diplomat in Japan*' that Japanese fishermen, whom he saw for the first time on entering the Edo Bay, were almost naked, wearing a cloth only around the loins, although some covered their faces with a blue cloth. [34]

He writes further, "I have kept my eyes on my servant, suspecting that he might be a secret villain. Just as I thought, so he was... I have found out that he pocketed a considerable sum from the money paid to the carpenter for chairs and tables he manufactured." [35]

I think it was natural that Arabs living in a hot climate and the Japanese in early September were half-naked. As for the unfavorable description of the Japanese, Ernest Satow often refers in the latter part of his book to the friendship, kindness, politeness and sincerity of the Japanese people that he experienced as he became acquainted with them. Thus, Iwamatsu's observation that local people all seemed to be "thieves" seems to be incorrect and exaggerated. He

might have been influenced by the preconception towards Arab people by the Japanese at that time.

Akitake Tokugawa and his party, who visited Europe in 1867 to attend the World EXPO in Paris, also visited Aden in Arabia. Eiichi Shibusawa, a member of the party and business tycoon in later years, writes in his book entitled *Kosei Nikki* (Diary of a voyage towards the West): “Arabs seem to be stronger than Indians, but are of abject character” and “They persist in selling ostrich feathers and so on, overcharging us. Be aware of it.”[36]

It was on 27 November 1869 that the Suez Canal was opened from Suez to Port Said. It had taken ten years to complete from the start of its construction in 1859. As the Canal was still under construction when the above missions were dispatched, they disembarked at Suez and went by train as far as Cairo and then Alexandria, from where they left by ship again for Europe.

Chapter 5 Human Exchange between Oman and Japan

Masaharu Yoshida Mission

The Meiji Government dispatched the so-called ‘Masaharu Yoshida mission’ to Persia and Turkey in 1880 for a survey of their general and business conditions.

What prompted the dispatch of this mission was the audience given to Takeaki Enomoto, who had worked as Japanese minister to Russia for four years from 1874, and Tokujiro Nishi, the then councillor at Saint Petersburg, by Nasser al-Din, Shah of Persia, who was visiting Europe at that time. During the audience, the Shah expressed his desire to develop trade relations with Japan. Kaoru Inoue, the then Foreign Minister, took advantage of this opportunity to decide to dispatch a mission and have it extend their visit to Turkey.

As for Turkey, the Turkish Foreign Ministry had also expressed its desire to establish diplomatic relations with Japan when Hiroshi Nakai, the then secretary of the Japanese Legation in England, called in at Turkey on his way back home in 1876.

The main issues of the Meiji Government, which was pushing forward the modernization of Japan, were demarcation of the territory and revision of unequal treaties. As Persia and Turkey, like Japan, were suffering from unequal treaties, the Japanese Government was concerned about the developments in both countries.

Nobuyoshi Furukawa

Nobuyoshi Furukawa, Captain of army engineers and deputy head of the mission, landed at Muscat on his way to Persia. This was the first recorded visit to Oman by a Japanese man.

I will outline Furukawa’s travel according to his book entitled *Perusha Kikou* (Travelling to Persia), published in March 1891:

Furukawa, who was then with the staff headquarters of the War Ministry, set sail on board the *Hiei* from the vicinity of Shinagawa on 6th April 1880, under orders to inspect Persia. The commander of the ship was Sukeyuki Ito, a junior captain. Furukawa was accompanied by Masaharu Yoshida, a Foreign Ministry official and the head of the mission, Magoichiro Yokoyama, the Vice-President of Okura-gumi Trading House, a clerk of the company representing the Commercial Department of the Ministry of Finance and three merchants of cloisonné ware, haberdashery and gold and silver work. The mission members were seven in total.

A book entitled *Perusha no Tabi* (Travels to Persia) by Masaharu Yoshida tells us that the *Hiei* left Japan with two missions. One was to gain experience of navigation in the Indian Ocean and the other was to extend facilities to the Yoshida mission throughout the main ports in the Arabian Gulf. This was possible through the good offices of Takeaki Enomoto, who had then been promoted to Navy Minister. [1]

Furukawa, who parted in Hong Kong from Yoshida and his party, who were to set sail for Bandar Bushehr in Persia on board a faster commercial ship, continued his voyage by himself on board the *Hiei* to Bombay via Singapore, where he happened to join Yoshida and the others again. Bidding farewell to the commander and officers of the *Hiei*, he took a commercial ship, the *Socotra*, at Bombay and arrived in Muscat by himself via Karachi on 25th June 1880, eighty days after his departure from Shinagawa, Japan.

Furukawa describes the situation as follows:

25th (Friday) Fine, 90°F

I arrived at Muscat in Arabia at 12:30 in the afternoon...Muscat is a port located in the north-eastern part of Arabia and is the capital of Oman. [2]

He goes on to write about the town:

The port of Muscat is a small bay surrounded by craggy mountains on which I cannot see even a piece of soil or a spot of green. In the sea to the left of the port entrance stands a big rocky island, on the top of which lies a gun battery in the shape of a circular mound. Moreover, there is a gun battery of the same shape on the craggy mountains to the right and left...The town lies at the end of the port. The population of Muscat is over seven hundred. There is a palace and the British Consulate. I can see eight western ships on the berths, one of which is a Turkish commercial ship... [3]

Furukawa went to the British Consulate through the good offices of Major Grant, the British Consul at Muscat with whom Furukawa had become acquainted aboard the *Socotra* after he left Karachi, and looked around the town with a guide provided by him. He records his impression as follows:

I reached the city centre. The view is very strange, without any busy streets. Houses are made of bricks dried in the sun and the streets for people and horses to pass through are only two to two and a half metres wide...On the right and left side stand shops selling cloth, grains and food. The town extends only three to four hundred metres in length and width. Surrounded by the walls, the city looks like a castle...I cannot see any tree inside or outside the town. I can spot several houses scattered on the rugged mountains, and poor soil. It is easily understood that it is a

land of extreme heat. The only trees I can spot are six to seven palms. As I could not endure the scorching sun and the blazing heat, I went back to the Consulate and took a short rest... [4]

He tells us that he learned at the Consulate that Muscat was extremely hot, in fact the hottest place in the world with temperatures of over 120°F (48.8°C), that only two westerners lived there, Major Grant and another English merchant, with no other Europeans, and that the best thing in Muscat was its rich supply of drinking water. [5]

The month of June, when Furukawa visited Oman, is the hottest in Muscat and may have days with temperatures from the high thirties to a maximum of 45 to 46 degrees Centigrade.

It was 1800 when the first British political agent was stationed in Muscat. However, the resident office was closed in 1810 because the first three political agents had died of heat there in succession, and the British political agent stationed at Bandar Bushehr then took care of the task for thirty years. The Muscat political agency was restored as the importance of Oman increased with its prosperity under Said the Great. It was certain that Major Grant had this history in mind when he explained the extreme heat of Muscat to Furukawa.

Furukawa records the name of the Sultan as 'Saitake'. The then Sultan was Sayyid Turki. The pronunciation of 'Sayyid Turki' might have sounded to Furukawa like 'Saitake'.

He writes "I returned to the ship at three o'clock in the afternoon and the ship weighed anchor at nine in the evening and left for Jask in Iran." [6] Furukawa left for Jask on the night of the day when he arrived. His stay in Muscat was less than nine hours.

Furukawa (1849-1921) was born to the house of Shogun's retainer. He fought in the Boshin war at Shimofusa (presently Chiba Prefecture) with Sohei Ehara (the founder of Azabu Secondary School, one of the most prestigious secondary schools in Japan). He was admitted to the third class of the Numazu Army Academy which had been established with the transfer of the Tokugawa's domain from Edo (presently Tokyo) to Sumpu (presently Shizuoka). With the abolition of the Academy, he went up to Tokyo and worked successfully as an army engineer. He participated in the Japanese-Sino and Japanese-Russo Wars and was promoted to lieutenant-general in 1906.

Sukeyuki Ito

The *Hiei* came into Muscat port on 3rd July, eight days after Furukawa departed. The *Hiei*, then one of the three capital ships of the Japanese imperial navy, was the first Japanese ship to visit Oman and her crew was the second to visit

Muscat. However, they were the first Japanese to be granted an audience by the Sultan of Oman.

Ito recorded the following:

Fog was as usual so thick on that day that we could not know whether or not we could reach the coast until we were less than 2 kilometres distant. The sea could be called 'the sea of danger'...As soon as the *Hiei* arrived at the port, government officials visited our ship and presented us with fruits, sheep, and other items as gifts from the Sultan...

At 8:00 o'clock in the morning of 4th July, the ship fired the twenty-one gun salute to the Sultan, which was reciprocated by a gun salute of the same number from the battery. Commander Ito, Vice-Commander Hattori, Medical Officer Murase and other officers paid a courtesy call to the palace and presented a pair of Japanese vases and two gold lacquered chairs to the Sultan...We were informed that the Sultan would visit our ship at five o'clock in the afternoon and passed the time by hanging coloured flags and decorating the inside of the ship...The crew manned the yards and gave a salute as the boat of the Sultan approached our ship...We fired a twenty-one gun salute on his return... [7]

Having left the *Hiei*, Sultan Turki indicated his intention of promoting friendship and proposed to exchange letters. Ito agreed and sent a letter of gratitude, and had the honour of receiving a personal letter in return from the Sultan. [8]

The letter Ito received from Sultan Turki reads "Your esteemed letter of this date has been received and what you have written we have understood and we thank you for the sentiment conveyed therein. We were pleased to hear of your arrival and shall be glad if the Emperor's ship comes here. We shall not fail to extend to them the courtesy which is their due at our hand."

The *Hiei* weighed anchor and left Muscat for Bandar Bushehr on 6th July.

Furukawa and Yoshida refer to the visit to Muscat by Ito in their respective books as a story they learned from Ito when they later welcomed the *Hiei* at Bandar Bushehr. Yoshida writes that the presents from the Sultan were a cow, four sheep and several baskets of dates, grapes and mangoes. [9]

I would like to emphasize that the visit was epoch-making in the context of relations between Oman and Japan through the fact that the *Hiei* was the first Japanese vessel whatsoever that entered the Muscat Bay, Commander Ito and the officers were the first Japanese that were granted an audience by the Sultan of Oman and Commander Ito was the first Japanese that had the honor to receive a personal letter from the Sultan of Oman. Moreover, the *Hiei* fired a twenty-one gun salute when she entered the Muscat Port. Considering that a

twenty-one gun salute is never fired to a country with which another does not have diplomatic relations, this visit can be evaluated as the starting point of the relations between the two countries.

Since the marine sweepers of the Maritime Self-Defense Force of Japan called in at the Muscat Port after the Gulf War in 1991, Japanese warships have entered the ports of Oman for the Iraq War operation, ocean training voyages and anti-piracy measures directed towards Somalia. Sultan Turki's patronage as expressed in his letter, "We are pleased to hear of your arrival and shall be glad if the Emperor's ship comes here. We shall not fail to extend to them the courtesy which is their due at our hand", has been maintained toward Japan even after more than a century since the visit by the *Hiei*.

Ito (1843-1914) is from a house of Samurai warriors belonging to the Kagoshima clan. He participated in the Satsuma-British War. Trained at the Navy Training School of the Tokugawa shogunate, he became a navy officer after the Meiji Restoration. Having served as Commander Admiral of the Allied Squadron during the Japanese-Sino War, he won a massive victory over China (under the Qing dynasty) by destroying a large Chinese capital ship in the Yellow Sea Battle. Heihachiro Togo, the heroic Navy Admiral of Japan who defeated the Baltic Fleet of Russia in the Battle of Tsushima in 1905, worked as the captain of the *Naniwa* under him. Ito was promoted to Admiral in 1898 and to Admiral of the Fleet after the Japanese-Russo War.

Masaharu Yoshida

Masaharu Yoshida also published his travelogue *Perusha no Tabi* in April 1894. Having had a distant glimpse of Oman on his way to Bandar Bushehr with Yokoyama and others with whom Yoshida had left Furukawa at Singapore, he gives the following description:

As Arabia is a vast land of deserts, it stands to reason that we did not expect the mountains to be so high as to obstruct our eyes. However, the mountains on the coast of Oman were rugged and high. While the bases of the mountains end near the coast, if the mountains lay nearer to the sea so that we could have a glimpse of them, we could not have said nothing obstructed our eyes. [10]

Afterwards, Yoshida and Yokoyama stopped at Bahrain. As the description of Bahrain in Yoshida's book is a valuable one recorded by the first Japanese who visited there, I will quote from it as follows:

Bahrain is a well-known island in the Arabian Gulf, located in the middle of the Gulf where the Arabian Peninsula becomes constricted towards Persia and on the coast ninety miles to the left from Bandar Bushehr ... We imagined what the city was like when we caught a glimpse of a

red wall amidst date palm trees after having anchored at an inlet of the island...We got on shore, but there was nothing special to see...We heard there was a fountain gushing natural soda two miles outside the city. Having hired donkeys, we visited this surprising place...We reached there in several dozen minutes by following winding alleys in the palm trees. When we drank soda water, which we scooped up by prostrating ourselves towards the fountain, we felt quite refreshed... The fountain was only fifteen to eighteen metres in diameter and was pellucid like a mirror. Having barely endured the baking heat by drinking warm water on the ship, we felt like staying by the side of the fountain for a while... The Emir lives in a huge house with a red flag amid the palm trees on the left side of the mooring point, and has great powers over the life and death of the inhabitants. What they are proud of as treasure trove are pearls which are laboriously collected from the bays of the island. Exports to European countries bring in not less than four to five hundred thousand dollars per year. The pearls from Bahrain are shiny and are evaluated as the best by the high society in Europe. It is said that a good string of pearls covers the whole amount of the dowry of a beauty. I have heard that the method of collection is very inefficient. When I learned that they could increase their income a hundred times if they knew how to use better equipment, I regretted that there was no instrument to survey the depth of the sea. I strolled around the island all day long until the ship weighed anchor for Bandar Bushehr. I left the strange island after sunset and arrived at the port of Bandar Bushehr next morning... [11]

Which fountain did Yoshida visit? The Adhari pool, which I saw during my first visit to Bahrain in 1973, was much bigger, and torrents of water were flowing into a stream from there. Yoshida might have visited a different fountain.

Pearl collecting, to which Yoshida refers in his book, was actively pursued then. It started more than two thousand years ago and supported the livelihood of the local people for a long time. The industry started declining after the emergence of cultured pearls by Kokichi Mikimoto in the 1930s. It was in 1893 that Mikimoto succeeded in pearl farming and it was in 1929 that his cultured pearls were recognized worldwide when he opened new sales outlets in London and New York. However, he was forced to downscale the business during the Second World War. It was during the late 1940s, after the war, that he secured a worldwide dominance by expanding the business.

Yoshida, Yokoyama and others arrived at Bandar Bushehr well before the arrival of Furukawa and the *Hiei* there. Wishing to explore the remote parts of Arabia rather than wait there without doing anything, Yoshida, Yokoyama and an Indian interpreter planned to visit Basra and Baghdad, going upstream on the Arabian River (the Tigris and the Euphrates). They departed Bandar Bushehr on 22 June, leaving the accompanying merchants behind, one day before Furukawa entered the port of Karachi. On their way, Yoshida and Yokoyama called in at Kuwait as the first Japanese visitors there.

We reached a mooring port called Kuwait located on the estuary of the Arabian River. Strange spectacles on board to be noted are as follows. The Emir of Kuwait happened to be aboard the same ship as me on his way back home from Bombay where he had been visiting with his two children. The Emir is heavy-boned and wears on his head a turban sewn with golden threads...He wears a brown 'abasu', a long collarless dress with wide lower sleeve edges, made of the hair of wild sheep...During a meal, he sits on his heels on the carpet which he has ordered to be spread and eats rice, meat and 'curry juice' from a big plate by hand... As soon as the ship came to a stop at the designated position, two barges approached the ship to see the Emir, with more than ten women sitting in a circle in the barges. They all covered their faces as if they were Japanese women wearing the Kazuki [a cloth with which an ancient Japanese high-born lady used to cover her face on the occasion of an outing] in ancient times...In view of the fact that they unloaded several hundred boxes of cotton and grains, the buildings on the yellow banks at the far front must have been trading houses...we proceeded to the estuary of the Arabian River...The local people called it "Shatti Al Arab..." [12]

Although Yoshida and the others did not land in Kuwait, they examined the people's clothes, the way they ate, the women and so on with curiosity. Seeing women covering their faces, they recollected the 'Kazuki' worn by Japanese women in ancient times.

Yoshida, Yokoyama and the Indian merchant next visited Basra and Baghdad and headed for the ruins of Babylon, but could not get there. Yoshida collapsed because of sunstroke in a temperature of 130 degrees Fahrenheit (54.4 degrees Centigrade) and so they gave up their trip to Babylon after just under twenty kilometers and returned to Baghdad.

It was on 3 November 1976 that I stood among the ruins of Babylon for the first time. This was the date of Culture Day, a national holiday in Japan. I spoke complacently to Mr. S of a Japanese trading house, who was accompanying me, saying "We are the only Japanese among over 100 million that are standing on the ruins of Babylon on this auspicious Culture Day". We did not imagine then that Yoshida and Yokoyama had arrived in the neighborhood of Babylon nearly 100 years ago. Yoshida and his party also dropped in at the ruins of Persepolis on their way from Bandar Bushehr to Tehran. When I visited there several times in the 1970s, I never imagined that other Japanese had also visited there nearly 100 years ago.

Yoshida and Yokoyama returned to Bandar Bushehr to join the party, completely exhausted by the blazing heat. The *Hiei* had already entered Bandar Bushehr.

Furukawa narrates:

I got up at three thirty in the morning, rode the barge at four thirty, arrived at the *Hiei* and saw the commander and other officers. I heard that the ship had left Bombay on 26 June and arrived at the port yesterday after spending a few days in Muscat in Arabia...I got off the ship at nine o'clock in the morning and came back to the hotel at eleven o'clock in the morning. I left the hotel to visit an official of the Foreign Ministry and, when I came back to the hotel, I learned that Yoshida and Yokoyama had come back from Baghdad. [13]

Yoshida also records:

It was with great regret that I could not welcome the *Hiei* together with the mission members. The *Hiei* arrived safely three days ago before my return and was flying the flag of the Rising Sun off Bandar Bushehr. I paid a courtesy call on the Governor of Bandar Bushehr and the representative of the Foreign Ministry. They hosted us and we invited them to the ship in return. The *Hiei* left for Japan in a few days, leaving us behind. [14]

It is a big surprise that a Japanese ship went as far as Bandar Bushehr in the early Meiji period, and I can easily imagine how Yoshida and Furukawa were moved by seeing the flag of the Rising Sun there.

Masaharu Yoshida (1852-1921) is the eldest son of Toyo Yoshida, chief retainer of the Tosa (presently, Kochi Prefecture) clan. After the unnatural death of his father, he was brought up at the Gotos, the house of his mother's parents. Shojiro Goto, a well-known Japanese politician during the latest Edo and Meiji periods, was his cousin. Yoshida took the role of the head of the mission as an official of the Foreign Ministry and conducted a survey on the drafting of the constitution in Europe in 1882, accompanying Hirobumi Ito, the best-known Japanese politician during the Meiji period. Yoshida also translated the book *Kouko Setsuryaku* (Overview on Archaeology) written by Heinrich von Siebold.

Reign of Sultan Turki bin Said

Here, I will refer to Sultan Turki who visited the warship *Hiei* and received Commander Ito and others at the palace.

Sultan Turki is the 6th son of Said the Great. When the Sultanate was divided into Zanzibar and Oman, Thuwaini, Turki's elder brother, became 7th Sultan of the Al bu Said dynasty in 1856, though Turki, then Wali of Sohar, asserted independence. In 1861, Turki tried to attack Muscat to claim the succession, but his plan was thwarted.

After his reconciliation with Turki, Thuwaini was shot and mortally wounded

with a double-barreled pistol by his son Salim during his visit to Sohar in 1866. Turki was then interned, but escaped and captured Muttrah and assailed the walls of Muscat to dethrone the new 8th Sultan Salim. However, the British Government of India acknowledged Salim as the ruler of Oman and it was stipulated that Turki would receive an annual stipend from Salim. With this assurance, Turki embarked across the Oman Sea for Gwadar, accompanied by his son, Faisal, and ruled there for a while. [15] Turki, who had aspired to be the ruler of the Sultanate, returned from Gwadar and fought at Wadi Dhank with Azzan, the unpopular and collateral 9th Sultan. Rather surprisingly, Turki's side won and he became the 10th Sultan in 1871, the 15th year since the death of Said the Great.

However, he had no easy passage. The powerful Al Harithi family sacked Muttrah and attempted to take Muscat in 1874. Humiliated and in ill health, Turki retired to Gwadar in 1875 and, with health and spirits restored, staged a surprising comeback, landing at Muttrah unannounced in the same year. In 1877, the Al Harithi opposition forces launched another attack on Muscat, but Turki overcame them with British assistance. In 1883, the Al Harithi laid siege to Muscat to depose Turki in alliance with his brother, but Turki again defeated them. His reign continued until his death in 1888. [16]

Through the above brave act, Turki redirected the royal succession to his own son Faisal, to his son Taimur, to his son Said and ultimately to the present Sultan Qaboos. It was in 1880 that Furukawa, Ito and others visited Muscat, when Sultan Turki was busy dealing with continuing internal insurrections.

Muscat nowadays

I will give some details of Muscat, which Furukawa and Ito visited 130 years ago. While Muscat nowadays means 'Greater Muscat' which extends forty kilometers north and south, the place that Furukawa and Ito visited then is the district called 'Old Muscat' today.

From the airport, you take the main road towards Muttrah and then to Muscat. Turning to the right at the Riyam roundabout immediately after passing through the main street of Muttrah, you will strike a trail which was the first paved road in Oman in 1929. Climbing the slope, you will find a craggy mountain on the left side and sheer cliffs on the right separated by a low concrete protective barrier. Following the trail for a while, you will reach the point where the mountain on the left side ends. Parking there and looking down to the left, you can command a view of the townscape below.

The area within sight is the town called 'Old Muscat' set on a narrow patch of land less than one square kilometer in size. To your left is a view of Mirani Fort, built by the Portuguese in 1587, and the Alam Palace, rebuilt in its present form in 1974, where the Sultan executes his official business. The national flag

of Oman is hoisted at the Palace while the Sultan is at work. When we see the flag, the Sultan is in the building. In the far front, we can get a glimpse of Jalali Fort, built in 1588. Looking more closely, we can see the Al Khor Mosque in front of Mirani Fort.

I understand Muscat means 'falling place' in Arabic. We can easily understand this if we have a glimpse of the town from the sea. The cliffs of the mountains surrounding the town look as if they are falling down towards the sea.

While the present population of Old Muscat is about 30,000, we hear that it exceeded 50,000 during the reign of Said the Great. Muscat, well-known from ancient times for its privileged location, good natural harbour and abundance of water, was, with Aden, one of the two most important ports in the Arabian Peninsula during the reign of Said the Great, when Oman formed a maritime empire by taking control of the regions on Africa's east coast from Somalia to Mozambique and Baluchistan on the opposite coast. It is said that the population decreased to around 5,000 in 1970 with the decline of Oman's dominance.

Just as it had been attacked in the revolt during the reign of Sultan Turki, Muscat had always been a place of battle for political power. Notably, Omani forces climbed up the walls of Forts Mirani and Jalali in 1650, leaping over thousands of their comrades' corpses and succeeding in exterminating and expelling the Portuguese. Looking at the forts and recollecting those days, we are deeply moved.

A love affair is said to have been involved in the victory. There was an Indian merchant called Narutem who supplied the forts with provisions. He had a very beautiful daughter. Attracted by her beauty, Pereira, the then Portuguese commander, wished to marry her. Narutem did not want his daughter, a Hindu, to marry Pereira, a Catholic, and he declined his proposal. Pereira, who had fallen in love with the daughter, became furious and threatened to cancel the contracts Narutem had with the forts, which would mean his financial ruin. Narutem was worried and played for time. He pretended to change his mind and asked for a year to prepare for the wedding. Once an agreement was reached, he proceeded to tell Pereira that the fort would never stand a long siege. He claimed that the water in the tanks was foul and must be replaced. He said that the old stocks of wheat should be changed and the gunpowder removed. Pereira told him to go ahead, but when Narutem removed the items he did not replace them.

Narutem knew that Imam Sultan ibn Saif was waiting for the right moment to attack the forts and, when he saw an opportunity to get rid of Pereira, he informed Imam Sultan ibn Saif that the garrison was weakened. The Imam launched his attack against the Portuguese and successfully took the forts. [17]

I would like to remind you at this point that a visit to see Old Muscat from

above in the evening is even more attractive than in the daytime. The night view of the town that appears all of a sudden on the left side is especially striking in contrast to the pitch-dark mountain trail. The views of the floodlit forts, Mirani and Jalali, and Muscat Bay with illuminated buildings reflected in the sea have an unworldly beauty. The night view of Muscat Bay from the car park at the entrance to the Royal Yacht Harbor is also amazing. You can find it by taking the road through the Great Wall of Muscat, passing by the Al Khor Mosque and turning left at the corner of Mirani Fort.

Yasumasa Fukushima

Two more Japanese, Yasumasa Fukushima, then an army colonel, and Toyokichi Ienaga, a so-called forgotten cosmopolitan, visited Muscat thereafter during the Meiji period (1868-1912).

Yasumasa Fukushima was from the lower-grade Samurai class of the Matsumoto (present-day Nagano Prefecture) clan. He was appointed as first lieutenant at the age of 26 and became a career officer, passing the recruitment examination after many years of hardships. He took up the post of military attaché at the Japanese Legation in Beijing in 1883. Dispatched to India in 1886, he distinguished himself by touring all over the country. He received national acclaim for his adventures between 1892 and 1893 in which he traveled alone on horseback through Russia, the Great Plain of Siberia, the Plain of Mongolia and Manchuria and returned safely to Tokyo.

Having left Tokyo again in October 1895, he toured China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Lebanon, Ceylon, Burma, India, Oman, Persia, the Caucasus region and the Central Asian countries until finally returning to Tokyo in March 1897. It was on 26th November 1896 during this tour that Fukushima called in at Muscat.

Fukushima could not land in Oman due to bad weather. He recalls the situation then as follows:

Rocked violently back and forth by high waves caused by the strong wind from the north, the ship managed to arrive in the Muscat Bay at seven o'clock in the morning. However, the ship could not start taking up cargoes due to the high waves in the port, the entrance of which faced the north. Dropping anchor, we waited in vain for the wind to die down. There was a ship of the Sultan's anchored alone at the outdated berth in the port. Craggy mountains and the half-collapsed forts retained their original appearance and the red flags were fluttering over the palace. Noticing the red flags, the captain said, "So the Sultan has made a triumphant return now"...Having 250 tons of cargo to be loaded, the ship patiently waited for the wind and waves to die down. However, they never abated their momentum. I had heard that a steam ship from Karachi suffered from great difficulties, hit

by strong winds on the way to Muscat. The wind and high waves which involved our ship might have been the after-effect of these. [18]
Although the wind weakened a little at night, it gained force again at dawn on the 27th and the ship weighed anchor and left for Gwadar in Baluchistan at three o'clock in the afternoon, with no prospect of loading cargo.

Personally speaking, I was stationed in Beirut as the chief representative of Maruzen Oil for about two years after 1974, and the place is filled with my old memories. Fukushima visited Beirut in 1895 as the first Japanese to do so.

Toyokichi Ienaga

Toyokichi Ienaga was a member of the Kumamoto Band (the origin of the Protestants during the Meiji period). Born in Yanagawa in Kyushu district, he entered Doshisha University after his graduation from Kumamoto Western School. He went to the U.S. at the age of 22 and graduated from Oberlin University in 1885. He returned to Japan in 1890 with a Ph.D. degree from Johns Hopkins University.

Thereafter, he served as professor at Tokyo Senmon Gakko (College), the precursor of Waseda University, and Keio University. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1897 and went again to the U.S., where he was responsible for lectures on Japan at Columbia University, but died in an accident there in 1936. Not listed in any kind of encyclopedia, he was an unmatched cosmopolitan of the times in Japan. That is the reason why he is called the 'forgotten cosmopolitan.'

While working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs he started his tour of India, Persia, Turkey, Egypt and other places in May 1899 on a mission to investigate matters related to the opium trade, which was the most important issue for the Government of Taiwan. He returned to Japan in March 1900.

Persia was an opium-producing country then and was supplying a large quantity of opium to Taiwan. In 1895, after the Japanese victory in the Japan-Sino war, Taiwan was ceded from China to Japan, where the import of opium was prohibited. Ienaga was dispatched to solve the problem and visited Muscat in the course of this trip.

Ienaga writes on Muscat in the paragraph dated 19 May 1899 in his book *Nishiajia Ryokoki* (Account of travels to West Asia) as follows:

At noon of the 19th, in front of me appeared the never-seen-before landscape, alarming and unbelievable. Precipitous cliffs of red or black granite, as though chiseled with a saw, towered from the sea. There was no tree and no shrub on the coast. All of a sudden, successive cliffs of 150 to 180 metres high soared from the sea and formed a stretch of coastline.

Looking into the far distance, copper-colored rugged mountains without any greenery extend in the foreground as far as I can see. There is an inlet surrounded by these natural defensive walls. There is a small flat place where the city of Muscat is located...

At the place located at the east corner from where one can look down on the whole city, the British Consulate stands out...Although I see the American flag flying on a building, America has few interests here except the trading of a small quantity of dates...Therefore, the U.S. delegates the office work to an agent... [19]

During my stay in Muscat, I went outside Muscat Bay to go fishing with my wife and several Japanese friends. It was perhaps in 1994. I clearly remember the strange spectacle of the craggy mountains. On the rocks were written an endless number of characters, some at high altitude and others at the edge of the surf. The white-painted markings extended on and on. It is said that the characters were left behind by the crews of the ships that visited Muscat in olden days. I had heard we could find the name of the *Minerva*, which Admiral Nelson was on board in the latter half of the eighteenth century when he was still a lower-ranked officer. The white paint emphasizes the unusual aspect of the craggy mountains. We were deeply moved, remembering that Ienaga also saw this spectacle.

Ienaga left Muscat on the following day. "The ship weighed anchor at noon on the 20th and cruised on the calm Oman Sea. On the port side, we can get a distant view of beautiful but strange ranges of craggy mountains and big dolphins jumping in the waves. A breeze started blowing in my face and I felt the cool and refreshing air. I enjoyed this very happy change of circumstances."

I assume the landscape referred to here by Ienaga is that around Ras al Hamra, which is one of my favorite places in Muscat. I have visited the place very often with my wife. I have never spotted a dolphin from the cliff-top but have seen a turtle swimming serenely. I have a vivid recollection of the blue sea.

Ienaga also visited Beirut and dropped in at Tripoli to the north and Sidon to the south in 1899, four years after Fukushima. I can but take my hat off to them both.

Moreover, I note that Ienaga received useful information on Persia from Fukushima when he came up to Tokyo to visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before his departure.

Reign of Sultan Faisal bin Turki

It was under the reign of Sultan Faisal, the second son of Sultan Turki who succeeded to the throne after his father's death in 1888, that Fukushima and Ienaga visited Muscat.

