I. Introduction

This paper examines an aspect of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies in Japan during World War II, paying a special attention to Hajime Kobayashi (1904-1963) as a case study. Although he is one of the forgotten Japanese scholars on contemporary Middle Eastern and Islamic studies in Japan today, he can be considered as a good example of the researchers who represent the continuation of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies before and after World War II. Kobayashi was one of those who engaged in the establishment of the first academic research institution of Islamic studies in Japan, the Institute for Islamic Area Studies (Kaikyoken Kenkyujo, thereinafter, IIAS) in 1938. He was also...
appointed as professor of Kokugakuin University\(^4\) and at the preparatory Army Academy of the Imperial Army before World War II. After the war, Kobayashi exerted himself in 1956 for the establishment of Middle East Research Institute of Japan (Chuto Chosakai) which was an auxiliary organization of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, he was appointed as professor at Daito Bunka University.\(^5\) He passed away suddenly at the age of 59 on July 3, 1963, immediately after submitting the Ph.D. degree claim paper “International Politics and the Middle East Question” to the Faculty of Law at Kyoto University.

Why is Hajime Kobayashi forgotten in the field of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies in Japan today? The purpose of this paper is an attempt to answer that question. I suppose that the reason might be Kobayashi’s versatility with the times; Kobayashi was not only a researcher but also a coordinator of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies in Japan before and after the war. This paper discusses his academic activities under the assumption that he committed to the war and politics or even collaborated with the military establishment during the war. This paper pays special emphasis to his commitment to the political situations as an ardent nationalist during the war.

As mentioned earlier, Kobayashi founded the Institute for Islamic Area Studies (IIAS) with Koji Okubo (1889-1950) and Hisao Matsuda (1903-82) after the Sino-Japanese War broke out in July 1937. While Okubo was inaugurated as the president of the IIAS and Matsuda as the chief of documentation section, Kobayashi was appointed as the chief of research section. It is said later, however, that Kobayashi opposed the management of Okubo and separated himself from the IIAS in March 1940. Henceforth, Kobayashi taught as a professor at Kokugakuin University, and also as a professor at the preparatory Army Academy. His writings during the war might suggest that Kobayashi was convinced of the plans and thoughts of “Tai sei Yokusan Kai (The Imperial Rule Assistance Association)” as a scholar who was committed to the war at least in appearance. His books such as *History Eye* and *A New Thinking on World History* that were published in 1943 after the Greater East Asia War (Pacific War) in 1941 differed in the tone of argument and character compared with his previous writings. The two books were written for the purpose of the upsurge for combative spirit for war with extremely patriotic posture. Since his books can be obtained easily in old-book markets even now, it can be surmised that a considerable number of the books were sold at that time; 3000 copies of *History Eye* and 5000 copies of *A New Thinking on World History* were printed for their first editions.

Yoshitsuru Yamana (1891-1967), who was the first chairman of the board of directors of the Middle East Institute of Japan, recalled his impression of Kobayashi from when the two first met saying
“Mr. Kobayashi was one of those persecuted scholars who was troubled by so-called progressive scholars’ persecution those days.

Mr. Kobayashi was suited for the education of young army officers with his patriotic aspirations during the war as a professor at the Army Academy. In fact he recalled those days with pride throughout life.

He was such a noble-minded patriot that he couldn’t bear looking on the homeland during the war. The Complete Works of Shoin Yoshida was discovered in his study room after his death. It proved that he had read Yoshida’s books with pleasure. I can easily understand the kind of soul that influenced Mr. Kobayashi’s character building deeply.” [Yamana 1964: 556]

Yamana admired Kobayashi’s consistent political belief, which was influenced by the great educator and patriotic thinker Shoin Yoshida (1830-59),(6) and also called Kobayashi a ‘noble-minded patriot.’ Having considered the tumultuous political situation in Japan when Yamana met with Kobayashi in 1963 and when this “postscript” was written in 1964, which sandwiched the popular campaign against the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1960, it is natural that he should be troubled with “persecution” from “progressive intellectuals.”

Moreover, circumstantial evidence provided by Yoshiro Mutaguchi (former editorial writer for the Asahi Shimbun), who would become a director of the Middle East Institute of Japan, also shows us that Kobayashi was influenced strongly by Shoin Yoshida. Mutaguchi wrote in his book:

“I have surely heard that Kurazo Yoshida was Shoin’s nephew. Mr. Kobayashi was his former student. There is probably no one who knows this fact except me. Kurazo Yoshida had served as a principal for a long time, since the foundation of an old system Kanagawa prefecture Yokosuka junior high school (the present high school). Mr. Kobayashi was a student at that time, and, in fact, I know this because I was Mr. Kobayashi’s junior by twenty years and graduated from the same junior high school. The bust of Kurazo Yoshida was put on display in the principal’s office, and we the junior high school students used to be taught the appropriate “Yoshida’s soul” by the principal of those days.” [Mutaguchi 1975: 70]

Moreover, Yamana wrote again about postwar Kobayashi as follows.

