

REVIEWS

MODERNIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC SOCIETY

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- Chūtō no Kindaika to Isuramu-kyō* (Modernization in the Middle East and Islam), a monograph by Hajime Kobayashi, 1961, 220 pp.
Arabu Shokoku no Shakai Keizai Kikō (Socio-Economic Structure of Arab Countries), edited by Shinji Maejima, 1961, 330 pp.
Indonesia no Seiji Shakai Kōzō (Politico-Economic Structure of Indonesia), edited by Yoichi Itagaki, 1961, 283 pp.

“The Islamic society” is a concept which I use sometimes with certain doubts about its validity. The term has been applied indiscriminately to those societies where an overwhelming sector of religious belief is Islamic. In this sense, such countries as Indonesia in Southeast Asia, and Guinea and Nigeria in West Africa are also “Islamic societies”. After making a tour in these areas, however, I have found neither in Southeast Asia nor in West Africa that any pressing problem has been raised as to whether Islam would be a deterrent to the modernization of those societies. On the other hand, the problem of modernizing Islam has been of great importance in the Middle East, and Arab countries in particular.

Identifying this problem of Islam and modernization as the key issue, I will give an outline of, and some personal comments on, the three reports of the Institute of Asian Economic Affairs as listed above. In so doing, I should hasten to add that my discussion will be somewhat one-sided, for I shall concentrate on the issue I have mentioned. In the interest of those students of the subject who would read these publications of the Institute, similarly aware of the issue, I may expediently take up for discussion, first of all, *Chūtō no Kindaika to Isuramu-kyō* (Modernization in the Middle East and Islam) by Mr. Kobayashi.

I

This volume comprises seven chapters: 1. “An Outline of Islam”, 2. “*Shariat* (Islamic code) and Realities”, 3. Religious Systems Particular to Islam”, 4. “Commandments of Islam”, 5. “Examples of Modern Reform”, 6. “The Sense of Solidarity in Islam and Nationalism”, and 7. “Is Islam a Deterrent to Modernization?”. As these chapter headings would indicate, the present work is meant to be an inquiry into Islam itself, and not so much into modernization in the Middle East. In this connection, it would have been better titled “Islam and Modernization in the Middle East”.

Still, such a study as this in which Islam has been taken up as the

central subject will provide a very useful as well as convenient reference for those of us who are apt to discuss the modernization of the area without having much knowledge of Islam. Mr. Kobayashi especially is the best possible person to study the subject because he has behind him many years of research in this field and, in recent years, has travelled extensively in the vast Islamic area ranging from Morocco to West Pakistan and even to Soviet Turkistan.

What Mr. Kobayashi has intended to grasp is obvious when he says, "I would like to grope for and discover an answer to the question of whether or not Islam means a 'closed religion' rejecting modernization". (p. 25) He thinks that, to answer the question, it is necessary to "go back historically to the fundamentals of Islam", and he elucidates the religion at length in Chapters 2 to 4. Although the limited space does not permit a review of the author's description in great detail, one point he makes at the outset is too significant to be omitted. He says that the gap between the *Shariat* and the realities of life was filled for the first time by the adoption of *Kanun* (common law) in the Osman Turkish Empire. The adoption of *Kanun* meant, as Mr. Kobayashi points out, that Islam was adapted to the historical and local circumstances in Turkey, (p. 29) and that the *Shariat* was connected with European codes.

The question of how the *Shariat* was adapted to such circumstances would have been better answered, I should feel, if it had been viewed in a closer relationship with the discussion of Chapter 5, "Examples of Modern Reform". The author takes the rise of the sect of *Wahhâbiya* as an example. He makes the point that the *Wahhâbiya* wanted to restore Islam to its original qualities, and to champion rigid orthodoxy. He writes: "This was the first case of a modern Islamic reformist movement that successfully secured political ground". (p. 116) This is true, but the *Wahhâbiya* as a reformist movement was in essence a movement to purify Islam and revive its antique values in order better to resist Turkish rule under which the *Shariat* was connected with European codes. Apart from the question of how such a movement was related to modernization, the movement must be regarded above all as a political movement which sought to elevate Islam to the level of, so to speak, a super-tribal and national morality, thereby mobilizing the people against "the adaptation of Islam to the historical and local circumstances". Unless this point is grasped accurately, the historical significance of those militant orders of neo-Wahabism which, as Mr. Kobayashi observes, grew very powerful afterwards in India, Libya, Algeria, and Indonesia, would not be fully explained.