The succession to the throne was peaceful. This was to be the first time since the mid-nineteenth century decline of the Sultanate that the transfer of power had been orderly. Having married his cousin, the daughter of Thuwaini, the 7th ruler, Sultan Faisal consolidated his rule in its initial stage by taking advantage of the good relationship with his relatives and powerful families inland and also the continuance of the Zanzibar subsidy. However, he gradually lost the confidence of the families, inland sheikhs of importance and religious leaders alike because of his dependence on the British. [20]

In 1891, Sultan Faisal agreed to make a binding pledge that his heirs and successors would never cede, sell, mortgage or give for occupation, save to the British Government, the dominions of Muscat and Oman or any of their dependencies. [21]

In 1895, the Sultan of Zanzibar dreamed of recreating a unified Omani-Zanzibari empire and occupied the Muscat palace with the aid of leading internal tribes. Sultan Faisal and his courageous wife fought the occupiers with rifles, protecting Taimur, his seven-year-old son, and others. During the night, he took his wife, two sisters and Taimur and hid them in a nearby Hindu merchant's house. Later, his wife, in the desperation of the moment, ran to the British Consulate to plead for assistance, but none was forthcoming, which resulted in a growing distrust of Britain. Sultan Faisal managed to defend Muscat as a result of conciliation with the revolting forces, but was burdened by Britain's request for compensation for damage caused to foreigners during the attack. [22]

Thereafter, Sultan Faisal became closer to Russia and France, which were penetrating the region in order to weaken British influence around the Indian Ocean. At one point, Sultan Faisal promised to the French the gift of a coaling station at Bandar Jissah near Muscat. However, he had to retract his offer after a threat from the British aboard their cruiser that, if he did not revoke the promise to the French of a coaling station, he would suffer from the naval bombardment of the capital and his palace. This incident occurred in February 1899.

The public display of such a humiliating cave-in was unbearable to the Sultan. He was morose enough to believe that the only solution was abdication. After his proposed abdication was bluntly turned down in 1903, he left the affairs of the country to his ministers. [23]

During Faisal's rule, the Omani economy declined due to the ban on slave trading, the restriction on the arms trade and other matters. Sultan Faisal's influence in the interior weakened because of his inability to keep paying monthly stipends to the important sheikhs.

In 1913, an Imam was elected in the Interior amid increasing religious fervour for the first time since 1871, and the army revolted against Sultan Faisal, who appeared to them to be under the influence of the British. Fanatic and anti-alien

revolting forces opposed the conclusion of an agreement with infidel people and the prohibition of the arms trade, also asserting that customs duty went against the teachings of Islam.

During June, July and August, Nizwa, Izki and Samail fell to the rebels and the road to the Batinah coast was later controlled by them. In September, the Sultan doubled the size of the garrison at Bait-al-Falaj, outside Muttrah. In the following month, he died of liver cancer. [24]

It was at the time when Sultan Faisal defended Muscat by himself and began to nurture his distrust of the British that Fukushima visited Muscat, and it was immediately after the Sultan's coercion into a humiliating submission aboard a British cruiser that Ienaga visited there.

Chapter 6: Sultan Taimur bin Faisal and Shigetaka Shiga

Shigetaka Shiga



Shigetaka Shiga before his departure on his first world tour in 1910 at the age of 46

Shigetaka Shiga's visit to Oman was epoch-making in the history of exchange between Japan and Oman. Firstly, I will introduce Shiga, based on *Who's Who in Modern Japan*. [1]

Shiga was born in the present-day Okazaki City, Aichi Prefecture, in 1863 as the eldest son of Jushoku Shiga, a Samurai warrior of the Okazaki clan. He moved to Tokyo in 1874 and joined the preparatory course of Tokyo University after studying at Kogyokusha School. He then entered Sapporo Agricultural College in 1880 and graduated

from the College in 1884. He did not come to believe in Christianity in the college, although ethnic education based on Christianity was prevalent.

After having worked in Nagano Prefecture as a high school teacher, he traveled around Tsushima Island, Australia, Hawaii and other places. Based on his experiences while travelling, he issued a journal entitled *Times of the Southern Sea* and became known as a writer.

Afterwards, he threw himself into the world of politics and inaugurated the Political Education Party with Mr. Setsurei Miyake, the well-known Japanese philosopher and critic, and others. Shiga, as chief editor of the magazine entitled *Japan*, called for nationalistic behavior, opposed the policy of westernization and the government system controlled by the specific clans, and advocated a large solidarity movement and support for the opposition party at the initial imperial parliament. He won a seat at the Lower House in 1902 and 1903 after working as a government bureaucrat, but moved away from political activity after his loss in the election of 1904. He also separated from the Political Education Party in around 1897.

Shiga, who had loved mountain-climbing and travelling and been interested in geography since his attendance at Sapporo Agricultural College, became known as a geographer after writing his book *Nippon Fukeiron* (Japan landscape

review) in 1896 and publishing many further books. As his books included not only travel records on various destinations and vivid descriptions based on his actual survey but also enlightening political and economic proposals, they attracted the interest of many Japanese readers. Shiga often travelled abroad after his first world trip in 1910 and notched up visits to Europe, Asia, North and South America and Africa.

Having seen a Westerner searching for oil even in a snow-covered Andean mountain over three thousand metres high during his second world trip, he came up with the idea that oil should be crucial for every country in the world, including Japan. He wrote in his book *Shirarezaru Kuniguni* (Unknown Countries), first published in 1926, as follows:

The future world can be judged by only one sentence. That is to say, the countries with rich supplies of oil will prosper and those without oil will perish...I do not know who first said that the disruption of the oil supply for an oil lamp stand is a great threat to the life of a person. What is even worse, if the oil supply is disrupted, the country will perish. Oil supply disruption means the perishing of a country. [2]

Considering that Japan entered into the war with the U.S. in 1941 to secure oil resources and faced a miserable defeat afterwards, his view was perceptive and extremely far-sighted.

Moreover, having learned of the rehabilitation of Turkey and the growing pride of the Muslims by reading newspapers and magazines on board ship on his way back to Japan from Chile, and having found out in the U.S., where he stopped en route, that the Lausanne International Conference had been complicated by scrambles for oil fields, he decided to embark on journeys to Mesopotamia and Arabia as soon as possible. [3]

He set out on his third world trip in December 1923 and visited Oman on this occasion.

As a geographer and thinker, Shiga firmly believed that Japan had to solve three issues in order to have Japan survive on the globe: that is to say, the issue of how Japan should cope with the growing Japanese population, the issue of how Japan should secure important oil, and the issue of with which side Japan should ally itself, the East or the West, in the face of a creeping decisive showdown between the white people and people of colour. [4]

Shiga writes in his book as follows:

Persons of vision should inspect Muslim countries...Asian countries to the west of India, African countries on the northern coast of Africa...I hope the Japanese will be well prepared for Japan's decision on which

course to take at the decisive showdown because this is the first measure to be taken to solve the issue. [5] Shiga viewed the Arabian countries as the breeding ground of diplomatic conflicts among European countries.

Shiga to Oman



*Shigetaka Shiga in India
just before his entry into Oman*

Shiga headed for Oman via Baluchistan and south Persia, completing his travels in India. He describes his state of mind then as follows:

Having heard that I would not have a glimpse of a lighthouse until I reached western countries (on the Mediterranean coast), I felt lonely when I turned around the corner of Ras Mauri on the borders of India and Baluchistan, imagining that I would see so-called 'civilization' for the last time and that I would enter a region of darkness. However, I felt tense and my heart throbbed more and more strongly at the thought that I would now enter an unknown country, bidding a farewell to fully-developed civilization. [6]

Shiga was then 60 years old.

He explains Oman according to his knowledge then:

Oman is an independent country with...a population of 500,000... located in the eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula and the mouth of the Arabian Gulf. Muscat, its capital, has a border with Muttrah demarcated by steep cliffs. The total population is 20,000. The annual trade volume is 7.5 million yen. The only exported commodities are dates, dried fish, shark's fins, salt, pomegranates and lemons. Imported commodities are rice, sugar, coffee, cotton cloth, petroleum and everyday sundries. [7]

Even Shiga felt intimidated by the lone trip to Arabia. He set foot in Muscat and passed himself off as a plush Indian gentleman, wearing a newly-made heat protection suit from Calcutta and a heat protection hat bought there.

He travelled alone, having learned the prayer chants of 'Hayya Alas Salah' (Come to Prayer), 'Hayya Alal Falah' (Come to Success), 'Allahu Akbar' (Allah is the greatest) and 'La Illaha Illa Lah' (There is no God but Allah) and five Arabic words, 'sadique', 'aiwa', 'la', 'kam' and 'shi hatha', in order to mitigate, even if only slightly, the Arabs' feeling of hostility towards foreigners. [8]

Shiga was so lonely that he entered Oman reciting a passage from a poem written by Sanyo Rai (1780-1832), a distinguished Japanese historian, poet and litterateur. He was mindful of Sanyo's attempt to encourage himself with a poem to enter the domain of Satsuma from Higo (the present-day Kumamoto Prefecture) when he was shouted at by officials at the checkpoint. [9]

Shiga may have been highly cautious about Arabs, considering that he even chanted the words of prayer; we can imagine his tension. The Japanese in those days seemed to have a terrifying impression of Arabia.

He describes Muscat further:

How can I explain the landscape, which is quite different from any other in the world I have ever seen? There are huge craggy cliffs without any grass or any tree, rising in a line from the deep sea which is flatter than the surface of a mirror. I cannot depict them with commonplace words such as 'bizarre landscape'. They cannot be expressed by the word 'towering'. The words 'extremely high' do not apply either. Even the words 'steep' and 'high' are not enough. Self-styled Chinese scholar though I am, I was at a loss for a word to express the landscape. When I called up the soul of Dr. Wadagaki, my respected teacher, from the other side and asked him how to express the landscape in a word, his smiling image came to my mind and I heard his voice saying that the word 'Forbidden' might be the most applicable one. Indeed, it was a landscape seemingly designed to prevent human beings from entering its bounds. On the tops of great cliffs lies a series of forts and watchtowers, with the guns pointing down... The streets of Muscat are very narrow. Even the main street in front of the palace is less than two and a half or three metres wide. The narrowest was less than one metre wide. [10]

Just as people visiting Muscat nowadays search for words to describe the singular landscape, Shiga was also at a loss. I myself feel there is no expression other than 'Forbidden'. It is a landscape which can never be seen in Japan.

Shiga happened to encounter a wedding procession on his way to the palace and was scrutinized by the participants, who were seeing a Japanese man for the first time. He writes about the scene as follows:

There were about thirty men and women, most of them being women. Two men in the front line beat instruments like hand drums and two other men had similar drums. They were followed by a woman burning incense, a man and three women with something like large plates on their heads and a group of many women singing tunefully. The procession marched towards the outside of the city wall. They simultaneously looked at me when I encountered them. I climbed onto a rock on the right and sung the Japanese national anthem, 'Kimigayo' (Reign of Your Majesty). They let out laughs. [11]

The fact that he even sang 'Kimigayo', Japan's national anthem, at the age of 60 illustrates Shiga's excitement.

Before long, Shiga reached the palace and asked for an audience with the Sultan. The description in his book continues;

The palace was a three-story structure built along the sea. When I arrived at the gate, a guard challenged me, "Who goes there?" I submitted my name card in Japanese. He took it and entered the palace. Soon, a man wearing western shoes emerged and asked in halting English about the purpose of my visit. He was a well-known wealthy Baluchistan merchant in Muscat, dealing with the palace. "I have come from Japan, far from Oman," I told him. "Taking advantage of this opportunity, I wish to request the honor of an audience with the Sultan to ask his support for promotion of friendly relations between Oman and Japan, and hope to relay to the Japanese people what the Sultan is like." He returned within a few minutes and told me, "I have conveyed your message to His Majesty and he has graciously accepted your request." The guard guided me through to the three-story palace.

All the people inside were without their shoes. The Baluchistan merchant was also without footwear, kneeling on the floor. By Arab custom, it was considered rude to wear shoes when one was to see elders and dignitaries. I therefore began to untie my shoelaces, whereupon the merchant hurried over and said to me, "You can come in and leave your shoes on." Even so, I took off my shoes before entering.

When I entered the room, a sophisticated gentleman aged about 40 was sitting calmly on a couch, looking much like the historically famous Chinese philosopher Zhuge Liang (181-234 AD). He was seated in a far corner of the room near a balcony looking out upon the sea. His skin was fairer than that of most Arabs. He had a neatly trimmed mustache and wore a pure white cashmere silken turban on his head. Someone softly whispered, "His Majesty!" and I knew that this gentleman was indeed the Sultan of Oman.

I was at a loss as to whether I should address him as 'Your Highness' or 'Your Majesty' because I knew that the English government had established that a 21-gun salute should be fired in honor of the Sultan of Oman, as was customary for other sovereigns, and that he should be addressed with the honorific 'Your Highness'. I chose to address him by 'Your Majesty' as being the proper form. After I stood and made my salutation, he beckoned to me and smiled gently as he said, "Please be seated," and I took a seat.

Sultan Taimur told me,

“You are most welcome to Oman. Do you not consider Arabia and Japan as both part of Asia? Europeans are supposed to deal with the issues concerning Europe. We are to address our own issues within Asia. Why should not the Japanese come to Arabia as soon as possible? If you could promote closer friendship and improve and revitalize Arabia by coming here to do business and develop industry here, our peoples could both achieve great things.”

“What you have just suggested is precisely what I had wished to propose to you and your people on behalf of Japan,” I replied. “I will do my utmost to convey your wishes in detail to the people of Japan.”

The Sultan told me,

“If you can publish what you have seen here, please send the article to me. Moreover, if you have the chance to write on the history of the Arabs, please let me know. I will send you the necessary pictures and reference materials”. I replied to him, “The fact that I, a foreigner, was granted this audience despite my unexpected appearance is more than I could have dreamed of. I am deeply touched by your warm words. I have brought nothing for you as a keepsake except this fan, which I acquired in the course of my journey. Would you be good enough to receive this?”

The Sultan said to me,

“Our country is very hot. As a fan is for cooling, I am willing to accept it”. I presented the Sultan with a Japanese silken fan which I had received from the captain of the *Awa Maru*, a ship owned by the Nippon Yusen Company, while on my way to Calcutta.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, I asked the Sultan for his autograph. “I understand,” he said, and he stood and entered an inner room with a sheet of thick paper on which his seal was imprinted in gold. He returned soon, wrote my family name and pointed to his own name, telling me, “The name written at the end is mine, Taimur.” It read, “Shiga, the owner of this writing, visited here on 28 February 1924, Rajab 1342 AH at Muscat. Taimur.”

I bade farewell to the Sultan. He said, “You are most welcome to visit anywhere here. I will have someone accompany you”. I replied to him, “I am very grateful for your further kindness. I would be most appreciative if you would permit me the honor of walking around the garden.” He said to me, “The garden is the one cherished by my late father, the previous Sultan. It is not at its best, without proper trimming recently, but you can visit at any time if you wish,” and he ordered two guards to guide me around. The garden was very small but accommodated lush green trees and a fountain surrounded by boulders and the desert. I felt comforted by the big fountain and composed a poem. [12]

Thereafter, Shiga visited Bahrain, the southern part of Iran, Kuwait and Baghdad, crossed the Syrian Desert, visited Damascus, Beirut, Amman and Cyprus and came back to Japan via Europe and the U.S. in July 1924. Shiga wrote an account of his visit to Oman and published it as one chapter of his book entitled *Shirarezaru Kuniguni* (Unknown Countries) in November 1926, as promised to Sultan Taimur. He died in 1927 at the age of 64.

Shiga's tombs are built at Sogenji Temple at Shimotakaido, Sugunami-ward, Tokyo, and at Sesonji Temple at Okazaki, Aichi Prefecture. I have heard that there is a statue of Shiga in the East Park in the City of Okazaki.

There lives a she-camel called 'Mimi' at the zoo in the East Park. She is nearly thirty years old now. She is a camel presented more than twenty years ago by an Arabian sheikh to the president of a company with which I was working, who then donated her to the city. I supervised her delivery to the zoo. Although I never imagined then that a statue of Shiga would stand in the park, I am deeply concerned with fate's hand in the coincidence.

Reign of Sultan Taimur bin Faisal

Taimur, to whom Shiga was awarded an audience, was born in 1866 in Muscat as the eldest son of the former Sultan Faisal. His mother was a daughter of the 7th ruler.

Taimur was recognized as Heir Apparent from an early stage of life as the eldest son of Sultan Faisal and his pedigree. He was sent for his education to the prestigious Mayo College, dubbed 'The Eton of India'. In 1903, he officially visited India on behalf of his father. When the interior rebellion broke out in 1913, he served as Wali of Bidbid, which was located in the line of the rebel thrust towards Muscat. [13]

It was when the revolting tribesmen of the interior, led by an Imam, approached the Al-Falaj fort located at Ruwi, just by Muttrah near Muscat, after having taken Nizwa, Izki, Samail and other towns, that the former Sultan Faisal died of cancer of the liver. Taimur was in the room adjoining his father's but was not with his father when the end came. After a mourning period of three days, Taimur became the 12th Sultan of the Al bu Said dynasty. He was then 27 years old. [14]

Fortunately, Sultan Taimur was backed by the British. Shortly before the death of Sultan Faisal, the British sent half a battalion to Muttrah, followed by four hundred men for relief. Soon afterwards, the Sultan held negotiations for peace with the rebels, but in vain. [15]

In January 1915, 3,000 rebels attacked Al-Falaj fort under the light of a faint moon, but seven hundred well-disciplined British Indian troops beat them

back. The next Sultan Said, then five years old, remembered climbing up onto the palace roof with his father to listen to the distant sound of gunfire. [15]

In September 1920, through the mediation of the British, a peace agreement was signed between Sultan Taimur and eighteen rebel sheikhs at Seeb, where the Muscat international airport is now located. Under the Seeb agreement, a certain degree of autonomy in purely local affairs was allowed to the tribes concerned, but the agreement included no abrogation of the Sultan's sovereignty over Oman as a whole or of his responsibility for the country's external affairs. Nevertheless, he undoubtedly saw the outcome, whereby tribal autonomy was recognised, as a blow to his pride and position. [16]

As for the status of Oman, its territorial authority was rapidly shrinking and its treasury in debt due to expenses for the internal war. Oman, which had to be supported by the British both militarily and financially, was formally an independent country although substantially under the rule of the British.

In November 1920, Taimur expressed his desire to abdicate in an interview during his first visit to India as Sultan. When his request was rejected, he returned to Muscat, but went off to India the next February. He returned to Muscat for three months under a compromise with the British Political Agent in Muscat. However, this understanding was only temporary. Taimur effectively made his escape from Oman and, in response to an ultimatum by the Government of India, sent the following letter dated 17 November, 1931 to the British Political Resident of the British Government cum Consul-General in the Arabian Gulf and abdicated.

Whatever advice, inducement, and persuasion your honour offered, we replied about it [abdication] verbally and we explained to you the causes of the ailments from which we suffer, and we are afraid that they may get worse if we return to Muscat...And we are very sorry indeed for our inability to return to Muscat, as we explained in our previous letters to you and to the Political Agent, Muscat...we accepted a reduction in our personal allowance ...And we request your honour to convey to the Government our determination to abdicate from our Sultanate, and we have from today taken off our hand from all ruling rights, and we have appointed our successor our son Sayyid Said bin Sayyid Taimur as Sultan of our Government... [17]

His eldest son Said himself visited his father in India to persuade him to alter his decision, but failed. Sultan Taimur formally ceded the throne in January 1932 and Sayyid Said became the Sultan of Oman in February with British approval.

Chapter 7: Sultan Taimur's Stay in Japan and Princess Buthaina

Sultan Taimur's stay at Kobe

It has been confirmed that Sultan Taimur went to Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) after his abdication and left for Burma in 1932. For the following two years, he seems to have been in Ceylon, Singapore, Mecca, Bombay (present-day Mumbai) and elsewhere yet to be determined.

Sultan Taimur called in at Kobe in 1935 during his sightseeing tour of the world. According to Mitsuko Shimomura, a Japanese journalist, the reason why he had come over to Japan was given in the *Kobe Shimbun* (a newspaper) dated 1st June 1936 as follows:

I had been obsessed with Japan since a friend of mine came to Muscat from Japan and told me a story that engaged my heart and mind. My boyish longing for Japan was satisfied last year for the first time, and I came over to Japan again this year, feeling compelled to do so. [1]

Shimomura wrote, "The Japanese friend who came over to Muscat might have been Shigetaka Shiga." [2] The author quite agrees with her view.

The Sultan happened to get acquainted with Kiyoko Oyama in Kobe during his stay. Driven by his love towards her, he visited Japan again in 1936. Having decided to reside permanently in Japan, he held a wedding ceremony with Kiyoko on 5th May at Akashi, near Kobe.

Thereafter, he went back once to his country to dispose of his household goods and returned to Japan again, an event which was highly publicized in the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* (a newspaper) dated 18th September 1936 under the headline, "A chief of a powerful Arabian family has returned to his lover's bosom. Young woman in the port city of Kobe is cheerful-bond is tightly-knitted," as follows:

Shaikh T. F. T. Al Said, a billionaire and powerful family member in Oman, Arabia, who happened to get acquainted with a young Japanese lady during a world sightseeing tour, has made the decision to live permanently in Japan, his passion for her as hot as the boiling sand. This international romance has attracted tremendous interest among people in the port city of Kobe. The Shaikh has returned to Kobe on board the German steamship *Sharnhorst*, accompanied by his servant Basher (24), as he had vowed to Kiyoko (20) that he would be sure to come back to Japan, bag and baggage.

When he visited Japan for sightseeing the previous March, he encountered Kiyoko, a daughter of Mr. Kanji Oyama who lived at 2, Oji-cho, Nada-ku, City of Kobe. Driven by his intolerable passion for her, Shaikh Al Said, who had made one return visit to his country, came to Japan again. Having made clear his intention of living permanently in Japan by leaving his residence, household goods and all the other possessions of a member of a powerful Arabian family to his younger brother. During this period, Kiyoko sent him ardent love letters, assisted with their writing by her English teacher, and received many letters full of love from Al Said whenever a ship arrived at Kobe.

On the morning of the 17th, Kiyoko saw him at the No.4 Jetty, together with her mother and a few relatives, and they entered the new and elegant western-style residence on the top of a slope at Nakao-cho, Fukiai-ku, which had been prepared for them as a love nest. When I hastened to call at the house, Al Said and Kiyoko were out buying things for their new household; it looked like a house of romance with dozens of large luxurious items of luggage piled up in the spacious and bare downstairs area. It is said that Al Said is going to build a new residence for Kiyoko, spending 20,000 yen, which is arousing particular interest in the port city. [3]

In the newspaper, Sultan Taimur was introduced as “a member of a powerful Arabian family”. The reporter did not identify him as the former Sultan of Oman. Thereafter, they built a stone monument on the 1,000 square metre-wide premises of the new residence with the inscription “Our love is eternal. We have chosen this place as our permanent home,” following a verse in the Holy Koran.

There is only one official record of Sultan Taimur remaining at the Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, entitled “The Report on a visit to Japan by the Sultan of Oman, Arabia and his suite” (dated 7th December 1937), and kept in a file under the title of “Miscellaneous records of visits by the Head of State and royal families from abroad”.

The report was for a preliminary investigation of the visit to the former Sultan by Sultan Said and Sayyid Tariq, his younger brother, during their sightseeing tour of the world.

The report refers to his life and family as follows:

He fathered a girl (Princess Buthaina) on 10th October 1936 and nurtured her tenderly. He is living the high life on an allowance of 2,500 yen per month from his home country, employing an Indian servant, a Japanese nurse to take care of the girl, a female cook and a domestic servant.

As for his words and deeds, it is reported that he goes to the Mosque at 2-Chome, Naka-yamatedori, Kobe-ku, and offers his prayers on Fridays and that, although he often has the chance to contact other Muslims, he has

been identified only as a 'Nobleman from Arabia' among Indians, Arabs and a Turkish Tartar living in Kobe. He sometimes makes excursions to Kyoto and Nara and visits Hanakuma Ballroom in the Takarazuka Hall, accompanied by Kiyoko.

As for his associates, it is reported that he has no close friend. While there are Muslims, Indians and the Turkish Tartar with whom he exchanges conversation, he has no contact with Europeans. [4]

Sultan Said's visit to Kobe

Sultan Said and Sayyid Tariq, Taimur's sons, came over to Japan on 23rd December 1937 to see their father.

The *Kobe Shimbun* of 24th December 1937 publicized the visit extensively under the headline, "The former Sultan of Oman, Arabia, builds a love nest in Kobe-The incumbent Sultan and his brother visit their father from far away and have a pleasant talk" as follows:

"The incumbent Sultan of Oman, S. T. F. Al Said, son of the former Sultan T. F. T. Al Said, and Sayyid T. T. F. Al Said accompanied by seven attendants, came all the way to Japan aboard S.S. *Hakone Maru*..” on the 23rd on a leg of their world tour to see their father after a long interval. He had been living in Kobe, having thrown away the throne of Oman without regret for a leisurely life incognito at a large western-styled residence, marrying a Japanese woman, the equivalent of Mrs. Simpson, and fathering a beloved daughter.

In the morning, the former Sultan was waiting for the ship to arrive at the berth. As soon as the ladder was lowered, the Sultan and his brother disembarked from the ship and hastily rubbed cheeks with the father who had been waiting there. After the dramatic meeting, the first for six years, they settled into the Toa Hotel.

Meanwhile, the fierce red flag of Oman and the flag of the Rising Sun were hoisted at the residence at Nakao-cho and the porch and the sitting room were decorated with fairy lights in a joyful welcome to the beloved sons from their home country far away. In the evening, the Sultan and his brother were welcomed to the residence, which was decked out with Japanese-style decorations, and Kiyoko Oyama (21), who had married the former Sultan, formally met them for the first time as their mother-in-law. Thereafter, the former Sultan and his sons spent an enjoyable night reminiscing about the past. [5]

From this article, we can understand how happy Sultan Taimur was to welcome his sons to Japan for the first time in six years. Kiyoko saw Sultan Said and

Sayyid Tariq for the first time, and Buthaina (in Japanese 'Setsuko') the newly-born baby, might have been held by her half-brothers in their arms.

The article continued as follows:

The title of the former Sultan has been kept in strict confidence under the present international conditions. However, as may be expected of the former Sultan of Oman, a country located in the southern part of Arabia with a population of more than 700,000, his regal presence manifests itself.

The reporter refers to the fact that Sultan Taimur lived incognito and did not introduce him any more as "a billionaire and powerful family member."

The above-mentioned official report, kept at the Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, refers very briefly to the visit by Sultan Said as follows:

He (Sultan Said) is to see his father for the first time in six years at the invitation of T. F. Al Said, his natural father and the former Sultan of Oman, who lives at 61, Nakao-cho, Fukiai-ku, Kobe City, as a side trip on his sightseeing tour of Japan, which he has been longing to visit... He left Muscat last July accompanied by six attendants. The ship set sail from Bombay on 30th July and is under way to Singapore. He is to arrive at Kobe on around the 20th of this month and to stay at the Toa Hotel at 1cho-me, Kitano-cho, Kobe-ku, Kobe City. The details of his schedule are not known. It is reported that the Sultan and his younger brother are to travel around the U.S. and Europe on their way back to Oman, accompanied by a secretary and a servant. The other three persons are to return to Oman by sea via India.

Additionally, the following is written in the report from the British Ambassador in Japan to the British Foreign Office, dated 1st February 1938, which I have located at the University of Exeter, England:

His Highness, Sayyid Said bin Taimur, Sultan of Muscat and Oman, left Yokohama on 27th January for San Francisco on the steamship *Tatsuta Maru*, thus concluding his five-week stay in this country.

His Highness arrived at Kobe on December 23rd on the steamship *Hakone Maru* from Hong Kong and stayed at a hotel there. He was accompanied by his brother, Sayyid Tariq bin Taimur, two secretaries, Hilal bin Bader and Abdulmunim Zawawi, an official, Khan Bahadur Ahmad Shubaily, and two negro servants. The main purpose of his visit was to see his father Sayyid Taimur, who, having abdicated in 1932, has been living for the last two years in Kobe with a Japanese wife. The announcement of the Sultan's

arrival appeared in the Japanese although not in the foreign press, and throughout his stay in Kobe His Highness was constantly troubled by Japanese reporters, although he refused to grant any interviews.

I instructed His Majesty's Consul in Kobe to inform him that I desired to take an early opportunity of welcoming him to Tokyo and that I hoped to arrange a dinner in his honor. I also asked Mr. Owens to make discreet enquiries as to whether His Highness would like to stay at the Embassy when he came to Tokyo...He looked forward to visiting the Embassy but he hoped that any entertainment which was arranged in his honour would be of a private nature, since he was anxious to remain strictly incognito while in Japan. As regards staying at the Embassy, he had already decided to stay at a hotel in Tokyo in view of his desire for as much freedom of movement and as much privacy as possible. Mr. Owens reported that the Sultan had been very harassed by newspapermen and that the impression which he and his entourage had formed of this country until then had not been an entirely happy one.

After a short visit to Kyoto, the Sultan and his party arrived in Tokyo on the 10th January...Fears for preservation of the Sultan's incognito, however - to a very large extent, these determined all the party's movements - led to a sudden change in their plans, and after only one night in Tokyo they left hurriedly for a hotel in Yokohama, where they stayed until they left Japan and where they successfully concealed their identity, at least from the press.

The Sultan eventually accepted my invitation and came to luncheon at the Embassy on 18th January, when the party was met at the station by a member of my staff who conveyed my greetings to His Highness. As he had expressed a desire to attend a session of the Diet which was then sitting, two members of the staff accompanied His Highness, together with Mr. Zawawi and Mr. Bader, to a session of the Lower House on 24th January. On the following day, the 25th January, His Highness lunched at the American Embassy...

On 27th January the Sultan and his entourage left for San Francisco on the steamship *Tatsuta Maru*. His father was in the party but it is expected that he will soon return to Kobe.

The impressions which the Sultan and his party formed of Japan were far from favourable. Reference has already been made to the unwelcome attention to which they were subjected by reporters in Kobe, who more than once forced their way into the Sultan's room at the hotel, while the police, both in Kobe and in Kyoto, were as importunate as usual. As is the case with most tourists, their contacts with the Japanese were almost solely confined to their dealings with guides, hotel employees, taxi drivers, shop assistants, curio dealers and others of that predatory

class, which may account for the low opinion they formed of Japanese intelligence and efficiency. While the party stayed in Tokyo, a member of my staff accompanied them at their invitation to a Japanese sumo wrestling tournament, a classical drama and on a motor-car sightseeing tour.

On the whole, they appeared to derive little pleasure from their visit to Japan and to be finding time hanging heavily on their hands. So far, His Highness confided, Japan had proved to be the least interesting stage of his tour round the world.

It was unlikely that any discussion took place between the Sultan and Japanese officials ... [6]

It seems, to my regret, that Sultan Said could not have had a good impression of Japan.

Visit to Japan by Princess Buthaina

Sultan Taimur, who settled in Japan, and Kiyoko had a happy married life. Kiyoko had no need to do household chores because there were employees and servants responsible for these. The couple spent a pleasant life going out for dinner with Kiyoko wearing expensive dresses and jewels. However, this happy time did not last long. Kiyoko contracted tuberculosis. Taimur had Kiyoko admitted to a good hospital, but she did not like staying there and often returned to her house.

Tuberculosis was a fatal disease at that time...Kiyoko died at the young age of 23 in November 1939. Taimur, who had been in Bombay on personal business, returned to Japan in the following year and left Japan for good with Buthaina after having built a tomb for Kiyoko. Buthaina was then three years old. Thereafter, Buthaina was left to the care of the first wife of Taimur (the mother of Sultan Said) and brought up as a full princess of the Omani Royal Family.

The above are excerpts from the book entitled *Kings and Queens in Arabia* and from articles in the *Shukan Asahi* (a weekly publication), both written by Mitsuko Shimomura, a former reporter of the *Asahi Shimbun*. [7]

Shimomura visited Oman by herself in June 1973 and saw Princess Buthaina there as her first Japanese visitor, attended by Sayyid Tariq, her elder brother, who visited Japan with Sultan Said in 1937. During the meeting, Shimomura was shown a small notebook, which was kept secretly by the Princess as a reminder of her mother. Shimomura found it the diary of Kiyoko in which she had recorded happy days of love for two years.