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs could not but count on Mr. Kobayashi in much sur-
veillance study as the Middle East problem took a close-up of on world politics. Moreover, his views on the international communist movement enabled him to contribute not only to the promotion of Middle Eastern research but also to Southeast Asian research with Mr. Etsuo Kadani and others who were secretaries of the Public Security Investigation Agency in those days.

It was from this period that Mr. Kobayashi began to organize the establishment of the Middle East Institute of Japan with Hiroshi Iwanaga and others. From the beginning, Mr. Kobayashi had ambitions beyond that of a mere scholar as he had founded the “Institute for Islamic Area Studies” in cooperation with Professor Okubo in the prewar days, and he had extensive experience promoting Japan’s Islamic problem research.” [Yamana 1964]

I will discuss later what kind of research Kobayashi was doing the prewar days as well as his works following the war.

II. Kobayashi at the Institute for Islamic Area Studies during the Sino-Japanese War

When the Japanese empire entered the Sino-Japanese War in September 1937, the Japanese encountered what would be called the “Muslim problem (Kaikyoto Mondai)” in China. Islamic research needed to be quickly organized in order to accomplish the political purpose of war with China. Some organizations and research institutes dealing with “Muslim problem” were founded in the year following the outbreak of the war in 1937, and some journals were published aimed at promoting policy-oriented research for the “Muslim problem.” The journal Kaikyoken (Islamic Area) was published by the Institute of Islam Area Studies Institute (IIAS) in 1938 under then editor-in-chief Koji Okubo. This journal was evaluated highly as an academic one among others. Of course, it was a well-known fact that three journals whose titles included the name of Islam were published at this time such as the Kaikyo Sekai (Islamic world), published by the Dai Nihon Kaiyo Kyokai (Greater Japan Islamic Association) which was chaired by General Senjuro Senjuro (1876-1943) and the Kaikyo Jijo (Islamic Affairs), published by the Research Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs etc. in addition to Kaikyoken (Islamic Area). Moreover, although not limited to Islamic studies, Shin Ajia (New Asia) was published by To’ia Keizai Chosa Kyoku (the Research Institute of East Asian Economy) where the chairman of the board of directors was Shumei Ohkawa (1886-1957). Many articles related to the “Muslim
problem" were published in the journal New Asia. The journal To'a (East Asia) published by To'a Kenkyujo (the East Asian Studies Institute) could be mentioned as one of the typical journals concerning so-called Japanese prototyped Area Studies during World War II.

It can be said that the relationship between the Soto Buddhist sect and Islamic studies in Japan was deep from the beginning. Ryushin Azuma, the 72nd Soto sect Mahayana temple chief priest, spoke in an interview saying "Islam and Soto sect got to know that relation was deep. Kaiten Nukariya (1867-1934, the eighth president of Komazawa University) published his book titled as Mahomet, a Wonder Man about a hundred years ago. Koji Okubo (1889-1950, professor of Komazawa University) established the Institute for Islamic Area Studies. The favorite pupil of Okubo, Kanshi Kagamishima (1912-45) published detailed papers on "The translations of the Koran in the world." " Ryushin Azuma also published a book titled Japanese Buddhism and Islam [Azuma 2002]. Still now, a temple of the Soto called Monjuin Temple in Enzan-shi, Yamanashi Prefecture, offers Muslims in Japan one corner of the precincts of the temple as the sole domestic Muslim cemetery in Japan. Kobayashi became a lecturer at Komazawa University in 1930. Komazawa University belonged to the Soto Buddhist sect, and it was here that he met Koji Okubo, with whom he co-founded the IIAS.

Isuramu Kyokai (Islamic Society) was established by Koji Okubo in October 1933 as the parent body of the Institute for the IIAS. This institute was reorganized in March 1938 under the auspice of a Japanese imperial colonizing organization, Mouko Zenrin Kyokai (Mongolian Good Neighbor Association). With the reorganization of the internal structure in April 1940, the name was changed from Kaikyoken Kokyujō to Kaikyoken Kenkyujo in May of the same year.

Since Kobayashi was on the register as the research section chief till March 1940, the institute should be called Kaikyoken Kokyujō in this paper. But we shall use Kaikyoken Kenkyujo (IIAS) in order to avoid any confusion. Incidentally, Kobayashi claimed that the expression "Kaikyoken (Islamic area)" was coined by Kobayashi himself. Although he explained later that "this way of thinking and expression occurred to me when I published my book in 1936" [Kobayashi 1964: 6], it is difficult to find this argument justifiable. The work which Kobayashi mentioned in the quote is Gendai Kaikyouken (Contemporary Islamic Area) which he co-authored with Koji Okubo.

