

Studies on the history of the *Arabian Nights* and its influence upon the literary genesis of Orientalism

Tetsuo Nishio

(National Institutes for the Humanities, National Museum of Ethnology,
Center for Research Development, Associate Professor)

【Outline of survey】

The *Arabian Nights*, or the *Thousand and One Nights*, is originally a large collection of the popular folktales in the Arab-Islamic world. Since the first appearance of the *Arabian Nights* in 1704, when the first Western rendition of the *Arabian Nights* was published in France by the French Orientalist, Antoine Galland, the *Arabian Nights* has been playing a decisive role in forming the general image of the Islamic Middle East in Europe, which in turn influenced the Japanese view of the Middle East.

Focusing on the cultural and social values of the *Arabian Nights* in the Arab-Islamic history, we will investigate an original form of this story collection in the Middle East through the excavation and arrangement of the manuscript material that lies scattered in the world. In particular, we will study the textual history of the *Arabian Nights* by comparing the pre-Galland and post-Galland textual traditions in terms of the reciprocal influence of the literary emergence and development of the so-called Orientalism upon the textual formation of the *Arabian Nights*.

【Expected results】

Our discussion about the reception of the *Arabian Nights* in Europe and Japan and its re-introduction in the Middle East will lead to the understanding of the formative mechanism of the mutual image between the civilizations. We can construct the symbiosis theory between the civilizations that exceeds "Crash of civilizations" theory by recognizing the *Arabian Nights* that has been considered to be a literary work that represents Orientalism, again as a cultural heritage in the history of mankind, and by searching for the universal mechanism that generates this transitory civilization phenomenon.

【References by the principal researcher】

- Nishio, Tetsuo & Yamanaka, Yuriko eds. 2006 *The Arabian Nights and Orientalism: Perspectives from East and West*. London: I.B.Tauris. 269p.
- Nishio, Tetsuo 2004 Les Mille et Une Nuits et la genèse littéraire de l'Orientalisme au Japon. In Aboubakr Chraïbi ed. *Les Mille et Une Nuits en partage*. Paris: Sindbad. pp.141-150.

【Term of project】 FY2006 - 2010

【Budget allocation】 13,900,000 yen

【Homepage address】

n o n e