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Gender Representation between Egypt and Japan: A Cross-Cultural Study of Gendered Representation

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Abstract

This study analyses representations of Japanese women in Egypt and representations of Egyptian women in Japan. By exploring the formation of Mutual gendered representations focusing on women in each country, the study seeks to create a space for dialogue between Egypt and Japan and deepen understanding between the two countries. After discussing the formation of gender representations in each country, the study identifies opportunities and challenges facing gender studies in Egypt and Japan to suggest possible paths forward. This study reviews gender-orientated studies by both Japanese and Egyptian scholars, as well as news articles and films. The study found that most Japanese studies on gender issues in Egypt adopt an empirical approach; in contrast, most Egyptian studies on gender issues in Japan adopt literary analysis. There remains a lack of interdisciplinary, cross-cultural studies on gender in both Egypt and Japan. Translating studies on these issues into other languages may help deepen understanding and encourage dialogue. However, translated studies alone are insufficient for examining in-depth the historical and cultural specificities of both societies.

Keywords

Area Studies, Islam, MENA, Orientalism, Regional Studies, Interdisciplinary

1. Introduction

Gender representation is a critical element of culture that is a key to understanding any society. However, the interpretive models developed primarily in Western societies are insufficient for studying the issues of gender representation and socialisation. For example, Ahmed discusses some important issues re-

lated to women and gender in Islam such as highlighting that, "male dominance had already gained ground prior to the rise of urban societies" (Ahmed, 1992: p. 12). However, Ahmed relies mainly on secondary sources conducted by Western orientalists and Western gaze to analyse the historical roots of gender and Islam. Although Ahmed mentions that women in the first Muslim community participated in the activities that preoccupied their community; those included religion as well as war. Women of the first Muslim community attended mosque, took part in religious services on feast days, and listened to Muhammad's discourses" (p. 72), contradicting her assumptions about the limitations on Muslim women's lives and her assumption that, the lives and the marriages of two of Muhammad's wives, Khadija and Aisha, foreshadow the changes that Islam would affect Arabian women (pp. 42-43). However, Aisha's marriage cannot be generalised to foreshadow the changes that Islam would affect Arabian women. Rather, a deeper understanding of the social and historical context for marriage conditions is necessary. As Ahmed, herself mentions, ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab complained that before coming to Medina "we the people of Quraysh [Mecca] used to have the upper hand over our wives, but when we came among the Ansar [Helpers], we found that their women had the upper hand over their men, so our women also started learning the ways of the Ansari women" (Ahmed, 1992: pp. 52-53). This reflects the extent of regional differences in the treatment of women and the extension of the impact of these differences even after Islam.

As for the Japanese case, Takano relates that an Italian anthropologist once stated, 'What is individuality in Japanese society? In most cases, it can be said that individuality does not exist'. Takano also highlights the Western perception that 'all Japanese people look that same', which is reflected in Western newspapers and media (Takano, 2019: pp. 18-19). However, as Nakane states, the field of sociology first developed in the West, and therefore, it is natural that sociologists have primarily relied on Western theory and modes of analysis. When such theories are applied to societies with significantly different histories and ethnic backgrounds, problems arise due to the gap between theory and empirical reality (Nakane, 1967: p. 11). Similarly, research on gender representation and socialisation requires a deeper understanding of social and historical context besides overcoming gender Orientalism and fostering dialogue based on an in-depth understanding of social and historical context.

Approximately 10% of the Egyptian population is Christian (Copts). The remaining 90% are Muslim. Therefore, many studies have had to grapple with the question of 'What is Islam?' (Omar, 2022b). However, there are several customs and rituals that all Egyptians have shared in common since ancient times. Egyptian culture has developed over a long time and contains popular beliefs and customs that affect Egyptian Culture. There is little Japanese gender studies research on Egypt that considers this point. In addition, as Minesaki (2007: p. 95) pointed out the problem is that some approaches that combine the concepts of gender and the concepts of feminism. These approaches consider gender norms

as constant across the globe and to be closely linked to and compatible with human rights, democracy and civil society affect some gender oriented studies related to Islamic countries (cf. Katō, 2005: p. 7). However, although concepts of feminism are universal, gender and gender socialisation are specific to the culture of each society. Gender is related to the social attributes of men and women, the different opportunities available to them, and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys. These social attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and learned through socialisation. That is, they are time and context-specific and subject to change (cf. UN WOMEN[1]). Additionally, there are few studies on gender issues in Egypt that consider the historical and cultural contexts that shape gender issues in Japan. Japanese culture has evolved through circumstances different from those of Egyptian culture and Western cultures. Moreover, due to the lack of gender-related studies by Egyptian researchers, some representations of Japanese women in Egypt tend to be orientalist in nature and explicitly or implicitly affected by the nihonjinron (日本人論)[2] as will be discussed. Additionally, there are few comparative and cross-cultural studies of Japan and Egypt, resulting in a lack of cross-cultural dialogue. Therefore, these two countries' mutual gender representations of each other include a type of misrepresentation that differs from Orientalism as defined by Edward Said (1979), as Said's Orientalism widely refers to the Orient in opposition to the Occident (i.e., 'the East' and 'the West'). However, both Egypt and Japan are so-called 'oriental' societies, and there is no colonial relationship between them.

As Ahmed highlights, Egypt has played and continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the significant Arab discourses regarding women. Moreover, advancements in Egypt concerning women's issues, similar to other domains, closely mirror, reflect, and at times even prefigure the developments in other Arab nations (Ahmed, 1992: p. 6). On the other hand, Egypt and Japan have strong economic and cultural ties, and analysing gender issues in Japan can facilitate collaboration and understanding between the two countries. Moreover, Egypt and Japan have a unique cultural and historical context that shapes their gender dynamics, and studying these dynamics can broaden mutual understanding of gender issues and their intersections with culture, history, and social norms.

Despite the recent growth of Japanese studies in Egypt and the Arab world, there are still few studies on gender issues within Japanese culture. In Egypt, translated works of literature, Egyptian and Japanese dramas about Japan, films and print media contain strong representations of Japanese culture and women. This study examines gendered representation produced in both Egypt and Japan.

The study seeks to create a space for dialogue and deepen understanding be-

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[1]https://japan.unwomen.org/ja/news-and-events/news/2018/9/definition-gender (retrieved on 25 November 2022).

[2]Nihonjinron refers to a category of texts that examines the topic of Japanese identity and culture. This genre gained prominence after World War II and typically includes books and articles that compare and contrast Japanese culture with those of Western continents, such as Europe and North America.

tween Egypt and Japan by investigating the gendered representation, focusing on women's representation of Japan produced in Egypt and vice versa. In addition to reviewing both Japanese and Egyptian gender studies research, this paper also analyses media as a primary source of gendered representations. The study first analyses gendered representations of Japanese people created in Egypt and then examine gendered representations of Egyptian people produced in Japan. Finally, the study clarifies some challenges facing studies on cross-cultural gender studies in both Egypt and Japan and then suggests a future path forward.

2. Research Design and Methodology—Cross-Cultural Studies and Gender Representation

One merit of cross-cultural studies is that they enable the researchers to rediscover their cultures while studying the 'Other'. Gender representation and socialisation are important aspects of understanding any society. However, when studying a society, it is insufficient to rely solely on the interpretive models developed primarily in Western societies; instead, a comprehensive understanding of the specific social context is necessary. The author was inspired by the notion of space for dialogue that was discussed in Juvan's study about world literature, when conducted the first study of comparative literature, as Juvan states: world literature is "primarily a space for intercultural dialogue: through the circulation of texts and their active presence in foreign environments, individuals and communities are supposed to broaden their horizons, reflect upon their own identity in an intercultural relationship to otherness, surpass nationalist narrow-mindedness, strengthen the cosmopolitan ethos, refashion domestic traditions, increase the scope of the expressible, and gain an opportunity to establish themselves globally even if they write in a minor language. (Juvan, 2013: p. 4)". However, although the importance of world literature, comparative literature, and comparative culture as well, these kinds of studies have been targets of criticism because of Eurocentrism hegemony. The author believes that analysing cultural phenomena from cross-cultural perspectives is crucial. However, researchers should pay attention to avoid hegemonic discourse, and this does not mean leaving criticism of certain practices from the researchers' point of view.