Kobayashi and Okubo published the book Contemporary Islamic Area for general readers in 1936 and was the product of the two scholars’ academic endeavors before the establishment of the IIAS. The preface of the book is anti-Eurocentric according to the present Japanese understanding of Islam. The following quote is an example of this anti-Eurocentric sentiment, although it is somewhat long.
“The Islamic area is not a garden of flowers of exoticism. The reality is that the Islamic area, which holds about 246 million Muslims ranging over Asia, Africa, and Europe, is just a historical given fact. The Arabian Nights styled fantasy about today’s Islamic world is nothing but sentimentality out of season at least. Is the “Contemporary Islamic Area” which we submit now useful enough for the destruction of the fantasy?

(Omission)

There are few of our Japanese fellows who surely observe the problems of Islam and Muslims. However, we have to reflect on our tendency to concentrate our vision on a European culture over there far intently across the Muslim world and the fact that many people have neglected this important subject for inquiry or have made light of it. There are an abundance of subjects attracting our attention to the Muslim area such as a destination for Japanese export goods, as the target of colonial re-division, as a constituent factor of the world culture, and also as an indispensable portion of its world history. We therefore expect that our poor attempt of inquiry into the contemporary Islamic area will be correctly evaluated by our fellow Japanese, at least by the intellectuals who are concerned about the Muslim world.”

[Okubo and Kobayashi 1936: 3-4]

Such manifesto was connected with the idea of the establishment of the IIAS. This manifesto tells us the volition of the young researchers (Kobayashi was 32 years old in 1936) who are going to catch actuality in Islamic area and this text is filled with their critical views against Euro-centric or Orientalists’ attitudes toward Islam in general. Moreover, in editing this book, the assistance of some of the younger historical researchers in the IIAS such as Toshio Matsuda, Shiro Nohara (1903-81), and Ryozo Miyagi (1907-38), was obtained. This book shows the character of the IIAS.

This book was written by Okubo and Kobayashi in a division-of-labor style of writing. It is composed of three parts; Part I consists of articles which focus on the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the general history of Islam, Part II surveys the present conditions of each Muslim state, and Part III discusses the thoughts and ideology of Muslims.

It turns out that Okubo and Kobayashi divided the work brilliantly. While Okubo wrote articles on current situations in Turkey or on Turkic peoples in Central Asia and China as well as the Islamic belief system, Kobayashi described modern and contemporary Islamic thoughts and politics, focusing on the non-Turkish Arab nation. Kobayashi’s realistic secular nationalist way of thinking on Islam, even his stereotyped image of Islam, is exemplified in his article, “Islamic Reform Movement and Muhammad ‘Abduh” which
was the last chapter of the book, saying critically to Muslims

"O, Muslims! Stop blaming Kemalist Turkey as "a country without God" dancing to medieval-styled fanaticism. Such slander is nothing but an anachronism. Today, Muslims should fully deepen their recognition and understanding of the problem of survival for depressed Muslims rather than blaming Turkey. Don't a small number of Muslims who hold progressive thoughts today show self-sacrificing efforts for their leap to tomorrow by seeking a solution for this problem? Islam cannot be a sacred exception to the world history. Muslims have not been in ecstasies over their subordinated position like believers of other religions. Muslims should know where the most proper key is found out in order to solve this problem in the time of crisis in Islam." [Okubo and Kobayashi 1936: 462]

While Japanese researchers of those days, including Kobayashi, regarded Turkey highly under the national leadership of Kemal Ataturk as a secular nationalist nation-state, we can easily recognize that Kobayashi took a severe stance regarding the Islamic reform movement as a Japanese secular nationalist. His posture toward Islam was consistent after the war, too. His severe evaluation of the Japanese solidarity movement with the Islamist movement is in sharp contrast with the attitudes of Japanese military authorities and pan-Asianists such as Mitsuru Toyama (1855-1944), who supported the pan-Islamic movement. Though Kobayashi carefully observed the activity of groups and movements such as the Khalifat movement in India, the pan-Islamic conference in Jerusalem organized by Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem in Palestine, and the activities of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, he observed them very coolly saying

"Anyway, the pan-Islamist thoughts in the Muslim world and room for their activity seem to have not disappeared yet.

However, I would be pleased if the voice of pan-Islamism was not a mischief of Jamal al-Din's ghost at the time of this writing. Don't be fanatical nor possessed, Muslims. True, there is the increase of imperialist competition, their growing reliance upon oversea colonies and the strengthening of rule over those colonies, the impoverishment of the colonized people and their resistance against the colonizer, and the spread of a national liberation movement. Against the background of Imperialist states' attitudes and the colonized people's separationist struggle, where is the place of pan-Islamism? When the contemporary Islamic world is laid in the melting pot of world capitalism, is pan-Islamism nothing more than "illusionary

Of course, Kobayashi was not necessarily negative towards Islam as a religion itself, and he kept his distance from politicized pan-Islamist movement. Kobayashi went to China from August to December 1938 to do research and then published two books on Islam titled Chinese Muslims [Kobayashi 1940a] and An Introduction to Islam [Kobayashi 1940b] based on what he found there in China. Looking at An Introduction to Islam, we can see that the book is composed of five chapters; a general survey of Islam, a history of Muslims, the belief system in Islam, the development of Islamic thoughts, and the reform movement in Islam. A table of Arabic words and both of their Chinese translation and transliteration or transcription about Islamic vocabularies are attached as appendix. Therefore, this book was very useful for political and military purposes since it was published in Manchukuo under the Japanese military occupation of Northeastern territories of China. From the following quote, we can know that Kobayashi’s view of Islam was based upon genealogical assumption of Islam as one of the monotheistic faiths.