Kiyoko wrote on the last page of the diary, dated 11th June 1939, as follows:

I want to live for the sake of Buthaina...I won't lose the fight against this disease. I have to overcome it. For the sake of sweet little Buthaina, I wish God to stand by me. I cannot even come near my daughter. There is nothing more miserable than this. As I hold her dear, I cannot touch even her hands. I think again and again with chagrin what I would do if I were not infected with this disease. [8]

The passage conveys to us her emotion of grief.

Again, according to articles in the *Shukan Asahi* written by Shimomura, Princess Buthaina visited Japan with Sayyid Tariq in 1978 for the first time in 38 years in order to visit her mother's grave. She fulfilled her vow expressed to Shimomura five years earlier, "I wish to visit my mother's grave." She saw many of her relatives after her visit to the grave, which was located at Inami-cho, Hyogo Prefecture.

Also, she walked around the places that held fond memories for her parents in Kobe. She visited the elegant western-styled residence where her parents had spent a happy newly-married life at Fukiai-ku and, by touching the wall, told herself that she remembered the residence. [9]

During a later visit to the site at Aodani, Kobe City, where her parents had built the well-appointed and pretty new house, she took out her notebook and put down in it the Arabic words on the stone monument in the garden which read "Our love is eternal. We choose this place as our permanent home."

I have learned that her relatives subsequently delivered the words in the shape of a Takuhon stone rubbing. It was reported in the evening edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* dated 19th December 1978 under the headline of "Epitaph of Love" that the words of her parents, carved 40 years ago in Kobe, had been presented in the shape of a Takuhon (rubbed copy) to the half-blooded princess of Oman – a promise made to her during her visit to Japan, realized by her uncle Oyama [10]

The epitaph remained until several years ago but is now non-existent, destroyed when an apartment building was built on the site. We can now see the epitaph only in a picture. I have heard that Sultan Taimur had asked the relatives to erase "the words of love inscribed on the stone", perhaps in acceptance of the loss of the happy days with Kiyoko that would not return. His request happened to be met after several decades by the construction of the apartment building.

I can inform you that Princess Buthaina reportedly lives in good health in Muscat.

Sultan Taimur saw Princess Buthaina when he returned once to Oman during the period between 1945 and 1946. She was then eight years old.

In 1963, Sultan Taimur received Qaboos, who was on his way from England back to Oman, in Bombay. It seems to have been the happiest moment for Sultan Taimur. Sergey Plekhanov writes as follows: “When Qaboos came to see him, the old man was moved. They embraced each other and for a long time neither was able to speak.” [11]

Sultan Taimur passed away in Bombay in 1965.

Press Report on Princess Buthaina

The articles on Taimur, Kiyoko and Buthaina were extensively publicized in the *Kobe Shimibun* and the *Sankei Shimibun* in Japan in November 2006 under headlines such as “Visit to Japan incognito, marriage and birth of a princess”, “She was like Cinderella”. The articles referred also to the wish of the younger sisters of Kiyoko, “Is she well? We want to see her again.” [12]

The fact that the articles have news value even now shows that this romance and the existence of Princess Buthaina are not known to ordinary Japanese. Many Japanese are surprised to hear my explanation that an Omani-Japanese half-blooded Princess lives in Oman.

How did the information on Princess Buthaina spread, even to a limited extent, in Japan?

Kazuo Wanibuchi, who worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and visited Oman in 1971, referred to Princess Buthaina in his report, “Trip to Oman” carried in *Chuto-Tsuuho* (the Middle East News), No.184, April 1971. I assume this might have been the first reference in Japan to Princess Buthaina since her return to Oman.

He writes as follows:

Princess Buthaina, 33 years old this year, is leading a single life in Muscat... Prime Minister Sayyid Tariq referred to Princess Buthaina during our meeting in Muscat and told us in a friendly tone that he had stayed with his father (Taimur) in Japan for about two months and that he would like to bring his younger sister, possibly in the following year, to Japan to have her see her home country, if circumstances permit... When he added that his sister lived near his house and that she might have gotten a peek at us, I was moved by great emotion... Two days later, a letter of appreciation reached the Japanese Ambassador whom Wanibuchi accompanied, saying that Princess Buthaina was very glad to be able to watch the image of her mother’s country, unseen by her, in the public relations film which Wanibuchi’s party had brought with them. He felt sentimental when imagining the Princess gazing intently at the screen. [13]

However, what triggered the introduction of Princess Buthaina to the Japanese public was an article written by Sasagawa in the *Asahi Shimbun* dated 5th May 1973 under the headline, “Half-blooded princess in a Muslim country - Oman, Mother was a Japanese in Kobe, In her mid-30’s, Unable to be seen under strict Islamic law.” Sasagawa, correspondent for the Asahi, called in at Muscat in May 1973 on his way back from Cairo to Tokyo.

Excerpts from the article are as follows:

I drove amid the 40-degree heat to visit a very important person, a member of the royal family. I was given the opportunity to see a picture of Princess Buthaina. Very few Japanese know her story. No Japanese have met her. It was four days ago that this important person disclosed to me that he had a picture of Buthaina. Of course, I asked him to arrange a meeting with her. But he replied that it was impossible because I was a man. He added that I was requested to observe their customs. In this country, under strict Islamic rule, a woman must not show her face to a man other than her husband.

I then asked him whether or not I could have a look at the picture and he agreed. I thus managed to get a glimpse of the color photo of the Omani-Japanese Princess...I, a man, could not approach her any further...The gentleman who showed me the picture told me that, if I could send a Japanese woman, he would be sure to have her meet Buthaina. Therefore, it is just a matter of time before she shows herself to the Japanese people. [14]

How did Sasagawa get to know about the existence of Princess Buthaina? I have a Japanese friend who has been stationed in Abu Dhabi several times since 1968. Recently, I happened to hear from him that he informed Sasagawa of the existence of the half-blooded Princess Buthaina when Sasagawa visited Abu Dhabi from Cairo. My friend had learned about Princess Buthaina from his Omani friend who was then working in Abu Dhabi.

Sasagawa could not see the Princess because he was male. Having read Sasagawa’s article, the editor of the *Shukan Asahi* immediately decided to dispatch Mitsuko Shimomura, then a reporter on the weekly paper, to Oman, and this led to the first exclusive interview with the Princess by Japanese.

Shimomura writes about the situation as follows:

It was in the evening edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* dated 17 May 1973 that I got acquainted with the country of Oman. I was strongly attracted for no special reason by the article under the headline of “Half-blooded princess in a Muslim country – Oman”...When I went to the editorial department, I was ordered to go to Oman to interview Princess Buthaina. [15]

On her return to Japan, she wrote a series of stories in the *Shukan Asahi* and referred to Princess Buthaina in her book entitled *Arabia no Osama to Ohi tachi* (Kings and Queens in Arabia).

In her first exclusive story on Princess Buthaina, run in the *Shukan Asahi* dated 6th July 1973, it is stated that the Princess promised Shimomura after three interviews that she would be sure to visit Japan. [16] This led to the Princess' visit to Japan in 1978.

Visit to the tomb of Kiyoko Al Said

I had the chance to visit the Tomb of Kiyoko Al Said on 16th October 2004. Having been asked to give my lecture at a university in Kobe, I left the hotel near the JR Sannomiya Station early in the morning for the Higashi-Kakogawa Station. Hailing a taxi at the station plaza, I asked the driver to take me to Kiyoko's tomb and was asked in turn where the tomb was, as I had anticipated.

Handing over to the driver the map showing the way to the tomb which I had obtained in advance from the Inamicho town office, and a few copies of landmark pictures, I asked him to drive me to the place. Passing through the streets, I found the Higashi-Harima Prefectural High School on the left. The Osawa Park Graveyard was supposed to be in front of the main gate of the school. Turning to the right there, we were soon forced to stop by a line of stones placed to prevent cars from entering further. Having gotten out of the taxi, I started to try to locate the tomb but could not find it. The taxi driver, who was curious as to whether there was really a tomb for such a person, took part in the search.

Having looked around here and there, we could not locate the tomb. I tried again from the entrance of the graveyard, according to my information that the tomb was a big one near the entrance, but I could not see it. While I was with the University of Exeter as Honorary Research Fellow in 1996, I visited nearby Ottery St. Mary to locate the tomb of Sir Ernest Mason Satow, who was assigned to Japan as a diplomat at the end of the Tokugawa shogunate and who had great influence on the modernization of Japan. I had looked around the graveyard together with an English priest of the church. This was my second tomb-hunt since then.

Having resigned myself to giving up the search for the tomb, I went up a slope to the road, which was located higher than the graveyard. Looking down, I saw some Japanese katakana letters. I shouted aloud "There it is!" to the driver, who was looking for the tomb some way off. Walking towards it, one sees a Buddhist name written on the front of the tomb. There is an inscription on the right side, "The wife of the former Sultan of Oman, Kiyoko Al Said, 23 years old", and on the left side, "Built by Taimur F. Al Said in May 1940".

I burned frankincense which I had brought from faraway Oman and prayed quietly for the repose of her soul. It was the moment when my dream was fulfilled.

Reign of Sultan Said bin Taimur

Oman was under the reign of the 12th Sultan, Said bin Taimur, between 1932 and 1970.

Said was born in Muscat in 1910. Like his father, he was sent first to Mayo College at the age of eleven and thereafter studied in Baghdad for two years from 1927. Soon after he returned to Oman, he was appointed President of the Councils of Ministers at the age of 19 and ascended the throne in 1932 at the age of 21, succeeding his father who wished to abdicate. It was expected by the British that he would reverse the trend of decay in the Sultanate because of his namesake of the previous century, Said the Great. [17]

Sultan Said concentrated firstly on not spending beyond his income, thinking it was necessary to eliminate the huge debts in order to free the Sultanate from British influence. In his view, another way to attain its independence was a world tour. In late 1937, the Sultan set off to the East, firstly to Japan to meet his father in Kobe, and then to the United States. He next visited England, France, Italy and India before returning to Muscat. In 1938, he had a meeting with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the U.S. In March 1944, he made a similar trip to Egypt and Jerusalem.

The financial and military assistance tendered by the British to the Sultanate during the Second World War and the concession payments by the Iraq Petroleum Company allowed the Sultan to pursue his hope of regaining control over Oman. Oil revenues which were indispensable for the Sultanate to remain financially independent lay in the interior. If Sultan Said could have regained the interior, then the circle of independence would have been complete. [18]

To achieve this end, Sultan Said embarked on reassertion of his pre-eminent authority by settling tribal disputes and seeking rapprochements with the important tamimas (paramount sheikhs) in the interior. Having succeeded on both counts, he was able to increase his own prestige and to obtain cooperation from many tribal leaders. This was achieved during the period between 1937 and the end of 1945. [19]

In 1955, however, a move towards independence broke out among the tribes in the interior, with the Imam, backed by Saudi Arabia, at their centre. Although the Sultan suppressed this move, civil war with the rebel forces broke out in 1957 and it was not until 1959 that they were driven out completely with the help of the British. Earlier, in 1952, there had been an incident in which Saudi Arabia penetrated into the Buraimi Oasis in the north-west part of Oman. [20]

Although Sultan Said sold the Gwadar enclave to raise money to counter the revolt of 1957-59, he still accepted British military and development subsidies. In the circumstances, he chose to leave Muscat for Salalah. It might have been the best counter-measure against the substantial ruling influence of the British. [21]

It appears that his frugality in government expenditure, pursued as a means of independence, was transformed into an end in itself. [22] Even after the commercial production of oil in Oman was confirmed in 1964, he did not begin to spend the increased income from oil for the positive development of the country. Even after oil revenues had begun to accrue to Oman in 1967, the Sultan was unable to abandon the habits of economy and careful husbandry which had been imposed on him. He did initiate some plans for development but they were on too small scale. [23]

Instead, the Sultan imposed severe social restrictions on Omanis and also foreigners, such as the prohibition of free travel inside the country, closure of the gate of Muscat within three hours after sunset, the compulsory carrying of lanterns at night inside the Muscat walls, prohibition of smoking and playing music during Ramadan, restrictions on women's dress and so on. He further monitored the public in Muscat by means of an efficient spy network and radios and telephones. [24]

Dissatisfaction mounted not only from the public but also from royal families. In 1965, a revolt started in Dhofar and in 1966 a near-successful assassination attempt was made on the Sultan. Thereafter, he rarely ventured out even from the palace.

This situation led to the coup d'état of 23rd July in 1970. Sultan Said reluctantly signed the abdication document on the scene and was flown to London via Bahrain, where his wounds were tended. He subsequently took up residence in a suite at the Dorchester Hotel and died there in 1972.

Dr. J. E. Peterson, an expert on Oman, assesses Sultan Said as unpopular in general, in comparison to other rulers of the area who found themselves confronted by new-found wealth and the intrusion of Western ideas and technology, as follows:

He did not become a profligate like Shaikh Ahmed bin Ali Al Thani of Qatar; nor was he a miser in the pattern of Shaikh Shakbut bin Sultan Al Nahhyan of Abu Dhabi, since he began to spend, however cautiously, on development after he received additional revenues. The safest conclusion that can be made is that the situation in which the Sultanate had found itself in 1932 had radically altered between then and 1970: Sultan Said, by contrast, had not. [25]

In fact, over 1,000 vehicles had been imported before 1970, although limited mainly to oil companies, military forces and royal families. Moreover, schools were built and telephones were laid down, despite some reluctance.

Furthermore, it was not totally prohibited for Omanis working abroad to return to Oman. There were some Omanis who came home to see their families and relatives and those who came back to Oman permanently with enough savings to buy land and pay taxes.

The author does not assess Sultan Said totally negatively because, under the substantial control of the British, he managed to subdue the revolts by influential tribes in the interior professing allegiance to the Imam and realized the development of oil. He handed over the government finances in sound shape to his son Qaboos. Among other factors, his reign lasted for 38 years. It was regrettable that he was slow in investing money for the country's modernization and did not alter the outdated domestic restrictions.

Muscat Bay operation by the Japanese Imperial Navy

Japan went to the Pacific War on 8th December 1941. The Tripartite Pact among Japan, Germany and Italy was concluded in September 1940, the previous year, and the military treaty on the joint operation was concluded among them in early 1942. According to the treaty, it was agreed that Germany and Italy should be responsible for operation in the area to the west of longitude 70 degrees and that Japan should be responsible for that to the east thereof. [26]

At that time, having occupied Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Denmark and Norway and seized Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Balkan countries, Germany was in the process of invading Soviet Russia. Moreover, it tried to dominate North Africa, Egypt and the Suez Canal.

In order to complete the occupation of strategically important points before the enemy countries were well prepared with their defense and supply system, Germany had been asking and urging Japan to conduct an operation to destroy completely the enemy's main supply route which extended to the north along the east coast of Africa. [27] It was General Rommel, feared as 'the Desert Fox', who directed the operation in North Africa. It seemed that the operation was aimed at destroying not only the route related to the North African operation but also the Arabian Gulf route, one of the routes used for assisting Soviet Russia.

Initially, the Japanese Navy had put priority on an operational mission in the use of submarines, and the main emphasis had not been on the destruction of marine transportation routes. Here, however, Japan clearly defined implementation policy of destruction of the transportation routes and started implementing the operation. [28]

According to operational policy, a Japanese I-27 submarine belonging to the 14th squadron of No.8 Submarine Division left the port of Pinang on 1st May 1943 [29] and sank the Norwegian vessel S.S. *Dahpu* (1974 tons), which was discharging bitumen from Abadan in the harbour at Muscat, at 0405 in the morning of 20th June 1943.

A British public document records this in detail:

H.M. Whaler the *Atmosphere* proceeded from Khor Kuwai to collect survivors..... *H.M.A.S The Bathurst* was also diverted to collect the overflow... Neither torpedo track nor torpedo was seen at the time, but later fishermen made various vague reports of having seen a submarine - a motor launch - a disturbance in the water...Weather: bright and sea calm...Later H.M.S. the *Atmosphere* was sent back to Muscat with divers from *H.M.S. the Ceres* who succeeded in recovering the tail of a 21” torpedo with a number of Japanese characters and ‘No. 390’ in many places, both the tail and the engine...This torpedo appeared to be of German pattern...The ship carried Norwegian officers and an all-Indian crew. Casualties: 11 killed, two seriously wounded. Three tally-staff and 26 Muscat coolies employed in unloading were also killed. 47 survivors reported. [30]

This attack, in which many people were killed, must have been an earth-shaking incident for the inhabitants of Muscat. There are many older Omani people who remember the incident because it happened only 70 years ago, and I heard over dinner during his visit to Japan an account of the experience by Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, born in old Muscat and the proprietor of some influential Arabic and English newspapers in Oman: “I was then five years old. All of a sudden, we heard a tremendous noise and the whole town shook. I ran head over heels towards the harbour.”

The bell attached to the bow of the sunken *Dahpu* had reportedly been displayed earlier as an item of memorabilia at the entry hall of the British Consul’s residence, the neighbour of the British Consulate next to the Royal Palace in Muscat.

The I-27 submarine won remarkable fame through the operation, which was under the command of Commander Toshiaki Fukumura. Having just been appointed to the submarine on 23rd February 1943, he left Pinang on 1st May. After having torpedoed a Dutch ship in the south-east of the Maldives, he torpedoed the American S.S. *Montanan* (4898 tons) on 3rd June off Masirah and set fire to and sunk a British tanker, the S.S. *British Venture*, carrying kerosene from Abadan and sailing independently to Bombay, on 24th June in the Oman Sea. After having sunk the S.S. *Dahpu* on 28th June in Muscat Harbour as mentioned above, the I-27 torpedoed the S.S. *Alcoa Prospector* (U.S.), under way with ballast water in the Oman Sea for Monte Video, on 5th July and returning to Pinang on 14th July.

The following events are recorded further in British public documents:

The month of June was marked by unusual activity by Japanese U-boats in the North Arabian Sea...A number of unreliable reports were received during the month of strange craft having been sighted off Gwadar...The first more definite indication of a U-boat was a detailed report from an American transport plane, proceeding from Masirah to India, that a U-boat had been sighted on 7th June 10 miles N.E. of Masirah...On 9th June, a U-boat was attacked unsuccessfully by aircraft, just over 30 miles S.E. of Masirah. [31]

The I-27 submarine left Penang on 4th February 1944 on the fifth mission of the destruction operation and torpedoed a British commercial ship on 14th February in the south-east of the Maldives, but it was then attacked and sunk by a British destroyer on convoy. The I-27 submarine had a life of two years since its completion on 24th February 1942. The commander, Toshiaki Fukumura, was specially promoted after his death to Rear Admiral, bypassing the rank of Captain. [32].

Chapter 8: Exchange of Commodities between Oman and Japan - Trade

Trade during the Meiji period, based on literatures

It was after the Meiji period that trade between Japan and Oman began. However, there is no organized data on it; therefore, we have to estimate the trade during this period solely by examining the descriptions by the Japanese who visited the Gulf region at that time and the related statistics in Japan and England.

There is no comprehensive description on the trade between Japan and the Gulf region in Furukawa's *Perusha Kiko* (Travelling to Persia) and Yoshida's *Perusha no Tabi* (Travels to Persia), but only sporadic mentions.

Furukawa writes that a very small quantity of silkworm eggs and tea were exported to Persia from Japan. [1] It is also written that the merchants who accompanied Yoshida brought in a variety of commodities to be traded. Having dealt in ceramics, cloisonné, haberdashery, and gold and silver work, they brought in the goods concerned as samples.

It was at the end of June, during the hottest season in the year that Yoshida's party visited Persia. It is written that, due to the severe heat, Japanese traditional paper changed its quality and lost its stickiness and that the bonding faces of sheaths of swords and lacquerware came off. [2] Based on the above, they are sure to have brought in paper, sheaths and lacquerware as well.

Moreover, Furukawa writes that when Yoshida, Furukawa and Yokoyama paid a courtesy call on the Sultan of Turkey they were asked by the Turkish persons in charge, i.e. those who had guided them, to specify whether the ceramics owned by the Sultan were made in Japan or in China. From this we can deduce that some ceramic items seemed to have reached Turkey too.

In view of the circumstances in those days, trade relations were still in the exploratory stage. It is therefore a surprise that tea and silkworms had already been exported to the Middle East.

The trade relationship between Japan and Oman might have been similar to that with Persia. Come to think of it, a large item of Japanese ceramic ware is displayed at the National Museum in Ruwi in the city of Muscat. I wonder when it arrived there. Was it in the Edo period? Or, was it the one presented to Sultan Turki by Commander Ito in the early Meiji period?

Yasumasa Fukushima refers to his visit to Basra on 18th May 1897 in his book entitled *Chuo Ajia yori Arabia* (From West Asia to Arabia) as follows:

I saw Japanese matches here and there. I never failed to see them in Burma, India, Persia, Afghanistan, Turkey, Oman and elsewhere and to hear of their bad reputation and poor quality. It is a pity that greedy merchants think only of immediate profit and never pay attention to their long-term interests. [4]

Based on this, we can infer that matches were exported to Oman.

Fukushima continues his account:

I was extremely happy to find some very beautiful goods displayed at a Japanese sundry goods shop which an Armenian showed me in Tehran... in the house of a secretary to the Prime Minister of Persia to which we were invited, the ornaments in the room and the containers and dishes on the table were all Japanese-made. [5]

The author assumes that the room ornaments and tableware there might have been ceramics, fans and pictures of Japan.

Ienaga was granted an audience with His Majesty the Shah of Persia in Tehran. He comments in his book entitled *Nishiajia Ryokoki* (Account of Travels to West Asia) as follows:

Both nations, which have no previous trade relationship, are now going to come closer due to their cultural heritage and the recent progress of trade. Iranian opium has found its main market in Taiwan, which has become a new territory of Japan, in response to the needs of the local people. While Iranian rare carpets now adorns Japanese house, Japanese toys or other manufactured products compensate for a shortage of supply in Iran. [6]

According to the above, a large quantity of opium was imported into Taiwan from Iran and carpets were arriving in Japan at that time. I presume that Japanese fans, pictures, toys and so on might have reached Oman, too.

Trade during the Meiji period, based on Japanese statistics

The import and export statistics by commodities between 1874 and 1880 and those by countries between 1877 and 1880 are listed in the first Japanese Imperial Statistical Yearbook, which was published in 1882, the first work of its kind.

According to the statistics by commodities, exports of pottery, matches, porcelain and cloisonné are listed from 1874, 1878 and 1879 respectively. [7] As for the statistics by countries, destinations were the U.S., Britain, France, China and Italy in descending order; however, neither Arabia nor India is named. [8] Of course, Oman is not listed.

The second Japanese Imperial Statistical Yearbook, published in 1883, indicates that the principal goods exported from Japan in 1881 were silk, tea, coal, camphor, dried seaweed, lacquerware and pottery. Among them, of course, were mentioned matches, porcelain and cloisonné. [9]

It was in 1875 that the first overseas sea route was opened out of Japan. Yubin Kisen Mitsubishi Co. Ltd. (the predecessor of NYK, i.e. Nippon Yusen Kabushiki Kaisha) introduced a new line between Yokohama and Shanghai in this year. In 1893, NYK introduced a Bombay route and also bi-weekly lines between Japan and Europe, with Aden, Suez and Port Said as calling ports in the Middle East.

It was during the Showa period that Japanese ships entered the Gulf. Up until then, Japanese goods had been delivered to the Gulf by foreign ships via Aden and Bombay.

Let me introduce the goods for India as recorded in the 8th and 18th Japanese Imperial Statistical Yearbooks, published in 1889 and 1899 respectively. The former lists as exported goods in 1888, in descending order, rice, coal, ceramic wares (pottery and porcelain), silk material, lacquerware, crude copper and copper products, floss silk and, in addition, scrapped threads, silk handkerchiefs, folding screens, bronze wares, matches, bamboo wares, fans and silk clothes. [10] The latter lists, in descending order, coal, habutae silk, matches, silk cloth, rice, umbrellas and Japanese agar, camphor, threads, Japan wax, fans and cotton cloth as exported goods in 1898, some items continuing on the list after ten years. [11] Among them must have been the goods which were transferred to Muscat.

Combining the descriptions by the Japanese visitors and Japanese statistics in the Meiji period, we can easily assume that Japanese exports to Oman during the Meiji period included matches, ceramic ware, porcelain, cloisonné and sundry goods such as fans. I wonder whether or not rice reached there. Coal might have been transferred to Muscat for ships which called at the port. On the other hand, we may conclude that exports from Oman to Japan were nil, considering that the main goods exported from Oman at that time were dates, fish, salt, pomegranates and lemons.

I will add here the unknown fact that Japan was one of the energy-rich countries in the world during the Meiji period. The coal industry and the spinning industry were developed as key industries during the Meiji period in accordance with government policy. As a result, in the case of Shanghai, Japanese coal accounted for 80 per cent of its total import of coal in 1880 when Furukawa and others left Japan. [12]

Regarding oil, the oil production rankings in 1901 featured Russia with about 233,000 b/d, the U.S. with 190,000 b/d, Indonesia with 21,000 b/d, Rumania with 4,600 b/d, Burma with 4,000 b/d and Japan with 3,000 b/d, in descending

order. Japan was then the sixth largest oil-producing country. [13] The situation was totally different from that of present-day Japan, which imports from foreign countries nearly 100% of its domestic consumption of oil and coal.

Trade during the Meiji period, based on foreign statistics

According to a foreign report, *Britain and the Persian Gulf (1884-1914)*, the main countries exporting to Muscat were India, Britain, France, the U.S., Germany and Belgium, while destinations for export from Muscat were India, Persia, the U.S. and the Gulf countries. In the former list, imports from France sharply decreased after 1910 and the U.S. pushed its way up to third place. Imports from Belgium and Germany started in 1906 and 1907 respectively. There is no mention of Japan in the list. [14]

Trade between the Middle East and Japan

With regard to trade between Japan and the Middle East as a whole, trade with Turkey started first, as early as 1877, and the import of cotton and export of cotton cloth from and to Egypt followed in 1898. Trade with Turkey started on a small scale, worth 5,000 yen, and in 1898 reached 62,000 yen, while that of Egypt was then 472,000 yen. [15]

Cotton fabrics became the main item exported after the Japan-Sino War, along with Japanese silk, which had accounted for more than half of Japanese exports since the opening up of the country. The supply sources of cotton material to Japan expanded from China to India and then the U.S. and Egypt in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Egypt also became one of the main destinations for the export of cotton fabrics.

Other than cotton products, goods exported from Japan to Egypt were copper, ceramic ware, lacquerware, sleepers for railroads and others. However, the quantity was limited.

It was in 1906 that sea routes to Hong Kong and Bangkok were introduced by NYK, after the introduction of the Indian and Egyptian routes. This was prompted by the trade volume of cotton and cotton fabrics with the latter areas, which was higher than that with south-eastern Asia.

Trade from the First World War until the Second World War

Japanese exports to the Middle East expanded remarkably during the First World War (1914-18). European countries could not afford to export in the circumstances since they suffered tens of millions of casualties in the fierce battles. The Middle East countries therefore shifted their sources for the import of cotton fabrics and industrial products from Europe to Japan.

As far as Egypt is concerned, the value of Japanese exports to Egypt in 1916 increased sharply to about four times that of 1913 and, in 1918, to twenty-one times that of 1913. On the other hand, the value of imports increased by 17 and 29 per cent respectively during the same period. [16]

Above all, the penetration of cotton fabrics into the market was remarkable. In addition to the disruption of supply from Europe, the low prices of the goods due to low transportation charge by Japanese ships, cheap labour costs, upgraded productivity and the depreciation of the yen were attractive to Middle Eastern countries with low incomes, although the quality of the Japanese products was inferior to those of Britain.

Japan achieved a position of victory without participating in any actual fighting in the war, which was also advantageous to the increase in exports. As a result, Japan became the most important supplier of cotton fabrics and emerged as the No.1 or No.2 supplier in the Gulf region in the 1930s.

The export business to the Gulf was handled by Indians, via Bombay, as mentioned above, or via Aden where the Japanese ships used to call on their way from Yokohama to Liverpool, a route introduced by NYK in 1928. However, Yamashita Kisen introduced the occasional service from Japan to the Gulf in 1933 for the first time and made it a regular service after 1934. NYK also placed their ships in service on this route in 1934 and Mitsui-OSK followed thereafter.

Perhaps because it became possible to transport Japanese-made goods directly to the Gulf region, the names of Iran, Iraq, and Arabia (including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Yemen) were first listed in the Japanese Imperial Statistical Yearbook as individual export destinations in 1935. [17]

A report, "*Emirates on the east coast of Arabia-Kuwait, Bahrain, Trucial Oman*" (compiled by the Toa Research Institute in 1943), explains the circumstances as follows:

The relationship between Japan and the Gulf deepened, especially after Yamashita Kisen introduced the Gulf route in 1934. While the local market was then in the position of needing cheaper goods, with a decrease in purchasing power due to a slump in the pearl industry influenced by the world recession and other factors, Japan, which was aiming to attain a firm commercial position in the Gulf region, was in a favourable position.

The main Japanese exports were cement for Basra and Mohamera, cement and rice for Kuwait, Bahrain and Muscat, cotton fabrics for Mohamera, cement, glassware and others. Most of these were exported through Indian merchants in Bombay, and the Japanese goods were a great threat to rival countries.

Japanese-made pottery, glassware and sundry goods dominated everywhere in the Gulf, and the cotton products were especially welcomed by the local people, with British ones driven out. However, from the British viewpoint, Japanese-made cement competed with the products of Britain, Italy, Yugoslavia and the Baltic countries, but, because of its inferior quality, it could not be considered that Japan had succeeded in the competition. As for matches, Japanese-made matches achieved a solid result because of their low price in competition with Swedish and Russian ones.

Although Japan's penetration into this region was thus remarkable, the trade between Japan and the Gulf countries became heavily lop-sided because Japan did not take any measures to import their primary goods and Iraqi and Iranian traders began to voice opposition to Japan. When Japan began to import a large quantity of raw cotton, tragacanth gum, old iron and other items from Mohamera and there were promising signs for the future, the Second World War broke out. [18]

In addition, the report refers to Oman's trade situation as follows:

The main imported goods are rice, cotton cloth, coffee and sugar. Oman imports a large quantity of rice, cotton fabrics and sugar from India and some reshipped sundry goods, cotton products and tobacco and liquors from Iran and Lancashire in Britain respectively. Japanese penetration into the market is surging, as is clearly seen in the following table, and the decline in imports from other countries during the two years since 1932 is mainly due to the penetration of cheaper Japanese-made goods (cf. Table 1). [19]

	1932-33	1933-34
Japan	---	412,494
India	2,000,563	1,618,870
Iran	256,263	266,868
Britain	151,380	130,488
Africa	81,803	39,884
Germany	---	33,180
Aden	12,430	16,095
U.S.	14,672	7,224
Others	954,507	483,119
Total	3,471,618	3,008,222

Source: *The Persian Gulf Trade Reports, 1905-1940*, Vol.2 (1987) p. 6.

Furthermore, it continues:

Among Japanese-made goods, penetration of cotton cloth was particularly remarkable, as is shown by the statistics of the two years during the same period (Table 2) as follows. [20]

The penetration into the market of Japanese-made cotton cloth was due to the fact that Japanese trading houses studied the unique features of the market and provided the customers with cheaper products. Despite its excellent quality, the demand for British cotton cloth declined annually due to its high cost. Although Indian manufacturers and merchants are well aware of this, they say they cannot compete with the industrial power of Japanese-made cotton cloth.. [21]

	1932-33	1933-34
Japan	---	331,397
India	172,966	117,674
Britain	48,765	28,190
Iran	7,706	---
Others	359,049	10,028

	1932-33	1933-34
India	1,201,322	1,250,969
Germany	277,550	182,030
Ceylon	206,735	88,860
Iran	125,347	70,925
Coastal Areas of Arabian	78,525	109,152
Others	137,855	263,760
(China among them).	(21,625)	(11,550)

Source: *The Persian Gulf Trade Reports*, 1905-1940, Vol.2 (1987) p. 20.