Viewed in this light, the *Wahhâbiya* represented in essence revivalism and was alien to the idea of modernization or reforming Islam. Yet, for the very reason that it was a political movement of such character, it could be useful, and actually played a strange but historical role as the guiding principle of nationalism, a fact to which one should perhaps attach greater importance than the author does.

Now, the Islamic nation-state, the establishment of which the political movement of the *Wahhâbiya* urged, was more of a pre-modern mode of

theocracy, which united the religion and the state power, than any nation-state aimed at by many political movements in the modern period. Accordingly, when it had completed its role in modernization as an "initial explosive" or "accelerator" of nationalism, the political movement of the *Wahhâbiya* began to expose its actual pre-modern and reactionary nature.

Thus all questions concerning the modernization of Islam come to concentrate on the issue of abolishing the Islamic mode of theocracy. In this connection, Mr. Kobayashi gives a very suggestive and detailed account, based on the example of the revolution led by Kemal Atatürk in Turkey. He also emphasizes that the tendency toward secularization, which began to appear among the Arabs, was by no means opposed to Islam. But on the other hand, drawing his conclusions from the examples of Soviet Turkistan, he writes: "If a powerful leader seizes power on a platform of 'anti-religion' or 'secularization', the political and economic systems of Islam will quickly disintegrate and the Islamic customs will be swept away all too soon by the wave of modernization". (p. 205)

Mr. Kobayashi's conclusion will be seen in the following extract: "The question as to whether Islam is a deterrent to modernization has been a subject of much discussion, simply because 'the riddle of Islam' is yet to be solved. This 'riddle' is, in brief, one relating to the way of living in the 'climate of the dry desert'. Until a unique formula of modernization suitable for the 'climate of the dry desert' can be worked out under a powerful, stable government, that riddle cannot be solved. Or more accurately, 'the riddle of Islam' has not yet actually been discovered". (p. 216)

All these lead to the conclusion that Mr. Kobayashi could not but regard Islam as a deterrent to modernization in the Middle East. Keeping this in mind, we may turn to the second of our studies which deals with the socio-economic structure of Arab countries which, so to speak, constitute the core of the Islamic world, and its relations with Islam.

II

Arabu Shokoku no Shakai Keizai Kikō (Socio-Economic Structure of Arab Countries) is a type of work which is completely different from Mr. Kobayashi's study of modernization and Islam in that it is the result of a joint study conducted by a group of scholars centred around Prof. Maejima and including Profs. Hiroshi Iwanaga and Shirō Tōmine, Mr. Yūzō Itagaki and myself, who had a share in the report. It comprises an introduction by Prof. Maejima who makes a survey of the nature of the Arab society; Chapter 1, "Conditions Restricting Modernization and their Solution" in which Prof. Iwanaga deals with tribalism and Prof. Tōmine Islamization; Chapter 2, "Factors Promoting Modernization" in which Prof. Iwanaga deals with problems relating to the development of agriculture and in which I set out to trace the shaping of nationalism; and Chapter 3, "Present Stage of Modernization Policy in the United Arab Republics" in which Mr. Itagaki analyzes recent developments in the UAR as typical examples of modernization.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, however, I must add a few words

to what I have stated about the joint study in which I was a participant. Although it was a joint study, the participants were not able to arrange enough chances for common discussion and coordination in the course of their research, let alone in the course of their writing. Accordingly, in approaching the problem of modernization, they were lacking in uniformity, and, as a result, those chapters arranged as listed above are also lacking in any common angle of view which could have given them consistency in discussion.

The section which I prepared was an attempt to review the role Islam played in the course of the formation of nationalism in the Arab World, and it has eventually become extraneous to other sections of the volume. Mr. Itagaki made a study on the actual conditions of modernization policy in the case of the United Arab Republic, in a manner closely related to my historical retrospect, while Profs. Maejima, Iwanaga, and Tōmine, though covering various aspects of actual modernization, do not probe deeply into the essential questions involved in modernization in the Islamic society.