“From a genetic standpoint, Islam belongs to Semitic monotheism along with Judaism and Christianity. Between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, similarities or common features are observed to some extent within this context. Islam may especially express closeness with Judaism and Arabism. However, Islam was never the derivative religion which acted as the other self from Judaism, Christianity, etc. It is a cultural religion which has remarkably original character as a completed entity of the Semitic religious faith. The religious system shows that Islam is high-class world religion. Islam may be equal in the doctrine, in faith, and also in the number of believers when contrasted with Buddhism, Christianity, etc.” [Kobayashi 1940b: 3-4]

III. Kobayashi as Professor at the Army Academy during the Greater East Asia War

As described at the beginning of this essay, Kobayashi published, with Toshio Matsuda in July, 1938, the book that may be called the work for which he won fame at that time. The book is A Cultural History of Arid Asia: beyond China [Matsuda and Kobayashi 1938]. When this book was published, Kobayashi was not yet a member of the staff at the Institute for Islamic Area Studies (IIAS). The book came about following lectures on West and Central Asian history that were requested in the previous year of the publication as a
part of the “History Lecture Series on the Asia Nations” by the Tokyo Central Radio Station. The lectures overwhelmingly consisted of those of “the history of Chinese Asia,” i.e., “the history of China.” The lecture time taken by Kobayashi and Matsuda on West and Central Asian history was only 90 minutes for three lectures. At the request from a publisher, they decided to publish *A Cultural History of Arid Asia: beyond China* which would unite the history of Central Asia and West Asia in one book. The objective of the two young historians was to break the preconceived idea of the history of Orient as exclusively supporting the history of China and it can be said that the two were going to describe the history of Asia “beyond China” as shown in the subtitle. The view of the two historians is condensed at the beginning of the preface of the book as follows:

“We previously felt strange that “the history of Orient” was equal to the history of China, i.e., “the history of Chinese Asia,” when we studied the history of Central Asia or West Asia, that is, “the history of Arid Asia.” We often talked together about the history of Asia in its true meaning. It was not recently that we engaged to start our plan to write whole aspects of the history of Asia. Since our proposal was eagerly supported by several young researchers who studied Western and Oriental histories, the “Asian history series” was planned and officially announced by the publisher Shikai Shobo in spring of the 2597th year of the Imperial reign, i.e. A.D. 1937.

Once the plan for “Asian history series” was advertised, the term “Asian history” was made known instantly. Then, as the term of “Asian history” became known among people, other similar series or books on Chinese Asian history as a part of Oriental history began to be published with attached chapters on the history of Central and West Asia. However, the concern about the history of Asia is not new to today, as we have already seen that the “world cultural history series” (Shinkosha Publisher) and the “world history series” (Heibonsha Publisher) etc. have already allotted half a volume or a volume for a section on “the history of Arid Asia.” It is strange, however, that we hardly look back upon the fact that “the history of Arid Asia” comprises half the history of Asia. Needless to say, it seems that it is on the occasion of the China Incident [Chino-Japanese War] since the summer in 2597 [1937 A.D.] that we have suddenly been reminded of the history of Asia.” [Matsuda and Kobayashi 1938: 2-13]

Moreover, the third edition of this book was published in October 1941 [Showa 16] just before the Pacific War broke out in December 1941. The preface of the third edition
reflected deeply the tense situation of the approaching “Greater East Asia War” and the ongoing plan of the “Greater East Asian Prosperity Sphere”:

“This book was written before the plan for the Greater East Asian Prosperity Sphere was raised in our country. Our present “Japanese-oriented volition” has been far away from the historical diagram of this book. The historical stage which this book draws doesn’t present a monsoon climate like “Humid Asia.” The book shows you the historical dynamics of this anti-monsoon atmosphere. However, although it is not necessarily proposed from a climatology position, the historical idea of this anti-monsoon Asia, i.e., “Arid Asia,” can be generally diverted to the case in the “Greater East Asian Prosperity Sphere,” if it is replaced by monsoon-like reduction. When you are going to grasp the history of the “Greater East Asian Prosperity Sphere” from a “Japanese-oriented position,” it could serve as reference. Since the true recognition of the history of Asia has not been reached to the full width until today, we could give a raison d’être for this book in such a meaning. Though it is poor in the “Japanese-oriented position” and seems to be out of season, I believe that this book may be given one monumental meaning.” [Matsuda and Kobayashi 1938: 15-6]

In the third edition, Kobayashi was conscious of Tetsuro Watsuji’s famous book, *Hudo (Climate)* which was published in 1935 when we find the same expression and terminology in that text. At the same time it was necessary for the authors to justify their book in the context of the “Greater East Asian Prosperity Sphere.” Kobayashi was forced to express his duty to the war regime as a professor of the Army Academy further. Compared with Kobayashi, his co-author of the book, Matsuda, had already left the Institute for Islamic Area Studies and moved out to the Keijo Imperial University in Seoul under the Japanese occupation of Korean Peninsula.