Since the 1970s, there has been an increase in the number of studies on the Middle East worldwide due to certain political factors, such as the oil crisis (Al-Qa'id, 2001: p. 182). As a result, gender studies research on Egyptian women has also increased. In Japan, interest in Middle Eastern studies, Islam and gender began to increase in the 1990s, and most of these studies adopted an empirical approach. However, mutual cross-cultural studies between the two countries are still limited.

To develop comparative or cross-cultural studies between Egypt and Japan, it is necessary to first understand the current state of research, particularly regarding women and gender studies research. It is also crucial to identify existing problems with the studies, which represent both opportunities and challenges

for cross-cultural research. Indeed, to promote dialogue and mutual understanding between the two countries, it is necessary to clarify the current state of mutual representation formation. For this purpose, this study first presents an overview of studies on gender representation in Japan and Egypt and then analyses media representations of gender in both countries.

3. Gendered Representations of Japanese People Produced in Egypt

In Egypt, the most common images of Japanese society include samurais, ninjas, Martial arts, Captain Tsubasa (known in Arab societies as Captain Majid), sushi, kimonos, Japanese technology and Japanese etiquette and anime. Regarding gendered representations, the series *Oshin* has strongly influenced Egyptian people's images of Japanese women. The next section sheds light on the gender representation of Japanese people in the Egyptians studies, Egyptian writings and media.

3.1. Gender Representation of Japanese People in the Egyptian Studies

In the 1970s, the first department of Japanese language and literature in Egypt was established at the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University. Subsequently, the study of the Japanese language, literature and history developed within Egypt. This enabled the flourishing of translations from Japanese to Arabic, including translations of Japanese literary works by Academic such as Ahmed Fathy. Fathy translated many valuable works, such as *The Tale of Genji (Genji monogatari, 源氏物語)*, *The Gikeiki (義経記; The Chronicle of Yoshitsune)*, *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter (竹取物語)*, *Tsugumi (つぐみ)*, *Hikari no ryōbun (光の領分; Territory of Light)*, and many other works. Fathy's translations greatly increased Egyptian people's familiarity with Japanese culture. Since then, many other translations have been completed by specialists in Japanese language departments; however, research into Japanese gender issues remains limited. Moreover, Japanese-to-Arabic translations are still scarce compared Japanese-to-English translations. Moreover, there is a lack of accumulated experience in translations from Japanese to Arabic. For example, there are multiple English translations of the Japanese work *The Tale of the Heike*. Likewise, many old Japanese manuscripts have been translated into modern Japanese multiple times by different translators. The author read three modern Japanese translations (Ozaki, 2015; Nakayama, 2004; Ōtsu & Hirafuji, 2014) and an English translation of *The Tale of the Heike* (Tyler & Michael, 2014). Each translation has a different style. This is important, as no translation perfectly reflects the author's original intentions. Therefore, multiple translations enable readers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the work, especially when the work deals with cultural phenomena. The author chose Ahmed Fathy's Arabic translations of Japanese literary works because they are important pioneering works, and the author learned a

great deal from Fathy and his translations. These translations often pay more attention to the social and cultural contexts of the texts. This makes the works enjoyable, as the sentences convey the events smoothly and make the reader feel that they are reading a work originally written in the Arabic language. Therefore, Fathy's translation and other Japanese-Arabic translations provide an important introduction to Japanese culture and raise many questions for the reader. However, a translated work alone is insufficient to convey all of the cultural attributes of a country or gender relations.

Some English-language works about Japan have also been translated into Arabic, including *Memoirs of a Geisha* (Golden, 1997). This work contains a gendered Orientalism and misrepresentation of 'geisha girls', which is a common misrepresentation of Japanese culture (cf. Kogure, 2008: pp. 48-82). The novel and subsequent movie influenced the image of Japanese women overseas. The original novel was published in 1997 and was subsequently made into a movie in the United States in 2005. Both Arthur Golden, the author of the novel, and Rob Marshall, the director of the film adaptation, are Americans who were born and raised in the United States. Arthur Golden had no experience with Japanese geishas. When writing *Memoirs of a Geisha*, Golden interviewed Mineko Iwasaki to gather background information to help him represent geisha and enhance the credibility of his work (Akita, 2006). In the novel, the geisha are introduced as sexualised objects, and Japanese society is portrayed as being lascivious. Geishas are described as girls who have been trafficked by their families. Although the film was popular in the United States, it was not as successful in Japan due to its misrepresentations of geisha and Japanese society (Akita, 2006).

As for the studies conducted by Egyptian scholars, several Egyptian scholars have conducted studies in Japanese universities on gender within the field of literary analysis (e.g., Salem, 1983; AlKuraidi, 1987; Amin, 1991; Sabri, 2006; Omar, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

Recently Egyptian scholars produced studies in Egyptian Universities on gender within the field of literary analysis (e.g., Sabri, 2016; Nour, 2014; Ibrahim, 2015; Mohamed, 2019; El-Dakrouri, 2019; Abou El-kheir, 2022). There are also studies by Arab scholars in Arab countries (e.g., Ali, 2020). Ali's study is written in Arabic, thus it could be read by Egyptians.

Amin conducted a unique empirical comparative study of *marriage and divorce* in Egypt and Japan (Amin, 1991). A study was conducted by Karam Khalil Salem about female poet Shunzei no Musume[3] and *waka*[4] (Salem, 1983). This study discusses Shunzei no Musume within the social and cultural contexts of the period during which she was active while focusing on her songs in order to highlight certain cultural changes. Salem also recently published multiple collections of lectures representing his perspective on the history of Japanese women's literature and the social problems that these works address. These books deal

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[3]Shunzei no Musume (approx. 1171-1252) was a Japanese poet; she was considered the greatest female poet of her day (Rexroth & Ikuko, 1977: p. 147).
[4]Waka (和歌) is a type of poetry in classical Japanese literature.

with the development of Japanese women's literature, including the ancient, medieval and modern eras; it also addresses the characteristics of Japanese literature (Salem, 2021). These works are important because, unlike most of the master's and doctoral dissertations by Japanese language specialists working in literary studies in Egypt, this work was written in Arabic, enabling the general reader to engage with the subject. AlKuraidi (1987) conducted a study on the image of the mother in Japanese literature that focuses on the literary works of Junichiro Tanizaki. Amin's study, Salem's Stduy and AlKuraidi Study employ the methodology of area studies.

Recently, there has been an increase in feminist and gender studies approaches to Japanese literature in Egypt. For example, A. Sabri (2006) produced a study on feminism in the literary works of Nobuko Yoshiya. Later, Sabri conducted a study on female characters in Taijiro Tamura's post-war literary works (Sabri, 2016). W. A. A. Ibrahim (2015) wrote a dissertation about *'The Image of the Mother in Shotaro Yasuoka's Literature: In Light of Absence of Father and War Experience'*. Moreover, Abou El-kheir wrote a dissertation about *'The Image of Women in Modern Japanese Women's Literature: Focusing on Ichiyo Higuchi's Thirteen Nights and Yuriko Miyamoto's Nobuko'* (2022). Mohamed (2019) conducted a study about the image of legal wives and concubines in the Meiji era (1868-1912), focusing on the work Onnazaka (女坂) by female writer Fumiko Enchi. El-Dakrouri (2019) analysed the work of Tsushima Yuko in her study about, 'The Female Figure in Contemporary Japanese Women's Literature: Focusing on The Territory of Light'. However, most of the studies mentioned here were conducted in the Japanese language, making them inaccessible to common Egyptian readers. Moreover, most of these studies focus on works of literature. Multiple studies focus on the image of the mother due to the 'holy' status of mothers in Arabic and Islamic societies.

In 2014, Safaa Nour conducted a historical study tracing the development of both Egyptian and Japanese feminism as two models that differ from the Western model. However, the study concentrates on the historical development of the feminist movements rather than gender study (Nour, 2014).

Ali's (2020) comparative study assumes that Japanese women had distinguished roles in the history of old, middle and modern Japan. However, their position has changed due to several factors, ultimately leading to the deterioration of women's status in Japanese society. This study compared women's rights under the Meiji constitution of 1889 and the 1946 constitution. However, although the study assumes that, Japanese women had distinguished roles in the history of old, middle and modern Japan, the study did not thoroughly analyse women's role in the old and middle eras of Japanese history.

recently, Omar analysed the female circumcision phenomenon from a cross-cultural perspective and multiple aspects (Omar, 2021, 2022c), beside analysing Gender representation in *Sīrat al-Amīrah Dhāt al-Himmah* (Omar, 2022a) and Gender Representation in *The Tale of the Heike* (Omar, 2022d) taking into account the historical and cultural background of the two works. Omar (2022a: pp.