Again, the above shows that the goods exported from Japan to Oman were cotton fabrics, cement, rice, ceramic ware, glassware, matches and so on. It is a surprise that rice was exported to Oman. Considering that Japanese agriculture has been isolated since the end of the Second World War, I am left with the thought that it should be opened to the world.

On exports from Oman, the report continues as follows:

Important goods exported are dried fish and dates. Dried and salted fish are for India and Ceylon; around six-sevenths of the production of dates is for India and one-seventh, of higher quality, for Britain. The total export of dried sardines during the period between 1932 and 1933 reached 316,875 rupees, from among which 227,450 rupees' worth of sardines were exported to Germany. The value of exported dried fish other than

sardines was 216,360 rupees, from among which 206,485 rupees' worth of fish was exported to Ceylon. Exports of dates were 761,300 rupees, with most of them exported to India as mentioned (cf. Table 3). [22]

It is assumed that a portion of the export from Oman to China was reshipped to Japan, but direct export from Oman to Japan was nil. The report refers to Kuwait as follows:

According to the customs statistics during the period between 1935 and 1936, Japan accounts for 9.2 per cent of the total imports of Kuwait, India for 43.2 per cent, Britain for 5.0 per cent and so on. However, considering that imports from India include mostly the Japanese-made goods exported through agents in Bombay and Karachi and that imports from Iraq also include a large quantity of Japanese-made goods, penetration of Japanese products is significant. Although most rice and tea is imported from India, Indian rice was once threatened by cheap Japanese rice and Indian tea is similarly threatened by cheaper Japanese tea. As for coffee, Singaporean coffee and Mombasa coffee dominate the market evenly. The demand for Maraba coffee is small due to its high cost. While low-grade coarse-grained sugar is imported from Egypt and Java, granulated sugar is imported from the Netherlands and Britain despite its high cost. As for cotton textile goods, Japanese-made products dominate the market by driving out almost all of the other countries' products. British blankets are challenged by Japanese-made woollen textiles. Japanese-made silken thread and rayon filament yarn are in very high demand because of their cheaper prices. Furthermore, Japanese-made cement challenged Indian cement, and Japanese-made bicycles tried to penetrate the market but could not compete with British ones because of their inferior quality. Japanese-made matches are considered to have made a considerable penetration into the market, but, in reality, they could not threaten those of Sweden and Russia for the same reason. The import of ammunition and weapons is not possible without the permission of the British Government, while the import of liquors and medicines is prohibited. Horses, camels, sheep and other livestock are provided by the Bedouins living in the interior. [23]

Judging from the above, bicycles might also have been exported from Japan to Oman. As for exports from Kuwait, the report explains:

“The main goods exported were pearls for India and gold or silver coinage, animal skins, dates and horses for Iraq.”

During the Second World War

The Second World War broke out initially in Europe in September 1939, but for a while trade between Japan and the Middle East was not disrupted. After France was defeated in 1940, Italy participated in the war against the Allies, joining

forces with Germany, and the war in Europe spread to the Middle East. As a result, the Suez Canal was closed and for a while Japanese cargo was transported via Basra. In 1941, Egypt, Iran and Iraq severed diplomatic relations with Japan and the Middle East offices of Japanese trading houses were closed one by one. Accordingly, trade between Japan and this region was disrupted.

From the end of the Second World War up to 1969

The economic relationship between Japan and Oman began with exports from Japan in 1949. According to the 1949 edition of *Japan Foreign Trade Chronology*, the details are as per Table 4. [24] Import was nil. On the other hand, exports from Oman to Japan began in 1954 and continued sporadically, gaining momentum with the export of crude oil in 1967 (cf. Table 5).

Imports from Oman during the period between 1954 and 1955 consisted of foreign butter, lobsters, coffee beans, crude oil and unrefined oil for refining. However, trade was disrupted during the period between 1970 and 1971, due to the unstable political situation in Oman, i.e. the palace coup d'état and subsequent recognition of Oman as a state. The balance of trade has been significantly unfavourable to Japan since 1967 with the regular import of crude oil.

Shigeki Nogusa, a Japanese diplomat, who flew to Oman from Bahrain in March 1968, writes, "Many Japanese electrical appliances, cameras, fishing nets and equipment were displayed at souks in Muscat and Muttrah." [25] Kazuo Wanibuchi, also a Japanese diplomat, who visited Oman in 1971, writes,

I frequently saw a lot of Japanese goods such as sundry goods, electrical appliances, canned foods and cars. I have heard that there are about 600 Toyota cars and over 1000 Japanese cars in Oman, including Nissan and Matsuda cars. [26]

Those goods were being exported to Oman at that time, I assume.

Table 4: Value of Exports to Oman 1949	Unit: yen	%
Cotton Fabric	31,205,270	(72.4)
Rubber-soled canvas shoes	6,895,615	(16.0)
Matches	1,593,000	(3.7)
Thermos bottles in cases	767,070	(1.8)
Dishes and Bowls	642,130	(1.5)
Tea and/or Coffee Sets	473,110	(1.1)
Bicycles and Tricycles	277,140	(0.6)
Cotton Umbrellas and Parasols	159,900	(0.4)
Locks and Keys (made of Iron and Steel)	133,560	(0.3)
Miscellaneous	954,702	(2.2)
Total	43,101,497	(100.0)

Source: *Japan Foreign Trade Chronology*.

Table 5: Trade between Japan and Oman	Unit: million yen	
	Export	Import
1949	43	---
1950	32	0
1951	14	---
1954	154	487
1955	150	324
1960	100	---
1965	278	2
1967	302	302
1968	824	5,188
1969	---	18,312

Source: *Japan Foreign Trade Chronology*.

Oil development in Oman

Oil development in Oman has a long history. The first oil concession was awarded to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in 1924. They conducted a geological survey, but abandoned the concession in 1929 without finding any sign of oil. Petroleum Concession Oman (an affiliated company of the Iraq Oil Company), which obtained the oil concession throughout Oman in 1937, established Petroleum Development of Oman and Dhofar (PDOD) in 1942. However, it abandoned the concession over the Dhofar region and was reorganized as Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). PDO started to drill experimental wells in around 1956, but it took a long time for them to find commercially viable oilfields. They succeeded in discovering the Yibal oilfield in 1962, the Natih oilfield in 1963 and the Fahud oilfield in 1964 after a history of long and painful struggles. The pipeline between Fahud and Mina al Fahal in Muscat and the loading facilities at Mina al Fahal were completed in 1967 and oil production and export began.

Oil production increased from 47.5 thousand b/d in 1967 to 336.1 thousand b/d in 1970, 280.0 thousand b/d in 1980, 658.0 thousand b/d in 1990, and reached 955.8 thousand b/d in 2001. Production declined in the 2000s to 757 thousand b/d in 2008. However, it recovered to 812 and 864 thousand b/a in 1009 and 2010 respectively.

Trip to Fahud oilfield

It was in late April 1974 that the author visited the Fahud oilfield in the interior of Oman for the first time. I remember that it was a long trip from Japan: from Haneda airport to Hong Kong, from there to Bahrain and then to Muscat. The purpose of our visit was to conduct a feasibility study on construction of the first oil refinery in Oman, and, as it was necessary for us to inspect an oilfield,

our party of four Japanese flew to Fahud from Muscat by Shell's propeller plane with around ten oilfield workers.

Soon after having flown over the green Batinah coast, the plane was high over the Jabal Al Akhdhar mountain area taking a counter-clockwise turn. I remember that the craggy mountains were shining brilliantly in the sun.

We arrived at Fahud in the late afternoon when the sun was going down. We hastened to leave the office, built on a desert plateau, to inspect the oilfield under the guidance of an English engineer. We soon arrived at a small area next to a precipitous cliff. Looking down at the rocky stretch under my feet, I found it strewn with fossils such as bivalves, which convinced me that the place was once under the bottom of the sea.

Looking beyond the plateau, I could see the desert, without trees or grass, extending to the horizon 180 degrees right and left in the dusk. Looking closely, I saw a line of oil wells stretching endlessly from the horizon up to the plateau. The engineer accompanying us explained, "Those are the remains of the wells abandoned by PDO after drilling in vain in search of oil." A well was standing 100 metres ahead of us on the left. Pointing at the well, the engineer explained, "That is the empty well most recently drilled." A well was standing isolated in the desert nearly 400 metres ahead of us to the right. When I asked, "What is that?" he replied, "That is the first successful well in the Fahud oilfield." The distance between the two is only about 500 metres. One is among the unsuccessful wells drilled in a continuous line from the horizon in the belief of abundant oil, but abandoned 100 metres ahead on the left. The other is a successful well, drilled triumphantly, "It goes here!"

The engineer explained to us "The difference between success and failure is due to the existence of a fault," and added, "This is the oil business!" Only the 500-metre-wide fault divided Paradise from Hell. I then fully understood the risks and vagaries of the oil business.

Chapter 9: Cultural Exchange between Oman and Japan

1. Frankincense

Frankincense and Christmas

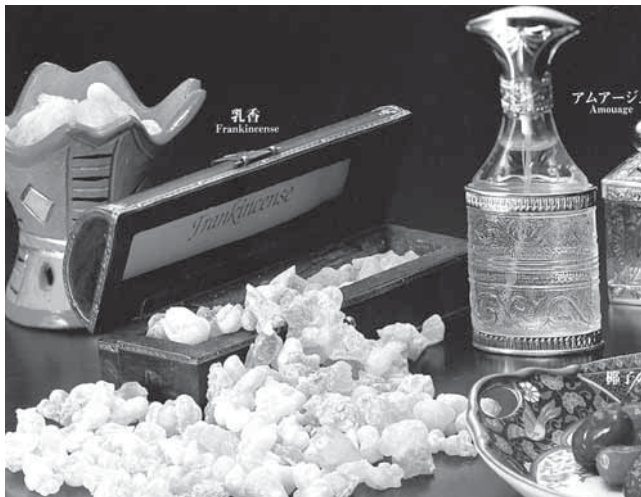
Few Japanese seem to know of frankincense, contrary to my expectations. Firstly, then, I would like to begin with an explanation of it by looking into scenes of Christmas, with which many Japanese people are familiar.

At Christmas time, we often hear a story and see a picture of the Magi who visited the newborn Jesus Christ in a stable, bearing gifts. Although most Japanese do not know what these gifts were, we can find out in the New Testament of the Bible in the second chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew:

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they came into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. [1]



Granules of frankincense, a burner and perfume

Also, in *The Travels of Marco Polo* the author writes on the Magi from the east and their gifts, according to the story which he had heard from people in Sava (50 miles southwest of present-day Tehran).

In Persia is the city of Sava, whence the three Magi set out when they came to worship Jesus Christ...One of them

was called Beltasar, another Gaspar, the third Melchior...three Kings of that country went to adore a Prophet who had just been born, and took with them three offerings, gold, frankincense, and myrrh...if he takes the gold, he is an earthly king; if he takes the frankincense, he is God; if he takes the myrrh, he is a physician.

when they had seen the Child take all three offerings, they had concluded that he was God, and earthly king, and physician. [2]

At the Venetian Glass Museum in Hakone, Japan, from time to time they exhibit Venetian glass products related to the Magi in the above episode. I assume that they were made based on the information of the Magi in Marco Polo's *Travels* because explanatory notes on the glass products show The Three Wise Men's names; Beltasar, Gaspar, and Melchior respectively.

I hope that the Japanese may become more familiar with incense through knowing the fact that one of the Three Kings' gifts was frankincense.

Frankincense

I would now like to talk more specifically about what frankincense is like. It is a fragrant resin exuded by scraping the bark from trees of the genus *Boswellia*. The trees grow only in Dhofar (the southern part of Oman), Yemen, and Somalia, and are usually from three to ten metres in height.

In the Japanese language, frankincense is called 'nyuko', literally meaning milk incense, as the colour and shape of frankincense looks like dripped and hardened milk. A sweet and elegant odour pervades the air when it is burned. Omani frankincense is considered to be the best in the world. Of its varieties, the frankincense consisting of clear white and greenish globules is regarded as the highest grade.



A Frankincense (Boswellia sacra) Tree

History of frankincense

Frankincense has always been one of the best and most indispensable types of incense, together with myrrh, and has been used at religious ceremonies to worship God and Heaven before 2000 B.C. It has long been regarded as God's possession or God himself.

As mentioned earlier (Chapter 1, p.5), frankincense was exported from the Dhofar region in Oman to South Mesopotamia long before 3000 B.C.

Hatshepsut (15th century BC), who expanded Egypt's territory into Mesopotamia and southern Turkey, and was the only female pharaoh of all the dynasties of ancient Egypt, sent an expeditionary corps to the Land of Punt. A famous wall-painting survives in Luxor, Egypt, depicting such scenes as the people of Punt loading frankincense and thirty-one frankincense trees onto ships, and Hatshepsut herself weighing frankincense at Thebes (the ancient capital of Egypt, now called Luxor). At that time frankincense was the most significant product of Punt (present-day Somalia).

The Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon of Israel in about the 10th century BC, as described in Chronicles 9:1 of the Old Testament.

And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bore spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. [3]

Since her kingdom is thought to have been located in present-day Yemen, the incenses must have included frankincense.

In ancient times, frankincense had been exported from Dhofar to various places in the world via both land and sea routes. One of the land routes started at Dhofar, going northward through the *Rub' al Khali* to Gerrha in present-day UAE, whence it led to Babylon by sea. Another land route used by camel caravans was via Marib and Ma'in, heading up the Arabian Peninsula along the coast of the Red Sea and passing Mecca and Medina on the way to Petra and Palmyra. This route split into two additional routes to Lebanon and Egypt, whence the cargo reached Greece or Rome by ship.

The sea routes were: 1) heading for Qana, Yemen (whence frankincense was carried overland via Shabwah to Mari), 2) starting at Qana and proceeding northward along the Red Sea (frankincense was unloaded on the way, then transported to Africa and Alexandria by land), 3) going up the Arabian Gulf 4) leaving the region for India and China. Thus, frankincense was exported all over the world using both land and sea routes.

The ruins of Ubar, an ancient city in the Dhofar region, are about 200 kilometers north of Salalah, Oman's second largest city. The Lost City of Ubar, discovered by USA satellites and excavated in 1992, is thought to have been a significant trading centre on the 'Frankincense trail' about two to five thousand years ago.

The Sumhuram ruins, about 30 kilometers east of Salalah, indicate a city once prosperous due to the frankincense trade. Khor Rori (or Sumharum), viewed from there, was a harbour where dhows loaded with frankincense left for the east and west in ancient times.

Whereas the Arabian Peninsula tends nowadays to be associated with oil, the southern part of it prospered in old times because of the wealth brought by frankincense and was known as 'Felix Arabia.' Frankincense is said to have been as valuable as gold in those days, which might be hard to take in at first. However, the fact that agilawood, an aromatic tree, is now far more expensive than gold might convince you of the reality. To be specific, while the current price of gold is about four thousand yen per gram, agilawood is ten thousand yen at the current retail price. In the Roman era, at the peak of demand, frankincense cost four thousand two hundred yen converted into today's value.

Introduction of frankincense to Japan

In Volume 22 of *Nihon Shoki*, the second oldest Japanese history book completed in 720, you can find a description which is the first record relating to aromatic trees in Japan:

Lign-aloes wood drifted ashore on the Island of Awaji in 595. It was a fathom in diameter. The people of the island, being unacquainted with aloes wood, used it with other firewood to burn in their cooking stoves, whereupon the smoky vapour spread a perfume far and wide. Wondering at this, they presented it to the Empress. [4]

Japan originally had no indigenous incense trees. Only Japanese cedar, Japanese cypress and camphor trees, at most, were recognized as emitting a fragrance.

Incense was brought to Japan through China and Korea, together with Buddhism which was first officially introduced to Japan in 552. However, incense is thought to have been introduced to Japan in the Tumulus Period (early 3rd century - early 7th century), earlier than the date of 595 referred to in *Nihon Shoki* above, because Buddhism was propagated to Baekje (a country which existed in southwest Korea from 346 to 660) in the second part of the 4th century.

China, from whence Buddhism was brought to Japan, did not produce incense either. It appears that the Chinese burned only dried plants such as husk of millet, the smell from which was only a subtle fragrance. Incense seems to have been introduced from the West to China before it adopted Buddhism. However, after Buddhism came into China and the authority of Buddhist temples was established, the usage of incense increased. Then, it was widely integrated into the daily life of men in authority.

In the days of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), incense was imported from the western countries by both overland and sea routes, connecting ports in the southern part of China with Persia and Arabia. Incense was then introduced to Japan by Japanese envoys to the Tang dynasty of China or by Buddhist priests.

One of the incenses brought to Japan was frankincense. In the Nara and Heian

period (710-1185), it is thought to have already entered Japan. Looking into inventories of the Horyuji and Daianji Temples in 747, we can find the name of kunroku incense. Moreover, in 781 and 832 kunroku was added to the Shosoin Treasure Repository which was set up in 756 to accommodate the Empress Komyo's donation of the items cherished by the late emperor on the forty-ninth day after his death.

Now, what does the incense called kunroku indicate? It is generally explained that kunroku is another name for nyuko (the Japanese word for frankincense) and that they are the same. However, with time its content has gone through changes. Kentaro Yamada, a Japanese authority on the history of incenses and herbal medicines, explained the transition in his book as follows:

The word 'kunroku' might be derived from kundur (Indian olibanum), Indian resin incense, by copying the pronunciation. In China kunroku had been known since perhaps the 4th century, or since the 6th century at the latest...I cannot state positively that the content of kunroku in about the 4th and 5th centuries was of Arabian origin from the start. Was then kunroku what the Chinese called kundur (Indian olibanum) or guggul (Indian myrrh)? No. Because hearsay on frankincense from Arabia was largely accurate, I believe that the kunroku incense initially introduced to China might have included Arabian frankincense even if it had been adulterated in India. Arabian frankincense imported to India was mixed with Indian olibanum and Indian myrrh, and became a harmonious fragrant resin. Chinese people called the resin kunroku at first. In the 8th century, genuine Arabian (Omani) frankincense was brought to China, and the term kunroku incense was used to refer only to frankincense of Arabian origin. [5]

In addition, according to Yamada, in China the word 'nyuko' was first used in *Supplement to Materia Medica* (Ben Cao Shi Yi, or Honzo Shui) written by Chen Cangqi in the year 739. [6] The book has a sentence stating that nyuko is a kind of kunroku. Thus, the name of nyuko was recognized not later than the first half of the 8th century, and clearly pointed to Arabian frankincense.

Jianzhen (known as Ganjin in Japan), is a Chinese Buddhist priest who finally reached Japan in 754, left Yangzhou about 750, drifted on the South China Sea, and stayed in a pirate's house. The word 'nyutoko' was found in *Todaiwajo Toseiden* (Jianzhen's biography) depicting the scene. [7] It is said that later on in Japan nyutoko became nyuko.

Incense brought to Japan with Buddhism was later observed in habitual use in the everyday life of the nobility, as distinct from the ritual of burning incense for the repose of a departed soul at Buddhist temples. The nobles enjoyed a variety of aromas with blended incense balls. They consumed incense daily; perfuming clothes by burning incense, wearing a scent bag, taking pills made from it, bathing with it and using it as a cosmetic.

In *Kunshuruisho* (Guide for Incenses) written by Norikane Fujiwara (1107-1165), a book on prescribing kneaded incense or bokhur, the word 'nyuko' was not used yet, but only 'kunroku' for frankincense. It was not until the second half of the Heian period (the latter part of the 12th century) that nyuko was found in Japanese literature. In *Koyakujisho* (Guide for Incenses and Herbal Medicines, written for studies on the rituals and doctrines of esoteric Buddhism), nyuko was mentioned for the first time with the statement that "Nyuko was perhaps a sort of kunroku." [8]

Toyama's 'Hangontan'

Since ancient times, frankincense has been used not only as a fragrance but also as a medicine. In Dhofar, a producing centre of frankincense, it is still utilized as a cure-all for many kinds of diseases. In Japan, too, frankincense has been made up into medicines for a wide range of diseases such as indigestion, faintness, heatstroke, angina pectoris, neuralgia, bruises, wounds, menstrual problems, newborn infant diseases and so on.

One of the most representative medicines is Hangontan, or gastrointestinal agent, used in Toyama (approximately 300 kilometers northeast of Kyoto). The pills were ordered to be sold by the second local lord of Toyama, Masatoshi Maeda, who encouraged the cultivation of medicinal herbs and the study of their mixing. Hangontan is said to originate from Okayama (roughly 140 kilometers west of Kyoto). However, it is not clear when it was introduced to Toyama. According to another source, it was reportedly brought to Toyama in the Oei era, the early days of the Muromachi period (1394-1427), about three hundred years earlier than Masatoshi's time.

A legend tells us why Hangontan initially spread and won fame all over Japan, as related below:

In 1690, Masatoshi was in the Edojo Castle for an audience with the Tokugawa Shogun and to attend the rituals. At that time Akita Kawachinokami, the lord of Miharu, Fukushima (nearly 250 kilometers north of Tokyo) suddenly experienced a pain in his side, clutching himself in agony. Masatoshi, who happened to be there, calmly took Hangontan out of his pillbox and gave it to Kawachinokami. In a moment, he recovered from his stomach ache. Feudal lords from all parts of Japan who witnessed the details of this scene were impressed with the miraculous efficacy of Hangontan. They subsequently asked Masatoshi to sell the medicine in their own domain. [9]

Another tale explained why the medicine was called Hangontan, which literally means a medicine which can return the soul to its body:

When a samurai warrior climbed up Mt. Tateyama in Toyama to pray

for his mother's recovery from a deadly illness, Amitabha Tathagata (saviour deity in Buddhism) appeared in front of him and gifted him with medicine. He hurried home to give it to his mother. However, she was already dead when he got home. He put the pill into his dead mother's mouth, thinking that it was the least he could do. Then, surprisingly enough, she came back to life, and said, "In heaven, Amitabha told me that I shouldn't have come here this time, and that I should go back to the land of the living at once. And Amitabha gave me a tap on the back, and then I came to life again. [10]

This original Hangontan was made from more than twenty kinds of medicinal herbs, including cloves from Zanzibar, once a domain of Oman, and frankincense.

Hangontan today is composed mainly of four herbs and one chemical component, a formula completely different from that of old times. While the original medicine was used as a panacea, the present form of Hangontan is prescribed as a gastrointestinal agent.

Hangontan peddlers during the Genroku era (1688-1703) began the pharmaceutical business of Toyama. In the Bunkyu era (1861-1863) the medicine peddlers of Toyama are said to have numbered twenty-two hundred. This medicine peddling continued in the Meiji period (1868-1912) and entered the golden age between 1926 and about 1945, when fifteen thousand medicine sellers traveled to all parts of Japan with their leading product, Hangontan.

Tokaidochu Hizakurige (Up the Eastern Sea Circuit on Shank's Mare), written by Jippensha Ikku in 1802, referred to Hangontan as a must-have item for travel:

You, gentlemen can't travel the roads without copper and silver. In addition, you must have a stick, a woven hat of bamboo, and a waterproof rain cape. However economical you may be, you can't go on one leg without the other leg, as money is called. Besides, you must have Tamachi's Hangontan, Sattaya's lice repellent string, and a change of loin-cloths. [11]

Kaneyasu's 'Nyukosan'

Nyukosan was famous as well as Hangontan in Edo, the capital city at that time. As a well-known Edo senryu (a Japanese form of short poetry) says, "Hongo town, up to Kaneyasu, is within the city of Edo". Hongo around Kaneyasu was the place where the urban landscape ended in the Edo period (1603-1867). Yuetsu Kaneyasu, a dentist, opened a drugstore named Kaneyasu on the east corner of Hongo 3-chome in the Kyoho era (1716-1736) and started to put Nyukosan toothpaste on sale. It gained great popularity and he enjoyed a thriving business.

Although no records were found on whether this hot-selling product Nyukosan used frankincense as an ingredient, I can conclude that the toothpaste must have included frankincense (nyuko in Japanese), considering the name of Nyukosan. To confirm my theory, I visited Kaneyasu, still located in Hongo 3-chome. People at the store told me that they had heard their ancestors' stories but that no records remained about how to make Nyukosan because everything was burned as a result of an air raid during the Second World War. Concerning Kaneyasu, I would like to add that the store is no longer a drugstore but a clothing store, with a board displaying the above well-known senryu on the left side of the front wall.

The Edo period in which Hangontan and Nyukosan were popular products was a period of national isolation. Only China and the Netherlands were allowed to trade with Japan in Nagasaki. The important thing is that Oman and Japan had a relationship even in this period, because the word nyuko (frankincense) was found in trade records at that time.

Zoho Kaitsushoko (Supplementary Studies on Trade with China and Other Foreign Countries), written by Joken Nishikawa in 1708, mentioned nyuko (frankincense) as a souvenir in Shaanxi and Yunnan provinces among fifteen provinces of China referred to in Books 1 and 2 respectively. Also, he wrote that the ships carrying goods (including nyuko) came to Japan from these ports in the provinces.⁽¹²⁾

Arabs and fragrance

In not only Oman but also other Arabian countries, fragrance is indispensable for everyday life. When I began to seek oil from east to west in the Arabian Peninsula, just after the 1973 oil crisis, I was shocked to see a negotiating counterpart at a meeting, an Arab dignitary, putting on perfume because Japanese men of our age rarely wear perfume in their workplace. However, Arabs today normally wear scent and come to work just as Heian period aristocrats in Japan did about a thousand years ago.

While the Japanese Heian nobles were said to be enjoying nerikoh (kneaded incense) for which each had his own recipe and ingredients, Oman today has bokhur, similar to nerikoh, which is blended using ingredients such as agar wood, sandalwood and other incense. The making of bokhur varies from one family or blender to another. People in Oman enjoy boasting of the differences.

In Oman we often see a thirty to forty-centimeter-high triangular wooden frame called a masnad. Although almost all Japanese ask what it is, it is comparable to the fusego, which was used in the past in Japan for perfuming clothes with burning incense. The masnad, which has the same structure as the Japanese fusego, is used for the same purpose, though it is not as elaborate as the Japanese equivalent. We can see Japanese life in the Heian period (794-1185) through the masnad of Oman today.

I once stayed with my wife in a bedouin village in Abu Dhabi. Just before we went to bed, Sheikh, a friend of mine, came to us, saying “Both of you, please hold out your hands”, and he then filled my wife’s palm and mine with perfume. I understand that Arabs use a lot of perfume in bed. I wondered if he meant that he wanted us to enjoy making love with plenty of perfume.

Frankincense is burned in hotels, restaurants, and houses every morning in Oman. Whereas incense is now burned to refresh the air, it was originally intended to ward off evil spirits. Bedouins burn incense in their animals’ sheds in the evening for this reason. In addition, frankincense is burned at the time of childbirth to ensure a safe and easy delivery, keep off evil spirits, and celebrate. Frankincense is also a requisite in wedding ceremonies.

Besides providing fragrance, frankincense is widely used for medicinal purposes. It is thought to help regulate digestion, control intestinal function, relieve pain, heal wounds, stop bleeding, promote diuretic action, and act as a disinfectant. In addition, chewing the resin is believed to strengthen the teeth and refresh the mouth. In Salalah, situated in the south of Oman, they sell chewing gum made from frankincense. I encountered a professor who added frankincense to water and drank it every day, saying it could improve memory.

It is also effective for repelling insects. When I lived in Muscat, a snake sneaked into my house. I was advised that burning frankincense would make the snake run away, and so I burned it with the doors and windows of the room closed. The snake disappeared before I knew it.

I would next like to refer to Amouage (waves of emotion in Arabic), a treasure of Omani perfume. The Arabian perfumer has a much longer history, spanning more than a thousand years, than the French one. To revive the tradition, Amouage was created by the legendary perfumer Guy Robert in 1983 and is now produced in the perfumery built in Muscat. While a high-class perfume is usually composed of forty to fifty ingredients, Amouage has a mix of one hundred and twenty ingredients. It is known as the world’s most expensive perfume, partly because genuine gold is used for the flask, and it is sold in more than twenty countries in Europe, America and the Middle East.

Transplantation of frankincense trees to Japan

Finally, I would like to talk about the cultural exchange between Oman and Japan through frankincense trees. There is a person who tried to grow young frankincense trees in Japan: Shinobu Kinoshita of the long-established incense store named Tennendo in Kurume, Japan. He was invited, along with myself, as a memorial lecturer to the meeting to commemorate 30th anniversary of the Oman-Japan Friendship Association in 2004.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, with the special permission of Ambassador

Hagi, Mr. Kinoshita cut off some twigs from frankincense trees growing in the ambassador's residence in Muscat.. He brought them to Japan and planted the cuttings. While all the cuttings planted in his garden (about twenty) died off, two out of almost the same number planted in a greenhouse at Saga University survived two winters and grew into young trees of about sixty centimeters in height.

This was reported in an extensive article in the *Times of Oman* (an English language newspaper in Oman) on March 23rd, 2005, which I was asked to write by the newspaper's owner, with whom I was on friendly terms. I wrote there that

Nature can provide a virtual link to cement the bond between two countries, and the legendary frankincense, Arabia's own natural perfume, did just that.

Five twigs of the tree from Oman were planted in Japan in order to grow frankincense, and they are showing good results. It is further proof that Oman-Japan friendship is getting stronger amidst a whiff of bon homie prevailing between the people of the two countries. [13]

All concerned hoped that these two frankincense trees would grow bigger and higher as a token of friendship between Oman and Japan. The twigs had a story behind them; they went missing at Dubai Airport on the way to Japan, and we were worried about them for a couple of days until they reached Japan safely. As they had escaped from danger once, we really wanted them to grow up healthy. However, unfortunately, they suddenly withered and died in June of 2006.

2. Aruheito

Aruheito and Alfeloia

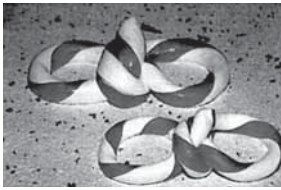
The relationship between Portugal and Japan began when a Portuguese ship with about a hundred people on board drifted down to Tanegashima Island in 1543. As I mentioned earlier, they introduced the gun to Japan.

Following this, Francisco de Xavier arrived in Japan in 1549 to propagate Christianity. Meeting Paulo Yajiro, an ex-samurai warrior of the Satsuma clan who provided the opportunity for Xavier to come to Japan from Goa, India, and hearing about Japan from Xavier there, Louis Frois reached Japan in 1562. After being banished from Kyoto and experiencing hard times, Frois had his first audience with Nobunaga Oda in 1569. He was granted an audience with Nobunaga on eighteen further occasions, probably because he gained the confidence of the new leading ruler.

For your information, Nobunaga Oda was a major Daimyo during the Sengoku (warring) period of Japan. He lived a life of continuous military conquest,

eventually conquering a third of Japan before his death in 1582. His successor, Hideoyshi Toyotomi, became the first man eventually to conquer all of Japan. He was in turn succeeded by Ieyasu Tokugawa, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603. Even now, these three military commanders are very popular among Japanese people as national heroes.

Among the presents Frois gave to Nobunaga at their first meeting, Nobunaga was said to have been impressed with 'Kompeito' and 'Aruheito'. [14] Sweets with brilliant colours and solidity probably captured Nobunaga's and other local lords' imaginations, because sugar was not abundant due to its high price at that time.