Now, Kobayashi published *Britain, Lawrence, and Arabia* [Kobayashi 1941] as his unique work of the war time in 1941. He analyzed “Lawrence of Arabia,” alias Thomas E. Lawrence in the Middle East during and after World War I in his book. “Lawrence of Arabia” might remind Kobayashi of General Kenji Doihara (1883-1948) whose secret activities in Manchuria made Doihara known as “Lawrence of Manchuria” all over the world. Kobayashi’s intention was declared to be the destruction of “Lawrence myth” at the beginning of the book as follows.
"The design of this book does not necessarily expect a collection of the Lawrence legendary stories of the arabesque style. The intention of my writing this book is to clarify the real role of Lawrence, who hid and maneuvered secretly behind the smoke screen of World War I, and tries to explain the British policy in the Arabian peninsular in the first decades of the 20th century. So to speak, I conceived that the book made a vivid description of "Lawrence of Arabia," and would play a piece of music of the fate of the Near East manipulated by the English feeler, i.e., "Arab Revolt," with "the heart which carries out history" from a right perspective. By the way, the unusual passion of "Lawrence of Arabia" may make us stop walking in the storm of feeling. Especially, the posture of "Lawrence of Arabia" who intervened between Britain and the Arabs and was sorrowful about the consequence of "Arab Revolt" is too tragic. However, many keen critical readers can read the author's idea of this book on the contrary in the impressive scene of ups-and-downs which "Lawrence of Arabia" directed." [Kobayashi 1941: 2]

Yoshiro Mutaguchi, who is also known as a researcher of "Lawrence of Arabia," described Hajime Kobayashi as follows.

"Although Professor Kobayashi was an energetic researcher who published no less than 20 volumes of the books by the end of the war, he regrettably he passed away at the age of 59 in July, 1963 for cancer. Six years before his death, I received Mr. Kobayashi's introduction to the Middle Easter question, at the same time I was dealing with it. Before long I found out that I was from the same junior high school as Mr. Kobayashi and that I belong to a generation twenty years younger. I had you become intimate much more. Meeting again in Cairo in two years later, we had several days together. It has become a source of nostalgia." [Mutaguchi 1997: 36]

Mutaguchi, a former correspondent of the Asahi Shimbun in Cairo, praised this book saying "Probably it is 'the great book like a phantom' which world will refer to such books. While the voice of praise for Lawrence is still full in the West after Lawrence’s death five years ago, Mr. Kobayashi is analyzing calmly as a scholar of Middle Eastern studies. The direction of World War I which made re-division of colony as the main object is difficult, reckless and even impossible to be converted by a great purehearted.” Mutaguchi’s quotation regarding Kobayashi’s analysis tells us that Kobayashi had the realistic way of thinking about international politics.

After the outbreak of the Greater Asia War, the two Kobayashi's books, <i>History Eye</i>
[Kobayashi 1943], published in 1943 with 3000 copies of first edition, and A New Perspective on World History [Kobayashi 1944], published in 1943 with 5000 copies of first edition, were propagated to whip up war sentiment for "holy war" against the US, Britain and Holland when Japan's defeat was near at hand. Since he was inaugurated as the professor of the Preparatory Army Academy in April, Showa 16 (1941), it is natural that he should change his posture toward war. When Kobayashi was inaugurated as the professor, there were 2300-2400 cadets in the academy. Moreover, Kobayashi was holding an additional posts those days, such as a researcher of the Total War Research Institute of the Cabinet, a non-regular staff of Ministry of Education, a professor of Kokugakuin University, a member of Japan Publication Association, and a member of the Greater Japan Patriotic Association for Speech.

Kobayashi recollected frankly his research travel which returned to Japan as a subject of the Empire and also manifested himself to participate in supporting the war-time regime as a historian in the preface of History Eye as follows:

"I am concerned about the Empire of Japan. My research travel was from Europe to West Asia and Central Asia, that is to say, from the Christian cultural sphere to the Islamic cultural sphere and then to the Chinese cultural sphere. My research record, which crosses Arabian deserts from the Mediterranean and went beyond Pamir Mountain ridge, was not a short story...My history eye at least tends to separate from the optic nerve of the people of the Empire. Since the concern about Asia didn't satisfy me with studying English, German, and French, my cultural interest pushed me to learn Arabic, Turkish, etc. I just drew a line for my studies through the process of moving from Arid Asia to Humid Asia. How fragile my taste for learning is! It was not more than pleasure of study after all. One of the noble-minded patriots recited an ode, saying that if a patriot know himself well, it would not be not useless to learn foreign-made things. Unfortunately, however, I have never heard that no one's voice was raised for the necessity of studying the histories of the Islamic area or Arid Asia among scholars of history. Nevertheless, I couldn't remove the restrictions from old-styled historical study in my mind and body. In many cases, old training in historical study deprived me of my dignified position as one of the people of the Empire. My history eye is reinforced to be color blinded due to my Eurocentrism. Modesty as the people of the Empire also tends to fade. What on earth is historical studies? The time of suffering is cold to the skin."  