184-185) asserts that, "By examining the historical background of the work, the content of the literary work becomes even deeper, and various facets and events in society can be better understood". However, Omar's work still has space for deepening the theoretical framework.

3.2. Gender Representations of Japanese People in Egyptian Writings

There are some books written by Egyptian travellers that praise Japanese society (e.g., Al Jerjawy, 2017; Al-Qa'id, 2001). Al Jerjawy,[5] who travelled to Japan in 1906 to attend a conference on religion, claimed to have introduced Islam to Japan. However, in the beginning part of his book, Al Jerjawy dwells on the details of Egyptian cities and discusses several political events from his political perspective; this is strange, as he claimed to have shortened the events of the conference in Japan in order not to bore the reader. Al Jerjawy also provides exaggerated descriptions of the people living in Egyptian cities, stating that the Alexandrians, unlike the rest of the Egyptians, had morals, which he claims is due to their dealings with foreigners (Al Jerjawy, 2017: p. 17). He also provides protracted descriptions of Arab countries and their histories (Al Jerjawy, 2017: p.21). Al Jerjawy glorifies the British occupation of Egypt; he justifies and praises British colonialism (Al Jerjawy, 2017: p. 41). Al Jerjawy legitimised the occupation and ignored the fact that the occupiers killed innocent people and plundered the wealth of occupied countries. Al Jerjawy's book is outdated[6] and he does not begin addressing Japan until nearly halfway through the book. Moreover, he mentions women only briefly and only in the context of the moral expectations placed on Japanese women. For example, Al Jerjawy describes Japanese women as chivalrous, highly educated and patriotic; he also states that Japanese families place importance on educating their daughters (Al Jerjawy, 2017: pp. 126-128).

Al-Qa'id is an Egyptian novelist and journalist who visited Japan in 1993 at the invitation of the Japan Foundation, and in 2001, he published a book about his Japanese travel (Al-Qa'id, 2001). He greatly admired Japanese culture, society and morals. Like most Egyptians, he sympathised deeply with the Japanese people regarding Hiroshima and Nagasaki and mentions them more than once in his book (Al-Qa'id, 2001). In his book, he mentions multiple times that before his travel to Japan, many of his Egyptian acquaintances said to him, 'Do not forget to say hello to *Oshin*', which reflects the Egyptian people's love and respect for the character of *Oshin*. In his book, Al-Qa'id sheds light on the social and historical context of producing *Oshin* drama series in Japan, and the circumstances of broadcasting on Egyptian TV and other countries' (Al-Qa'id, 2001: pp. 91-93). Al-Qa'id repeats the following question throughout his book: Why did the Japanese succeed when the Egyptians did not, despite the fact that the two

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[5]In 1906, Al Gergawi visited Japan as the first Egyptian to do so. His admiration for Japan and the Japanese people was highlighted in his famous book *alrihla alyabania in* 1907.
[6]First published in 1907.

countries entered modernity at approximately the same time? (Al-Qa'id, 2001: pp. 16-17+137-139+189). This question reflects the writer's search for himself in the world of the Japanese other; it also demonstrates that the writers could not be separated from their environment, circumstances and intellectual orientation. Despite his fascination with everything Japanese, he was continually preoccupied with the questions of why Japanese people's faces reveal a tinge of sadness and anxiety and why Japanese writers commit suicide such as Mishima Yukio and Kawabata Yasunari (Al-Qa'id, 2001: pp. 11+255+270). Al Jerjawy and Al-Qa'id are both men, and their books mainly focus on their experiences with Japanese society. Meanwhile, issues regarding women and gender are mentioned only briefly in their books. For example, while attending Tokyo University for Foreign Studies' annual carnival, Al-Qa'id expressed his admiration for the cooperation displayed between male and female students. That is, unlike in Egypt, male students did not gaze at female students in an atmosphere of sexual tension (Al-Qa'id, 2001). Despite visiting Japan for just a short time, Al-Qa'id's observations of Japan were detailed. However, his relationship with Japanese society was like that of a honeymooner; therefore, he did not study women's issues in depth. He also didn't scrutinise whether Japanese women and female students enjoyed true equality in Japanese society, as he was constantly comparing Japan and Egypt, which certainly impacted his opinion. Although the book is valuable as an Egyptian intellectual's perspective on Japanese society, not all of his impressions are based on in-depth observation. For example, Al-Qa'id states that 'after a person dies and is cremated in Japan, their ashes are placed in a bottle that is placed on top of a mountain, And after a short time, the bottle is washed away by rain, and the matter of the deceased is over' (Al-Qa'id, 2001: p. 148). However, this characterisation did not accurately reflect death practices in Japan at that time. He also describes the mountains of Japan as green and void of any sand or stones (Al-Qa'id, 2001: p. 157). This description is an exaggeration, as he did not visit all the mountains of Japan.

3.3. Egyptian Media and Gendered Representations of Japanese Women

There is a lack of Arabic-language studies on Japanese society and culture that address Japanese women and gender in Japan. On the other hand, Egyptian films and dramas that deal with Japanese women, especially Egyptian comedies and dramas, portray stereotypical images of Japanese women and their relationships with men. Some of these films and dramas include misrepresentations of Japanese women. Although the Italian anthropologist's statement referred by Takano which states that In most cases individuality does not exist in Japanese Society and Japanese people's appearance (Takano, 2019: pp. 18-19) and the *nihonjinron* (日本人論) theory are unknown to common Egyptians, the sentiment that 'all Japanese people look the same' is popular in Egypt. This is particularly true in the context of Egyptian's views of Japanese women. Furthermore, the Egyp-

tian comedy film *Karkar* (2007), which is directed by Ali Ragab, contains the following joke: 'If a Japanese man enters the market with his Japanese wife and she joins the crowd, he might get confused and leave the market with another woman without noticing the difference because they all have the same face'. Moreover, the indirect influence of the *nihonjinron* effect can be seen in a passage from Al-Qa'id's book where his friend asks him to verify on his journey to Japan that 'they [Japanese people] are completely unlike us. They are successful in groups, but they are completely unsuccessful as individuals. In contrast, we are successful on the individual level and fail in groups' (Al-Qa'id, 2001: p. 34).

The image of Japanese women in Egyptian society was also influenced by the *Oshin* television drama broadcast on Egyptian television in the 1990s. The character *Oshin* is a girl with a strong will and a love for life who overcomes many difficulties and hardships and smiles and bows with great politeness. She captured the hearts of many Egyptians. The *Oshin* series portrays women as speaking humbly and respectfully when conversing with their husbands, even when their husbands are angry.

Egyptian comedies and films also portrayed Japanese women as worshipping men. For example, in the series *Super Meero* (2019), a hard-working Japanese woman named Hoshinami meets an Egyptian man named Hodhod. Hodhod is a skinny man and an unsuccessful inventor. Normally, no Egyptian woman would want to marry a man like him; however, Hoshinami admires him and asks him to marry her. Within the narrative, Hoshinami is intentionally contrasted with strong and arrogant Egyptian women who treat men unfairly in marriage, forcing them to buy them apartments, furniture and expensive engagement gifts, such as gold or diamonds. Men must also sometimes pay *mahr*[7]. However, in this comedy series, the Japanese woman gives Hodhod some money as a contribution to the marriage. Although Egyptian women and their families also contribute to the expenses of marriage and the marital home, more responsibility falls on the husband and the increase in consumer society becomes burdensome to both parties. Some Egyptian families believe that exhausting a husband financially and forcing him to overcome certain obstacles in order to get married increases the prestige of the daughter and makes the husband feel more responsible for taking care of his family after the marriage. In *Super Meero*, Hodhod is surprised when Hoshinami gives him money and apologises for being unable to deliver a large *mahr*. Hoshinami says to him, 'Our women are the ones who give a man a *mahr*, as we worship our men in Tokushima'. Astonished, Hodhod replies, 'Our women are the ones who oppress and humiliate men'. The series is comedic, and the audience knows that there is a degree of exaggeration; however, the repetitive images of a Japanese woman worshipping and chasing after a man, as well as the lack of research on Japanese women, has resulted in stereotypical images of Japanese women circulating in Egyptian society. The Egyptian film *Mutarada Ghramia* (مطاردة غرامية; *A Love Chase*) (1968) features famous actor Fouad el-Mohandes in the role of a pilot who loves women. His job enables him to

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[7]The money or possessions paid by the groom, to the bride at the time of Islamic marriage.

have relationships with women of different nationalities, including Japanese, American and Mexican women. His Egyptian lover decides to teach him a lesson by imitating his Japanese, American and Mexican lovers. At the end of the film, she reveals her deception. She reprimands him and then breaks up with him, ignoring his pleas and explaining that she wanted to teach him that no woman can compare to an Egyptian woman. Works such as *Super Meero* and *Mutarada Ghramia*, although comedies that viewers interpret as artistic exaggerations, repeat contrast images of Japanese women who worship men with Egyptian women, and in this way, these works misrepresent both Egyptian and Japanese women.

