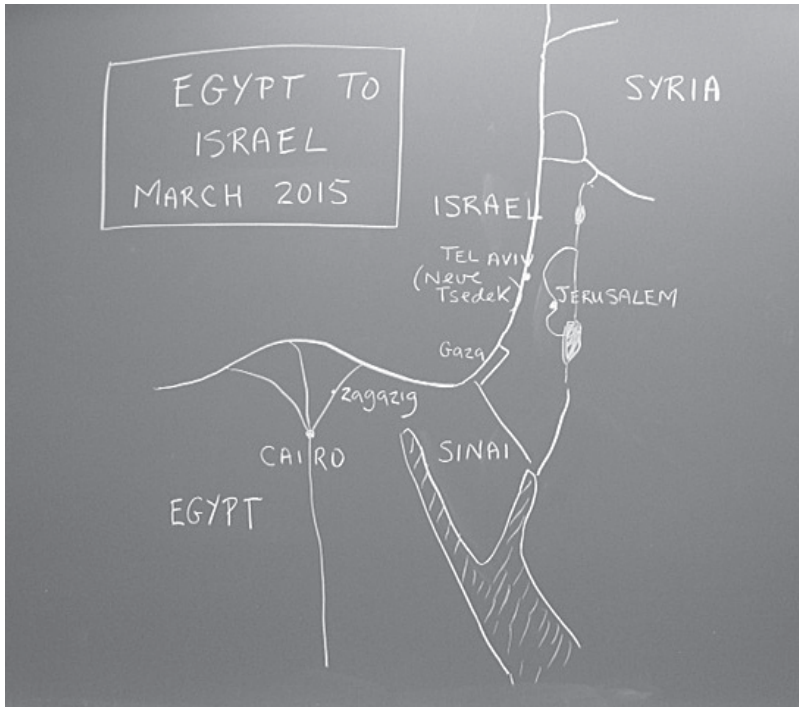


〈記録〉

**ZAGAZIG and NEVE TSEDEK
(March 16th-24th, 2015):
An Adventure which Started in Sasashima.....**

John Hamilton



This exploration started in Nagoya, Sasashima..... I went out for a quick lunch at the JICA cafe next to our university and found myself sitting with an Egyptian doctor. That was Dr Asser Saleh..... Later we went hiking to Yashagaike (夜叉ヶ池) and he was invited to a barbecue in Seto Kamishinano (瀬戸・上品野の蜚会). So this March in England when I was booking my flight to Israel, to see my son Mark, I thought there might be a chance to meet Asser again.

So I asked the Travel Agent if there was a way to visit Egypt and Israel. He said that it was possible, and that I wouldn't have to go via Cyprus. The ticket I got from him was an Egypt Air night flight from London Heathrow to Cairo, with an Air Sinai flight from Cairo to Tel Aviv, and then back by Easyjet from Tel Aviv to London Gatwick. I was not sure that it was a good idea to go. but in the end I decided that I would try, and I contacted Asser to see if he was going to be there, and he was. This record comes in five parts:

- (1) Cairo, Zagazig and Alizizia and more...
- (2) Neve Tsedek
- (3) Bauhaus Tel Aviv
- (4) West Jerusalem
- (5) Conclusions

On a short trip like this I just wanted to see a bit of everyday life. By myself and on a much longer stay I would like to have another go at Ancient Egypt.

(1) Cairo, Zagazig and Alazizia and more

On March 17th I arrived in Cairo early in the morning. Asser very kindly came to meet me. Actually he was outside the terminal, not allowed in! But I was able to borrow a mobile phone and telephone him. He had a Skoda Octavia in the car park (We have Skodas in England) and he drove me first to OBOUR, a new town near the airport where he had a flat and that is where he put me up.

Asser lives in ZAGAZIG
الزقازيق, a university town of



about 300,000 people in the Nile delta 60 kms northeast of Cairo. It is about the same size as Toyohashi. It was market day when we arrived there, and we drove along for a while behind this cow and its minders. (I think it might be a bull.)