[Kobayashi 1943: 2-3]
Kobayashi developed his chauvinistic nationalist vision for history by advocating the concept of benevolent Imperial rule of world history after he published *A New Perspective on World History* in 1943. He began to assert his historical description from the position of “the Empire which cultivates the world history” instead of “the world history which wraps Japan.” With the fulfillment of Japan’s great mission of “the creation of a new world order (*Shuri Kosei*), Kobayashi advocated the slogan of “eight corners of the world under one roof (*Hakko Ichiu*)” and the mission of the Greater East Asian War for the liberation of Asia from under the Western rule. The preface of this book starts as follows:

“This book is written from the firm belief that the Empire is brilliance in the world. “Brilliance in the world” is meant to be a phrase in “an Imperial Order for Soldier’s Spirit (*Gunjin Chokuyu*).” When I give lectures on the outline of the Empire’s history, and also the history of foreign countries, it was brilliance that came to my mind as the first character. Then, I have opened my lectures with this phrase for many years...I felt that my imperfect lectures had been listened to by thousands of young student officers whose souls called me from the front of war. [Kobayashi 1944]

Kobayashi considers the grand design for the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere to be an overture towards a World Restoration. Therefore, the crisis and innovation in East Asia were considered to be the starting point of a new history for the Orient. He found out that the idea of the history of the Greater East Asia possesses actuality inside of the shining success of battles in the Greater East Asia War and claimed that the creative intention or constructive zeal should be suitable for the actual conditions of climate, histories and nations in East Asia. Therefore, the idea of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere was understood as realistic psychology which makes the German phrase “Blut und Boden (blood and earth)” a keynote in the Orient. And he concluded that the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere could realize the history of the Greater East Asia as a new history of the Orient as a result of the aggressive conclusion to their “heart which carries out history.”

Kobayashi’s way of thinking was of the same quality as Japanese ideologues of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. However, he claimed that the Muslim world should be regarded as the vital strategic area from Japan’s global points of view, calling it as “the Middle (Chuyo)” between the Occident and the Orient and attached importance to Islamic area in his book *A New Perspective to World History*. This idea accomplished a new development with the deployment of the Third World theory and the emergence of the Middle East as a strategic area after World War Two.
IV. Kobayashi after World War Two

Kobayashi established the Middle East Institute of Japan in June 1957 after the Suez War, that is, Suez Crisis, in 1956, while also being inaugurated as professor at Daito Bunka University in April, 1955.

The Bandung Conference in 1955 was considered to be one of the most important and symbolic events in the rising tide of the national liberation movements of Asia and Africa. Abdul Nasser, the Egyptian President, was represented as one of the most famous standard-bearers in the non-alignment movement in the Third World. The Middle East Institute of Japan was founded in 1957 corresponding to such a situation in Asia and Africa in general, and in the Middle East in particular.

Under such international circumstances, Kobayashi “discovered” the Middle East as a problem. He began to write the first chapter “the place in the Middle East in international politics” in his book, *International Politics and the Middle East Problem*. The chapter begins with the following provocative expressions saying

“The Middle East has not been discovered yet because the actual conditions in the Middle East are not well known to the Japanese people from an extrinsic or intrinsic motivation. Although the Middle East problem has emerged in international politics as a big issue, it has remained an unsolved subject in the world. It is in the Middle East today that there is the fundamental factor of a pre-modern “nebula state” which conceives of changing of factional alignments, fragile instability, under-development and backwardness.” [Kobayashi 1964: 1]

Furthermore, Kobayashi makes an issue of the “discovery” of the Middle East in Japan. He pointed out that “Until the Suez war broke out, the appellation of the Middle East (then the Near East or the Middle and Near East) had not been officially discussed.” Then he regarded as questionable that Japanese intellectuals considered this area as a “Muslim problem” or “Islamic problem” before World War II.