Aruheito knotted in the Japanese traditional way

I would guess that in Japan fewer people are acquainted with Aruheito than Kompeito. However, an item named Aruheito is easy to find if one looks carefully. For example, Aruheito, striped finger-shaped candies, are sold at both well-known shops in department stores and souvenir shops in tourist areas. I have seen them at Hakone in the past.

In addition, a spinning barber's pole with a helix of red, white and blue is called Aruheito in Japan, probably because its shape and colour are similar to that of Aruheito candy. Also, one design of the colourful facial make-up worn by kabuki actors, in red, blue and white, is called Aruheiguma.

In Nagasaki, Aruheito refers not just to candy but also to decorative sweets made from treacle and sugar, which are indispensable at weddings, celebrations, funerals, Buddhist services, festivals and other rites. Aruheito is a generic word for decorative confectioneries such as the masks of Daikokuten and Ebisu, decorated on a large plinth at the Nagasaki Kunchi Festival, and the Ebito and Chiyomusubi masks at wedding ceremonies. Moreover, Aruheito is served at tea ceremonies.

The word Aruheito stems from Alfeloia in Portuguese. Aruheito appeared as Aruheru in the work *Nagasaki Yobanashigusa* (Tales of Nagasaki) of Nishikawa Joken. [15] Ichiro Irie wrote that Alfeloia became Aruheru or Aruheiru and finally Aruheito. [16]

Irie also mentioned how Portuguese-originated Aruheito turned into uniquely refined Japanese confectionery.

By the time the word 'Alfeloia' became 'Aruheito', Nambangashi (foreign-originated confectionery) had changed into Wagashi (Japanese confectionery) with dexterous Japanese craft. [17]

Morisada Manko (Morisada's Manuscript), an encyclopaedia on manners and

customs of the Edo period on which Morisada Kitagawa spent thirty years from 1839 onwards, described how to make Aruheito, quoted by Irie in his book as below:

Both Aruhei(to) and Kompei(to) were imported from foreign countries in past times. However, recently they have been made in many stores all over Japan. White sugar is boiled, kneaded, and colored red, yellow and yellow-green and then made into various shapes...In particular, most Aruhei(to) is handmade in a variety of shapes. In the Keihan (Kyoto and Osaka) region, white sugar is poured into moulds, baked, coloured with writing and cooking brushes, and finally made into diverse shapes such as carp, crucian carp, udo salad plants, bamboo shoots, lotus roots and so forth. Known as Kinkato, they are skillfully made and look like the real thing. During the Kaei era (1848-1854), they were brought to Edo city. [18]

The Portuguese word *Alfeloa*, the origin of Aruheito, is used to indicate confectionery made from sugar, and presently means 'sugar to make confectionery'. Two years ago, when I visited the University of Eter, I asked a student from Portugal with whom I was acquainted if she knew about *Alfeloa*. Her answer was that she had never heard of the word. After that, she questioned her mother in Portugal about *Alfeloa* by telephone. However, her mother did not have any knowledge of it either. It seems that the Portuguese do not generally use *Alfeloa* today.

Alfeloa's origin from an Arabic word

I found out recently that the Portuguese word *Alfeloa* was derived from *al-helawa* in Arabic while reading *Nihon-jin no Chuto Hakken* (Findings of the Middle East Influence on Japan, written by Hideaki Sugita). [19] *Al-helawa* indicates 'confectioneries made from sugar or dessert'. In addition, *al-halawa* and *al-halwiyat* have the same meaning as *al-helawa*.

I understand that an English word imported to Japan which begins with 'al' is often of Arabic origin, such as alcohol (*arukoru* in Japanese), alkali (*arukari*), algebra (*arujebura*), algorithm (*arugorizumu*), and so on. However, I never imagined that Aruheito came from Arabic through *Alfeloa*.

As far as I know, whereas every Japanese book describing Aruheito and every shop advertizing and selling Aruheito on the internet says that Aruheito was introduced from Portugal, nothing refers to the fact that Aruheito originated from an Arabic word through *Alfeloa*. This is why I was really impressed with and excited about the information given by Sugita.

Oman has a well-known confection named 'halwa', which has a gooey texture like Japanese uiro. Halwa is served with Omani coffee whenever Omani people

have guests at their house. The ingredients are starch, eggs, sugar, water, ghee (a kind of clarified butter made from buffaloes' or goats' milk, used widely in Indian and Middle Eastern cuisines), saffron, cardamom, rose water and nuts. They are mixed and cooked in a large cooking pot for about two hours.

Located at Barka in the suburbs of Muscat, the Omani halwa factory which I have visited many times is especially renowned as a long-established manufacturer. I hear that halwa is exported to the Arabian Gulf states extensively and provided to Omani Embassies all over the world

Finally in this section, I should add that the word 'halwa' of Omani halwa has the same origin as al-helawa.

Aruheito's possible origin from Arabian countries

I presume that Japanese Aruheito is related to Omani halwa through the mediation of the Portuguese. When they conquered the Arabian Gulf area, the Portuguese set up bases in Muscat and Hormuz (the present-day Bandar Abbas in Iran). Considering this, the Arabic word 'Al-helawa' must have been introduced to Portugal from Oman alone and no other Arabian countries.

The Kuwaitis and the Bahrainis of the Utub tribe, sections of the Anazah, moved to the areas where they live now in 1720 and 1783 respectively. The Qataris, descendants of al-Musallam, a tribe that was part of the larger al-Tamim, entered the present Qatar at the end of the 18th century. The people of Abu Dhabi from the Bani Yas tribe found water and came to Abu Dhabi in 1761. The Al Maktoum family, also a section of the Bani Yas, established Dubai in 1833. All of the above occurred long after the Portuguese were expelled from Oman in 1650.

Judging from the historical events above, it might be natural to assume that al-helawa was introduced to Portugal through Oman. "Omani halwa, which is completely different from Japanese Aruheito in terms of colour, shape and taste, in fact became Aruheito in Japan through Portugal. It is a great discovery!" I was excited about the idea and made contact with Omani scholars who specialize in the history of cultural exchange between Oman and Portugal.

Since Japanese documents record the fact that Aruheito was introduced to Japan from Portugal, I assume there might have remained Portuguese documents somewhere stating that al-halwa was brought from Oman. To verify my theory, I have to depend on scholars who are fluent in both Portuguese and Arabic, and that is why I have asked Omani scholars to conduct research on it. However, they have not found conclusive information about the assumption that al-halwa was introduced from Oman and became Alfelo.

Miyo Arao, the producer of *Nazogaku no Tabi* (A Trip to Solve a Mystery)

on Nihon television, made a journey to look for the origin of Aruheito and collected her experiences and findings into a book, *Namban Supein Porutogaru Rryori no Fushigi Tanken* (Looking for Origins of Japanese Cuisines in Spain and Portugal), which I discovered recently.

According to her, she was at first told at a confectioner's in Lisbon, Portugal, that they had never heard of Aruheito. [20] She then went to Madeira Island, about 1000 kilometers south-west of Lisbon on the Atlantic, and found out that Alfeloá, a brownish sticky sweet, used to be made from treacle there but that it was no longer produced. In addition, she was informed that Alfenim, a kind of sweet made from sugar, might still exist in Terceira Island although it was not produced on Madeira Island.

In Terceira, the third largest island in the Azores Archipelago, about 1200 kilometers north-west of Madeira Island, she eventually discovered Alfenim in many shapes such as birds and gourds. She says in her book, "This [Alfenim] must be the ancestor of Japanese Aruheito." I take my hat off to her efforts, and really appreciate it. However, I should point out that she did not establish further the connection between Alfenim of Portugal and al-halwa of Oman, although the Arab land was mentioned as its place of origin.

3. Ahazeej

Arabian horses

In Japan, Arabia is more often associated with camels or camel racing than horses. However, horses in Arabia are considered to be sublime and a symbol of the Arabic culture. Depicting horses that raid enemy settlements at dawn, Arabs swear by them in Surah C: Al-Adiyat (The Courser) of the Holy Koran.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
By the snorting coursers
Striking sparks of fire
And scouring to the raid at dawn,
Then, therewith, with their trail of dust,
Cleaving, as one, the centre of the foe [21]

Where, then, did Arabian horses originally come from? A book in Oman claims that their appearance dates from the time when King Solomon gave a horse to the Banu Azd people, but this is probably a legend.

According to *Uma no Sekaishi* (Horses in World History), written by Ryoji Motomura, three theories on the origin of Arabian horses exist. [22] In his book, he assumes that in "about the 1st century B.C., bedouins from the north probably introduced horses to South Arabia with diverse military technologies," and that "the Caspian pony, closely related to the Arabian horse, is a breed originating



An Arabian horse

from Mesopotamia in about 3000 B.C. It is reasonable to suppose that these horses, bred in the north, were imported to the Arabian Peninsula one after the other.” He concluded that “the horses in the dry and harsh environment were culled by Bedouins, which resulted in the birth of the Arabian horse.” [23]

In addition, Motomura explained the reasons why Arabian horses have had an incomparable influence on the breeding of horses worldwide, as below:

The Arabian horse is the most pure-blooded of all the breeds, and this gave it the ability to inherit dominant characteristics. As a result, in both pure breeding and crossbreeding, the Arabian horse can bear offspring of refined and better quality. [24]

If we consider the scattering of independent Bedouin tribes and their life in barren terrain, the Bedouins’ ability to recognize pedigree by raising domestic animals such as camels, and their tradition of preserving pure-blooded breeds, we can understand the reason why the genuine Arabian horse was produced by Bedouins.

Oriental horses became known to Europeans when the Islamic Army, on agile desert-bred horses, invaded European countries. Realizing that the horses of the Islamic Army had greater speed and endurance than the large European ones, the European people came up with the idea that they would produce superior chargers by crossbreeding Oriental horses with Western horses. Thus, the improvement of horses began.

The Thoroughbred was developed by crossbreeding native English mares with three Arabian stallions, as is well-known today. The maternal line can be traced back to a small number of chosen mares in the 17th century with high levels of speed and endurance.

As for the export of horses from Oman, Marco Polo referred to the shipping of Arabian horses from Dhofar and Qalhat:

The city [Dhofar] stands on the sea-shore, and has an excellent harbour, at which many ships with many merchants call, carrying immense quantities of merchandise. I will add that they take there many fine horses from Arabia and other countries, and the traders get great gain and profit from them. [25]

I will add that from this city Qalhat many good horses are taken to India, and the merchants get great profits there from. Indeed, one can hardly believe the enormous quantities of fine horses that are taken to India from this province and from the others that I previously mentioned. [26]

Ibn Battuta, an Arabian traveller who rivals Marco Polo, also referred to the export of horses from Dhofar: “From it [the city of Dhofar] thoroughbred horses are exported to India.” [27]

Did chivalry originate in the Arab world?

Arabia has Horosaiya, a code of conduct for horse riders, which I have heard was introduced to Europe and influenced chivalry. With the question “Is European chivalry, on a par with Japanese Bushido, related to Arabia?” in my mind, I searched for literature on this subject at a university in England. However, I could not find anything and still have not done so.

Ahazeej

Sultan Qaboos is keen to breed traditional horses, preserve pedigrees and encourage equestrian events. His Majesty set up the Royal Stables in Muscat and Salalah, which undertake the breeding and rearing of Arabian horses. The Stables now own about nine hundred horses. For information, Oman has three hundred and fifty pure-blooded Arabian horses, one hundred and fifty thoroughbreds and fifteen hundred genuine Omani horses.

Horse racing and horse riding shows are popular in Oman and are held to mark national events, as horses are considered more prestigious than camels. Even in the city of Muscat, Omani people can often be seen on horseback. At the celebration ceremony for the National Day of Oman on November 18, which I have attended several times, I was really impressed with the displays of skilful horse riding and the magnificent parade of Arabian horses with glittering adornments.

In 1994, from Wednesday 9th to Friday 11th November, Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Princess of Japan paid a goodwill visit to Oman, which was their first trip to a foreign country after their marriage. Working for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Oman as the JICA (Japan International Co-operation Agency) expert at that time, I was honored to follow the party of Their Imperial Highnesses as the staff member in charge of the press from Japan during a part of their itinerary.

On the second day of their visit to Oman, Their Imperial Highnesses headed for Nizwa by helicopter and looked around Falaj Daris (a water channel) and Nizwa fort. Next, they saw a camel and horse show, after having had an audience and lunched with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in the Royal tent set up in the desert in the suburbs of Nizwa, with the Sultan's flag flying in the wind. It is not hard to imagine that Their Imperial Highnesses thoroughly enjoyed the camels' orderly parade in the desert and the stunt riding on Arabian horses.

After the show, which continued until the sun was about to set on the desert, His Majesty the Sultan gave a genuine Arabian mare named Ahazeej (Song of Joy in Arabic) to Their Imperial Highnesses. She was an excellent horse with a white star on the face and white socks on three legs. In the Middle East, even today, presenting a pure-blooded Arabian horse is a supreme expression of friendship and respect for one's counterpart. On top of that, a particularly distinguished horse was gifted.

Accompanied by Omani stable keepers from the Royal Stables of the Diwan of Royal Court and a British veterinarian, Ahazeej left Oman in May of 1995. During the following month she arrived in the Imperial Household Agency, Tokyo, Japan, and saw Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Princess again. In November of the same year, she was transferred to the Imperial Stock Farm in Tochigi (roughly 250 kilometers north of Tokyo). Since then, she has lived a healthy life there.

Ginjiro Takeichi summarized the history of importing foreign-bred horses to Japan in his book *Fukoku KyobaUma kara mita Kindai Nihon* (A Prosperous Country and Strong Horses - History of Horses in Early-Modern Japan) as follows:

On the 1591 New Year holidays, after the Japanese Samurai Boys' Mission to Europe, Alessandro Valignano, an Italian Jesuit missionary priest who conceived the idea of the mission, presented an Arabian horse to Hideyoshi Toyotomi, the ruler of Japan at that time. The height of the horse was one hundred and fifty-two centimeters, and amazed both the high-born and ordinary people in the city of Kyoto, who knew only the Japanese horse which was normally one hundred and twenty-one centimetres tall in those days. Compared with the Arabian horse, the Japanese horse was smaller and less elegant, and even the best horse in Hideyoshi's stables looked like a working farm horse.

In 1867, 300 years thereafter, Napoleon III, the Emperor of France, gifted and sent to the Tokugawa shogunate twenty-six Arabian horses which were produced in France and kept in the Imperial Stable... Among them, only Takasago-go's bloodline is still preserved through his son, Azumago (born in 1870); it is still found in about one-sixth of Arabian-blooded horses today. [28]

Although foreign horses were presented to the third and fourth Shoguns by the Dutch Trading House and imported by Yoshimune, the eighth Shogun, through its mediation during the Edo period, they were Persian horses, not Arab ones.

Considering the above facts, I can say that the present of Ahazeej was an epoch-making historic event in Japanese history.

In 1997, Ahazeej had a foal with Anglo-Arabian-blooded Hoeidaio. The foal was named Toyoyoshi (Plentiful Joy in Japanese) after his mother Ahazeej (Song of Joy in Arabic). He was kept and raised in the stable inside the Imperial Palace. I sincerely hope that Ahazeej, the pride of Oman, and Toyoyoshi will continue to have a healthy life as a token of the friendship between Oman and Japan.

Chapter 10: Oman and Japan since 1970

The exchange of people, commodities and culture between Oman and Japan got into its stride after Qaboos bin Said Al Said ascended to the throne in 1970. The following is a brief history of the development after his enthronement.

1. Human Exchange

The first Japanese visitors to Oman after the Second World War

Shigeki Nogusa, then a member of the Middle East Section, Middle East and Africa Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, contributed an article entitled “A Glimpse of the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman” to *Middle East Report No. 151* published by the Middle East Research Institute of Japan in June 1968. Under the heading “Visit to Dreamland Muscat”, he wrote:

I left Bahrain by air on 2nd March 1968 and was amazed at the sight of the seas and the lands of the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman [the name of the Sultanate before 1970] which were entirely different from those I had observed when flying over Doha, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah... There was no hotel at all in Muscat. I was offered accommodation at the British Consul General’s residence... The city was malaria-stricken and the Consul-General’s wife gave me tablets on the day of my arrival... For my sightseeing trip in the city I had to trudge on foot as the roads were too narrow for a car... I was cautioned against smoking outdoors. I observed many Japanese-made articles at the souks in Muscat and Muttrah. [1]

This report is a valuable record of the country during the era of Sultan Said before he was ousted in a bloodless coup by his son Qaboos.

Middle East Report No. 184, published in April 1971, carries a short article about the trip to Oman made by Kazuo Wanibuchi, also a member of the Middle East Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He stayed in Oman for five days from 30th January to 3rd February 1971. It was six months after the coup d’etat by Qaboos.

Wanibuchi accompanied Takase, the Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait, on his trip to Oman. They took off from Doha, Qatar, arrived in Muscat via Dubai and then flew on to Salalah. He says, “Sultan Qaboos served us tea and dessert himself during our time together. Much to our surprise, he drove a Land Rover to show us around the town of Salalah and its suburbs.” [2] Obviously impressed by the Sultan’s great popularity and his people’s sincere trust in him, Wanibuchi continues as follows:

Whenever the children playing by the roadside or the local townspeople

saw the Sultan passing by they applauded or bowed to express their respect, shouting “Long Live the Sultan!” Some men jumped out of their homes, ran towards his car and showed their respect to the Sultan by putting their right hands over their chests. I even heard women shrieking cheers from behind the doors of their houses. The handsome Sultan greeted each one of them while driving the car with one hand. [3]

The writer goes on to say that the Sultan watched two Japanese public relations movies very enthusiastically at the dinner he hosted. One of the movies was “Japan in 1970” and the other “Expo ‘70”. [4] Wanibuchi also mentioned that there was no hotel in Muttrah and Muscat, although two were under construction, and that he saw numerous Japanese products on display in the Muscat souk [5] as Nogusa had written in his essay three years earlier.

Japan started importing oil from Oman in 1967 and Japanese products were available in Oman by 1968. These facts suggest that other Japanese may have visited Oman since the Second World War ahead of Nogusa and Wanibuchi. However, no records are available to confirm this.

Establishment of diplomatic relations

The immediate challenge to the young Sultan was to have his country formally recognized by the rest of the world. In 1971 Oman became a member of the Arab League and was admitted into the United Nations. On a bilateral basis, formal recognitions started streaming in from the U.K. and the U.S. as well as other Arab countries.

Japan recognized Oman on 1st June 1971 and opened diplomatic relations on 7th May 1972, more than four months before Oman joined the United Nations. The Japanese Embassy was established on 15th December 1972. First, the Ambassador to Kuwait concurrently held the portfolio for Oman and later the Ambassador to Saudi Arabia assumed the concurrent position. In January 1983 an Interim Chargé d’Affaires was dispatched to Oman, and in March of the same year Junpei Kato, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, was sent to the country. The Japanese Embassy officially opened at that time, but Oman had established its Embassy in Tokyo much earlier, in April 1975.

In the Arabian Gulf area, the Japanese Legation in Saudi Arabia was established in 1956 (promoted to an embassy in 1958), the Japanese Embassy in Kuwait in 1963, in Yemen in 1970 and those in Qatar in 1972, the UAE in 1974, Bahrain in 1988. However, the actual openings of the on-site embassies took place in 1960 for Saudi Arabia, in 1963 for Kuwait, in 1972 for Qatar, in 1974 for the UAE, 1988 for Bahrain and 1990 for Yemen.

Establishment of Friendship Associations

The Oman-Japan Friendship Society was incorporated in Japan on 27th September 1973. Shintaro Abe became Chairman and Takeyo Nakatani an Honorary Advisor. A year earlier, in June 1972, Muneo Yanagisawa, then a senior at Keio University, had visited Oman by himself and was granted the honour of an audience with Sultan Qaboos as the first Japanese private civilian to have one after the Second World War.

Yanagisawa visited Oman again in May 1973. During the visit he took Sasagawa along and introduced him to the Sultan. Sasagawa had just left his post as manager of the Cairo Branch of the Asahi Shimbun and was on his way home. A little later Hiroshi, Muneo's elder brother and a medical doctor, joined the pair. Through a British gentleman who was the Supreme Advisor to the Economic Council of the Omani Government, they were requested to arrange to extend Japan-Oman technical cooperation in the three areas of port management, medical services and agriculture.

Muneo was completely captivated by the country of Oman. Upon his return to Japan, he devoted himself to the incorporation of the Oman-Japan Friendship Society. Kentaro Shiina, senior officer of Showa Line, Ltd., and a few others joined Muneo, at his father's request, in an effort to support him. At last, the Society came into being.

Meanwhile in Oman, the Oman-Japan Friendship Association was established on the instructions of Sultan Qaboos on 21st March 1974 with H.H. Sayyid Thuwaini bin Shihab Al Said, the Sultan's Personal Representative, serving as Honorary Chairman. This Association was the first organization established in the history of the Sultanate for the purpose of promoting friendship with another country. This fact reflects the Sultanate's strong affinities with Japan.

A Japanese courtesy delegation of 16, headed by Hiroshi Nakao, a member of the House of Representatives, attended the Association's inauguration ceremony in Muscat on 24th April 1974. This followed the Japanese mission's visit to Oman in the previous year on the occasion of the Sultanate's Third National Day celebrations.

At the ceremony marking the opening of the Association, H.H. Thuwaini said in his speech, "It is a great pleasure for all the people of Oman that this Association has been incorporated with Sultan Qaboos' blessing for the purpose of promoting friendship with Japan, our good old friend for the past fifty years." [6]

In 1924, exactly fifty years earlier, Shigetaka Shiga visited Oman. It shows how important he was to the history of the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

The Japanese delegation hosted a party on 28th April of that year to express their gratitude for the invitation. Nakao, the delegation leader, stated the following:

One of our great seniors, Shigetaka Shiga, the geographer, arrived in Oman on the morning of 28th February 1924. He was granted an audience with Sultan Taimur, the grandfather of Sultan Qaboos, during which he urged the necessity of achieving the co-prosperity of both countries. No longer is Japan a strange Asian country to Oman and Oman a strange Arab country to Japan. Our visit this time was made in remembrance of his visit fifty years ago, and I hope Japanese will visit Oman again and again at every opportunity”. [7]

In November of the same year, H.H. Sayyid Thuwaini led a delegation to visit Japan as the representative of the Sultan. The *Asahi Shimbun*, in its issue of 1st December 1974, reported the visit under the headline, “Lessons to learn from the Japanese Statesmen at the Meiji Restoration”.

A goodwill mission of ten people arrived at Haneda Airport on the 30th from the Sultanate of Oman, a country situated at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula. This group was headed by H.H. Sayyid Thuwaini, second man of the country. Oman opened its doors to foreign countries only four years ago. It is in transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age, as Japan was at the time of the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Oman has chosen Japan as the first foreign country for its state delegation to visit presumably because it wants to learn from our experience in the Restoration. However, today we do not even know who will be our next prime minister. We sincerely hope that the current political mess in our country will not disappoint our friends from Oman. [8]

The article goes on to describe the bloodless coup staged within the Court as follows:

When the incumbent Sultan was still the Crown Prince, he studied in England. He returned home with the ambition of modernizing the country. However, his father, the Sultan, was not receptive to progress and change and considered the liberal Crown Prince to be a nuisance. The Sultan tried to isolate him deep inside the extensive palace, but eventually, the pro-Crown Prince group succeeded in carrying out a bloodless coup within the Court. When they rescued him, they encountered traps and falling objects. This event is reminiscent of the turbulent Warring period in Japan.

The paper adds:

The isolationist and despotic policy of Oman was much stricter than that of Japan during the Edo period. Britain was the only trading partner.

People were banned from free travel at home, let alone abroad. They were allowed to read only books on Islam and nothing else. Meetings were prohibited and a curfew order was enforced with no radios or papers permitted; even singing was forbidden. During this time there were only three elementary schools in the whole country.

In December 1989 the JICA Alumni Association, an organization primarily made up of active young people, was established under the Oman-Japan Friendship Association. However, although the Oman-Japan Friendship Society was quite active for a while after its inception, its activity tapered off.

To rejuvenate the spirit of friendship, the Oman-Japan Society was inaugurated, replacing the Oman-Japan Friendship Society. Masayuki Fujio, then a member of the House of Representatives and Policy Chief of the Liberal Democratic Party, became Chairman. The new organization has continued up to the present date.

The 12th Asian Olympic Games were held in Hiroshima, Japan, in October 1994. The City of Hiroshima allocated community centers to support the activities of the delegation of each participating country. Yasuhigashi Public Hall was responsible for Oman, and the president of the Omani team visited there during the Games. Thus, a relationship of goodwill between the city and Oman began. On 9th October 1996, the Hiroshima-Oman Friendship Association was inaugurated with Kazuhiro Fukushima as Chairman.

Since its inception, this Association has been active, offering a variety of programs such as the youth exchange program, goodwill missions and lecture meetings.

For the purpose of promoting friendship between the parliamentary members of both countries, the Parliamentary Group on Japan and Oman Friendship was established with Seishiro Eto, member of the House of Representatives, as Chairman.

In 2010, the year of the 40th anniversary of the enthronement of HM Sultan Qaboos, the Association was reorganized and revived its activities, with HH Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Said as Honorary Chairman and Sheikh Mohammed Saud Bahwan as Chairman of the Board.

Exchange of visits by leading statesmen

Sunao Sonoda (former Minister of Foreign Affairs) was the first Japanese statesman to visit Oman as a special envoy of Japan in 1980. Japan's interest in Oman suddenly heightened when it started importing crude oil from Oman in 1967. After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the security of the passage through the Strait of Hormuz became a matter of great concern for Japan, and the strategic position of Oman caught its serious attention.

On the other hand, Oman sought capital from the industrialized countries. Japan responded with an offer of technical cooperation. In fact, Sonoda's visit to Oman was to convey a message to this effect from the Japanese government. An agreement was executed between the two countries, initiating Japan's dispatch of JICA experts, research on industrial development, provision of yen loans through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, and so on.

In 1984 Uno (former Minister of International Trade and Industry) visited Oman as the Prime Minister's personal envoy and had an audience with the Sultan. He was accompanied by Hiroshi Nakao, a former member of the House of Representatives who had long contributed to the promotion of friendship between the two countries.

Again in 1985, Masayuki Fujio, then Policy Chief of the Liberal Democratic Party, attended the Oman National Day celebrations as the special envoy of the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu planned to visit the Middle East in 1990, but his trip had to be postponed in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In August of the same year, Taro Nakayama paid a state visit to Oman as the first Minister of Foreign Affairs to do so. In October, Prime Minister Kaifu called in at Oman and traded views with Sultan Qaboos in person. It was the first visit to Oman of a Japanese prime minister. In 1987 Masayuki Fujio, Chairman of the Japan-Oman Society, and Koji Omi, Director of the Society and Diet member, also went to Oman.

Over the next twenty years Kamikawa, Minister of the Cabinet Office, was the only Japanese cabinet member who visited Oman. In the meantime, various Omani VIPs came to Japan. Among them were the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Oil and Gas, the Minister of National Economy, the Minister of Commerce and Industry, the Minister of Heritage and Culture, the Minister of Transport and Communications and the Minister of Sports Affairs. HE Dr. Omar Al-Zawawi, Special Advisor and the former Chairman of the Oman-Japan Association, has visited Japan as many as ten times since 1986.

European and Asian countries, particularly China and Australia, frequently sent their royal families, heads of state and ministers to Oman, outshining Japan, much to our chagrin.

Royal diplomacy

Besides the exchange of visits by statesmen, the royal families of both countries visit each other, contributing to the promotion of the goodwill between the two countries.

Chronologically, H.H. Sayyid Thuwaini bin Shihab, who led the members of the Oman-Japan Friendship Association on his visit to Japan in 1974, attended the funeral service for the late Emperor Hirohito on behalf of the Sultan in February 1989. In November 1990, H.H. Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said, the then Minister of Heritage and Culture, came to Japan in commemoration of the coronation of the reigning Emperor.

In November 1994 Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Princess of Japan visited Oman, a momentous occasion since it was their first overseas trip since their marriage. Their tour included Oman, Qatar and Bahrain. Returning the courtesies, H.H. Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, and his wife visited Japan in 1997. H.H. Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said came to Japan as a special guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2008.

2. Exchange of Commodities

Trade

Once Oman began exporting crude oil, the trade volume between Japan and Oman continued to expand. Japan's exports increased 591 times from 1970 through 2005.

Table 6 Exports to Oman	Unit: USD 1,000				
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
Foods and Live Animals	10	497	518	867	1,206
Beverages and Tobacco	19	555	45	463	896
Crude Materials Inedible, except Fuels	-	-	300	105	127
Mineral Fuels, Lubricants and Related Materials	-	27	14	36	504
Animal and Vegetable Oils, Fats and Was		4	-	-	0
Chemicals and Related Products	11	908	3,912	4,630	6,706
Manufactured Goods (classified chiefly by material)	1,865	68,067	76,537	76,896	138,445
Machinery and Transport Equipment	281	221,727	301,997	641,825	1,225,854
Miscellaneous Manufactured Articles	160	11,901	35,396	14,361	11,018
Commodities and Transactions not elsewhere classified	2	542	389	2,620	5,579
Total	2,351	304,228	419,106	741,794	1,390,335

Source: OECD Note: Figures are rounded and do not necessarily add up to the totals.

Manufactured products, machinery and transport equipment accounted for most of the exports, constituting 91.3% of the total in 1970, 95.3% in 1980, 90.3% in 1990, 96.9% in 2000 and 98.1% in 2005. The most important of all exports from Japan was automobiles, accounting for 31.1% in 1980, 54.1% in 1990, 72.1% in 2000 and 70% in 2005. Other notable items were steel, general machinery, auto tyres, home electric appliances, audio equipment and specialty machinery. Cotton fabric was one of the main exports from Japan from World War I until some time after the Second World War, but the volume had plummeted to a trifling 0.7% in 2005.

The imports from Oman increased 42 times from 1970 to 2005. Refer to Table 7. [10]

Table 7 Imports from Oman	Unit: USD 1,000				
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
Foods and Live Animals	-	850	4,054	9,264	9,467
Beverages and Tobacco	-	47	-	-	0-
Crude Materials, Inedible, except Fuels	-	-	128	620	317
Mineral Fuels, Lubricants and Related Materials	64,958	1,731,732	1,903,584	2,022,649	2,716,066
Animal and Vegetable Oils, Fats and Waxes	-	-	-	-	0-
Chemicals and Related Products	-	-	-	196	337
Manufactured Goods (classified chiefly by material)	-	-	2,709	1,614	5,479
Machinery and Transport Equipment	-	-	57	31	1,141
Miscellaneous Manufactured Articles	-	-	2	1,132	546
Commodities and Transactions not elsewhere classified	-	182	476	267	103
Total	64,959	1,732,764	1,911,054	2,035,772	2,733,456

Source: OECD

Note: Figures are rounded and do not necessarily add up to the totals.

Crude and petroleum products (including LNG after 2000) were predominant, accounting for 100%, 99.9%, 99.6%, 99.3% and 99.6% of the total imports respectively in 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2005.

As well as petroleum, Japan imported the following goods from Oman in 2005;

fish including yellow-fin tuna, lobsters and cuttlefish, vegetables including kidney beans, dates, marble, and other items. Kidney beans were imported into Japan during the winter, which was the off-season for the vegetable in Japan, and the imports at that time exceeded 1,000 tons a year.

The 2000 Kyushu/Okinawa Summit was held in a newly-built hall in Nago City, Okinawa, named 'Bankoku Shinryokan', for which Omani marble was used.