This poor understanding of Japanese women is also reflected in newspapers. For instance, in 2016, there was a journal article titled 'If you think you are oppressed (i.e. Egyptian women), learn about the injustice in Japanese women's lives' (لو فاكرة نفسك مظلومة.. تعرفى على الظلم فى حياة المرأة اليابانية ; Shauki, 2016). The article contains unsupported statements about Japanese women, such as, 'Japan is a man's paradise. Once married, Japanese women are among the most obedient in the world, whether to their fathers, husbands or sons, as they are considered inferior to men… The strangest thing is that men divorce women if they do not give birth or if they talk a lot and are lazy... Despite this, Japanese women are cheerful and always wear brightly coloured clothes. After marriage, they must be modest in their clothes… It is an old custom in Japan for the wife to attempt to look gloomy so that outside her house, no one will pay attention to her. One way of doing this is to blacken one's teeth. That way, if she smiles, she will look ugly. If she becomes a widow, she wears clothes that give her the appearance of misery and sadness'. Although some of these practices, such as blackening one's teeth, were practised at some point in ancient times, they would have had a different meaning, and therefore, this newspaper article is misinformation. This does not mean that Japanese women do not suffer from male supremacy; however, this article is an exaggeration. Recently, images of girls in anime have contributed indirectly to Egyptian teenagers' impressions of Japanese girls. However, this point requires deeper analysis which this study will not provide.

In Egypt and the Arab world, the absence of critical research on media misrepresentations of Japan, as well as the actual gender relations in Japan, has resulted in stereotypical images of Japanese women circulating widely in Egyptian society. Movies and images, in particular, have contributed to these misrepresentations, as they often have a stronger impact than printed material.

4. Gendered Representations of Egyptians in Japan

4.1. Gender Representation of Egyptians in the Japanese Gender Studies

As mentioned, In Japan, interest in Middle Eastern studies, Islam and gender began to increase in the 1990s. Motoko Katakura was one of the first researchers in Japan to publish research based on fieldwork in Egypt, Syria, Iran and the United Arab Emirates (Katakura, 1979, 1991, 1998, 2004, 2008). Katakura's works

discuss the diversity of Islamic society and highlight the mass media's misrepresentation of Islam (Katakura, 2004: p. 6). Katakura also addresses gender issues. For example, she highlighted that, since the rise of Islam, education has been considered important for both women and men and that Islam teaches that men and women are basically equal. She mentions that the acceptance of polygamy was intended to help war widows and orphans (Katakura, 2004: p. 7). As Katakura argued in her discussion of Islam, Islam clearly states that education is important for both women and men and that men and women are basically equal. However, polygamy is not limited to helping war widows and orphans. However, polygamy, which occasionally occurs in reality, does not necessarily meet the conditions stipulated by Islamic law. Katakura's symbolic analysis of Japanese and Arab thought employs an interesting comparison of the Islamic and Arab culture as 'a culture of movement' and Japanese agricultural culture as a 'culture of settlement'. Katakura asserts that in the histories of both cultures, the concepts of 'settlement culture' and 'culture of movement' have not remained consistent. She also emphasises the diversity of both cultures (Katakura, 2008: pp. 12-16+174-192). Katakura also applies this comparison to her survey of the Egyptian community in Canada. She states the Egyptian Islamic marriage contracts that she analyses contained many details related to divorce, and she argues that it is a sign that the 'culture of movement' stuck with the Egyptians, even in Canada, which differs from Japanese marriage documents which reflect the 'culture of settlement' (Katakura, 2008: pp. 11-12). Despite her interesting symbolic comparison, in this study, Katakura does not analyse regional and historical differences in the Islamic world and their effect on the culture of marriage.

Through his fieldwork and experiences in Egypt, North Sudan and Saudi Arabia in the early 1980s (Ōtsuka, 1989, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2002a, 2002b, 2004), Ōtsuka has examined many issues and has conducted various cross-cultural studies related to Islamic culture from multiple perspectives. For example, he has written about female circumcision and the veil (Ōtsuka, 2000a). Ōtsuka has also focused on various Muslim rituals in Egypt and Sudan, such as circumcision, marriage and burials. Ōtsuka emphasises the diversity of the Muslim societies that he has analysed. He also engages in detailed discussions of folk beliefs regarding saints in Egypt. Ōtsuka's studies are unique for their focus on theory and cultural phenomenon. He provides examples from Egyptian, Sudanese and other cultures. He examines the relationship between clothing as symbols of modern Egypt and so-called 'Islamic fundamentalism' from various angles (Ōtsuka, 1989).

Moreover, Ōtsuka addresses the veneration of saints and several topics related to Sufism (Ōtsuka, 1989). He sometimes addresses folk beliefs and gender issues; however, these discussions lack depth. For example, he states, 'In Egyptian society, there is an idea that even if someone with the evil eye stares at a newborn baby, if that person doesn't know the real name of the newborn, the evil eye won't have an effect' (Ōtsuka, 2004: p. 55). However, the issue involves more

than the name: It also concerns the gender of the child. In Egyptian popular belief, male newborns are given strange female nicknames to hide the baby's gender. As Ōtsuka explains, 'A male newborn was dressed up in girl's clothes' (Ōtsuka, 2004: p. 55). For example, the author heard that in one Egyptian village, there was a woman whose male children always died. Therefore, she decided to give her final newborn son the nickname Kheisha (meaning 'a worn-out piece of cloth') to protect him from the evil eye. The boy lived, and the name remained with him throughout childhood and even late into adulthood; he is still sometimes called by this nickname by his friends and relatives as a joke. Nevertheless, Ōtsuka's research was conducted based on his fieldwork in the 1980s, and therefore, these cultural practices have likely changed and evolved.

However, Ōtsuka was one of the first Japanese researchers to discuss female circumcision (Ōtsuka, 2004: p. 60). He made several important observations regarding this topic. He was also one of the first Japanese researchers to stress the importance of addressing the problem of female circumcision from a local viewpoint (Ōtsuka, 2004: p. 60). Ōtsuka mentions that Grand Imam Gad al-Haq[8], the former president of the Al-Azhar Organisation, publicly expressed the view that female circumcision has no relation to Islam (Ōtsuka, 1998: p. 273). However, Grand Imam Gad al-Haq supported female circumcision (Omar, 2021: p. 266). Ōtsuka also investigates the issue of honour killings, which are common not only in Islamic societies but also in the Mediterranean region (Ōtsuka, 2000a: p. 114). Ōtsuka argues that 'the veil of Muslim women in Egypt in the 1970s was regarded as the latest fashion rather than simply a return to the "grandmother's veil", and although putting the veil back on demonstrates that women are interested in religion, it does not mean they support so-called "radical Islamist movements". He also assumed that the veil could be considered a consequence of the search for self-identity among relatively well-educated young women living in cities in the context of ongoing cultural changes (Ōtsuka, 2000a: pp. 121-122). As for the veil in contemporary Egyptian society, it is a topic that has attracted the attention of many researchers (e.g., Hirai, 2005; Goto, 2014).

Ōtsuka assumes that it is a myth that Middle Eastern women are alienated from 'politics' (Ōtsuka, 2000a: pp. 118-119). He cites a study conducted by the female anthropologist Nelson that provides several examples of the involvement of Middle Eastern women in political life (Nelson, 1974). Ōtsuka also mentions anthropologist Abd al-Ghaffar Ahmad (Ahmad, 1974: p. 37), who, while discussing the nomads of the Blue Nile region of Sudan, argues that women's involvement in politics and public life from behind the scenes and within the home influences men's public positions. Ōtsuka also criticises the tendency to try to understand the contrasting theme of inside and outside through the dualism of the public and private.

