

Home Page: [OCIN INITIATIVE](#)

([Japanese Version](#))

([Arabic Version](#))

([Table of contents](#))

"The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(38)

By Areha Kazuya

E-mail: areha_kazuya@jcom.home.ne.jp

Chapter 5: Two calendars (Gregorian & Hijri)

5-2(38) Around Hijri 1400 (Gregorian 1980)

Hijri which started on July 16, 622 AD celebrated 1st of Muharram, 1400 on November 21, 1979 AD. It was the last year of the 14th century of Hijri. The 14th century of Hijri began in the year 1883 AD. As explained earlier, the year of Hijri is shorter than 11 days compared with the Gregorian calendar, so the length of one century of Hijri is four years shorter than Gregorian.

Before the 19th century AD, people in the Western countries of Christianity thought that the end of one century would cause serious fears. But in the age of modern science of the 20th century, such superstition had gone away. There was a small noise that the computer's "Year 2000 problem" might take place when the time passed away from December 31st, 1999 to January 1st, 2000.

Muslims did not make a loud noise about the 1400th year of Hijri. They were more sensitive to monthly events such as Ramadan and Haji (Great Pilgrimage). They are less confident about the change of the year. Therefore, changing of the year from 1399 to 1400 of Hijri did not be emphasized too much. However, it was a historical fact that major events occurred one after another in the Middle East before and after the year 1400 of Hijri.

For example, in Hijri 1399 (1978-79 AD) Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin had concluded a historical Camp David Accords mediated by the US President Jimmy Carter. They won the Nobel Peace Prize for that year, and the two countries signed the peace treaty in 1979 AD. But this brought about fierce opposition from other Arab countries. Egypt was expelled from the Arab League. Egypt lost the position as the leader in the Arab and Muslim world in return for bilateral peace with Israel.

The Iranian revolution occurred in January 1979 (Hijri 1399, hereinafter Gregorian calendar will basically be applied for easy understanding). In July 1979, Saddam Hussein assumed the presidency in Iraq. He aimed for the leader of Arab nations replacing Egypt. In August 1979, Ka'aba temple of

Makkah in Saudi Arabia was occupied by Islam extremist. It shocked the Saud ruling family. In September 1980 (Hijri 1401, the first year of the 15th century of Hijri) the Iran-Iraq war was broken out. Ayatollah Khomeini, supreme religious leader of Shia Islam aimed for the religious leader of whole Islam, while Saddam Hussein of Iraq aimed to be a dictator in the Middle East. Religion and ethnicity competed regional hegemony each other.

At this time, Saddam Hussein stipulated Iran-Iraq War as a battle between Shiite and Sunni of Muslims. Using such rhetoric, Saddam Hussein withdrew the war chest from Gulf oil-producing countries of the same Sunni states such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Of course, both Saddam Hussein and Gulf monarchies were the same secular states. The Iran-Iraq War, therefore, was not a battle between religious sects but it was the war between secularism and religion. When Iran put up a bad fight at the first stage of the war, the young Iranian volunteers appeared in the battlefield one after another. It was the "jihad" for the Iranian Shiite Muslims, who were driven by the sense of religious mission and bravely challenged against Arab secular states.

Although Saddam Hussein was Sunni, but many Shiite residents lives in southern Iraq. Shiites are the majority in Iraq. In Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Bahrain also there are many Shiites. In Bahrain the majority is Shiites. Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini allured these Shiite residents in Gulf countries to resist against their rulers. Sunni rulers in Gulf countries felt crisis. It was the reason why six Gulf States formed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981 (Hijri 1402). They feared that the Shiites would rise and overthrow the monarchy regime. Hussein brought a composition of Islam sectarian conflict into the Iran-Iraq War and involved the Gulf oil-producing countries into war. GCC countries have fallen into Hussein's trap.

In December 1979, the same year as of the Iran-Iraq War, the USSR invaded Afghanistan and the Afghan War broke out. These two wars continued during 1980s across the 14th and 15th century of Hijri.

Judging these historical incidents from the scale of Hijri, the years before and after 1400 of Hijri was the era of large crustal deformation or paradigm shift in the Middle East world. The driving force was the Islam. During the first decade of Hijri 15th century (From 1980 to 1990 AD), Muslims fought against apostates who had anti-Islam religion. The first enemy was an atheistic communist Afghanistan government. The second one was the struggle within two sects of Islam of Shiites vs Sunnis representing two major regional powers, namely Iran-Iraq War. The third one was the conflict between the Islam fundamentalism so-called Al-Qaeda and Islamic moderate forces and Western Christianity. September 11 attacks (also referred to as 9/11) in 2001 was the biggest tragedy. And until very recently, Islamic State (IS or ISIS), the virtual caliphate nation challenged the existing secular states of Iraq and Syria.

Like riot by Ikko sect of Buddhism in the 15th and 16th century in Japan, the religious riots used to become extremely radical in the end. The modern Islamic movement is also taking on that aspect. When the movement reached at the peak, it was self-destructed and lost the support of the masses. In Buddhism, it is said that prosperous must decay. Nobody knows when the struggle will end in the Middle East. It is true that "Only God (Allah) knows".

(To be continued ----)