Current trade between Oman and Japan

According to JETRO statistics, Japan's 2010 imports at US\$4,496 million exceeded its exports at US\$3,104 million for the same year, showing an excess of imports of US\$1,392 million. Of the imports, crude oil, oil products and LNG were US\$4.467 million in value, accounting for 99.4% of the annual total. The balance was only US\$29 million but the import of kidney beans, though still US\$ 5.1 million in value, is worthy of special attention. Oman is the largest exporter in the world of this vegetable to Japan, accounting for 93.2%. Most of the beans one sees in Japanese supermarkets during the winter come from Oman. The other goods imported from Oman are methanol, fish, chrome ore, penicillin, dates and so on in descending order of values. Seafood includes sea urchins, scallops, big-eye tuna, yellow-fin tuna, cuttlefish and lobsters and totals about US\$8.5 million in value.

On the export side, transport equipment represents 84.6% of the total at US\$2,626 million. Passenger cars and trucks account for 71.3% or US\$2,211 million among them. Machine tools such as engines, pumps constitute 7.2% at US\$224 million.

Inroads by Japanese firms into the Arab Gulf countries

In a nutshell, Japanese firms made inroads into the Arabian Gulf markets from the north.

In the Gulf areas, oil was first discovered in Bahrain in 1932. Discoveries in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait followed in 1938, in Qatar in 1949, in the UAE in 1958 after the Second World War and then in Oman in 1962. Actual operations by Bahrain started in 1933, Saudi Arabia in 1939, Kuwait and Qatar in 1949 after the war, the UAE in 1962 and Oman in 1967. With the impetus of the oil discoveries, Japan soon started trading with the northern Arab countries such as Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and Japanese companies began establishing a presence in these markets. In the burgeoning of the oil industry, the Arabian Oil Company acquired concessions from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in 1957 and 1958 respectively, and the Abu Dhabi Oil Company likewise from Abu Dhabi in 1967.

I visited the Gulf countries in 1973 when there were only a handful of factories

in the area: Abadan Refinery in Iran, Khafji Refinery and Ras Tanura Refinery in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain Refinery and an aluminum smelting works in Bahrain and Umm Said Refinery in Qatar. Oman had no factory at all. However, nowadays, large-scaled state-of-the-art factories have sprung up across the country, at Sohar, Sur, Salalah, just to name a few.

Japanese firms' penetration into Oman

Let me discuss how Japanese firms have made inroads into Oman by sector:

1. Oil exploration and production

Japanese firms started oil exploration and production only after the 1970s. In 1975, Sumitomo Petroleum Development Company and Elf of France jointly acquired oil interests from Oman. This joint venture discovered the Sahmah oil fields in the Rub al Khali desert (Empty Quarter) and started production in 1980. The firms relinquished the oil concession in 2001.

In 1981 Japex Oman, a local subsidiary established by Japex and its partners, signed a production-sharing contract with the Omani government, and Nippon Oil Corporation followed suit. Nippon Oil Corporation then assigned its interests to Oman Petroleum Company but failed to find a commercially viable volume of oil and eventually withdrew from the operation in 1987.

Japex Oman discovered the Daleel oilfields in 1986 and commenced production in July 1990. In 1995 the production reached 10,000 b/d under its second-phase development programme. However, having failed in the renewal of the concession contract, it had to relinquish all interests in 2002. Eventually a joint venture company formed by a local Omani company and a Chinese company bought the interests. Considering the significant surge of crude oil prices in recent years, this loss of the production to China turned out to run counter to the best interests of Japan.

After the turn of the century, Mitsui and Company and the Mitsui Oil Exploration Company acquired a 35% stake from the Finnish utility Fortum in 2002 and, later, a 35% from Occidental Petroleum Corporation's interest on another onshore block and are producing crude oil. In 2010, they acquired the concession on the onshore block, together with CC Energy Development and Tethys Oil and are now at the exploration and preparatory stage of the development.

2. LNG

A joint venture agreement was signed in June 1993 to transport inland natural gas to a liquefaction plant in Qalhat, 15 km north of Sur, for the export of LNG.. Following this, the Oman LNG Company was incorporated in 1994 with the

stakeholders consisting of the Government of Oman (51%), Shell (30%), Total of France (5.54%), Korea Gas (5%), Partex of Portugal (2%), Mitsubishi and Mitsui (2.77% each) and Itochu (0.92%).

The plant got under way in December 1999 and produces about 6.6 million tons of LNG a year. The company started supplying LNG to Korea Gas in April 2000 and to Osaka Gas in November of the same year under the term contracts. Deliveries have been smooth ever since under the term contracts, as well as with some spot contracts with buyers in Asia and Europe.

Since Qalhat LNG commenced operations in December 2005, it has been producing 3.3 million tons of LNG a year. Its stakeholders are the Government of Oman (46.84%), Oman LNG (36.8%), Union Fenosa Gas (Spain) (7.36%) and Itochu, Mitsubishi and Osaka Gas (3% each). The LNG industry of Oman has grown to reach an annual production of 10 million tons.

3. Plant exports

Japanese plant manufacturers started business in Oman in the 1980s. Between 1981 and 1982 the Mitsui Engineering and Shipbuilding Company constructed the first refinery in Oman with a refining capacity of 50,000 b/d at Mina al Fahal. The company undertook the refinery capacity increase to 85,000 b/d in 1986-1987 and added a gasoline manufacturing plant to the refinery in 1994.

As my first visit to Oman was related to the construction of a refinery, it was my regret that my company, Maruzen Oil (present-day Cosmo Oil), could not contribute to this project, at least with regard to its commissioning.

The Hitachi Zosen Corporation completed a desalination plant in Ghubra, Muscat in 1982 and participated in its second, third and fifth expansion programmes.

In 2000, the company was awarded the first phase power generation/desalination project in Barka and completed it in 2003. As the Omani government assigned construction, management, maintenance and the supply of water and electricity to a private company for the first time in history under the Omani privatization programme, the ordering party was AES, a U.S. company, not the Omani government.

The Sasakura Engineering Company constructed a desalination plant under a contract with the Government of Oman during 1984-1985.

In 1985 Niigata Tekko constructed a gas processing plant in Yibal and completed a capacity increase and plant expansion work in 1992. Ishikwajima-Harima Industries (now IHI) undertook the expansion of the Rusayl Cement Plant in 1997. In the same year IHI was awarded a contract to construct six units of container cranes at the Port of Salalah, which were completed in 2001.

The Chiyoda Corporation, in a joint venture with Foster Wheeler, received an order in 1996 for the construction of an LNG plant and the delivery system with an annual capacity of 6.6 million tons and completed the project in 2000. Chiyoda was awarded a contract in 2002 to construct the LNG plant in Qalhat and completed it in 2005, achieving the feat of the shortest construction period in the world.

In 2003 JGC Corporation were given a contract to construct a refinery at Sohar, completing it in 2006.

In connection with these LNG projects, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Kawasaki Heavy Industries were commissioned to build two LNG carriers, the *Sohar LNG* and the *Muscat LNG* respectively, and delivered the former in 2001 and the latter in 2004.

In addition, the Oman Shipping Company, owned by the Government of Oman, issued orders for four more LNG vessels, of which Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Kawasaki Heavy Industries each obtained one. These two vessels, the *Salalah LNG* and the *Nizwa LNG*, were respectively delivered in December 2005. Of the six vessels, three are owned jointly by Oman Shipping Company and Mitsui O.S.K. Lines and the remaining three by the Oman Shipping Company, Mitsui O.S.K., Mitsubishi Corporation, Mitsui and Company, and Itochu Corporation.

Following the LNG vessels described above, Oman Shipping Company has placed orders for LNG vessels, crude oil tankers (VLCC), oil product tankers and a bulk carrier vessel with Japanese shipbuilding companies and nine vessels in total has been delivered from 2008 to April, 2011. Two more vessels are under construction.

In 2004 Mitsubishi Heavy Industries was awarded a contract to construct a fertilizer plant in Sohar, while Kobe Steel secured an order to construct an iron direct reduction plant in 2005. Both plants are currently in operation, completed in 2009 and 2010 respectively.

In addition, Sojitsu Corporation, which had been awarded construction contracts of various plants, participated in IPP projects, Barka 3 and Sohar 2, in 2009. The projects are to construct new power generation facilities and sell electricity to Oman Power Water Procurement Company for 15 years.

Intergovernmental cooperation

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is well known in Oman. It renders international cooperation under two major categories, Technical Cooperation and Grant Aid. Under Technical Cooperation, there are four operations, namely acceptance of trainees, dispatch of experts, development research and project technical cooperation, all of which are extended to Oman.

The first JICA trainees from Oman came to Japan in May 1975, nearly forty years ago. They were from the Police Department of the Omani Government.

The number of the Omani trainees Japan received by the end of March 2009 totalled 556. They were from different walks of life and included bureaucrats, businessmen and university professors, all specializing in a diverse range of fields such as policy planning, trade, mineral and industrial sectors, transport, communications, police and so on. The list includes the incumbent ministers.

Besides JICA, two other organizations accept trainees from abroad. They are the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS). These three organizations received more than 768 trainees from Oman by 31 March 2009, with UNIDO 2 and AOTS 210.

Conversely, JICA sent 158 experts to Oman from 1986 (when the Oman programme commenced) through to 31st March, 2009. They worked in many governmental offices including the Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries, Commerce and Industry, Oil and Gas, Information, Transport and Communications, Housing, Power and Water, Foreign Affairs, Regional Municipalities, Water Resources and Vocational Training Centers.

The author served with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for three years from 1992 and again for a year from 1996. 5S (SEIRI-Clean-up, SEITON-Organizing, SEISO-Cleaning, SEIKETSU-Standardizing, SITSUKE-Training and discipline) was introduced to Oman for the first time in the initial period and captured wide attention.

I was deeply gratified by my experience of my close personal relationships with many outstanding young Omani gentlemen. We worked very hard together in and outside the Ministry, exchanged personal visits to each other's houses and sometimes spent nights in the desert. I would not trade this experience for anything else. One of my former counterparts in Oman is now an incumbent minister, and many others have assumed responsible positions in the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and in the private sector.

The development research programs totalled 31 as of 31 March 2009 and covered a wide range of projects. A few of these were the Fundamental Plan for Industrial Development, the Programme for Establishing Industrial Statistics and an Information Center, the Program for Training in Fisheries, the Program to Develop Roads and Related Facilities and the Fundamental Research on Agricultural Development. These programmes are vital to the future of the country, and the JICA's activities in this area contribute significantly to the policy-making of Oman.

The Program for Training in Fisheries was carried out from 1992 through to 2000. It was a project-oriented technical cooperation programme which

packaged expert dispatch, acceptance of trainees at JICA, Japan, and the supply of equipment. In this connection aid was extended in the form of a grant for the establishment of the Fishing Industry Quality Control Centre.

Also, Japan Cooperation Center Petroleum (JCCP) launched research on the treatment and utilization of the water produced in oilfields in 2007, jointly with SQU, PDO and the Ministry of Oil and Gas. They completed a pilot plant in 2010, and conducted demonstration experiments to utilize the water for agricultural use.

Technical cooperation in the private sector

Private companies have extended technical cooperation in many fields.

Those which have been awarded plant construction projects, such as Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries, Hitachi Zosen Corporation, Chiyoda Corporation and JGC Corporation, have accepted trainees from Oman.

Since the 1990s, Idemitsu Kosan has accepted trainees from Oman, sent their experts to Oman and cooperated with the Government of Oman in developing the basic oil industry policy in accordance with the scheme designed by Japan Cooperation Center, Petroleum (JCCP). In 1998 this Japanese oil company signed a technical cooperation agreement with the Government of Oman. The firm sent some of its technical experts to Oman, including a refinery manager to help run the Omani refinery for three years.

More recently, Cosmo Oil has become active in rendering technical cooperation to Oman. Many Omanis were trained at Toyota under the AOTS scheme. The Water Re-Use Promotion Centre, an outer organization of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, extends technical cooperation to Oman in carrying out research on the purification of oil-contaminated seawater under an agreement with Sultan Qaboos University.

One of the most notable developments in recent years was the technical cooperation programme which Mitsui O.S.K. Lines has extended to the Government of Oman. The Government aims to promote development of the marine industry as one of its prioritized programmes primarily for the purpose of transporting LNG by its own vessels. This is a commendable step for the Omanis, 'the Seafaring Nation', to take. In concert with this national policy. Mitsui O.S.K. Lines has been carrying out management of vessel maintenance, operations, new shipbuilding and training of Omani crews. The cooperative relations encompass the joint ownership and operation of not only LNG vessels but also crude oil, LPG and product tankers. For these purposes, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines opened a local office and keeps a few employees of its own there.

3. Cultural Exchange

Introduction of Japanese culture

Japanese cultural missions started visiting Oman in the 1970s with demonstrations of flower arranging and the tea ceremony. Since the 1990s, when the author lived in Oman, various activities have been maintained between the two countries in order to introduce Japanese culture to Oman

The introduction of Japanese culture was highlighted during the Japan Weeks in 1992, 1995 and 2000. Among the events and exhibitions were *Kendo* (the Japanese art of fencing), Japanese drumming, flower arranging, the tea ceremony, a bamboo vertical flute performance, *origami* (the art of folding paper), miniature samurai helmets, *kimonos*, *obis* (Kimono sashes), *ukiyo*e (Japanese traditional woodblock prints) and Japanese musical concerts. The first Japan Week was held in 1992 under the auspices of the Oman-Japan Friendship Association in Oman and was backed by the Japanese Embassy. In support of the event, the Japan-Oman Society dispatched a large delegation to Oman.

In addition, a series of other events has been held from time to time to promote Japanese culture. A wide range of arts and sports was included in the following events: “String Quartet Concert”, “Japanese Doll Exhibition”, “Ensemble of Traditional Japanese Musical Instruments”, “Japanese Flower Arrangement Demonstration”, “Magic Show”, “Photo Show”, “Japanese Woodblock Prints Show”, “Calligraphy Demonstration”, “Performance of Billy Bang Bang (Japanese singers)”, “Japanese Modern Architecture Exhibition” and “Karate Teaching”, among others.

Furthermore, lectures were hosted on “Japanese Gardens”, “Japan’s Industrial Growth”, “Japanese Economy”, “Trade between Oman and Japan”, “The Tea Ceremony”, “Japanese Paintings”, “Culture of Ceramic Art”, “History of Interchange between Oman and Japan” and “Japanese Incense”. Various Japanese movies such as the “*Tora-san*” series were shown.

An increasing number of Japanese organizations and individuals participate in the Muscat International Festival which is held in January or February every year. In the past, “*Yagi-bushi*”, a local folk song in Kiryu City, and “*Yamatanoorochi* (an eight-headed and eight-tailed huge serpent-like monster) Song and Dance” from Hiroshima were performed. In the Japan Exhibition Hall the tea ceremony and flower arranging were demonstrated as well as a variety of other exhibitions.

Sales of Japanese automobiles and electric appliances also play an important role in the introduction of Japanese culture. Omani people get to know Japan through these Japanese products. Efficient and user-friendly Japanese products, made with cutting-edge technology, embody the spirit of Japanese culture. Many Japanese firms participated in the Muscat International Trade Fair in

1997. This Trade Fair is held every year and Oman welcomes continued Japanese participation.

Less well-known is the popularity of Japanese animation videos and TV games among Omani children. This form of entertainment is so popular that grown-ups often enjoy them with the children and together they learn more about Japan.

The Ship for World Youth

“The Ship for World Youth” is one of the Cabinet Office’s international youth exchange programmes. Under this programme, young people of 18 to 30 years of age from Japan and the rest of the world share daily life aboard the ship and aim to promote their mutual understanding and friendship through introduction of cultures, discussions on issues of common interest, club activities and so on.

I visited Nakhal Fort, approximately 100 km northwest of Muscat, in October 1992. There I met a group of six or seven Omani youths. I offered them my usual Omani greetings. “Al-salaam Alakum? (How are you?)”, “Aish Akhbaric? (Is there any news?)” and “Aish Alumic? (Is there any information?)”. One of the gentlemen (I later learned his name was Khamiis al Moharbi) replied in Japanese “*Konnichiwa* (How are you?)”. He learned this expression when he boarded the Ship for World Youth. He loved Japan and knew a surprising amount about it. We immediately became friends, and Ahmed, the leader of the group, invited me to his home on our way back. Except for one, all the men in the group wore the traditional Arab dress, the *dishdasha*. Khamis wore a loud-colored polo shirt and red shorts. He was a photographer, quite famous in Oman. When Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess visited Oman in 1994, they went to see his photo exhibition. His photos of Oman were exhibited also in Kobe, Japan. Ahmed was a popular TV broadcaster. My friendship with them still continues.

The author believes that “The Ship for World Youth” was one of the most successful government-managed programmes. Nothing can replace the value of the friendship and goodwill cultivated by young people from various countries as they share daily life and gain international experience on the ship.

The first group of Omani youths participated in the second voyage of the Ship for World Youth, which arrived at Port of Qaboos on 6th March, 1990. The group visited Nizwa and Sultan Qaboos University, and, after they had enjoyed playing some sporting games with the local youths, the ship sailed for Japan on the 9th. About 100 Japanese participated in the voyage, together with 168 members from 13 other countries including 19 from Oman. Since that time, Oman has sent participants to the Ship in 1992, 1994, 1998, 2007, 2008 and 2010.

The Ship sailed from Japan on its 20th voyage on 24th January 2008 and returned

home on 5th March. It called at Port Qaboos for the fourth time and ten years after the last visit to Oman. The participants enjoyed this opportunity to further their friendship through the three-day tour which included visits to historic places, the City Museum, the souk and Sultan Qaboos University. 260 young people joined in this voyage from 14 countries including Brazil, Spain, South Africa, the U.S. and Oman.

With 11 participants, all male, from Oman on the 22nd voyage in 2010, which dropped in at Dubai, the number of Omani participants totalled 91 on seven voyages, second in the Gulf region only to the UAE which had 103 participants on eleven voyages. Khamiis and Ahmed joined the voyage in 1992.

Rose and cherry blossoms

Have you heard of the “Sultan Qaboos Rose”? This is a large-flowered scarlet rose, a new species created by Maylan of France in 1989 and grown by Royal Moerheim Nurseries of the Netherlands.

It was so named by the World Federation of Rose Societies, the centre for rose lovers around the world, and presented to H.M. Sultan Qaboos in November 1990 out of respect for his outstanding achievements including, to name a few, transforming the nation from one of the poorest countries in the world into a modern nation in the 20 years after his ascension to the throne, playing a vital role in bringing a ceasefire to the Iran-Iraq War and contributing greatly to environmental protection and the defense of human rights .

Prior to the presentation, this new species was exhibited at the International Garden and Greenery Exhibition, Osaka, Japan, in April 1990. The rose was displayed from 1st to 22nd April, and various events of “Oman Day” were held with great enthusiasm on 17th April.

You can see the Sultan Qaboos rose in any season in Japan. One of the sites where the rose is planted is the Rose Garden of Ikuta Green Park in the vicinity of the author’s home. It was known as Mukogaoka Park when Odakyu Line owned it. The railway company donated it to Kawasaki City in 2002. A special section in the centre of the Rose Garden is dedicated to exhibiting a variety of the roses related to royal families around the world. “The Sultan Qaboos”, planted on the left side of “Queen Elizabeth” right in the center, enjoys a large space, together with “Princess de Monaco” on its right. It is quite a majestic sight when these three kinds of roses compete in beauty. I understand that the Sultan Qaboos rose is also found in Keisei Rose Garden and Hiroshima Rose Garden. In Hiroshima, which enjoys a friendship with the Sultanate of Oman, the rose is also planted at Yasuhigashi Public Hall, Yasuhigashi Elementary School, Bishamondai Elementary School and in many private homes.

In 2010, a Sultan Qaboos rose was planted in the front yard of the Embassy of

the Sultanate of Oman in Tokyo to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the enthronement of HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

In Oman, on the other hand, in February 2002 Japanese cherry trees were planted in a village on the mountainous area of the Jabal Al Akhdhar (green mountain) by Zenji Kaminaga, the then Ambassador of Japan, and the Omani Minister of Agriculture.

The temperature on the Jabal al Akhdhar area is below 10 degrees Centigrade in winter and stays below 30 degrees Centigrade in summer, providing an ideal environment for peaches and apricots. Japanese pears were also planted there, and the cherry blossoms are expected to be gorgeous when in season. The author visited the village in 2007 and felt more care was required to maintain a good environment for the trees, perhaps with further support from Japan.

I must add that young cherry trees were planted in the garden of the Embassy of Japan and the Ambassador's official residence in Muscat in 2010. I have learned some of them are growing, although they are not yet old enough to flower..

Heian Garden of Japan

A Japanese garden called the *Heian Garden of Japan* opened in Oman in 2001. It was built with much effort by Ambassador Kaminaga in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of H.M. Sultan Qaboos' enthronement. The garden is a cultural monument symbolizing the close friendship between the two countries. It is situated on a site of about 7,000 square metres in a corner of Naseem Public Park on the Batinah coast near the City of Muscat.

There was not a single visible sign of grass or trees in the park when the author visited it in May 2000, but on my second visit there in January 2005 it had been transformed into a beautiful garden with lanterns, a multi-storied minipagoda, a streamlet, a bridge, floating islands, a hedge, a Japanese-style torch and Japanese wisteria trellises. It was a moving scene to me, as I remembered there were many critics of this project at the outset. They did not think the Japanese garden would survive the intense heat of Arabia.

The Heian Garden of Japan has become a relaxing place for nature-loving Omani people. In addition, it was the first Japanese garden in the Arabian Gulf region and has become one of Oman's main tourist attractions.

The Government of Oman contributed more than half of the construction costs, and the City of Muscat bears the maintenance costs.

Sports exchange

In the third Asian elimination round for the 2010 South Africa World Cup

under the auspices of FIFA, Japan and Oman belonged to the same group. Japan easily won the first soccer game on 2nd June 2008 at the Nissan Stadium with Shunsuke Nakamura and others scoring goals. The second game was played away in Oman. Oman scored first in the first half but Japan managed to draw with a point by Yasuhito Endo's PK at 53 minutes into the second half. Oman was Japan's strongest rival in the heat but Japan advanced to the final round by defeating Oman with a win and a draw. I was sitting with my Omani friends in their side of the Stadium, but I remember I could not help smiling when I found myself cheering for the Japanese eleven in the Nissan Stadium.

In the first elimination round for the 2006 German World Cup, Japan was with Oman in the same group as Singapore and India. Japan survived elimination by beating Oman 1-0 in both games, at home and away. The first game was very close. With the score 0-0 even after the extra time had started ticking, everybody predicted a draw. Then, three minutes into the extra time, Japan pipped Oman with a goal.

In July 2004 Japan played against Oman in the qualifying round for the Asia Cup, China. Japan scored a win over Oman with a narrow margin of 1-0. The media rarely reports Omani soccer but gives lots of attention to the country when it plays soccer with Japan, its arch rivals. Every time Oman and Japan clash, I go out to buy the sports papers and enjoy reading about the competition.

Soccer is the most popular sport in Oman. Goal keeper Ali Al Habsi plays for Wigan Athletic in the English Premier League. Notably, a few more Omani pros play in Kuwait, Bahrain and in other GCC countries.

Karate is also popular in Oman. The Karate Association of Oman was established in 1984. Everywhere in Oman you hear adults and children alike shouting "Rei!", "Hajime!", "Wazaari!" "Ippon!" while they are practicing *karate*. There is a spiritual thread of connection between the meditation of the *Zen* religion and the spirit of *karate*. It is gratifying to note that the traditional ethos of Japan is taught to Omanis through *karate*. Oman has many black belts.

In October 2008 a female tennis player (Fatma al Nabhani) from Oman played in the Osaka Mayor Cup Tennis Tournament. I believe we will see an increasing number of Omani athletes competing in Japan.

It is my strong desire that the Oman/Japan relationship in the field of sports will become ever closer in the future.

Academic and student exchanges

Three Japanese universities, Waseda University, Nagoya Institute of Technology and Rikkyo University, have signed agreements with Sultan Qaboos University concerning academic exchange programs.

Deserving special mention in this connection is the visit to Oman in December 2002 by the students of the International Culture Department of Miyagi Gakuin Women's University. Thirty-eight girl students, divided into small groups according to their areas of study, carried out field work on tourism development, housing, clothing, world heritage, incense, education, music and dance and foods, and successfully conducted workshops on Cultural Exchange in cooperation with the students of Sultan Qaboos University.

I remember hearing students' excited voices saying that they wished to be resettled permanently in Oman or that they wished to marry Omani youths, at the briefing session held at Sendai after their return home.

This field study was held in Oman, and Zanzibar. Professor Chizuko Tominaga planned and took the initiative in this project. She is one of the best-known scholars of East Africa in Japan. We pay our respects to her broad vision and strenuous endeavours.

After this event the students of the member universities of the Japan Middle East Student Conference (International Christian University, Tokyo University, Nihon University and others) and Kobe University, Tokai University and Waseda University visited Oman and made the acquaintance of the students of Sultan Qaboos University. Students belonging to the Japan GCC Association of Students also visited Oman.

It is my fervent hope that the young people of both countries will continue to deepen their friendship and understand each other further. In this respect, it was my great pleasure that a Japanese student was enrolled in SQU in 2009, following the enrolment of a postgraduate student a few years back. Also, I believe that the Sultan Qaboos Chair established in the University of Tokyo to mainly promote Middle Eastern Studies in October of 2010, which falls on the 40th anniversary of enthronement of HM Sultan Qaboos bin Said, will help contribute towards deepening the understanding of their counterpart.

Chapter 11: Invitation to Oman

1. Rimal Al Sharqiyah/Eastern Sands

On my first visit to Kuwait in 1973, I was told that one of the greatest pastimes of the local people was picnicking in the desert. At first I could not for the life of me imagine how they enjoyed themselves in an area of complete desolation and barrenness.

I spent a night in the desert for the first time in my life in 1976 in the Liwa desert of Abu Dhabi. When setting off on the trip, we took some air out of the tyres and got into a 4WD car driven by an 11-year-old Bedouin boy – a thrilling experience. We enjoyed chats with the Bedouins around a bonfire under a starry sky. The next morning we loaded a camel with buckets of water from a small well in the desert, washed our faces and used the toilet in the Arabian way and stopped by a Bedouin village; all are very fresh memories.

Since then I have visited the Liwa desert a few more times, but it was only after I started living in Muscat and made frequent trips to a nearby desert that I really got hooked on it and found an answer to my recurring question about its charm. I frequented the Sharqiyah desert, which is located approximately 140 km south of Muscat. It is 80 km wide from east to west and 180 km long from north to south, and is a relatively small desert of approximately 10,000 square kilometres.

After a few trips to the desert, I came to realize that I was drawn to the barrenness where all you can see is sand. If you lie in a world of complete emptiness, you feel as if your mind achieves a kind of peace and purity. At night the moon and stars



Ras al Ruwais in the Sharqiyah region

look so close that you feel as if you could grab them, and you can see them move slowly but clearly.

You realize how small your existence is when you compare yourself with the vastness of nature and the universe. Then, you start asking yourself, “Why do we live?,” “What are men and women?,” “What is the family?” “What

should we do to survive?” Your spiritual trip goes on, and you think about the sense of values in your life: hospitality, courage, patience, power, honour, independence, freedom and so on. You cannot help but ponder on mankind and its history.

To my question I finally found an answer: the Arabs enjoy picnicking in the desert because their body and soul get cleansed, their children think about the life of their ancestors a long, long time ago and they learn the traditions and spiritual values of the Bedouin.

I had an opportunity to venture into the Rub al Khali (Empty Quarter) desert in the western part of Oman, the biggest desert in the Arabian Peninsula. We drove and then walked as far as we could, encountering a world with no trees or grass, only dunes as far as our eyes could see.

By contrast, the Sharqiyah desert is smaller but has a variety of features. Quartz, carbonates and ophiolite grains cover the surface and beneath them are Eolian rocks which are moulded like cement lumps out of the sands blown in. Some of these rocks jut out from the ground, and the spread of Eolian rocks there is said to be the biggest in the world.

Various kinds of animals and plants add another feature to the desert. More than 200 species of plants, including acacia, exist there. In addition to insects, over 100 species of birds, foxes and wolves inhabit the terrain.

The desert adjoins the sea, and from the top of the sand dunes you can see a stupendous view of the Arabian Sea sprawled below. Down on the beach you can catch an unlimited supply of octopuses and blue mussels with your hands.

Bedouins live in this desert, and it is an exciting experience to visit their villages. On our visit to one of them, a 10-year-old boy greeted us and impressively acted as if he were the head of the family, representing his father who happened to be out. We saw a children's swing, clumsily hand-made from cords, hanging from a tree, and the Bedouin home built from pieces of wood and tin sheets. Those dwellings still remain vivid in my memory.

We enjoyed a pretty delectable dinner with the Bedouins, even though we had no alcohol and drank only water and soft drinks. Usually, they have a barbecue where they grill mutton, goat meat and fish. If the sea is near, they often cook shellfish such as green mussels. The meal was excellent.

At such a stag party on a moonlit night, men play the oud (a stringed musical instrument similar to the lute and the Japanese *biwa*), beat the drum, sing and dance. Then they start singing lines of songs alternately like Renga or Japanese linked-verse poetry, and two groups of people, each man with his arms around the shoulders of those on either side, walk forward and backward over and

over again. Some dancers are disguised as women. A pair of a man and another man in female guise dance and sing. When the “lady” performs a woman-like gesture, the audience whistles. The party goes on well after midnight.

The desert may look flat, but it consists of one dune after another. A 4WD vehicle is a must-have companion in the desert, and driving it up and down across the wide expanse of sands is one of the greatest joys you can imagine. You rev up the engine, climb the dune and whizz down. Your head keeps hitting the vehicle’s roof all the time on your way up and down. The passengers, regardless of age and sex, go crazy and shout in excitement. At times you feel as if you are falling headlong 30-40 meters down the steep slope. When you are driving down, you hear a thunderous sound like the roar of a jet plane.

The Middle East is the best place for you to meditate on history and humanity. This is the first of my personal mottoes regarding the Middle East. I suggest you go and visit the Rimal Al Sharqiyah and experience what I mean with your own body and soul.

2. The Musandam Peninsula and the Strait of Hormuz



When I lived in Oman in the 1990s a prominent Japanese scholar on the Middle East came to Oman along with his researcher. I asked him whom he wanted to meet, and his answer was, “No-one in particular, but I would like to fulfill my long-cherished dream of visiting the Strait of Hormuz.”

A tranquil inlet of the Musandam peninsula

I needed to arrange a boat for the trip, and I was at my wits’ end. The Under-Secretary of Commerce and Industry rescued me with his offer to provide us with a boat and a guide from the Ministry’s Musandam branch office. I told the Japanese Ambassador about our plan, and he too wanted to join us. The four of us set off on the journey.

Musandam is an enclave of Oman with an area of 1,800 square kilometres and a population of approximately 31,000. Since there was no ferry service to Musandam at that time, we had to choose one of the conventional routes from

Muscat. The first option was to get to Khasab, the nearest city to the Strait, directly by air, the second was to travel to Khasab overland via Sohar and Daba, and the third to fly to Dubai and drive from there to Khasab. We chose to fly straight to Khasab.

Our plane took off from Muscat and cruised to the north along the coast of the Sea of Oman, overlooking the Western Hajar mountain range and the town of Khor Fakkan in the UAE on our left. In about an hour and a half the scenery abruptly changed. Now the towering sheer cliffs rose from the waters of the quiet sea. A white serpent-like line of waves separated the cliffs from the sea. I had never seen such a picturesque view in Arabia. I am not sure whether it was Khawr al Habalayn or the 20 km long fjords of Sim Gulf.

Soon we arrived at Khasab Airport, where we were met by two officers from the Musandam branch office of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. We checked into the Khasab Hotel.