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[8]Ōtsuka's spelling of the name Gad al-Haq is closer to the correct Arabic comapred to Omar's spelling. Moreover, in her study Omar used the word Seishoku-sha 聖職者 (i.e., Clergy) refererring to Muslim Scholars (Omar, 2021: pp. 265+269). However, the accurate word is ʿUlamāʾ (the singular is ʿĀlim (i.e., Islamic Scholar)) as Islam, has no clergy.

Ōtsuka was a thorough researcher of Egyptian society who closely examined cultural and historical contexts. Ōtsuka died in 2009, and therefore, his rich and valuable contributions have, unfortunately, stopped.

Akahori analyses gender issues related to the Bedouin people of the western desert of Egypt, such as the problem of honour killing, the veil and the harem. Akahori states, 'In terms of numbers, the Bedouin are a small minority, comprising less than 1% of the total Arab population. Nevertheless, the Bedouins have greatly influenced the formation of the image of Arab' (Akahori, 2005: p. 39). Akahori outlines the importance of separating patrilineality (a common kinship system whereby an individual's family membership derives from and is recorded through their father's lineage) from paternalism (as a power system) (Akahori, 2005: pp. 48-51). Akahori briefly makes an interesting point regarding gender issues such as the relationship between women and *faqihs*[9] he mentions that a Bedouin woman who was having trouble giving birth to a boy told him that she had been going to a *faqhih* mausoleum every morning for over a year until her wish to conceive was fulfilled (Akahori, 1995: p. 108). However, Akahori's study contains ambiguous points, such as whether the reference to women being prohibited from slaughtering livestock under Islamic law is based on the text of Islamic law or on the judgment of the parties concerned (Akahori, 2005: p. 41). Moreover, the relationship between the concept of thaʾr (*meaning 'revenge'*), which is associated with honour killings, and the concept of Qisas (*meaning 'retaliation in kind')* in Islamic sharia law requires further analysis because there is a significant difference between the two (Akahori, 2021: p. 85). Furthermore, more details are needed on the historical background of the Bedouin tribes, such as the *Al-Murābiṭīn (Almoravids)*, who have a unique history. It would be interesting to analyse the development of the position of the tribe, the author believes that the name Al-Murābiṭīn possesses a deeper meaning and history than the definition of 'those who are bound' that is provided in the article (Akahori, 2021: p. 86).

Eiji Nagasawa's (2019) book *Social History of the Family in Modern Egypt* is a work of family research that employs the methodology of area studies. It sheds light on the history of the Egyptian family and its development throughout the modern era from multiple perspectives. The book is composed of articles and discussions that Nagasawa has published over the past 30 years .The book is divided into two parts. The first part is titled 'family concept and family relationships', and the second part is titled 'Various Aspects of the Social History of the Family'. The first part is a general overview consisting of two chapters that attempt to sketch the problems surrounding the 'family' in modern Egypt. Chapter 2 is an essay that examines autobiographical materials and novels and offers a theoretical analysis of family studies from an area studies perspective. The second part deals with specific issues, including issues related to rural areas and cities, the modern nation and global capitalism, imperialism and nationalism, as well as political Islam and social crises and their relation to 'family' in a broad

[9]A *faqih* is a religious jurist.

sense. Moreover, this book takes up and analyses the autobiography of famous Egyptian sociologist Sayyid ʿUways (1903-1988). As Nagasawa mentions, 'These eight issues cover the period from the early nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century of the present. However, these eight issues do not illustrate the overall picture of the social history of modern Egypt' (Nagasawa, 2019: preface ii). The book contains many valuable articles; however, in recent decades, Egyptian society has undergone political and economic changes that have affected social life. Therefore, the author hopes that similar versions of this book will be written. Eiji Nagasawa's book analyses social phenomena, such as the growth of Islamic movements and their effect on social life in general and women in particular. In the book, Nagasawa also emphasises the importance of analysing literary works, such as the *Naguib Mahfouz Trilogy*[10] (Nagasawa, 2019: pp. 85-107), as well as the importance of studying films (Nagasawa, 2019: p. 339). However, it is necessary to pay attention to the social contexts in which literary works and films are produced. It is also important to consider if films and literary works realistically portray society. However, it must be remembered that novels allow writers to use their imagination and express themselves artistically. Indeed, Nagasawa similarly mentioned that when using novels as research materials, it is important to recognise their limitations as works of fiction (Nagasawa, 2019: p. 86). It is difficult to apply all the events of a novel to society. As Omar stated, 'When analysing gender representations or social problems embedded in literary texts, it is necessary to analyse not only the text but also the silent symbols of behaviour, the role of representation, and human relations in the era when the work was written' (Omar, 2022d: pp. 67-68). Nagasawa dealt with the *Naguib Mahfouz Trilogy* in the light of ʿUways autobiography, which is interesting.

Since 2000 in Japan, there has been an increase in research on gender studies research related to Egypt, and many valuable studies have been published (e.g., Toriyama, 2004, 2009; Goto, 2014, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Minesaki, 2003, 2007, 2015, 2021; Takemura, 2019, 2021).

Hiroko Minesaki conducted a study based on her fieldwork conducted in Egypt from August 2000 to January 2008 (conducted intermittently over four years and ten months) about '*Islamic Revival and Gender: Women Who Live in Modern Egyptian Society*' (2015, p. 28). Minesaki emphasises that it is desirable to accumulate empirical research and to avoid the influence of gender orientalism. She stresses that it is important to pay attention to the differences in region, history, class, ethnicity and more when studying Islamic worldviews. She also stresses the need to examine gender norms and gender orders in specific contexts and be cautious of falling into the trap of essentialism when addressing topics related to gender in the Islamic world (Minesaki, 2015: p. 26).

Moreover, Tanaka and Minesaki (2021) state that gender violence is not something that only occurs in 'other' societies, As gender violence is also a

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[10]The Cairo Trilogy (Ath-thulathia الثلاثية or thulathia al-Qahra ثلاثية القاهرة) is a trilogy of novels written by the Egyptian novelist and Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz.

problem in Japanese society. They emphasise the importance of thinking about gender violence in different cultures without resorting to gendered Orientalism interpretations (2021, p. 1). They state that gender violence became more apparent in various parts of the world during the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in January 2020. For example, in Japan, the number of domestic violence (DV) consultations increased by a factor of 1.6 (Tanaka & Minesaki, 2021: pp. 3-4). Tanaka and Minesaki (2021: p. 6) also discuss the obstacle of gender Orientalism and criticise the binary framework of civilisation versus barbarism. However, in the second chapter of the first book of the Islam and Gender Studies Project[11] book series titled *Marriage and Divorce*, Minesaki takes a new position that contradicts her previous statements. In this chapter titled 'Muslim Divorce: The Case of Egypt' in *Marriage and Divorce* (2019, pp. 42-57), Minesaki contradicts her earlier statements about the need to pay attention to the problem of gender Orientalism. At the beginning of the chapter, she mentions that this book is intended for general readers, and therefore, she has prioritised clarity and readability over excessive detail (Minesaki, 2019: p. 42). This is despite the fact that Minesaki has criticised non-academic books that influence readers' views of gender in the Islamic world (Minesaki, 2007: p. 95). Despite the importance of the topic, it is presented sarcastically. While avoiding in-depth analysis, Minesaki assumes that, in Egypt, marital quarrels are both a traditional and family 'art' (Minesaki, 2019: p. 47). Minesaki addresses this point as if quarrels between husbands and wives are a unique and essential characteristic of Egyptian society (Minesaki, 2019: p. 48). Hammers are often used in cases of DV in Japan. Many incidents of DV, as well as violence in general, involve hammers in Japan. For example, in 2019, a man killed his wife with a hammer.[12] In one incident, someone asked, 'My wife hit the car with a hammer during the marital quarrel. Is this covered by my car insurance?'[13] Therefore, can hammers be considered part of Japanese character or Japanese family 'art'? Of course not.