At the same time, not a small part of my discussion on the shaping of Arab nationalism contains problems overlapping with those appearing in a part of Mr. Kobayashi's report referred to above. My study is, however, different in that, compared with Mr. Kobayashi who tried to answer the question of modernization keeping in close touch with, or even adhering to, Islam, I have sought to consider the modernization of the Islamic society in the formative period of nationalism, from a more or less detached position.

For instance, I referred to the comparison often made between the *Wahhâbiya* movement and Protestantism, and wrote: "This difference between Protestantism and Wahabism comes from the difference in the frame of mind which each of these religions produced, and it must be noted that, behind that, there were different economic factors, and hence different modes of production, which necessitated a reform of each religion. The economic factors which produced Protestantism can be sought in the development of new production forces which undermined the feudal mode of production, while the factors which produced Wahabism were not accompanied by such development of new production forces. Accordingly, while Protestantism emancipated humanity and fostered nationalism at the same time, Wahabism sought to achieve the unity of the Islamic society with the religious authority, not accompanied by any economic factors, but rather employing this quest for unity as its sole driving force." (p. 178)

It is true, insofar as it had the function of pulling isolated political units of small communities together in a larger political and economic arena, that Wahabism played a role in the modernization of the Islamic society. "But, the expansion of the Wahhâbi kingdom, which did not liberate man but enslaved him to the religion, had to be defeated by the Arab movement which sought modernization by absorbing the Western culture". (p. 178-79) Nevertheless, the Arab world, including both *Wahhâbiya* and Westernization movements, has been stagnant within the limitations of Islam itself. (p. 179-80) This stagnation certainly arose, for the most part, from Western colonialism.

In this context, it was my intention to explain how the colonial type of economic development such as the completion of the Suez Canal and the

growing of cotton, as well as the development of oil fields, brought about the partition of the Arab world by colonial powers and how this impeded the modernization of this area. Also, in comparison with the case of Indonesia, I have noticed the fact that the revolution now taking place in the United Arab Republics and other countries cannot play the role of modernization to the full because of the uneven development among the countries thus partitioned.

III

Indonesia no Seiji Shakai Kōzō (Politico-Social Structure of Indonesia) is the result of a joint study, too, and is comparable to the "Socio-Economic Structure of Arab Countries" I have just brought under review. Although the former work on Indonesia had some of the weaknesses characteristic of any joint study in common with the latter work on Arab countries, it has a greater advantage in that all its writers have once stayed in Indonesia. I prepared Chapter 1, "Basic Politico-Social Structure of Indonesia—with Special Reference to Inequality as Seen in *Daerah*". Mr. Iwao Ariyoshi prepared Chapter 2, in which he discusses "Tribalism and Nationalism" in the light of historical development. In Chapter 3, Mr. Atou Masuda discusses in detail the "Position and Role of the Indonesian Communist Party" as the most outstanding of all parties that have had a clear role to play in forming the united national front and in the government of the nation following independence. In Chapter 4, "Position and Role of the Military," Mr. Shigeo Miyayama analyzes how important is the role which the military has been playing not only in military affairs but in politics in the same period. Lastly, Mr. Kōichi Kishi, in Chapter 5, attempts a generalized approach to the theoretical foundation of the Sukarno government or the idea of "Guided Democracy" by tracing the course of its formation and development.

In discussing the government and society of Indonesia, the writers, on the whole, have presupposed that the country is an Islamic society, but they have not identified the issue of such a society in its own perspective. They have been concerned more with a country which has a unique position among the less-developed countries of Southeast Asia. It may be in a sense irrelevant to bring this volume and the foregoing two under review at the same time.

I will thereupon begin by choosing the "Basic Politico-Social Structure of Indonesia" (Chapter 1), which I prepared myself, as the only topic for discussion here. For, there is an underlying question in this work of mine: "Would not a wrong preconception against the society of this area have already been strongly involved in the assumption that Indonesia is an Islamic society?" (p. 24) Looking back upon the accomplishments of social sciences in the past, I should think that the emphasis which the Dutch laid on the tribal customs (*Adat*) was designed to serve the policy of "divide and rule" and to prevent national unity from being achieved. In the recent studies of Indonesia by American scholars, it is considered that Islam which is a religious expression of a super-tribal national unity, should be made an important, even central subject of study. However, because those American

scholars specializing in Indonesia are mostly social anthropologists or cultural anthropologists, and because, with a few exceptions, they are often weak at evaluating the political role of religion, it seems that the question of Islam in Indonesia has not always been accurately analyzed in relation to the political consciousness of the nation.

