

On-site Education of Practical Languages for Area Studies

Report in 2008

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Graduate School of Asian and African Areas Studies

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On My research theme and Language Training

My research theme is about contemporary *ziyāra* (visit to the shrine or holy places) and religious tourism (*al-Siyāḥa al-Dīniya*) in Islam. I specially focus on the Shi'ite *ziyāra* and the Shi'ite religious sites in Syria like the Sayyida Zaynab shrine, which locates suburb of Damascus. More than two million people go for *ziyara* to the Sayyida Zaynab shrine, and Shi'ite religious sites in Syria every year. Most of them hail from regions outside Syria. Seventy percent of them are from Iran, twenty-five percent of them are from Lebanon, and five percent of them are from other countries such as Iraq, Turkey, the Gulf States, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. However, the site did not carry religious significance among the Shi'ite people in various areas until the middle of the twentieth century. Prior to this period, it was only revered by the local people such as Sitt Zeinab and Damascus. Furthermore, other Shi'ite religious sites were not famous among the Shi'ite people from outside Syria, and some of them were even ruined during that time.

Many researchers studied the rise in popularity of the Shi'ite *ziyara* in Syria from the end of the 1980s, following the renovation of the Sayyida Zaynab shrine. In their studies, they especially focused on the Iranian people, and they took cognizance of the post-1980 rise of Shi'ite Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran after 1980s. The year 1979 was especially significant, since it was then that the Iranian Revolution succeeded under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, and the Islamic Republic of Iran began to export the concept of the revolution. The researchers insisted that the rise in prevalence of the Shi'ite *ziyara* in Syria was the best example of the expansion of the revolutionary Iranian ideology in Syria. The other researchers also focused on the relationship between the political and social rise of Shi'ite Islam in various areas and the rise of the Shi'ite *ziyara*.

However, there are other reasons for the rise in popularity of the Shi'ite *ziyara* in Syria. Therefore, the aim of my study is to explain what contemporary *ziyāra* in Islam is through the Shi'ite *ziyāra* and Syrian governmental touristic policy such as “religious tourism” (*al-Siyāḥa al-Dīniya*).

This study needs two aspects: Reading books that are related to *ziyāra* and the story of Karbala, and make interviews to the people such as visitors and Shi'ite '*ulamā*'. Therefore, my language study in Egypt focused on reading and conversation related to that.

At al-Dīwān, I studies five hours per day, and six days per weeks. I concentrated on the speaking activities with my teacher at al-Dīwān. I also went to the bookshops and collected the books mentioned above.

My study stay in Egypt was very instructive. I thank all people who were concerned with me at Egypt. And I am also great thankful for International Training Program.



Photo 1: Lecture at al-Dīwān



Photo 2: At Dusūq