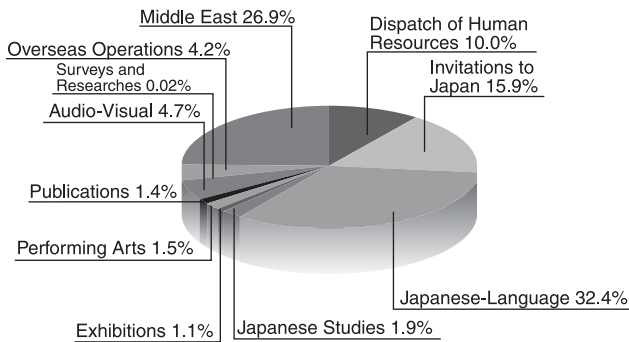


Middle East and North Africa

Abstract



Total amount of operations: 495 million yen

The operation expense in the Middle East and North Africa in FY2003 was 495 million yen, an increase by 160 million yen compared to the previous year.

The projects on Japanese-Language occupied nearly a third (32.4%) of the total operation expense followed by the human exchange (25.9%).

In the fields of introduction of Japanese culture and arts exchange, TV broadcasting of *Oshin* in Iraq and Afghanistan and TV broadcasting of *Suzuran* in Egypt and Syria created pro-Japanese sentiment. The Foundation conducted ikebana (flower arrangement) demonstrations (Algeria, Sudan and Bahrain) and performances of Ryukyu dance (Syria, Lebanon and Bahrain) in the Middle East touring through the Middle Eastern countries, all of which received high reviews. In the publication and translation field, the Foundation translated the *Tale of Genji*, rewritten into contemporary Japanese-Language by Jakucho Setouchi, and *Hojoki* a classical essay by Kamo-no-Chomei into Arabic to raise the level of understanding of Japanese classical works. In the intellectual exchange field, the Foundation held cultural exchange dialogue sessions in the Middle Eastern Region in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria and Egypt for learned persons to exchange significant opinions, create mutual understanding and lead to further intellectual exchange in the future. In the Japanese-Language fields, an advisor from the Foundation conducted a broad range of activities and contributed to

the promotion of the local network.

The Foundation provided lectures to enhance the general public's understanding of the Middle East with the themes "Let's Get to Know Iraq" and "Is Islam the problem? Let's think about the relationship with modernization" to promote understanding in people in a wide range of generations and occupation.

■ Report by the overseas office Egypt

The Japan Foundation, Cairo

1. General

Egypt is an important country as the strategic point in the Middle East and Africa, and it is an influential leader in politics, diplomacy, culture, information and academics, particularly in the Arab world. In the Islamic world, Egypt plays an important role because there is the al-Azhar Institute, the highest authority in the Sunni Sect of Islam theology, in Cairo where students from all over the world come to study Islam.

The Mubarak administration maintains stability in domestic politics, while the economy has grown to a certain degree by the restructuring of the economy toward a market economy in the 1990s, the problems of differences between the rich and the poor, and unemployment, have not been resolved causing disillusion and feelings of blockage to spread among the many youths who are not given opportunities for economic success. Under these circumstances, the general public's active commitment to Islam has spread steadily in the past few decades. While materialistic factors of European culture continue to flow in, underneath the surface, the devotion to Islam is spreading incorrigibly among the poor people and the students and university graduates who are dissatisfied with the present situation.

Economy was the largest domestic issue in 2003. Sudden price hikes triggered by the devaluation of the Egyptian pound at the end of January 2003 is oppressing the people's lives.

The health issue of President Mubarak was disclosed in November 2003, and as his second son was appointed to an important position in the ruling Party, the issue of his succession is arousing interest.

Military attacks and the subsequent occupation of Iraq by the United States and its allies in 2003 intensified the ill feelings of

the Egyptians against the United States. Criticism extended to Japan who supported and cooperated with the United States, but it was extraordinary that the citizens did not publicly voice their criticism against Japan as the Egyptians have been pro-Japanese, and this fact should not be taken lightly in Japan. Most of the criticism is based on misunderstanding and lack of knowledge. The importance of mutual understanding and exchange with the Arab world has never been higher.

2. Cultural Exchange with Japan

Japanese-Language education in Egypt has a history of over 30 years and is progressing stably. At the Japanese-Language and Japanese Literature Department in the Faculty of Literature at the University of Cairo, an Egyptian lecturer who graduated from this Department was promoted to a professor in 2003 for the first time, and he was appointed as the dean. This Department was established in 1974 as the first Japanese majoring course in the Arab world, and it has finally completed the process of independence after 29 years.

The Japanese-Language Department in Ain Shams University famous for foreign language education was established in 2000 and has attracted excellent students with successful achievement expected.

In the social science field, the Asian Studies Center in the Department of Economics at the University of Cairo conducted a research project and symposium (supported by the Japan Foundation) on the diplomatic policies of Japan. This Department is an elite institution in Egypt with strong social influence and connections with the policy makers, and it is remarkable that they started contemporary Japanese studies.

