Preface

It is a great honor and pleasure for us to publish this special issue of AJAMES for the Asian Federation of Middle East Studies Association (AFMA). The issue brings together the final versions of several papers presented at the Fourth AFMA Conference, "The Middle East and East Asia: Political Transition, Economic Reform and Energy Security," held August 1-3, 2002 in Beijing, China, plus two papers contributed after the conference.

In the past ten years, globalization of the academic field of Middle East studies has occurred at a rapid pace. For example, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1923 in the United States, began its Program on the Middle East and North Africa, "The State of Middle East Studies: Towards a Global Perspective", after September 11, 2001; and the first meeting of the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES) was held on September 8-13, 2002 in Mainz, Germany. Globalization is a trend of the times that researchers cannot resist. Globalization, however, should not be the adaptation of one single standard, but instead a respect for different ways of thinking, on a world scale. While globalization today is led by the United States and other European countries, it should be noted that the researchers of other countries should express their own original opinions on Middle East studies in order to create a global understanding.

We have realized through seven years of AFMA activities, as seen in the Outline in this volume, that AFMA has a high potential for building new ideas of Middle East studies from the viewpoint of Asian, especially East Asian, countries, and for circulating them to the world. JAMES hopes that this special issue, "Middle East Studies from East Asia" will be a great step toward globalization by Asian scholars in our academic field. We would like to express our gratitude to the Chinese Association for Middle East Studies (CAMES) for organizing the Fourth AFMA Conference, giving its consent to collecting the papers at the AFMA Beijing Conference in an AJAMES Special Issue, to the Japan Foundation for its financial support of the AFMA conferences, and to all the contributors to this issue.

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