“For example, Shigetaka Shiga studied the Middle East from the viewpoint of human geography. Kotaro Yamaoka perceived this region as the Islamic area (or the Muhammadanism area) and wrote books as the product of his field survey. A small number of dilettante scholars academically continued their research about this strange land that is special militarily or in exploration. An exception was the news that a Turkish warship, Ertuğrul, that visited Japan as a goodwill mission sank
off the coast of Kishu on September 16, 1890 on its way back to Turkey, which caused people’s condolence in Japan. But the appellation of the Middle East was hardly regarded as questionable, because a Middle Eastern problem was limited mainly to the Turkish problem which was called as the Eastern Question (or Near Eastern questions), and it was not discerned from the Muslim problem (then called “Muhammadanism problem”). These tend to be mixed up altogether.” [Kobayashi 1964: 4-5]

His comment on the Japanese understanding of Islam at that time shows his deep insight into Japanese stereotypes regarding the image of Islam. Because if that, we can point out that the Japanese had an image in mind as if all peoples in the Middle East consisted of Muslims, in other words the Japanese had a vague impression that the Middle East was all covered with Islam or Islamic culture until only recently. He indicated, therefore, as follows: “since the Japanese poor image of the Middle East should have reflected Japan’s weak relations with the Middle East, we have to reconsider deeply the shallowness of Japanese recognition of the “Middle East” as a problem. So, the history of the appellation of the Middle East in Japan is new, and the Middle Eastern area has not been taken up as a problem.”

This comment is very important when considering the Japanese-Islamic relations as an inevitable problem to be asked. That is, to pose a question concerning understanding ‘others.’ Kobayashi talked about the difficulty of understanding the Middle East as it related to the difficulty of defining the place itself called the Middle East and then he described as follows:

Although Britain and also France retreated from the region due to the upsurge of nationalism in the Middle East, the appellation of the Middle East was succeeded by the United States without any variation with the “nebula state” (it is “a vacuum of power” in a certain meaning) of the Middle East itself. The Middle East could not be free from uncertainty. Even the Soviet Union, which appeared as a new actor on the political stage of the Middle East, is not a decisive force in formulating the Middle East. Rather there is a key to the Middle Eastern problem in such a point. That is why we have “not discovered” the Middle East and it would be our task to find out how the US, the Soviet Union, or international organizations will form “the new Middle East.” However, here we can see the “crisis” related to the appellation of the Middle East. In other words, we have an opportunity to witness the collapse of the former appellation of the “Middle East” in international politics and to see a
new area of the “Middle East,” i.e. an “independent Middle East would be built. [Kobayashi 1964: 34-5]

We can learn much from Kobayashi’s approach to the Middle East as a region, since he watched the formation of the contemporary Middle East from a historical point of view, based on the real politics of the region. As an analyst Kobayashi had a sharp sense of the situation even though it is related to Islam or the international politics in the Middle East region. Although he was tossed by the waves of the time, Kobayashi sincerely responded to the situation in his own justified logic. From the viewpoint of outsiders, it may seem that he acted with a kind of treachery. However, when we look at mutual relations between Japan and the Middle East or Muslim world, we have to examine him critically or repeatedly as a historical route along which our predecessors have passed.

He wrote the following passages in Chapter 1 of the posthumous volume published 40 years ago.

“The appellation of the Middle East cannot escape from uneasiness when reflecting on the unhappy nebula state of the present Middle East itself. From this viewpoint, the Middle East has not yet been discovered. The Middle East will be formed after this. Although the Middle East exists today, it can be said that “the true Middle East” does not exist. Consequently the way of the appellation of the Middle East took place makes it unstably and vague. As long as a Middle Eastern nebula state continues, the “ambiguity” related to the appellation of the Middle East will not disappear.” [Kobayashi 1964: 38]

Since he had no long stay experience in the Middle East or the Muslim world, Hajime Kobayashi did not have the feel for the place when compared with today’s younger researchers. But his posture as a history student is consistent in a sense. He continued to observe the Middle East or Muslim world from an ecological viewpoint in his writings from A Cultural History of Arid Asia: beyond China in 1938 with Toshio Matsuda, to his posthumous volume International Politics and Middle Eastern Problem in 1964. Heavily depending upon the image of environmental determinism such as “aridness” and “deserts,” his understanding of the Middle East is problematic from a viewpoint of present-day Middle East area studies. For example, we would have a completely different image of the Middle East if the Middle East were regarded as a Mediterranean region.

As indicated earlier, Kobayashi proposed during World War II a new term “the Middle (Chuyo)” which corresponded to a region between Occident and Orient. This
deserves more examination in the present time. It is not accidental that this term was inherited by Tadao Umesao, ecologist and the first president of the Japan Association of Middle East Studies, because he advocated after the war for an ecological view of history on civilizations and published a very famous and acclaimed book, An Ecological View of History: Japanese Civilization in the World Context [Umesao 1967]. Umesao’s view overlaps with Kobayashi’s in terms of the exclusive positioning of Japan. Of course, Kobayashi’s argument is also an interesting subject that needs to be re-examined in the context of modernization theory.

V. Concluding Remarks

It needs to be emphasized here that Hajime Kobayashi has not drawn the attention of younger generations of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies who did not know him directly. Of course, since he passed away in 1963 when Arab nationalism was at the zenith of its prosperity in the Arab world, academic interest in the Middle East was still in embryo stage in Japan. A new, younger generation of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies students was brought up after some historical incidents in the 1970s, such as the oil crisis in 1973 and the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Since there are really a few researchers who survived before and after the war, it was regretful for us to have missed a good opportunity to hear about Kobayashi’s own experience forever. We have to reconsider once again that Shinji Maejima (1903-83), the late professor of Keio University, recollected Kobayashi as “being one of victims of the war,” saying as follows.

