

## *Notes*

# **A Note on Pakistan Studies in Japan<sup>\*</sup>**

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I feel a great pleasure to attend this gathering today held to launch a book, *Pakistan-Japan Relations, A Chronology* by Mr. Khalilur Rehman Shaikh as part of the activities to commemorate 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Japan. In the past 60 years, Pakistani writers have tried to introduce Japanese culture among Pakistani people through play-writes, stage and TV dramas, translations of a number of Japanese novels and fiction. They have also marvelously taken interest and participated in creating *Haiku* in Urdu language, the national language of Pakistan and the second largest speaking language in the world, and in other regional languages of Pakistan. Many renowned and prominent young poets in Pakistan are creating and publishing their Urdu *Haiku* collections. Besides *Haiku*, *Ikebana* has become a popular decorative art in mostly middle and upper middle class families in Pakistani urban life. Like *Haiku* and *Ikebana*, *Judo* and *Karate* have become very popular among young generations in Pakistan. We have regular gatherings to recite Urdu *Haiku* in our traditional *mushairas* and schools and classes have been established for teaching *Ikebana* and *Judo* and *Karate*. These efforts to introduce Japanese culture in Pakistan are, generally, not known in Japan. And in the same way, the efforts of Japanese scholars to study subjects that relate to Pakistan, especially its history and culture, are unfortunately not known the people of Pakistan. Even the scholars of relevant fields are not aware of such Japanese contributions due to several reasons, among them one is the language of research which is mostly Japanese.

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<sup>\*</sup> This paper is based on a speech delivered at the launching ceremony of a book, *Pakistan-Japan Relations: A Chronology*, by Mr. Khalil-ur-Rahman Sheikh published by Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi.

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During my stay and affiliation with Japan and its universities and my relations with Japanese scholars, I have tried to concentrate my efforts in enhancing research activities among scholars and help students and teachers of several universities in the fields of Pakistan Studies and the studies on modern Islamic movements and thoughts of South Asian Muslims. Having some experience of teaching and supervising scholars in the same discipline in seven highly reputed universities of Europe, Japan and Pakistan, I think that, comparatively, the interest of research on Islamic world and Muslims of South Asia is increasing in Japan, with a more balanced and unbiased outlook. About the academic contribution of Japanese scholars I have written a series of articles and notes in a leading Urdu magazine; a collection of such articles has been published in a book form titled *Mashriq-e Tabaan: The Studies of Islam, Pakistan and Urdu Language and Literature in Japan* in Islamabad in 2009.

Japan is known for its industrial progress, but its endeavors with special reference to scholarly and research activities done in Japanese language are little known by the people living outside Japan. Therefore, the outside world particularly Urdu world has very little knowledge about it. Sound tradition of Japan in research studies was established in the last decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century when the era of Meiji restoration tried to know the secrets of the developed countries' social and economic system, the trend of regional studies also gained ground. Some universities established centres to promote the regional studies in their disciplines and departments of many public and private institutions have continued that tradition.

Since the last few decades some scholars and institutions carried out research and took interest in Pakistan Studies. In particular the Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, Tokyo, at Tokyo University; Toyo Bunko, the Oriental library, in Tokyo; the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and Japan-Pakistan Association, Tokyo, have been prominent in keeping in touch with the aims of Pakistan Studies. The latter has organized events and lectures to introduce and promote Pakistan Studies, in particular, and some of its scholarly works are worth noticing. A journal, '*Pakistan*' was published regularly, till some time back, in which Japanese scholars wrote in their own language about the society, economics, history and politics of Pakistan. It also published regularly a Japanese translation of a short story or a piece of writing from a Pakistani writer. In these pieces Japanese writers also shared their experiences of visiting and living in Pakistan. Collections based on personal experiences and opinions, studies and analyses of Pakistan were also published focusing on the culture, social values, landscape, politics and economics of Pakistan.

A detailed and comprehensive bibliography, titled a *Directory to Pakistan* (in Japanese) is an important scholarly work done by the Japan-Pakistan Association. This book is in Japanese language, it comprises aspects of history, politics, culture, society, languages and literature of Pakistan and is edited by Prof. Asada Yutaka (former chairman, Department of Urdu, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) and Hiroki Fukamachi (expert on Pakistan's economic affairs). Both have their own sound contributions in this volume. The work of Prof. Asada Yutaka is on the language and literature of Urdu, his wife Miharu Asada has also contributed her work on the languages of northern Pakistan. Fukamachi has written on the economics and politics of Pakistan.

A book of similar nature was published in 2003 edited by Prof. So Yamane, Hirose Takako and Oda Hisaye and its title can be translated as *Sixty Chapters to go to Pakistan*. Information compiled in the sixty chapters can benefit those taking interest in getting acquainted with Pakistan. This book has gained lot of popularity and runs through its next editions in short spans of time. All the editors of the book have travelled to Pakistan. Prof. So Yamane received his education in Pakistan, as well, and since his first contact with Pakistan he has been regularly visiting this country twice and thrice in a year. At present he is busy studying, researching and writing on different topics of Pakistan's history, religion and culture.

Many studies have focused on the relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan in the last couple of decades. The studies on Afghanistan have also gained momentum in Japan. Experts are taking keen interest on both the countries either jointly or separately and in this regard articles are pouring in. A booklet of this nature has been co-edited by Fukamachi Hiroki and Oda Hisay. Both editors have done multiple research and analytical works on Pakistan. Fukamachi is not only an expert of politics and economics of Pakistan but is well-conversant with the language of Urdu. His wife also loves Pakistan and knows Urdu and has written her feelings of her experiences of Pakistani life.

Interest in Pakistan Studies in Japan is increasing and several universities like Waseda University, Keio University and Kyoto University and its Graduate Schools of Islamic Studies and Asia Africa Area Studies have been recently established. I am happy to see this developing phenomenon and I hope to see it flourishing more and more in the near future.