Moreover, Minesaki assumes that asking for a large *deferred mahr*[14] is equivalent to an insurance plan for the woman's family, as it guarantees that their daughter will not be easily divorced. Minesaki adds that some Saudis who come to Egypt to escape the heat in the summer marry Egyptian women and then divorce them when they return from holiday and that the overwhelming financial power of these Saudis makes them hated in Egypt (Minesaki, 2019: pp. 55-56). The author agrees with Minesaki that many families consider increasing the

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[11]This is a research project in Japan that aims to create a platform for a new intellectual exchange. The project leader is Eiji Nagasawa (http://islam-gender.jp/en/news/1.html; retrieved on 05 November 2021). In 2019, the project began producing a Japanese-language book series that covers topics related to Muslim women, and some chapters are related to Egyptian women (http://islam-gender.jp/en/books_en.html (retrieved on 05 November 2021)).

[12]https://news.line.me/detail/oa-shujoprime/f0748233451a (retrieved on 31 October 2022).

[13]https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q13249996348 (retrieved on 21 December 2022).

[14]Called the mu'akhar, is a deferred and promised amount, payable at any agreed-upon date following the consummation of the marriage often it is associated with the death of the husband or divorce.

amount of the *deferred mahr* as a means of protecting their daughters from potential divorce. Moreover, some families believe their daughter's *mahr* or gifts of gold or diamonds given as part of the betrothal gift (called the *shabka*) are a reason to be proud of themselves and their daughter. However, Minesaki states that some Saudis 'who come to Egypt to escape the heat in the summer marry Egyptian women in Egypt and divorce them at the end of their vacation because of their overwhelming financial power'. Minesaki also claim that Saudi's financial power makes them hated in Egypt is an untrue exaggeration and that it only occurs in very rare cases. Moreover, this type of marriage is not respected by the majority of both Egyptians and Saudis and is forbidden and criminalised by law.

In Column 9 included in *Marriage and Divorce*, Toriyama examines the subject of customary marriage in Egypt by drawing on her personal experience of ʿUrfi marriage[15] with an Egyptian man in early 1999 (pp. 199-204). Toriyama explains the details of her marriage process, beginning with going to her husband's house and ending with a meeting with the lawyer who wrote the marriage contract. She mentions many details, including the amount she paid to the lawyer. In Egypt, unregistered ʿUrfi marriage considers a type of relationship which does not protect the woman's and the children's rights. In the case of Toriyama, her ʿUrfi marriage took place first, and after pregnancy, the official marriage took place later. However, the reason for choosing the ʿUrfi marriage by Toriyama from the beginning is ambiguous, especially since the official marriage, took place in the same year. And the reason why she agreed to pay the lawyer who wrote the marriage contract instead of her husband is somewhat vague in Toriyama's (2019: p. 199) column. As Toriyama points out, the issue of ʿUrfi marriage' has been the subject of considerable controversy in Egypt. It is difficult for a woman who becomes married through a so-called ʿUrfi marriage' to maintain her rights in the case of divorce; they are also often denied paternity rights to their children. There are many ʿUrfi marriage cases in Egypt where the court requests DNA to prove the children's parentage, and such situations hurt the child's feelings. The author has heard a story of a woman whose husband died, and every month after, she collected her deceased husband's pension. Later, she decided to marry another man, but if she got married, she would lose the pension. Therefore, she got married secretly according to the ʿUrfi marriage; however, when she got pregnant, they decided to sign an official marriage contract. In some rare cases, some men choose ʿUrfi marriage to marry a second wife without the knowledge of their first wife. Problems always arise because of ʿUrfi marriages. Recently, in Egypt, a judge married a TV presenter according to the ʿUrfi marriage. In order to convince him to have children, the new wife threatened that she would tell his first wife about the secret marriage. However, he refused, and finally, he killed her. The court sentenced him to death (Mayani, 2022). Therefore, as Toriyama (2019: p. 199) mentions ʿUrfi marriage has a bad reputation in Egypt, even in cases where the conditions of marriage are fulfilled

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[15]Customary marriage is a marriage not to be officially registered with state authorities.

according to Islamic traditions, which includes publicly announcing the marriage and meeting Sharia standards, such as giving the woman a *mahr*. Thus, it would be interesting to study the history of this phenomenon, the development of marriage systems and the development of marriage contracts. Toriyama discussed issues related to people who do not possess official documents, such as birth or personal identification. However, Approximately 20 years ago, identification cards, birth certificates, as well as *marriage and divorce* contract registration systems were changed, and this became a serious legal problem for those who had not registered their birth certificates at birth. Unsurprisingly, for such individuals, it is impossible to access any services or be recognised legally. It is not clear if there are still those who choose not to register children's birth certificates or obtain personal identification, as Toriyama indicated (Toriyama, 2019: p. 200). It is also unclear if this is something that dates back to the 1990s when Toriyama conducted her fieldwork.

In Chapter 2 of in the second book of the Islam and Gender Studies Series, titled *Transborder Social Movements*, Goto discusses the historical development of the Egyptian women's movement in the twentieth century (Goto, 2020: pp. 34-45). The author believes it is necessary to examine this history more deeply by referring to historical materials. Goto mainly refers to the work of Badran (1996). This chapter does not mention Nabawiyya Musa (1886-1951), despite the fact that her career is often discussed alongside figures such as Huda Sharawi and Malak Hifni Nasif. Moreover, although the chapter was written in 2020, the chapter does not consider the role of Egyptian women after 2011. There is a valuable essay in Asahi Magazine from 9 October 2012 by Nagasawa that presents an important aspect of the struggle and position of Egyptian women in this crucial period of Egyptian history (Nagasawa, 2012); however, this is not covered in Goto's article or the book.

In the third book of the Islam and Gender Studies Series, titled *Education and Empowerment* (2020), Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 discuss education in Egypt. In Chapter 6, Uchida (2020) discusses the Islamic education of girls in Egypt (pp. 117-130). In Chapter 8, Toriyama draws on her experience of life and work in Egypt and of being a mother to explore the double standards of education Systems in Egypt (pp. 150-163).

In the foreword section of in the fourthbook of the Islam and Gender Studies Series, titled *Tales from the Field* (2021), Toriyama Junko (2021) writes about the problems of books that deal with the life of Middle Eastern people and Muslims and the merits of fieldwork (pp. 19-20). This book differs from the others in the series because it deals with a different topic. In his word at the preface section of *Tales from the Field*, Nagasawa sheds light on (a joint Arab-Israeli concert) by Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said as a dialogue with the "other" (p. 4). In the same respect, Nagasawa states that the fieldwork is an encounter and dialogue with the 'other'. However, in the cases of Said and Barenboim, there are two parties involved in the dialogue. In the case of the field studies that are pre-

sented in this book and previous books of the same series, the dialogue is between the 'Japanese' authors and the 'Japanese' readers. The 'other' is almost absent. Thus the 'other' here would be considered as a subject of 'representation' that Said criticised by borrowing the words of Karl Marx, stating, 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented' (Said, 1979). In other words, there were no people who expressed themselves directly within the chapters of the series, and articles by Native researchers, from Egypt and other countries are limited.

There is an interesting essay series by Shiojiri (2018), he presents his experiences as a diplomat with Egyptian culture, food and people. This series is based on Shiojiri's life experience in the 1980s. Shiojiri mentions in the first essay of this series that he was amazed that, despite the heat, his Egyptian 'host family' did not bathe more than once a week. They told him that it is preferable not to bathe more than once a week in order to avoid becoming sick. Many Egyptians tend to use puns and idioms of innuendo when making jokes or engaging in private conversations. Moreover, the word 'bathe' has another meaning in Egyptian popular culture. There are also many Egyptians who do not know the second meaning of this word which has indirect relation with Sexuality. When the author moved to the Menoufia Governorate in 2007, the author was ignorant of local customs. Once, the author heard someone complaining about his wife and saying, 'I didn't take bath for 18 days because of her'. Later the author learned that 'bathing' is a metaphor for 'having sexual intercourse',[16] as it is inappropriate to speak about such a topic explicitly. Thus, the man meant that his wife refused to have sexual intercourse with him for 18 days.