The next morning we set out by car for the Musandam's mountainous area. Musandam is the starting point of the Western Hajar mountain range. It is a mountainous region, and most of it lies nearly 2,000 meters above sea level. We drove up towards Jabal Harim, the highest peak with an elevation of 2,087 meters above sea level. On our way we were amazed to see houses carved into the rocks on the roadside. Then all of a sudden in the distance we saw patches of green cultivated land. We were in Sayh Plateau, 1,800 meters above sea level. Date palms could be seen here and there. The landscape was an unimaginable one which was in stark contrast with the extension of the rocky mountain range we had passed. There was a radar base in Jabal Harim, off-limits to travellers, on our way down from Sayh Plateau. We had to take a detour to Wadi Sal Al-A'la. There we turned to the right and parked the car. A magnificent vista opened up under our eyes: a long winding road over the rocks leading to an inlet cutting sharply into the cliffs. It was Najid Gulf.

At the foot of the rugged rocks there was a green spot called Khaldiyah Park, where local people often have barbecue picnics. We passed it and drove down the mountain pass to the town of Khasab. Many ships were anchored in the Port of Khasab, and there was a hustle and bustle all over the port with passengers busily walking up and down and men shouting loudly to attract new passengers.

We stopped by the souk en route to our hotel. The market displayed all kinds of goods. It was the closest market to Iran, and we heard that many Iranian buyers visited the souk.

In the afternoon we drove towards the UAE border on the west coast. On our left stood a range of angular rocks, and our meandering road ran along its base. Then a fantastic view of the Persian blue sea loomed larger and larger in front of us. We made a U-turn at the border city with UAE of Tibat.

The next day we proceeded to the Strait of Hormuz from the Port of Khasab in the boat of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It looked too small for our group of six. In fact, we had expected a much bigger vessel.. It was a windy day and we saw white choppy waves all over the sea. We were nervous and I murmured to myself, “I should have asked the Under-Secretary for a warship.” It was too late.

About 30 minutes after we sailed out into the open sea we saw an island on our left. It was Ghanem (goat) Island, where a radar base was installed to watch the Strait of Hormuz. We could see soldiers by the window of the building at the corner of the pier. It was during the height of the international tension against Iran and we were a bit on edge.

The Strait of Hormuz is an international strait, approximately 33 km wide, between the Arabian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the “international strait” is a strait through which nations are permitted to have their vessels freely pass within the specified guidelines.

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the most important international straits, through which crude oil equivalent in quantity to about 20% of world consumption passes. Tankers sail westwards into the Arabian Gulf along the Iranian coast and come out south-eastwards through the Omani side channel.

Our boat entered the Strait of Hormuz before we became aware of it. The view of the sea opened up and a large island emerged in front of us. It was probably Qeshim Island, part of Iran.

All of a sudden, out of the mist on our left a dark shadow appeared and kept coming closer and closer towards us. The shadow was so huge that it looked like a mountain, but it was a tanker. I wanted to wave my hands to the crew from the gunwale, but the sea was too rough.

My friend shouted, “I have seen the Strait of Hormuz. We have a VIP – an ambassador – aboard. We should not do anything risky. Let’s return!” I had to listen to my guest and we left the Strait behind.

The guide from the Ministry gave us a thorough explanation of each of the noteworthy things on our way back.

First, he pointed out Kumzar. This village is located at the northern tip of Musandam, only a few miles from the Strait of Hormuz. It is isolated and only accessible by boat. This district harbours a separate language – Kumzari. It is a unique blend of Arabic, Portuguese Persian, Hindi and English. I vividly recall the white buildings in the village beyond the quiet glittering Persian blue inlet basking in the sunshine. Then we cruised counterclockwise around the

peninsula, seeing the Sim Gulf Inlet and other spots within the gulf and the inlet. We had a good look at one of the most spectacular fjords in Musandam, and called at Telegraph Island as our last stop. It was so named because the British had a telegraph cable station on the island from 1864 to 1869. We saw from the boat what looked like its remains and then returned to Khasab.

On the last day of our trip we first visited Khasab Castle Museum and then called at the Musandam office of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. There we happened to see a few men each carrying a Jirz, which is a traditional axe-headed walking stick only seen in this area of Oman. We requested Musandam songs and dances, of which we had our fill.

I sincerely recommend a trip to Musandam, where you can savour the magnificent views of the Strait of Hormuz as well as the famous fjords. Now you can go there by National Ferries which ply the route Muscat-Khasab-Muscat several times a week. A new luxurious resort hotel is also there to accommodate you.

3. Land of frankincense

There are currently eleven World Heritage sites in the Arabian Peninsula, four each in Oman and Yemen, two in Saudi Arabia and one in Bahrain. One of these sites in Oman is the Land of Frankincense, inscribed on the 2006 World Heritage list. It includes Wadi Dawkah, where frankincense trees grow, the remains of the caravan oasis of Ubar, and the ports of Khor Rori and Al-Baleed from which the frankincense was exported in olden times.

The author made a frankincense research trip through the region of Dhofar in 2006. First, I visited Taqa, about 30 km east of Salalah, and proceeded to the ruins of Sumhuram Palace, 3 km east of Taqa, and the exporting port of Khor Rori. Standing at the ruins overlooking the inlet and the whitecaps breaking upon the shore, I imagined the glorious heyday of the port town.

The next stop was Wadi Dawkah in northern Salalah. A few years back I had visited frankincense tree farms along the coast and the forest owned by Bedouin families on a hill not far from the coast in Salalah. The Wadi Dawkah area was well-deserving of its status. Standing on the hill, I saw a boundless expanse of neatly-planted frankincense trees sprawling below my eyes.

There are four grades of frankincense resins: Hojari, Najdi, Shazri and Sha'bi. The finest grade is the citrus-cloured Hojari. It comes only from the region of Wadi Andhur on the northern side of the Samhan Mountain range which rises in the easternmost part of Dhofar. As there was no road leading to this district over the mountain from the plain on the coastal side, I had to take the circuitous northbound pass from Salalah over the Jabal Qara mountains, drive a further 80 km up north, then turn to the east and continue on a rocky mountain road.

I was determined to somehow see the Hojari producing area. Soon I found myself on the way to Wadi Andhur.

On my way there we stopped by a cave upon a rocky hill. It was said to be a frankincense shop during the heyday of the trade. I could not figure out why on earth they had chosen to open the store at a barely accessible spot.

I proceeded to the ancient remains of Hanun, one of the frankincense trading hubs in bygone days. I vaguely observed many half-broken stone structures all over the site, encircled by metal net fences. Perhaps they were storage for frankincense resins.

The next stop was to be my final destination, Wadi Andhur. The guide I had hired in Salalah was not too familiar with this area. I stopped by a village on my way and recruited a local man as another guide. He had worked at tapping frankincense from the trees. We kept driving along the wadi (a dried-up river bed in the mountain valley) but the destination still looked far away. We found a pond in the midst of the rough sands en route with reed-like waterweeds covering its entire surface. The guide told me that there was an ancient frankincense repository beyond the pond. We turned to the left around its farthest corner and from there we climbed up the steep rugged slope leading to the repository 50 to 60 metres high, taking extreme caution not to fall.

Up at the repository, we found many stone-walled holes which were used to store frankincense. Glancing around, I found lookout points hugging the mountainside and asked the guide what they were used for. He explained that men had been on their guard at these lookouts for robbers attempting to steal the frankincense from the repository. This tells us how valuable the product was in ancient times. Now I came to realize the reasons why the repository was on the top of this steep hill which a camel could hardly climb. Ancient merchants deliberately chose a cave on the side of a steep hill to protect their prized merchandise from theft.

We were about to continue our drive to Wadi Andhur when my guest traveller found that he would miss the 8:00 pm flight to Jordan unless we made a U-turn then. I felt as if my heart were going to be left behind, but there was no other choice. We returned to Salalah, and Wadi Andhur remained a town in my fantasy.

Next day I visited the Museum of the Land of Frankincense in Salalah. At the far end of the foyer there was a large map of the entire country of Oman, made of different sands from eight regions of the country. I was filled with deep emotion at its sight. A company in Abu Dhabi, owned by a Japanese friend of mine, cooperated in making the map in which I had played a role in arranging its cooperation.

The museum featured the excavations from Al-Baleed, Sumhuran and Ubar. There were a great variety of panels displaying “The History of the Oman Renaissance”, incense burners for many different kinds of frankincense, trade and trade routes, lifestyles, religions, meals, cooking, fisheries, maps, women, metal processing and so on. On a wall a video introduced the Museum of the Land of Frankincense, showing very informative pictures of the workers tapping the sap from the trees.

Later, I heard that the museum would be displaying some of the articles left by the famous English explorer Wilfred Thesiger who had crossed the Rub al Khali desert. They had been previously displayed at the Salalah Museum, which was eventually closed.

The Dhofar region becomes green all over from June to September. I would encourage you to visit Salalah where the Land of Frankincense is located.

4. Muscat and Nizwa

The name Muscat may remind the Japanese of grapes. Although some people assert that Muscat grapes originated from the local grapes which were introduced to Europe by the Portuguese as was Omani halwa. Muscat, the capital of the Sultanate of Oman, in fact means “falling place” in Arabic, as mentioned earlier.

Muscat today generally refers to Greater Muscat, which spans approximately 1,100 square km and encompasses districts or wards such as Muscat, Muttrah, Ruwi, Qurum, Al-Khuwair, Gubrah, Bawsher, Azaiba and Seeb. Its population was estimated at approximately 949,000 (Mid-year estimate in 2009).

I have already discussed the district of Muscat or Muscat in a narrow sense. In this chapter I will describe the other districts of Greater Muscat.

Firstly, the Al Bustan-Jissah district. You will find the Al Bustan Palace Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Qantab fishing port and some rocks, which look like a gift from another world, on your way there. The rocks are so strangely shaped that they are well worth looking at. Next to Qantab is the 3-hotel Shangri-la Barr al Jissah Resort and Spa complex.

Next, the Muttrah district. The main tourist attractions are the Muttrah souk which has remained essentially unchanged for decades, the street with Indian-style buildings standing side by side, the early morning fish market and the Bait al Baranda Visitors’ Centre.

Also worthy of a visit are the business centre and the Sultan’s Armed Forces Museum in the Bait al Falaj in the Ruwi district. In the Qurum district you will enjoy the views from the coastal road, the shopping centres, the luxury hotels, the high-class residential area and the imposing villas.

Furthermore, you may want to visit the government offices area, the Natural History and the Sayyid Faisal Museums in the Al-Khuwair district, the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, which can accommodate 15,500 people, in the Azaiba district, the shopping centre in Seeb district and, further out into the suburb, Al Naseem Public Park, which includes the *Heian* Garden of Japan.

There are 13 museums in Muscat. They are not big, but each has its own features. You will enjoy museum-hopping. I have heard that the new national museum is to be completed in 2012, integrating seven existing national museums.

Nizwa is an old capital of Oman comparable to Kyoto in Japan. It was the base for the Ibadhi Sect and the political, religious and educational centre for a long time after it became the capital of inner Oman in 793. The town is home to Nizwa Fort, built during the Yaruba dynasty, and Falaj Daris, the largest of the ancient Omani irrigation systems. Daris Falaj is listed with others as a World Heritage site. Nizwa Fort has an impressive tall round tower. The view from the top of the fort is magnificent. You see the lofty mountain range of Jabal Al Akhdhar in front of you and the wide expanse of green date palms under your eyes. You must not miss the sight. Just outside the town you find water rapidly flowing down the irrigation system of Falaj Daris, and maybe you can strike up a conversation with the local people bathing there.

Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Japan visited these two historic places in 1994. Adjacent to the Fort are the Nizwa souk and the Friday animal market, which are worth a visit.

5. Sohar and other towns

The town of Sohar is situated 280 km northwest of Muscat along the coast of the Sea of Oman. In bygone days it was the finest port in the Arabian Gulf. Sindbad, as the legend goes, sailed out on his voyage from this port. The city has nothing left today to remind us of the glory of its past except the Sohar Castle. Since the 1990s it has been transformed into a great industrial city. There is a large industrial port and a refinery and large factories for iron works, aluminum, petrochemicals, fertilizers and so forth and they are all in operation. It is a must-see attraction for tourists.

Sur is 334 km southeast of Muscat via Bidbid. When you travel to the Sharqiyah desert along the sea coast or to Ras al Hadd, which is known as one of the places where sea turtles lay their eggs, you pass through Sur. It is particularly famous for its construction of the “dhow”, a traditional Arab sailing boat. Dhows are still built there, and the dhow yard is one of the tourist attractions of the town of Sur.

Oman offers much more to see: Jabal al Akhdhar, Misfa Oasis, Bahla Fort, Rustaq Fort and Nakhal Fort. The list goes on and on. I highly recommend trips to these spots.

Chapter 12: Oman and Japan

1. Fascinating Oman

Peaceful nation

Many people may associate the Middle East with danger, remembering the violence which has often occurred in Palestine, Iraq, Iran and Lebanon.

When I said I was going to Oman, people often asked me, “Will you be all right? Aren’t you concerned about your safety?”

For several years, a British research centre has been publishing the Global Peace Index which includes international factors such as armaments and wars as well as internal security factors such as violence and crime. In June 2010, it was announced that 149 countries were surveyed and Oman was the 23rd in the world level, and the 2nd in the Arab world. [1]

For your information, out of Arabian countries Qatar ranked the 15th, Kuwait the 39th, the UAE 44th, Bahrain the 70th, Saudi Arabia 107th, and Yemen the 129th. As for the other Middle Eastern countries, Egypt ranked the 49th, Iran 104th and Turkey 126th. Placed at the bottom of the list were Sudan, Afghanistan, and Somalia in declining order, with Iraq at the tail end.

The two pillars of the foreign policy of Oman are peaceful co-existence and neighborly friendship. Oman solved the border issues with Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the UAE between 1990 and 2000 by peaceful means. Oman’s ability to keep peace is enviable to Japan, as we have the long-pending border issues of the Northern Islands with Russia, the Senkaku Islands with China and Takeshima Island with South Korea.

Public peace and order are exceptionally good in Oman. Women can safely walk alone in the streets at night. My wife once left her purse behind in the shopping cart at a supermarket. Realizing this, we rushed back to the shop from the parking area and found the purse lying safely in the cart.

This admirable peace and security in Oman may be partly explained by the fact that it is an Islamic country, but also, more importantly, by the traits of Omanis, who are a law-abiding people. .

Japan was the 3rd safest country in the world in 2010. It ranks No. 1 in Asia, followed by Qatar as the 2nd, Malaysia as the 3rd and Oman as the 4th. There is much in common between Japan and Oman when it comes to peace and security.

Clean country

As soon as you enter Oman, you will be impressed by the cleanliness of the city. Roundabouts are neatly kept, roadside trees and gardens beautify the landscape, and amazingly, there seems not to be a speck of dust in the entire city. Early in the morning trucks pick up road cleaners and transport them to their respective districts. I understand that these maintenance teams are a result of the Sultan's love of cleanliness; his standards have become as high as those of Singapore, which is world-famous as a pristine country. In this respect, too, there is a close affinity between Oman and Japan, which also loves cleanliness.

Beautiful country



*Some aflaj were built 1500 years ago.
Five are listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List*

You probably imagine an area completely covered by sand when you think about an Arabian country. As I said, mountainous areas account for 15% of Oman's land mass. In the Jabal al Akdhar mountain range, which has an elevation of 3,000 meters, you see great gorges of a dazzling height, as well as caverns, oases with gushing water channels which

unexpectedly come into view, and roses and apricots in all their glory.

In the fjords of the Musandam area, the rugged rock mountains rise steeply to a height of 2,000 meters from the waters of the sea. This magnificent spectacle reflects the region's nickname 'Norway of Arabia'.

The mountains are all green in southern Dhofar during the monsoon season. This region is called 'The Switzerland of Arabia'. No other countries in the Arabian Peninsula can compare with Oman in natural beauty. This explains why people often call Oman 'The Pearl of Arabia'.

Country of good-natured people

Contrary to the general image of Arabs as arrogant, pompous and overbearing, Omani people are gentle, sweet, kind, friendly, shy, reserved and extremely considerate to others.

Omanis never fail to stop and help when a car is in trouble on the road or when one loses one's way. Omani truck drivers give drivers behind them a signal to overtake the truck by blinking the tail lamp when the manoeuvre is safe, a habit which I think we, the Japanese, should adopt. I am impressed by their scrupulous care. Cars never fail to stop in Oman when pedestrians wish to cross the road.

Country of long history

Oman's history has been recorded since the Sumerian Age, a time when the frankincense trade prospered. Oman was dubbed *Arabia Felix* (Happy Arabia) during the Roman Age.

As previously mentioned, Oman traded with China in as early as the 5th century. Most of the people were converted to Islam in the 7th century, and the country expelled the Portuguese and expanded its territory into Africa during the Yaruba dynasty (1624-1743). The Al bu Said dynasty, which was established in 1744 and still exists today, is the oldest dynasty in Arab countries and formerly had territorial rights in Gwadar and Zanzibar. Oman is as old a country as Japan and has more than 500 castles, forts and other historic places.

Eco and culture-friendly country

Having realized the importance of Oman's natural heritage, Sultan Qaboos established the Office of the Advisor for Conservation of the Environment in the then Ministry of Diwan Affairs in as early as 1974, amid the Dhofar rebellion. I am amazed by the farsighted decision of HM. It was in 1971 that the Environment Agency was first established in Japan.

Protection of turtles in Oman is among its well-known ecological initiatives. A natural reserve for green turtles has been established at Ras Al Hadd on the south-eastern coast of Oman and protected by law. Natural reserves for other rare species of animals and birds have also been set up.

As for preservation of the cultural heritage, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture was inaugurated in 1976. Thereafter, Oman has been collecting ancient documents, establishing and renovating museums and restoring forts. Bahla Fort was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1987.

Country of perfume and flower lovers

Scent is an integral part of life in Arabia. People burn incense at home every day, clothing is scented, and men and women wear perfumes. It is easy to see how scent is held in particular high regard by the people of Oman, a country which produces frankincense.

Men in Arabia are traditionally attired in white gowns called *dishdashas*. Omanis wear them with tassels, which are steeped in perfume, hanging from their necklines. Omani gentlemen are more elegant than men elsewhere in Arabia. As already mentioned, they use *masnad* to imbue their clothing with fragrance; *Amouage*, made in Oman, is the most expensive perfume in the world.

Wild roses grow here and there in broad stretches in the mountains of the Jabal al Akhdhar, and in April, when the season comes, they diffuse their scent throughout the air all over the hamlets. Rosewater is made from these roses.

I have referred to the 'Sultan Qaboos Rose' earlier.

Country of active women

It was in 1974 that I visited Oman for the first time. It was rare then for foreigners to see local women in the streets of the Gulf countries, except in Bahrain. Even if we did see them, their faces and bodies were covered with veils and *abayahs*, or long black robes.

In Oman, however, on the first day after my arrival in Muttrah, I was surprised to see women without veils working busily on the beach, and, later among the date palms, those again unveiled and wearing colourful clothes. This might have been the norm in Oman, where an Omani woman became the country's first policewoman in 1972.

The social advancement of Omani women has been in accordance with history and tradition. Their remarkable progress into politics and business circles has been referred to earlier.

International country

English is well understood in Oman. You would do pretty well, especially in urban areas, without speaking Arabic. Oman possessed Zanzibar on the one hand and Gwadar on the other in the old days, fought with Great Britain for hegemony over the Indian Ocean in the 19th century, concluded a commercial treaty with the U. S. in 1833 and dispatched the first Arab delegation to it in 1940.

Even during the era of the former Sultan, who enforced a national isolation policy, many Omanis worked in the Arabian Gulf countries and beyond. A large number of these people have migrated home since the 1970s, which is one reason why many Omanis speak English. It is my opinion that their international awareness is more refined than that of the Japanese. Omani people are always aware of international trends.

Pro-Japanese country

Their feeling toward Japan is quite positive. Perhaps it is because of, among other things, the good nature of our people and the supremacy of our industrial products. In addition, the Omanis are respectful of our victory in the Japanese-Russo War, our courageous challenge against the U.S. in the Pacific War and the remarkable economic recovery after the war ended. In addition, they sympathize with Japan for its catastrophic sacrifices as a result of the atomic bombs. We should also not forget the important role which the recent exchange of soccer games has played in promoting friendship between the two countries.



Smiling children

When Sultan Qaboos gave a public address on nation-building in 1987, he told his people to learn from the strong work ethic of the Japanese people and encouraged them to develop the country by making the most of its natural resources.

Japan and Oman have much in common

Omani people are of a fascinating character (gentle, sweet, kind, friendly, shy, reserved and extremely considerate to others) as I mentioned earlier. Their personality and manners are very similar to ours.

We resemble each other in social customs as well. Both countries' diets consist primarily of rice and fish, both peoples take their shoes off at the entrance to the house, sit on the floor. In Oman, they have an extended family, the younger give precedence to the elder, men dominate socially over women, men and women are separated in public settings and daughters' maidenhood is a foremost priority. Oman seems to be a carbon copy of pre-war Japan.

In Oman, as in Japan, Yes and No are not expressed very clearly. The ambiguity probably arises out of people's concern not to embarrass others and hurt their pride. The author thinks this is part of their philosophy of life, which has been cultivated over a long, long period.

In Japan, maintaining one's honour is an important consideration. Omani

people evaluate the sense of honour highly, too. It was considered unmanly for a samurai to betray his emotions on his face. I have learned Omani people do not show their emotions on the face, different from some other Arabs.

In both countries, people seek solutions to problems by backstage negotiations and consensus rather than by debate and confrontation as in Western countries.

Looking into the cultural aspect, you can easily notice Oman and Japan have similar events such as bull pushing in which bulls are never killed unlike bull fighting in Europe. We enjoy watching bulls pushing each other with their horns, and do not cheer at the sight of blood as Europeans would.

In addition, we have calligraphy as an art, although there are some differences in its brush and ink.

Fragrance has a long history in both countries. Now, fragrance is closely related to daily life in Oman, which reminds me of our Heian period (794-1185) aristocracy who enjoyed kneaded incense, similar to *bukhor*, used to soak their clothes with incense and used incense as a charm against evil.

Arabian farm tools and the *burqa* (face covering) are similar to what we have in parts of Japan. In Yamagata, located at the northern part of Japan, women cover their faces with a kind of cloth burqa when they engage in the agricultural work in the field.

Oman's music, melodies and musical instruments also sound and look like ours. We feel there is something nostalgic about Arabian music. Bedouins play the drum and the oud in the desert, singing lines of songs alternately like Renga or Japanese linked-verse poetry. Men, some disguised as women, dance to the tunes; we Japanese would feel right at home in their company.

Japan and Oman also share the same sense of values. The *samurai's* code of behavior has many things in common with the traditions of the Omanis – courage, honour, self-respect (dignity of character), justice, loyalty, patience, benevolence, compassion, good manners and honesty. In Oman, benevolence is reflected in patriarchy as well as in manners, which are manifested in polite greetings, a neat personal appearance and a sedate pace of walking. As for honesty, a Japanese proverb goes, “The *samurai* can never be double-tongued.” Bedouins have a similar saying, to the best of my knowledge.

Colonel Koichiro Bansho headed the first troop of Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force in Iraq, and described the Arab's traits as “GNN and *bushi-do* (the *samurai* spirit)”. The “G” stands for *giri*, a Japanese word meaning justice, the first “N” for *ninjou* which means humanity, and the second “N” for *naniwabushi*, the traditional recitation and singing of stories of loyalty and human feeling. [2] I have long shared the same sentiment towards the Arabs and am happy to note that a better understanding of their mentality is gradually spreading.

Omanis, like their neighbours in the Gulf, consider hospitality, generosity and power as important values.

Oman is the closest Arab country to Japan

I make a habit of introducing Oman to the Japanese as the closest Arab country to Japan. Geographically, this is self-explanatory, as Oman is situated at the south-eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Historically, too, no other Arab countries have a greater affinity to Japan than has Oman.

There is a princess called Buthaina in Oman. Her father was the 12th Sultan Taimur and her mother a Japanese woman. After the Sultan abdicated, he visited Japan in 1935 and stayed in Kobe for four years. His son Said, later the 13th Sultan, also came over to Japan to see his father in 1937. The reigning Sultan Qaboos stopped by Japan on his way back from England in 1963. All these visits to Japan by the Omani royal family were personal ones, and we hope for an early state visit by Sultan Qaboos.

2. Oman and Japan in the 21st Century

Oman is a peaceful nation free from any serious problems. Perhaps for this reason, the Japanese mass media rarely report on Oman. The country gains attention only when its soccer team plays against Japan's. Television and newspapers pay little attention to a country like Oman, unless a serious dispute or event has occurred. That is how the mass media operate; therefore, their sparse coverage of Oman is understandable.

Oman is, however, an independent country with voting rights in the international arena. Due to its illustrious sovereign Sultan Qaboos, Oman has a fair share of international political clout and military presence. Economically, it is an oil-producing nation, ranked respectively at No. 7 and No. 8 in the world as an indispensable crude oil and LNG supplier to Japan in 2009, and it also provides Japan with an important export market for cars.

Altogether, Oman is a very important country to Japan in terms of politics, economy and military strategy. These three areas are particularly important in international society. Many Japanese seem to have been so used to a peaceful world that they do not pay due attention to military power. More than that, the military has become almost a taboo subject to them. The author firmly believes that we must give more importance to the issue of defense.

Granting the importance of politics, economy and fire power, I think 'soft power' plays an even more important role in order for a country to be recognized as a prominent member of the world in the 21st century. By 'soft power' I mean, among other things, the country's fundamental stance, character and morality, as with an individual. In personal life, while a man's social stature and wealth

are important, more so are his lifestyle, personality and virtue. I do hope that soft power will be valued more not only in the international arena but also in our personal life.

In this context I feel that Japan needs to take the initiative in further promoting the basic values of the 21st century such as happiness, peace, culture, care for the environment, co-prosperity (i.e. generosity) and a sense of good morals.

To attain happiness, the first thing the country must do is to develop its economy and become rich enough to meet people's material needs. Japan has a sufficient supply of technologies to achieve this goal. It has the experience in postwar economic recovery and still retains its tradition. If we capitalize upon these assets and manufacture goods friendly to man and the environment in large quantities, things will surely start looking up for the current troubled economy of Japan.

Japan's development of robots is a good example of human-friendly technology and its energy conservation is one of its environment-friendly initiatives. The Japanese economy will hopefully improve further in order to achieve a higher standard of living for not only our own people but also all men and women in Africa, Asia and the rest of the world.

Since the end of the war with the U.S., Japan's aspirations towards peace have been as strong as any country's in the world. We have learned a good lesson from that defeat. On the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the whole country devoutly prays for "No more war".

There is a world of difference in the desire to pursue peace between Japan and a certain country which on the one hand criticizes our government-approved textbook's depictions of the Second World War and on the other continues to expand its own armaments.

We do not hear the term 'Cultural Japan' as often as we used to during the postwar days; nevertheless, Japan has a rich culture of which it can boast to the world. Of international renown are industrial goods such as automobiles and electrical appliances, *judo*, *karate*, *sumo* wrestling, *kabuki* (Japanese classical dance drama), *noh* (Japanese classical musical drama), *kyogen* (Japanese classical comic drama), Japanese traditional drums, *shamisen* (a three-stringed musical instrument), *shakuhachi* (a bamboo vertical flute), *manga*, animation movies, *karaoke*, *sushi*, and so on. There are many other Japanese cultural traditions little known abroad. I am sure readers will agree with me on the need to make more effort to introduce them to the world.

Japan managed to escape from abject poverty in the postwar days and achieved a high growth of economy in the 1960s to become the second largest economy in the world. Its economic success was acclaimed as "Japan as No. 1" in the

1970s. During this period Japan faced many challenges including environmental pollution and the first energy crisis in 1973. In its fight with these problems, Japan has emerged as a world leader in developing cutting-edge technologies for environmental preservation and energy conservation. It goes without saying that still more efforts must be directed towards these fields.

Japanese magnanimity to other nations is a valuable trait. Every day, somewhere in the world, battles go on between different religious or ethnic groups. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all monotheistic. Even if they try to make peace, they insist that their own religion should prevail and will not budge an inch towards the others. It should be noted that the Japanese as a whole are broad-minded as regards religion. The Japanese observe funerals at Buddhist temples, they go to the Shinto shrine at the beginning of the year and when they feel the need, and they celebrate Christmas at Christmas time. Moreover, the Japanese traditionally show deference to foreigners.

The Japanese have virtuous characteristics. They are amiable, gentle, kind, reserved and considerate. Traditionally, they respect grace and morality. *Giri ninjo* (justice and humanity) is of utmost importance to them. The crime rate in Japan is still quite low as compared to the rest of the world.

Today, it is true that crimes are reported almost every day in Japan. In fact, felonies such as murders and rapes are committed by men and women, young and old – an unimaginable situation just a few decades ago.

However, according to ICPO statistics, the crime rate (the number of reported crimes per 100,000 persons) from 2001 to 2003 was 9.34 in UK, 7.96 in Germany, 6.67 in France, 4.16 in the U.S. and an impressive 2.30 in Japan. Oman had only 0.42 during the same three-year period.

If we judge by such key standards as happiness, peace, culture, environmental concern, co-prosperity (i.e. generosity) and morality, Japan and the Japanese command respect from the rest of the world.

I tell myself that no country on earth would venture to try to expel Japan from the world by barbaric means such as war as long as it remains a world leader in these areas of key values. Its efforts in this direction should in my view be the best defense measure for the country.

Oman would be a good partner for Japan when it sets out on the road toward the said goal. The Sultan of Oman has been strenuously forging ahead with the Renaissance in pursuit of his people's happiness.

The two important pillars of Oman's diplomacy are peaceful coexistence and a policy of goodwill towards its neighbors. Omanis have deep sympathy with the devastation of atomic-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Regarding

environmental issues. In the 1970s the government, which has long been committed to protecting the Arabian oryx, sea turtles and certain birds in special sanctuaries, enacted certain environment-related laws.

The spirit of understanding and forgiving others has been Oman's tradition. Historically, Oman has been a maritime power and the people have an international field of vision. The Omanis and Japanese share similar feelings and values.

Oman will be a good travel companion for Japan throughout the 21st century.

To develop a closer relationship, I believe the most important thing is to broaden human exchange. More frequent mutual visits by royal family members and leading politicians are requested. I hope the business relationship and grassroots exchange between the two nations will also develop more strongly. Among other means of contact, an exchange of youths through 'The Ship for World Youth' and student associations, and an increase in the numbers of Omani and Japanese students in each other's country are expected.

I sincerely hope our relationship will be deepened.

Additional Chapter: Arabia and Japan

While I was collecting information regarding the exchange of people, commodities and culture between Japan and Oman, I came to learn a bit about the same between Japan and Arabia as a whole. I will describe what I have discovered topic by topic in this chapter.

1. Human Exchange

Kotaro Yamaoka

Kotaro Yamaoka was the first Japanese to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. According to his *Arabia Judanki* (Travelogue across Arabia), he boarded a Nippon Yusen ship at Moji, Japan, on 4th October 1909 and arrived at Tuticorin in India via Shanghai, Hong Kong, Pinang and Colombo. From there he travelled by train to Madras and Bombay. He arrived at Bombay on 1st November and soon converted to Islam in preparation for a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Joined by Abdul Rashid, a Russian of Tartar extraction living in Samarkand, and a Qing (Chinese) gentleman, he set off on a voyage from Bombay on 20th November and arrived at Jedda via Aden on December 10th.