If I may put forward my conclusion first, I would say that I tried to establish a case, from my analysis of Indonesia's government and society, that the country is *not* a so-called Islamic society. Needless to say, an overwhelming majority of the population in Indonesia are Islamites and affairs of the country could not be discussed without reference to Islam. But even though Islam as a religion is an overwhelming influence, it does not follow directly that Indonesia is an Islamic society. The same logic is applicable to the Japanese society which can hardly be defined as Buddhist, though Buddhism has been the religion of an overwhelming number of the people.

In order to make my arguments easier to understand, I have adopted the method of taking Somaliland, the most typically Islamic society, for comparison with Indonesia. (p. 31 et. seq.) I have briefly traced the process in which the Somalis, living on farming, gradually developed a society based on local interests, with the result that the original Islamic society particular to the nomadic people in the dry land was transformed and doomed to disintegrate. Also I have stated, "the Somalis apparently take no account of the tie of Islam for a ground on which to organize a political party, for there is no such party that carries the name of "Islam" or "Muslim". (p. 33) And I have gone further to say, "This is the most telling indication of the fact that Somaliland is a typical Islamic society". (p. 33)

On the contrary, there have been not a few political parties in Indonesia which have the name of Islam from the rise of nationalism up to the present. For this reason, I agree with the American scholar, Clifford Geertz, when he makes the following point: "The self-conscious, religiously sophisticated, exclusive Moslem is a child of this century."¹

That is, because Indonesia has not really been an Islamic society, although Indonesia has become Islamic in name since the 16th century. Islam seems to have become associated with nationalism, to have helped national consciousness grow, and to have been instrumental in promoting national unity. Islam provides a flag under which tribalism can be effectively overcome. This proves the characteristic feature of Indonesian society which thus cannot be defined essentially as Islamic, especially when compared with Somaliland which has been a true Islamic society in that religion cannot there be made an ensign of political parties. In this sense, it may be said that Islam could play a historical role in Indonesia in the modernization of its government and society.

Here we may return to Mr. Kobayashi's study to see the question of "modernization" and Islam. Mr. Kobayashi is of course concerned with the question of modernization in the Middle East and with studying whether or

1 Clifford Geertz, "Religious Belief and Economic Behavior in a Central Javanese Town", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, Jan., 1956) p.144.

not Islam functions as a deterrent to that process. But he seems to have overlooked one aspect of Islam, namely that it promotes modernization by connecting itself with nationalism, despite all its historical limitations. This failure of his is inseparable from the fact that Mr. Kobayashi viewed the problem of modernization mainly from the economic angle. One is fully justified to study the problem of modernization on a foundation of economic development. As long as it is viewed from such an angle, there is no denying that Islam functions as a deterrent to modernization. "Although Islam, strictly speaking, means a group morality based on the tribalism of nomadic communities and yet clad in a religion, it has often been assumed to be a system of political and economic morals and therefore is ready to expose its own contradictions". (p. 215-16) This is perhaps the essence of all that Mr. Kobayashi intended to say about Islam.

Then, if we move out of the originally Islamic society in the Middle East into the circumstances of the farming society of Indonesia for further discussion of our problem, we will see that Islam gets out of the arena of a group morality based on tribalism of nomadic communities, and serves as the morality of super-tribal unity of the nation. This is a fact of which I should like to make a special mention. I prefer to clarify limitations on the modernizing function of Islam by adding the phrase "under certain historical conditions" to the following statement of Mr. Kobayashi. He writes: "If Pakistan fails to find out the way of its own nationalism, just indulging in the daydream of modernizing itself through Westernization, it may in time find its position as an 'Islamic nation' void of reality." "The Pakistan idea of an 'Islamic nation-state' would probably become nothing but a utopian vision." (p. 162-63) Still the fact remains that Islam *did* contribute to modernizing the government and society of Indonesia, in the period during which the nation was striving for unity and liberation from Dutch colonialism. Here I may emphasize that handicapped though it is, Islam could be an accelerator of modernization as a system of political morals, for I believe that this can also be said of that part of West Africa south of the Sahara.