On another occasion, a neighbour came to talk about her mother-in-law. She stated that despite her age, she goes out with her hair wet. My neighbour said, 'Although I'm younger than her, I take care not to go out with my hair wet'. The author learned later that some women in villages gossip about those who go out with their hair wet because, sometimes, they deliberately do it to show off their relationships with their husbands, teasing the other women. The author believes that discussing Shiojiri's writing and similar writings would offer opportunities for fostering deep understanding. As Clifford Geertz (1973) argues that we never understand the imaginations of other people. Geertz also claims that description itself is subject to rhetorical restrictions, as the writer uses the customary expressions of their native language and cannot exclude expressions that differ depending on the language. The author believes that comparative and cross-cultural studies of folk culture connecting Egypt and Japan are important to foster deeper mutual understanding.

4.2. Media and Gendered Representations of Egyptians

In this Section, the Media will be discussed not the Japanese media, but rather

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[16]Muslims must take bathe after sexual intercourse, and it is not permissible for Muslims to pray after sexual intercourse after having a wet dream or masturbating (masturbation itself is forbidden), except after taking a shower.

the Egyptian films used in Japanese books dealing with gender issues in Egypt. In the first chapter of *Marriage and Divorce*, Kazuaki Takemura (2019: pp. 16-41) discusses a case study of Muslims' marriage processes in Egypt. This topic is very important and interesting. Takemura discusses marriage practices from many aspects. However, it is remarkable that the films *Sahr al-Layali, Taymour and Shafika, and ʿimārat Yaʿqubyān (The Yacoubian Building)* are mentioned in the introduction without deep consideration of how the films relate to Egyptian society or how Egyptians viewed them. The chapter claims that Hajj Azzam whose second marriage is portrayed in this chapter as a businessman and a religious man (p. 19), when in the film Hajj Azzam is a drug dealer and corrupt person who pretends to be a religious man and hides the drug business behind the car business. For example, *The Yacoubian Building* was highly controversial. The film is famous for having had the largest budget in the history of Egyptian cinema at the time of its production. The film featured many famous Egyptian actors and actresses, and it received an unprecedented amount of publicity. The film was written by Waheed Hamed and directed by his son Marwan Hamed, who is well-known for having directed a documentary film that glorifies and supports Mubark the former president and his family. The film was produced by Emad Adib, who had also glorified Mubarak and his family before the release of the film. The film was praised by elite intellectuals; however, many viewers walked out of the movie theatre before the film ended. Others closed their eyes during sex scenes showing the poverty-stricken girl enduring harassment from her boss to secure food for her family (Yousef, 2006). Responding to these complaints, Waheed Hamed criticised veiled women who entered the movie theatre to see the film and then subsequently attacked it. He believed that this act exemplified a well-known contradiction in Egyptian society. He expressed his disapproval of these women watching films rated as 'for adults only'. Even though the majority of Egyptian women are veiled, He expressed that veiled women should not watch a film like this and that if they disapprove of it, they are being contradictive (Yousef, 2006). The author believes that his statement discriminates against veiled women. Moreover, the film is supposed to deal with social problems in Egyptian society. Therefore, everyone has the right to watch it and criticise it.

The author agrees that the period depicted in the film was full of political corruption, and the film portrays such social diseases as extremism, corruption and classism. Moreover, some characters resemble real-life personalities. However, the author does not agree that the film represents a microcosm of Egypt, as claimed at the beginning of the film. The film examines Egypt from above—that is, from the viewpoint of the elites. It is condescending toward everyday Egyptian people and does not deeply analyse reality. The film ignores and misrepresents and underestimates the poor, particularly poor women and also uses offensive language. In the words of one character, 'The Egyptian people love the government like a mother's love, even if that mother is a prostitute'. However, this

statement does not reflect reality. An in-depth reading of the conditions of Egyptian society reveals that the people were angry about state corruption at that time. For example, the term '*gamlaka*'[17] became popular among the public. I began hearing this term being used by everyday people at the beginning of the 2000s, and it was used as an alternative to the word 'inheritance'. Everyone was whispering, 'We are in the age of '*gamlaka*', meaning the "era of inheritance".' The common people were repeating that the government allowed for everything everywhere to be inherited as a prelude to the great 'inheritance' or '*gamlaka*'. University professors' positions were to be passed down to their children or their relatives, and the same was true in the art and political worlds. Furthermore, an in-depth review of Egyptian popular culture and literary studies reveals that songs and Egyptian literary works always use the word 'mother' as a metaphor for Egypt and as a symbol of the homeland. The mother is the 'small homeland', and the homeland is the 'big mother'. Thus, the homeland is considered the 'mother', not the government.

At that time, many common people who used to mock the conditions of schools, hospitals and roads asked sarcastically, 'Why do we interfere in the conditions of schools, hospitals and services?' And, 'We are only guests in this country. Why should guests be boastful?' However, all these jokes were a precursor to a revolution. The so-called Arab Spring accelerated the pace of events. Moreover, the mother of the poor girl in the film The *Yacoubian Building*, who receives money in exchange for enduring her employer's sexual harassment, says to her daughter, 'This is customary in this country, and as long as you do not take off your clothes, there is no problem'. Nevertheless, despite the film's disregard for ordinary citizens, it is strange that it is specifically cited in an academic book chapter about marriage in Egypt's corruption. The article uses a corrupt character from a film without analysing the social context of the character, the film or the relationship between the film and the issue of marriage. Therefore, this film can be read as one of the preludes to an imminent revolution[18], rather than a film that reflects the culture of marriage in Egypt.

The film *Urido hallan* (*I Want a Solution*) is discussed by Goto in the second topic of the second discussion in *Marriage and Divorce* (2019). This film led to amendments being made to the divorce laws (Goto, 2019a: pp. 158-165). Goto highlights the important topic of the development of divorce law and *khula*[19]

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[17]Gamlaka refers to Gamal Mubarak the son of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Before the 2011 revolution, Gamal was deputy secretary-general of the now-defunct ruling National Democratic Party and head of its policy committee. The term Gamlaka reflects people's concern that the presidency of the republic will be inherited by Gamal Mubarak. The author learned later that, the word 'gamlaka' is also a pun on the political word 'Jamlaka', which combines two syllables, 'Jam', which is an abbreviation of the word 'Joumhouria', which means republic, and the second syllable is 'mlaka', which is an abbreviation of the word 'Mamlaka', which means 'kingdom', which reflects the concern about 'inheritance'.

[18]The film was produced in 2006, and the revolution took place in 2011.

[19]In Islam, *khula* is a way for a woman to divorce her husband, which can involve returning the *mahr* depending on the agreement between the spouses or a court ruling (Nasir, 2009: p. 129).

divorce (Goto, 2019a: pp.158-165) by discussing the film *Oreed Kholan (I Want Khula Divorce)* and the phrase *'Oreed Kholan'* as a reflection of the evolution of divorce problems in Egypt. At the beginning of the discussion, Goto briefly touches on the historical and religious context of Egyptian family law. However, Goto does not offer any historical or academic references to support this discussion of historical and religious matters. Therefore, I believe that it would be interesting if this discussion was supported with additional academic references.

Chapter 7 of *Marriage and Divorce* (2019) is authored by Goto and is about Contemporary Marriage Situations as Seen in films (Goto, 2019b: pp. 205-213). In this chapter, Goto addresses the increasing age of marriage in light of the Egyptian film *Two Daughters of Egypt*. This topic is interesting. In particular, her comparison of the statistics on the age of marriage in Egypt and Japan is thought-provoking, and the film's relationship with the article is interesting. Regarding the film, Goto (2019b: p. 213) mentions that she is not certain that it reflects the opinions of most Egyptians regarding marriage; the author agrees with her opinion. However, Goto (2019b: p. 207) based her unsupported view on the argument that if a woman's marriage is delayed, it will not be easy to maintain a "clean body", which misrepresents unmarried women.

5. Results and Discussion

As discussed in Japan, interest in Middle Eastern studies, Islam and gender began to increase in the 1990s; these studies were rich in terms of quantity and diversity. While gender-oriented studies about Japan conducted by Egyptian scholars began to increase after the 2000s.

Japanese studies on gender issues in Egypt primarily adopt an empirical approach based on fieldwork that analyses contemporary gender issues, however, many Japanese studies did not delve into the historical backgrounds of social phenomena. Whereas Egyptian studies on gender issues in Japan place a greater focus on Literature Sociology analysis. While empirical studies which analyse Contemporary gender issues are rare. Moreover, there is a lack of Arabic-language studies on Japanese society and culture that address Japanese women and gender in Japan as most studies are conducted in the Japanese language.