Yamaoka was the first recorded Japanese visitor to Jedda. He described his visit as follows:

Looking at the port of Jedda some distance from the ship, I saw only tall towers and buildings standing in the desert, where not a tree or a blade of grass grew. Watching white waves breaking on the white sands, I felt as if I were visiting some dignitary's villa. Moving my eyes beyond the port and farther into the town, I saw a white four or five-storey tower built precariously of piles of uneven rocks. Its walls were decorated with limestone but there was nothing decorative or pleasing in its appearance. At first, I felt as if I were observing some ruins...The streets looked equally forlorn. Rubbish was piled up high on the roads and most of the goods displayed at the stores looked discoloured and rotten...However, hundreds of Muslims walked busily on the streets as if an endless piece of cloth were being woven. A countless number of camels were seen standing and lying here and there on the streets and, strangely, many coffee stores and tea rooms stood on the roadsides...The whole town was in a complete shambles. [1]

Yamaoka proceeded to Mecca and visited the Kaaba Mosque, Safa, Marwa Arafat, Muzdalifah and Mina. After this pilgrimage he journeyed to Medina. On his way there he suffered from sunstroke. In Arafat he was so feverish and dizzy that, "Much to my regret", he wrote, "I could not climb Mercy Mountain."

[2] From Medina he traveled by rail to Tabuk, Damascus and Beirut. Then, by sea, he extended his trip to include Turkey.

Following an introduction by his advisor, with whom Yamaoka had gotten acquainted during his stay in Saudi Arabia, he had an audience with the Sharif in Mecca on 14th December 1909. The Sharif was Hussein, thirty-eighth in the lineage of the distinguished Hashemite family which started with Ali, the fourth Caliph. He, as a descendant from an illustrious ancestry, was internationally recognized as an important figure, being the protector of the Holy Land. Even Turkey, the suzerain, paid due respect to him.

It is well known that, at Britain's repeated requests, Sharif Hussein instigated the Great Arab Revolt for independence. This was when Lawrence of Arabia rose to fame. The Arabs' struggle for independence started in 1916, a few years after Yamaoka's audience with the Sharif.

According to *Arabia Judanki*, Yamaoka wondered what to wear at the audience with Sharif Hussein, finally deciding to put on traditional Japanese clothes – a crested *haori* (hip-length kimono jacket), though it was a little old, a serge summer *kimono*, a *sendai hakama* (Japanese male skirt) and a pair of white Japanese socks. [3]

He described his impression of the Sharif thus:

The Sharif appeared to be in his sixties. He was ample-cheeked with a silvery grey mustache, self-composed and candid. I understood why 300 million Arabs worship him as a living God. Once you are in his company, you cannot help but respect him. [4]

He goes on to say,

The Sharif asked me to come closer and earnestly questioned me about the current situation of the victorious Japan. Perhaps his advisor had somewhat exaggerated his praise of Japan. Sharif observed me seriously and listened attentively. He appeared to show signs of deep admiration. I was the first Japanese that he had seen. Through my companion he sincerely thanked me for my visit and expressed his great pleasure in hearing about the country which had defeated Russia. [5]

Such reactions to Japan's victory in the Japanese-Russo War had been seen only in countries such as Persia, Turkey and Lebanon in the Middle East. Yamaoka's audience with the Sharif revealed for the first time how Arabs in the Gulf reacted to the news of this historic event. On 4th January 1910 Yamaoka had the honor of attending a dinner hosted by Sharif. He wore Arab clothes for this occasion. [6]

Ippei Tanaka

Ippei Tanaka was the second Japanese to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. He converted to Islam in China in January 1924 and performed the pilgrimage to Mecca in June of the same year. June is the hottest season in Arabia, and he wrote about his brutal experience in his book *Hakuun Yuki* (Pilgrim to Mecca) published in 1925:

Our travelling group had almost 70 men but most of them were sick. However, they kept performing daily rounds of prayer. Elderly men fell seriously ill. Three men died in half a month. I too suffered from a high fever. I as a proud Japanese man could not die by the roadside. I endured the ordeal. I put the white turban around my body and sprayed water on it. No medicine was available and garlic was the only alternative. I managed to survive. [7]

Shigetaka Shiga entered Oman in February 1924 and published a book entitled *Shirarezaru Kuniguni* (Unknown Countries) in November 1926. It was a coincidence that Shiga was on the east coast of the Arabian Gulf and Tanaka on the west coast at about the same time.

Masayuki Yokoyama

Shiga foresaw the importance of petroleum. He said, “In the future, countries with rich supplies of oil will prosper and those with no oil will perish.” He then stressed the need to pay serious attention to the treasure house of petroleum – the Middle East. In accordance with this belief he visited Oman and other Middle Eastern countries, as previously mentioned. He was a man of far vision.

Let me introduce another Japanese man who got involved with the Middle East in search of petroleum.

The Saudi Arabian minister to Britain came to Japan to attend the inauguration ceremony of an Islamic Mosque at Yoyogi, Tokyo, in 1938. In the same year, Saudi Arabia happened to make the first oil discovery. The minister said to the Japanese government that his country would be happy to accommodate Japan's requirements if it wanted to acquire petroleum interests in Saudi Arabia. In response to this offer, the Japanese government dispatched Masayuki Yokoyama, then minister to Egypt, to Saudi Arabia to open negotiations in 1939.

Yokoyama, accompanied by a geologist and an interpreter, had an audience with King Ibn Saud, known as the ‘Leopard of the Desert’, in March of the same year. He started negotiations regarding oil concessions with the King's Chief Secretary, who was also the head of the Political Bureau.

The negotiations failed, and there are numerous stories and analyses of America's

reactions to the proposed deal, King Ibn Saud's real intention and the positions of Italy and Germany. It was at a time only two years before the start of the Pacific War. Petroleum was a lifeline for Japan and therefore its guaranteed supply was imperative. If Yokoyama's negotiations had been successful, the history of Japan since then surely would have been entirely different.

Yokoyama and his aides were the first Japanese visitors to Riyadh. Incidentally, a prince of Yemen and his aides also attended the inauguration ceremony of the Yoyogi Mosque.

Taro Yamashita and Shigeru Sugimoto

Needless to say, Taro Yamashita was the founder of the Arabian Oil Company. He won fame as 'Arabia Taro'. In 1956 he incorporated the Japan Petroleum Trading Company in cooperation with Kanji Wada, the President of the Maruzen Oil Company. He first planned to develop oil exploration in Indonesia through this company but had to give up the idea because of the instability of the country, which was plagued by civil wars.

Then, quite unexpectedly, an oil development project in Saudi Arabia was brought to his attention. Yamashita staked his fate on this chance. He overcame a great number of difficulties at home and abroad, won the race with foreign competitors and at long last executed the concession agreement with the government of Saudi Arabia in December 1957, followed by one with the government of Kuwait in June 1958. In February 1958 he established the Arabian Oil Company, which took over the exploratory interests from the Japan Petroleum Trading Company.

Soon after the exploration commenced a fire broke out in the field, but in January 1960 the first well hit oil. About a year later, in April 1961, the first tanker carrying Khafji crude oil arrived at the Mizushima refinery of Nippon Mining. Yamashita was then 72 years old.

It was true that Saudi Arabia wanted to reduce the concentration of its interests with U.S. firms and to expand the list of concessionaires. However, it should be remembered that underlying Saudi's decision were its respect and admiration for Japan's victory in the Japanese-Russo War, a good fight against the invincible Americans for more than three years and a speedy economic recovery after the end of the Pacific War.

It is also worthy of special mention that in the tough negotiations the clincher was the mutual trust developed between the Japanese team of Yamashita and Takashi Hayashi (his interpreter, who later became a senior managing director of the Arabian Oil Company) and the host governments' representatives Saudi Oil Minister, Ahmed Zaki Yamani and Prince Fahad of Kuwait.

Incidentally, the oil concessions to which Yamashita had devoted all his energies expired in February 2002. The stumbling block in the renewal negotiations was the required construction of railways in Saudi Arabia. In retrospect, Japan made a grave mistake. The estimated investment in the railway project was a few billion dollars. Considering the sharp surge of oil prices since then, Japan would have recovered the entire outlay in two or three years. This misjudgment was a costly one.

While China was building up its presence in the Arabian Peninsula, Japan lost an important diplomatic foothold. It is painfully regrettable that Japan not only betrayed Saudi Arabia's trust, which Yamashita and others had gained after their laborious efforts, but even invited its contempt.

Shigeru Sugimoto successfully acquired exploratory interests in Abu Dhabi. Upon hearing from Kiyoharu Tanaka in 1967 of interesting prospects for Japan's participation in an oil concession in Abu Dhabi, Sohei Nakayama, then president of the Industrial Bank of Japan, completed the groundwork for a partnership including Maruzen Oil, Daikyo Oil and Nippon Mining and gave Shigeru Sugimoto carte blanche authorization to negotiate with the Government of Abu Dhabi.

Earlier, Sugimoto had assumed collective management responsibility for the financial troubles which Maruzen Oil, was suffering from and had resigned from the post of Deputy President. He was unemployed when Nakayama asked him to come up to Tokyo to see him. In fact, he was said to be purifying himself spiritually by sitting in the torrents of the Nachi Waterfall when the call came in.

He rushed to Tokyo and happily accepted the offer. By the end of that year he had flown to Abu Dhabi several times and finally brought the negotiations with the Government of Abu Dhabi to fruition. He signed a concession agreement in December of the same year. Sheikh Zayed, the then Ruler, congratulated him, saying, "I am so happy to have concluded an agreement with a country in the East for the first time in our history. I will do everything possible to help you. Good luck!" The Ruler too was pro-Japan.

Drilling started in May 1969 and oil was found in August. The first tanker carrying Mubarraz crude sailed for the Chiba refinery of Maruzen Oil in June 1973.

Establishment of diplomatic relations

Japan recognized Saudi Arabia in 1955 and Kuwait in 1961. It recognized further UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman all in 1971 and Yemen in 1990 after the North and the South were unified into one nation.

I have already talked about the opening of Japanese embassies in these countries.

A Japanese embassy was inaugurated in Istanbul, Turkey as early as 1925. It was the first Japanese embassy in the Middle East. In Egypt, a consulate was opened in Port Said in 1919, a general consulate in Alexandria in 1926 and a legation in Cairo in 1936. Iran came next with a legation in Tehran in 1929, then Lebanon with a consulate in Beirut in 1937 and Iraq with a legation in Baghdad in 1939.

Friendship Associations

The first Japanese friendship association in the Arabian Peninsula was the Japan-Saudi Arabia Society, incorporated in 1960, followed by the Kuwait-Japan Society in 1965, the Oman-Japan Friendship Society in 1973, the UAE-Japan Friendship Society in 1974, the Qatari-Japanese Friendship Society in 1976, the Yemen-Japan Friendship Association and the Bahrain-Japan Friendship Society, both in 1996.

Japanese diet members have established Parliamentary Friendship Groups with each of the Arabian nations.

Visits to Japan of Heads of State

The first postwar visit to Japan by the head of an Arab state was made by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia in 1971. Sheikh Zayed, President of the UAE, came to Japan in 1990, Sheikh Isa, Ruler of Bahrain, in 1991, Sheikh Jaber, Ruler of Kuwait, in 1995, Sheikh Kalifa and Hamad, Rulers of Qatar, in 1984 and 1999 respectively and President Saleh of Yemen in 1999.

2. Exchange of Commodities

From the Meiji period to the Second World War

Kotaro Yamaoka made a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1909 and wrote in his book *Arabia Judanki*:

Commerce and industry in Mecca is in a fledgling and deplorable state. Japanese businesses could do very little here under the circumstances. I saw some Arab families who love Japanese chinaware, especially tea-sets, and thin silk clothes. I was told that they had come via Chinese and Indian merchants. [8]

Japan's exchange of products with the west coast of the Arabian Peninsula seems to have been similar to that with its east coast, which I explained earlier. It was only during the First World War that Japan started exporting cotton products and other commodities to this region on a large scale, as was the case with the east coast.

In his book *Arabia Kikou* (A Trip to Arabia) Eijiro Nakano, who accompanied

Masayuki Yokoyama as interpreter, wrote about his visit to a souk in Riyadh:

I went to the souk... and saw in the fabric stores many silk and rayon fabrics for sale, rolled as well as hanging from a rail. Most of the fabrics were made in Japan and some even carried Japanese firms' labels. [9]

File No.2-68C (1943) of the Toa Research Institute describes Yemen's trade, "During 1927-1928 Yemen exported coffee, animal skins, straw bags and mats, and imported sugar, flour, rice, spices, fabrics, drugs, soaps, matches and kerosene." [10]

It also says that Britain exported 40% of fabrics imported into Yemen and Japan 20%. Italy exported 50% of imported matches and Japan 25%. The same report states that the exports in 1936 were coffee, animal skins, cottons, henna and grains, while the imports were sugar, flour, starch, rice, soaps, fabrics, cement and kerosene. It has no details of these by country. [11]

Postwar trade

Saudi Arabia was the first Arab country to resume trade with Japan after the Pacific War. Imports from this country began in 1946 and exports from Japan in the following year. Japan resumed exports to Kuwait in 1949 and imports from the country in 1954. As earlier mentioned, Japan's exports to Oman started in 1949, in the same year as to Kuwait, and its imports began in 1954. Trade with the UAE and Qatar commenced in 1972 after they were founded.

Current trade relationships between Arabia and Japan

According to JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) statistics, Japan's trade with Arab countries was as shown in Table 8 "2010 Trade with Arabia". Japan's imports for the year totaled US\$102.407 million and exports US\$20,305 million, showing an excess of imports of US\$82.102 million. [12]

Globally, China accounts for 22.1% of Japan's total imports, with the U.S. ranking second with 9.7% and Saudi Arabia fourth with 5.2%. The total imports from all Arabian countries combined ranks the second after China. Needless to say, oil is a predominant import from this region.

On the other hand, 19.4% of Japan's total exports were to China, followed by 15.4% to the U.S. and 8.1% to Korea. Japan's exports to Arabian countries as a whole were 3.6%, greater than the respective percentages to the Netherlands, Britain, Australia, Malaysia, Russia, Indonesia and the Philippines. On an individual country basis, Japan's exports to the UAE equalled those to Russia and were bigger than those to France and Italy, while exports to Saudi Arabia were nearly equal to them.

By products, transport equipment such as automobiles accounts for nearly 60% of Japan's exports to Arabian countries, followed by household electrical appliances, oil pipes and machine tools. Considering the expected high rate of population growth in the region, the importance of Arab countries as a promising market will only increase.

Table 8 2010 Trade between Japan and Arab countries				
Country	Imports		Exports	
	US\$:million	%Japan total	US\$:million	%Japan total
Kuwait	10,250	1.5	1,414	0.2
Saudi Arabia	35,763	5.2	6,459	0.8
Bahrain	659	0.1	587	0.1
Qatar	21,627	3.1	1,137	0.1
UAE	29,183	4.2	7,306	1.0
Oman	4,496	0.7	3,104	0.4
Yemen	429	0.1	298	0.0
Total	102,407	14.9	20,305	2.6

3. Cultural Exchange

Arrival of one-humped camels

The camel has long been known in Japan. *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan) refers to the animal on many pages. The earliest written record of the camel in Japan was in the 7th year of the era of Empress Suiko or the year 599. It states, "Autumn, 9th Month, 1st day. Paekche [of Korea] sent a tribute of one camel, a donkey, two sheep and one white pheasant." [13] They must have come through Paekche and Goryeo of Korea, and the camel was assumed to be two-humped and of Mongolian origin.

The only 5-stringed *biwa* of Indian origin (an ancient rosewood lute inlaid with mother-of-pearl) existent in the world is stored at the Shosoin Treasure Repository as one of its prized items. On its surface a man is depicted playing the *biwa* on the back of a camel. It is a two-humped camel.

There are two kinds of camels, one-humped (Dromedary) and two-humped (Bactrian camel). The original habitat of the former is believed to be North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, while that of the latter is the deserts of Iran, Central Asia, Mongolia north of China and Turkmenistan.

Wakansansai-Zue, the first illustrated encyclopedia of Japan completed in 1712, describes the camel: "The animal has a head like that of the sheep, long nape of the neck and dangling ears, three-knuckled legs and two humps on the back

which look like a saddle. The hairs have a mixture of different shades of colours such as grey, brown, yellow and purple.” [14] This camel too must have been a two-humped camel.

When did the first one-humped camel come to Japan? It was not such a long time ago as you might imagine. A couple of male and female one-humped camels arrived at Nagasaki via a Dutch vessel in June 1821 as a present to the Tokugawa shogunate. The government did not accept them, and they were sold to an Osaka merchant.

Nagasaki Oranda Shokan Nikki (Diary of Nagasaki Dutch Trading House), vols. 9 and 10, details the development as follows:

Two one-humped camels, a four year-old female and five year-old male, were unloaded at Dejima, Nagasaki, on 29th July, 1821. They were brought to the Magistrate’s office on the 4th of August and the magistrate was very much satisfied to see them. I received two documents regarding the camels. The first one stated that the receipt of them was accepted by the then shogun and the second one explained that the reason why the camels were retained at Dejima for such a long time is that a large amount of transportation charges to Edo were incurred... [15]

I (the Head of the Dutch Trading House) have not been informed of any shogun’s decision until today, 20th April 1822, on the transportation of the camels. I complained to the Japanese interpreter on 2nd July 1822 that it had been almost one year since their arrival in Japan, that I had asked the shogun to accept the animals and that I would not be able to take responsibility for the huge loss if the animals happened to die...I was informed by the interpreter of the decision of the shogunate government on 9th July 1822 that there was no need to send the camels to Edo because of the high amount of transportation charges and that we would be allowed to sell them at Nagasaki...On 9th July I handed a letter to a Japanese interpreter asking him to get approval from the shogun for the sale...I got the letter of approval on 10th October 1822 and got on to the task...the camels were finally delivered to the buyer on 21st March 1823 through the interpreters and Japanese merchants dealing with the Trading House... [16]

They were shown all over the country by the buyer as an attraction of his travelling troupe.

After landing at Nagasaki, the camels arrived in Osaka via the western part of Japan and were exhibited at shows in Nanba-shinchi in Osaka. From there the troupe performed in western Japan and Shikoku Island and then returned to Wakayama, where the feudal lord of Kishu came to see the show. The camels moved eastwards from Kishu and arrived at Itabashi, now a part of Tokyo,

overland via Nakasendo, which was a main road that connected Kyoto to Edo, the present-day Tokyo. It was recorded that a great number of spectators went to see the camels. The shows at Ryogoku in Edo were an unprecedented success.

The show was advertized with exaggerated praise. The camel's urine was said to be a wonder drug for eczema and its hairs a preventive medicine for smallpox. The camels were affectionate to each other, and it was said that the couple who watched them would be blessed with a happy marriage. People flocked to see them from the four corners of the city to get these divine favours. They even thought that the camels' legs, which bent at three points, were a sign of good fortune.

The camels toured the eastern provinces and arrived at Owari-Ichinomiya via Echizen and Kaga. In 1826 the troupe gave shows in Nagoya and moved on to Okazaki, the city now called Toyota, Ise and Iga-Ueno. They then travelled to Sendai and were believed to have visited locations along the north-east trunk road. The camels finally died of extreme cold while touring the Tohoku district. There was no reliable written record of their journey, but it seems to have lasted for more than ten years, extending throughout the country. [17]

Where did they come from? A caption in *A Picture Book of Birds and Animals Brought to Japan by a Dutch Ship* in the possession of Keio University says "Four years old, brought to Japan from Mecca, Arabia by a Dutch vessel". The first one-humped camels in the history of Japan were picked up by a Dutch ship which called at Aden and arrived in Japan via Batavia.

Introduction of coffee to Japan

The coffee plant originated from the highlands in the district of Kaffa, Ethiopia, situated in the north-eastern part of Africa, and Ethiopians would eat *bonn*, the beans of the coffee plant, as they did other grains, by simmering them. The beans were then brought to Arabian countries where *bonn* was called *bun*.

Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi (865-925), a well-known physician who worked in Baghdad, found that *bunchum*, soup made by simmering *bonn*, can be drinkable and good for the stomach. Documents referring to *bunchum*, from which coffee originated still remain and are the oldest written record of coffee in the world.

In the Islamic societies, where drinking alcoholic beverages is prohibited, people loved the energizing effect of *bunchum*. As the original coffee enjoyed growing popularity, the name *bunchum* changed into *kaffa*, named after a liquor, and later *kafee*, which is the etymology of the English word coffee.

Coffee was introduced to Turkey in the early 16th century and then reached Western Europe through the hands of Venetian merchants in the 17th century.

The first coffee shop in Europe opened in Venice, Italy in the first half of the latter century. Before the start of the 18th century, coffee drinking had spread almost all over the Western world.

Around the beginning of the 18th century, a Dutch ship brought coffee to Japan for the Dutch staying at Nagasaki, approximately 1,000 kilometers from Edo. At that time the Netherlands was the only European country allowed by the Tokugawa shogunate to trade with Japan. The first coffee beans shipped to Japan were Mocha, named after the port in South Yemen which was the most prosperous trading spot in Arabia in those days.

After the shogunate collapsed in 1868 the Meiji Government permitted merchants to import coffee beans freely, which enabled ordinary Japanese to have the chance to drink coffee. Up until then, the beverage was served to selected Japanese people such as government officials and doctors at the Dutch Trading House. [18]

When coffee was introduced to Japan it was far from popular. People said it tasted bitter and burnt. However, about one hundred years later, when Philipp Franz Balthasar von Siebold, a German doctor, came to Nagasaki and worked at the Dutch Trading House, there already existed coffee lovers in Japan. [19]

Import of dates

For the Arabs, the date, like the camel, represents their tradition and culture.

Date fruits grow on a palm in the genus *Phoenix* whose provenance is believed to be the Arabian Gulf region. The fruit, oval and two or three centimetres long, contains seeds inside. You eat dates raw or dried. They taste like dried persimmons, popular fruits in Japan. The date fruit is rich with fibers (about 8%) and natural sugar (70%). It has no fat but contains proteins (2.4%), eleven kinds of minerals and seven kinds of vitamins. Very nutritious, it is an ideal food.

The author says: “The Bedouin, the desert people, have lived only on date fruits and camel milk and survived the relentless environment of the desert for thousands of years, weaving a part of the history of mankind. It is understandable why local people call the date tree ‘the tree of life.’”

It is said that the date tree spread westwards from Mesopotamia to North Africa including Morocco and further to Spain, and eastwards from Iran to Pakistan and India. It was introduced to the American continent from Spain, and now you can see date trees growing in Arizona and California. [20]

When did the Japanese come to know of the date? I have already written about the camel painted on the five-stringed rosewood *biwa*, an old Japanese lute

stored in the Shosoin Treasure Repository. A date tree was drawn above the camel and this was probably the first image of the date tree our people saw.

Petro Kibe landed at Muscat in 1619 and journeyed to Jerusalem via Iran, Iraq and Syria. Undoubtedly he ate dates during his trip but no written records remain to confirm this.

Later publications such as *Zoho Kai Tsusho-ko* (Supplementary Studies on Trade with China and Other Foreign Countries), and *Wakansansai-Zue* (Comprehensive Encyclopedia) deal with various products from abroad, but neither work makes reference to the date or anything like it. The former has the word 'palm' in the chapter "15 Provinces of China and Other Countries" but it must have been the coconut tree, not the date tree. *Seiyo Kibun*, a report on foreign matters as testified by an Italian missionary, makes no mention of the date either. Probably the first written reference to the date in Japan was made by some members of the Japanese government delegation to Europe. They stopped in Aden and saw and ate the fruit en route to Europe toward the end of the *shogunate* government. [21]

In the Meiji period, Nobuyoshi Furukawa stated "I have seen some date trees in Muscat" when he wrote about the current situation with the country. [22] Masaharu Yoshida also mentioned in the chapter "Muscat" of his book that "After the steamship *Hiei* arrived there, the crew received a gift of a cow, four sheep, dates and grapes from the Sultan". He used the Japanese words, which are phonetically the same as 'dates'. [23]

When did the first date fruits come to Japan in commercial quantities? The imports after the war started from the U.S in 1949. The initial quantities were small, about 10 to 50 tons a year, but importation continued almost every year. In 1951 Iraq, China and Hong Kong joined the U.S. as exporters, although China and Hong Kong must have been transit shippers.

In the late 1950s Japan was compelled to buy dates from Iraq. Japan had imported practically nothing except petroleum and Iraq made a strong appeal to expand the list of Japan's import items. To comply with this request, Japan sent a delegation to Iraq to study what items to add. After thorough research, it decided to import dates from Iraq, with the exception of those for liquor distillation. The exception was to protect the domestic liquor manufacturers. This is believed to have been the first date importation in commercial quantities after the war.

Statistics show that date imports in around 1951 were small and sporadic but that the quantity soared from 1959 onwards. The annual imports in 1957 were slightly below 50 tons, but the figures jumped to over 2,300 tons in the next year, over 5,000 tons in 1960, nearly 9,000 tons in 1965 and over 9,300 tons in 1967, reaching an all-time high.

During those days date fruits were popular and in great demand as a replacement for sugar, which was quite expensive. However, the boom soon ended because the price relationship was reversed and the use of dates severely curtailed. The imports plummeted. Even though the market made a complete turnaround, a company called Otafuku Sauce Ltd. headquartered in Hiroshima continued to import date fruits after 1976 under the slogan “Natural taste from a natural gift”. Otafuku sauce is one of the key ingredients in cooking *okonomiyaki*, a savory Japanese pancake containing a variety of ingredients. The firm has been using the sweet and nutritious date fruits in the manufacture of its famed sauce. In 2007 Japan imported 919 tons, of which Iran and Pakistan were the main suppliers.

Date trees are found in Japan as well. It is reported that a big date palm grows by the gate to Yasutomi Elementary School along State Highway 58 in Onnason, Okinawa. It was planted in the Taisho period and is the oldest date tree in Okinawa. Few date trees in Okinawa bear fruit, but every year fruit grows on the date palms outside the Kagoshima Tropical Botanical Garden in Kagoshima Prefecture.

In Japan dates are consumed mainly in the making of *shochu*, a white liquor, sauces and vinegars, but very little of the raw fruit is eaten. In recent years cake and jelly makers have started using dates. As the fruits are quite nutritious, I hope they will find more uses in Japan.

I eat a few dates every morning, though with cow’s milk instead of camel milk, which is hard to get in Japan. And I am amused with myself at the idea of taking the same kind of breakfast as the Bedouins do in Arabia.

Vegetables and fruits

From *Shin Shokuhin Jiten* (New Encyclopedia on Foods) compiled by Tomomi Kawano, I have learnt that of the vegetables which we believe are native to Japan there are, surprisingly, a large number with their origins in Arabia or its vicinity.

Let us first consider vegetables. The okura has its origin in north-eastern Africa, the burdock in the districts along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea to West Asia, the field pea in the southern European countries along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and the southern parts of the Caucasus and Iran, the broad bean in North Africa (large-sized) and Central Asia (small-sized), the Japanese white radish in the areas from the Caucasus to Palestine, the carrot in the areas from Europe to North Africa and farther off in Central Asia, the garlic in Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, the spinach in Iran, the lotus root in India and the cucumber in north-western India. [24] Amazing!

Turning to fruits, we find that the sesame has its roots in Africa, the almond in West Africa and Jordan along the Mediterranean shore, the pomegranate

in Iran and the fig in southern Arabia. Some walnuts are native to Japan, but the walnut which originated in Persia is believed to have been introduced first to China via Central Asia in about the 4th century and then to Japan through China and the Korean Peninsula during the mid Edo period. [25]

How about grains? It is presumed that wheat and barley are traceable to the areas encompassing south-western Iran, Mesopotamia, Turkey and Palestine. [26]

On spices, saffron is believed to have originated in Asia Minor, [27] but Iran and Spain are now famous for this spice. The clove, which is called *choji* in Japanese, seems to have its origin in the Maluku Islands, Indonesia. [28] Arabian merchants engaged in Indian Ocean trade delivered the clove to Zanzibar in East Africa in about 1818 and the country is now a major world producer of the spice. I have already mentioned that Sultan Said the Great aggressively promoted the growth of the clove.

Introduction of Islam to Japan

What is the population of Muslims living in Japan?

Keiko Sakurai wrote in her book entitled *Nihon no Musurimu Shakai* (The Muslim Community in Japan) that about 70,000 Muslims lived in Japan, of whom about 60,000 were foreigners and 10,000 were Japanese as of the end of the year 2000. She said that it was just a matter of time before this number increased to 100,000. [29]

The number of expatriate workers from Islamic countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran has kept growing since the mid 1980s. Of the Japanese Muslims, most are men who converted to Islam when they worked, went to university or studied Arabic in these countries. However, it is noteworthy that in recent years an increasing number of Japanese women have become Muslim through marriage to Muslim men.

There are three fair-sized mosques in Tokyo and one in Kobe. Commensurate with the rapid increase in Muslim foreigners living in rural areas, many smaller mosques are springing up. [30]

Let us take a look at the development of Japan's relationship with Islam.

The first written reference to Islam in Japan was made in Hakuseki Arai's book *Seiyo Kibun* (Records of the West), according to Hideaki Sugita who authored a book entitled *Nihonjin no Chuto Hakken* (Findings Regarding the Middle East Influence on Japan). The Iwanami edition of the book states: "There are three kinds of religious believers in this part of the world. They are Christians, Heathens (pagans or polytheists) and Magometans. The last kind are the

followers of the Mughal religion and includes peoples in Africa and Turkey. I believe Mughal is what the Chinese call Islam.” [31]

As for books on Islam during the Meiji period, Tadasu Hayashi translated and published *Mahometto Den* (The Life of Prophet Muhammed) in 1876. He was then an ordinary diplomat but later became Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The first Japanese to convert to Islam was Shotaro Noda, a reporter for the *Jiji Shimpo* newspaper.

In 1890 the frigate *Ertugrul* of Ottoman Turkey capsized and sank near the Kashinozaki Light House in southern Wakayama. Noda visited Istanbul in January 1891 to deliver donations collected by the newspaper company, and converted to Islam, taking the name Abdul Harim.

The above is based on an article by Nobuo Misawa, an Associate Professor at Toyo University, published in the Annals of the Japan Association for Middle Eastern Studies in July 2007. He declared that it was a mistake that Torajiro Yamada had been introduced as the first Japanese Muslim. [32]

Misawa asserts that it was in April 1892 that Torajiro Yamada, also linked with Turkey through the collection of donations for the frigate *Ertugrul*, converted, and that Noda, who had already been to Istanbul, helped Yamada both publicly and privately.

As I have already mentioned, Kotaro Yamaoka was the first Japanese to visit Saudi Arabia and make a pilgrimage to Mecca. The first Japanese translation of the Holy Koran was made and published by Kenichi Sakamoto in 1920.

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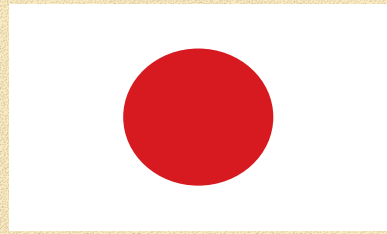
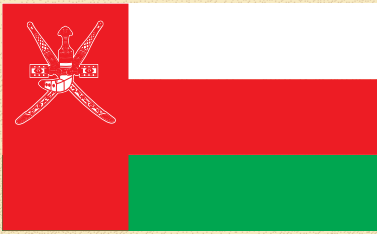
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Sultanate of Oman



Japan





Sultan Taimur told me: “You are most welcome to Oman. Do you not consider Arabia and Japan as both part of Asia? Europeans are supposed to deal with the issues concerning Europe. We are to address our own issues within Asia. Why should not the Japanese come to Arabia as soon as possible? If you could promote closer friendship and improve and revitalise Arabia by coming here to do business and develop industry here, our peoples could both achieve great things.”

I replied: “What you have suggested is precisely what I had wished to propose to you and your people on behalf of Japan. I will do my utmost to convey your wishes in detail to the people of Japan”.

(Excerpt from ‘Unknown Countries’ written by Shigetaka Shiga who had been given an audience with Sultan Taimur in 1924.)

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