“I have never met such a talented person such as him. I suppose that all those who spent those ten years during the war in the prime of their life full of energy had taken serious blows. Is it a mistake if I say that he was one of the victims of the war, too? When I recollect my friendship with Hajime Kobayashi over thirty years, I keenly realize that we have lived a hard life together.” [Maejima 1975: 68]

I conclude this article by citing Kobayashi’s own analysis on the Middle East in the context of international politics during the Cold War period.

“If the United States and the Soviet Union trifle with tactics of the ‘Cold War’ and tamper with the Middle East as the superpowers, the result would be fearful. Throughout the history of the Middle East it has been an ‘arena’ where superpow-
ers often stumbled, because they were caught in a ‘historical trap’ in the Middle East. Since the Middle East is characterized as being ‘amorphous’ like water and still ‘nebulous,’ even superpowers cannot escape from this ‘historical trap.’ Therefore, if a superpower commits a ‘mistake’ in its approach to the Middle East, the reaction of the desert of the Middle East may cause the anger of God, because the Middle Eastern desert is also ‘a seat of God.’ As a result, history may turn the defeated superpower in the face of Middle Eastern ‘desert walls’ into ‘sad ruins’ like ancient Rome. There is no ‘East’ and ‘West’ in a desert. A certain thing is merely ‘sand.’ ‘The discovery of the Middle East’ must be pursued after this fact is confirmed. This is the ‘key’ to the elucidation of the Middle Eastern problem.” [Kobayashi 1964: 540-1]

Kobayashi described the Middle East as a “desert” representing the region even during the Cold War period. It seems to me that this image of the Middle East or Islam is common to the Japanese in terms of environmental determinism from the beginning of his early life to the end. This way of thinking is too simple and naive, however, for the study of the Middle East politically judging from the present standard of academic studies.

As I indicated earlier Kobayashi’s versatility with the times might be the cause behind his being forgotten today. But we have to remember the fact that wars intermittently remind the Japanese of the Middle East or Islam as urgent political or economic issues. For example, the issues are as follows: the Japanese mobilization of Muslims under the name of the ‘Greater East Asian Prosperity Sphere’ plan during World War II, a panic in Japanese society after the oil crisis following the Arab-Israel War in 1973, Japanese debates on ‘international contribution’ to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the Gulf War in 1991 and then Japanese involvement to ‘War on Terrorism’ after the September 11th incident. Kobayashi is regarded as a prototype of scholars on contemporary Middle Eastern and Islamic studies in Japan. We have to lessons to learn from his experience.

Notes

(1) Kobayashi was born in 1904 in Wakayama where his father was appointed as a military officer in the Imperial Army. He graduated from the private Takanawa junior high school under the old-system in 1928 and the Yamagata high school, and then from the Western history department, Faculty of Letters, Tokyo Imperial University.

(2) Other examples are Rei’ichi Gamo (1901-77, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies), Shinji Maejima (1903-83, Keio University), Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-93, McGill University) and
Hiroshi Iwanaga (1915-, Hosei University) etc.

(3) I translate a Japanese word Kaikyo-ken into 'Islamic area,' not 'Islamic zone' literally. It is interesting that we could find Kaikyo-ken Kenkyujo had no official English name but French and German names which are written on its journal’s back cover; ‘L’Institut japonais des études islamiques’ in French until 1941 and then ‘Japanisches Institut für Islamkunde’ only in German.

(4) Kokugakuin University was established in 1882. Its predecessor was the Koten Kokyujo, a research institute for National Learning (Kokugaku) and Japanese history. Kokugakuin is famous for its Shinto studies.

(5) Daito Bunka University was founded in 1923 as a private university.

(6) Yoshida was an expert in the military arts, and ideologue of the Sonno Joi (Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians) in the late Edo period.

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ABSTRACT

USUKI Akira

An Aspect of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in Wartime Japan: A Case of Hajime Kobayashi (1904-1963)

This paper examines the roles played by Hajime Kobayashi (1904-1963) in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies in Japan. Although he is one of the forgotten Japanese scholars in this academic field today, he can be considered as a good example of the researchers who represent the continuation of the studies before and after World War II. Kobayashi was one of those who engaged in the establishment of the first academic research institution of Islamic studies (Kaikyoken Kenkyujo) in Japan in 1938. He was also appointed as professor at the preparatory Army Academy of the Imperial Army before World War II. After the war, Kobayashi exerted himself in 1956 for the establishment of Middle East Research Institute of Japan (Chuto Chosakai) which was an auxiliary organization of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This paper concludes that the reason why Kobayashi has been forgotten might be Kobayashi’s versatility with the times; Kobayashi was not only a researcher but also a coordinator of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies in Japan before and after the war. In other words, he committed to the war or politics or even collaborated with the military establishment during the war as an ardent nationalist during the war.

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Professor, Faculty of Humanities, Japan Women’s University