Research on both the gendered socialisation of Japanese women in Egypt and those of Egyptian women in Japan is still rare. Moreover, interdisciplinary studies that examine cultural and social phenomena while delving into the historical backgrounds are scarce. Moreover, cross-cultural researches that analyse cultural phenomenon are still rare in Egypt and Japan. There were attempts to conduct comparative studies of popular culture and literature, such as the study of Fathy (1991) on Egyptian and Japanese Hero images based on "*Gikeiki*" and "*Legend of Sultan Baibars*", comparison and his student Omar's (2017) Comparative Study of Heroes in Medieval Literature and Their Relationship with Supernatural base on a comparison of "*Gikeiki*" (The Chronicle of Yoshitsune)

and "*Banu Hilal Tribe Tale*". However, no comparative or cross-cultural studies of gender were undertaken except in the previously mentioned Amin's attempt to compare *marriage and divorce* in Egypt and Japan (Amin, 1991). There is a need to translate studies that deal with gender issues in both cultures to develop a more fruitful dialogue. However, translation does not negate the importance of learning local languages. Works context should be read in their native languages to enable the research to deeply explore the historical and cultural specificities of the society and conduct cross-cultural studies. Nevertheless, translated studies can be considered an entry point for deeper research.

5.1. Islam and Gender Framework

As previously mentioned, Japanese Studies especially those of Islam and gender framework contribute greatly to illuminating the various aspects of life in Islamic societies while also correcting the misconception that Islam is related to terrorism. However, there remains a need for cross-cultural research that addresses women's issues and gender in both countries. Although Japanese scholars have made great achievements in gender studies, however folk studies on gender-related topics still lack diversity. There is also a lack of comparative and cross-cultural research. Although the Islam and Gender Studies Project is a substantial undertakingand there are some articles that touched on some points of popular culture and its impact on the way of receiving and interacting with religions, however, there is no project for specifically studying gender and folk culture that can generate more opportunities for studying societies, social and cultural phenomena from various perspectives. The author does not object to the Islam and Gender Studies Project. Rather, the object to limiting gender studies within area studies to one framework may lead to missed opportunities regarding diverse studies of cultural and social phenomena even if the project seeks to replicate the emphasis on diversity in the Islamic world. This can also undermine efforts to enhance creativity and innovation within gender studies. Popular culture influences many issues related to gender in Islamic Societies, and there are issues related to women and the family that have nothing to do with Islam and cannot be explored within the scope of Islam and gender. Moreover, studying cultural phenomena in various countries is a part of many gender-oriented projects and is an interesting approach. Although Scientific projects in Japan (e.g., Islam & Gender project) is interested in providing spaces for dialogue and presenting multiple cross-cultural examples, however, presenting separate examples of these different cultures without providing analyses based on these different examples could not be considered best practice. Comparative studies and cross-cultural studies that take into account cultural phenomena as well as theory can produce more effective discussions, results and analyses, which, in turn, can contribute to developing future theoretical approaches. Of course, there is an intersection sometimes and a conflict at other times between popular belief and Islamic belief, as in the problem of female circumcision (cf. Omar,

2021), for example, and other issues. As Takagi mentions in *Transborder Social Movements*, 'Islam' varies greatly depending on the historical era, country and region. Takagi emphasises that understanding that the relationship between men and women cannot be understood as being the same across all Islamic societies. Takagi also states that certain social problems faced by Muslims are not unique to Muslim societies but resemble social problems in non-Muslim societies as well (Takagi, 2020: p. 9). Nevertheless, the field of popular culture studies, as well as comparative and cross-cultural studies that discuss both Japan and Egypt, are still rare. The author believes that increased interest in such studies will result in a breakthrough not only for cultural studies but also for language studies.

5.2. Interpretation of Culture through Films and Media

Based on the analysis of the existing literature and media sources, the study concludes that some media sources have influenced Egyptian impressions of Japanese women and gender relations in Japan. Japanese studies are abundant and valuable, and they contribute greatly to illuminating the various aspects of life in Islamic societies while also correcting the misconception that Islam is related to terrorism. Nevertheless, there remains a need for cross-cultural research that addresses women's issues and gender in both countries. Moreover, these studies should be based on a deep knowledge of the cultural and historical contexts of both countries and the related processes of gender socialisation.

The author believes that using films as a reference in a book that analyses social phenomena without analysing the context of this films and deeply investigate if these films realistically portray society or not, leads to misrepresentation. It is important to investigate the circumstances surrounding the film and the original novel. Khaled Saleh is a famous Egyptian actor who has been in many films that deal with corruption in Egyptian society, and he was one of the actors in The *Yacoubian Building* stated that he wants to contribute to societal change. He mentioned that he used to play corrupt characters and that these characters did not benefit society. Therefore, he wishes to take on new roles in the future. For example, he wanted to play the role of a police secretary who does not take bribes despite being in need. Indeed there are many real examples of people with these characteristics.[20] However, if Egyptian films portray characters idealistically, would this reflects or foreshows social changes in Egyptian society? Of course not.

There is A famous film produced in 1970 called *Al Meraya; (المراية The Mirror)* which was directed by Ahmed Diaa El-Din. The story concerns a government employee named Karim who has two beautiful daughters named Karima and Huda. Karima cares only about her clothes, hairstyle and accessories. She is uncertain about love and marriage. Her sister, Huda falls in love with her cousin and gets married. When Karima grows older, she agrees to meet men for an arranged marriage. She meets a rural man who wears traditional clothes, and the

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[20]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_AGpF70TUt4 (retrieved on 1 August 2022).

following dialogue takes place between them:

-The man asks: You know, of course, Einstein's theory of relativity, right?

= I've only heard about it!

- Ah... So, do you know Darwin's theory of evolution?

= Actually... No!

- And which college did you graduate from, miss?

= The truth is that I did not complete university!

- Why?

= Special circumstances! Does your honour reside in Cairo?

- I live in Cairo, and my family lives in the countryside.

= Do you have property?

(- He replies in classical Arabic, which she cannot understand. So, he explains the meaning to her.)

= Ah, it is clear. (While holding up a mirror) Do you have any possessions?

- How can I speak when the questioner is busy? (He scolds her for holding the mirror while speaking.)

= Go ahead... I hear you!

-The mirror is selfish. A person only sees themselves in it. If someone looks at it for a long time, they become preoccupied with it... Talking is sharing. And it is good manners to listen and listen well!

= I'm sorry... Do you have your land? Property?

- And you? What do you have?

= Our family is very well known... According to lineage and...

- Just?

= Are you one of those people who seek a women's property?

- Absolutely not... I have more than enough for me... But I believe that beauty is not enough... The woman must have knowledge and culture!

With that, he ended the conversation and decided not to marry her. He was not attracted to her clothes or hairstyle. Are Huda and Karima meant to represent women in Egyptian society at that time? Of course not.

Studying some cultural phenomena through films in their cultural context may be an interesting method; however, the important thing is how to detect signs and not fall into the maze of tracking signs without analysing the cultural and historical context of phenomena and signs.

6. Conclusion

This study discussed representations of Japanese women in Egypt and representations of Egyptian women in Japan as a clue to deepen understanding between the two countries. The study first analysed representations of Japanese women in Egypt and then examined representations of Egyptian women in Japan. Finally, the author identified opportunities and challenges facing the study of gendered representation in Egypt and Japan and highlighted possible avenues for future research. In addition to reviewing gender studies research in the two countries,

the study examined news and film content as primary sources of cultural representation of women. The study concluded that cross-cultural and interdisciplinary studies that investigate issues connecting Egypt and Japan are rare. The study concluded that studies of popular culture and popular belief in Egypt, as well as comparative and cross-cultural studies that discuss both Japan and Egypt are still limited. Additionally, there is a need to translate studies that address both cultures to develop a dialogue; however, it is difficult to rely on translated studies only to investigate the historical and cultural aspects of multiple countries in a cross-cultural context. Nevertheless, translated studies can be considered an entry point for more in-depth research.

In future work, challenges and opportunities Analysis will be conducted based on the results of this study and after deepening analysis of the mutual studies conducted so far in the field of gender between Egypt and after analyzing studies that have not been analysed in this study (e.g., Toriyama, 2004; Toriyama, 2022; Katō & Iwasaki, 2011, etc.), gender-oriented translated work (e.g., Abu-Lughod et al., 2009; Ahmed, 2000; Smail, 2012), and the writings and studies conducted by Egyptian scholars.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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