In the field of introduction of Japanese culture, the Egyptian national TV reran the NHK drama *Suzuran* in FY2003 after the original broadcast in FY2002, which is effective in generating pro-Japanese feelings. The Egyptian general public has a favorable impression of Japan as a country where original tradition and modernization co-exist harmoniously, but they lack specific knowledge of Japan. There is a strong need for the introduction of Japanese culture, which will be useful in understanding contemporary Japan in particular.

3. Activities of the Japan Foundation, Cairo

<Activity policies>

The Foundation cooperated in symposiums at the Department of Economics in the University of Cairo and dispatched a Japanese scholar for a lecture there as part of new efforts to promote intellectual exchange and Japanese studies in the social science field, the areas of focus for the operation in Egypt in FY2003. The Foundation planned a new operation to promote translation and publication based on research. These are preparations for operations in the coming years, which should lead to greater significance and effects in the medium to long run.

The Foundation introduced contemporary Japanese arts and cultural activities and traditional culture through the projects to promote introduction of Japanese culture in Egypt. The previous projects had tended to concentrate in the capital city of Cairo, but since Alexandria, the second largest city in Egypt, is energetic in cultural aspects through political reform in the prefecture and establishment of new cultural facilities, the Foundation increased the number of projects to introduce Japanese culture in Alexandria from FY2003. In the Japanese-Language field, the Foundation continued to support the domestic bases, endeavored in the formation of a network among the Japanese-Language teachers in the Middle Eastern region, reinforced the Japanese-Language teacher training program at the Foundation, Cairo and steadily conducted other activities.

<Examples of FY2003>

● Electronic media music: Japan-Egypt joint concert (June 15, 2003)

This is a collaboration project with musicians from Japan and Egypt. M. Abdul Wahab, an Egyptian composer and conductor of contemporary music, and three young Japanese composers of contemporary music composed new works of contemporary music using images and computer music, and the Cairo Orchestra performed them. The Japanese composers were Hiroyuki Yamamoto, Masahiro Miwa and Asako Miyagi, and video artist Akihiko Kaneko joined them to create the images. The Foundation supported this project and cooperated with the Cairo Opera House, which provided the hall.

Contemporary music is little known in Egypt, but as a result of a large-scale campaign, an unexpectedly large audience came to the concert. The local newspaper carried an article on this concert, and it was a good opportunity for the Egyptian people to know the tendency of the contemporary arts of Japan.



Japanese-Language education seminar in the Middle East

● **Japanese Culture Week in Alexandria (February 22 – 28, 2003)**

The Foundation held “Japanese Culture Week” with exhibitions, movie showings, concerts and other events in Alexandria with cooperation from the Alexandrian Arts Center. During this week, the Foundation exhibited ikebana, the photograph panels of the World Cultural Heritages in Japan and folkcrafts and showed Japanese movies with Arabic subtitles every evening, introducing a total of six films. On the evening of the opening day, the “Japanese International Wind Quartet” (woodwind quartet) held a concert at a theater in Alexandria.

The response was tremendous in Alexandria, which had had little opportunity to experience Japanese culture. The exhibition of ikebana attracted a particularly large amount of attention and the Japanese movies were so popular that many people could not even enter the hall.

A large number of the participants and visitors in Alexandria requested more events introducing Japanese culture and the Foundation confirmed the strong possibility and feasibility of further introducing Japanese culture in Alexandria.

● **Dispatch of a visiting professor to the Department of Economics at the University of Cairo (March 26 – April 2, 2003)**

The Foundation planned a lecture by a dispatched scholar to the Department of Economics at the University of Cairo to raise interest in Japanese studies in the social science field, which is not so active in Egypt. This Department is an elite institution that educates future diplomats, researchers and political officials. As criticism against Japan has risen due to the war in Iraq, the Foundation dispatched Assistant Professor Toshihiro Minohara from Kobe University who is a specialist in the history of diplomatic relations between Japan and the United States to deepen objective understanding of Japanese diplomacy. Minohara explained the large current of history of Japanese diplomacy, answered questions on the significance of the Japan-US alliance and the Iraq issue and presented an explanation of the background and frank opinions at an open lecture at the University of Cairo. It was not easy to plan a lecture on the relations between Japan and the United States inside the campus of a university in Egypt where anti-American feelings are strong and arguments on the Middle East dispute are emotional, but Minohara talked frankly and earnestly and was welcomed by the Egyptians. It was a fruitful exchange project. Many commented that it was good to hear a frank argument, and young students, in particular, surrounded

Minohara after the lecture and requested more talks from him. They seemed to have been strongly impressed and affected by the high-quality lecture by Minohara. An outline of the content of the lecture appeared in the local newspaper.



Symposium at the Asian Studies Center in the University of Cairo