Asser's son Omar aged 5 is in the kindergarten of the El Fouad International School in Zagazig and it was Parents' Day. So that was the first visit we made. It was really nice to see the school. And I was able to meet his wife there, who is also a doctor. First the children were singing songs. That is what you can see in the photograph. I liked the beautiful and varied headscarves of the teachers. After the singing, I watched an English lesson with a smaller group. The teacher was shouting "Stand up! Sit down! Stand up! Sit down! STAND UP BOUGIE! Jump, Jump ... Jump onto the green circle ... Jump onto the yellow triangle ... and they jumped! The teacher was very good. I can remember her lesson very clearly.



At the end there was 'musical chairs'. Little Omar won, but he gallantly conceded victory to a little girl who had wanted to win he was a gentleman like his father, I thought.



This is the mosque in the middle of Zagazig. It is a new one, possibly built with money donated by Gaddafi of Libya, Asser said, and it is close to Zagazig University.

President Morsi was a Professor of Engineering at the University of Zagazig. After studying in America he lived in Zagazig for 25 years. He has been described as the first democratically elected Head of State in Egyptian history..... But he didn't keep the job very long and at the time of writing he is in prison ... and has actually been given a death sentence, now confirmed. I think that is regrettable, certainly it would be regrettable if it is carried out. He lived quite close to the coffee shop where I had this cup of coffee so perhaps he also drank coffee there....

In all the coffee shops, I liked the way they put a mat between the cup and the saucer..... But more important than that was the taste of the coffee. It is so thick and the way it coats the inside of the mouth was a new sensation for me. And more important still was listening to what Asser had to say while drinking coffee.



Driving on Egyptian roads is a bit different from driving in Japan. There are almost no traffic lights in Egypt. Instead of lights, there are big roundabouts. And there seemed to be no speed limits and certainly no speed cameras, only huge ramps to slow the traffic down ... but you can't just go over a ramp slowly because they are too large. You have to go over the ramp at the right place. Otherwise you will take the bottom out of your car.... There is a lot of manoeuvring at high speeds to get over the ramps at the right place.... To complete the picture of being in the car with Asser was the music. We were listening to the songs of Fayrouz and Umm Khalsoum much of the time. It had a feeling of 1969 when I first made a trip to the Middle East, to Jordan just after I finished Oxford.

The Delta country north of Cairo is a bit like the landscape north of Nagoya. It is all cut up by big rivers and canals, with villages and rice fields and vegetable gardens and factories, and blocks of flats, and housing developments, all mixed up together.... In the north part of Nagoya there are no mosques or palm trees but otherwise it is much the same.

Asser commented, 'If they are going to build some houses or blocks of flats, first they build a mosque, and then they develop the land around it.' With the call to prayer five times a day it is obvious that Islam is quite a force in Egyptian

society..... But in UK the Church of England is also a force and so are the Buddhist temples and Shrines in Japan.... It is interesting to see how religion and the society interact.

Asser comes from a village called ALAZIZIA العزيزي which is half-an-hour from Zagazig. On our way there we spotted this pigeon farm. Asser's mother is a poultry vet and he told me that she knows a lot about pigeons. But at that time of day the pigeons were nowhere to be seen.



In Alazizia we visited Asser's uncle and his family. His wife prepared us very good icecream (Do I remember right?) and it was a great honour to meet them. The girls were charming and spoke good English, and their younger brother Ahmad was also able to communicate and together they asked thoughtful questions.

Asser's uncle is the vet in this small town and he took us to visit a farm. The boy in the picture below is Ahmad, Asser's cousin. The photograph shows an irrigation ditch. There was a pump beside the river pumping water into it. The farmer can be seen standing among the sugar canes. Enclosed by the walls is a field of potatoes which he said were Dutch potatoes. There were also an olive tree

and banana palms and a papaya and a big cactus. I think they eat the flowers. The word for ‘olive’ in Arabic is ZAITOON. (Last week in my Marco Polo lecture at Aidai we were looking at stories from ZAITON which in the 13th century was the Arabic name used by Marco Polo for the big port in Southern China, now called Quanzhou 泉州 in Fujian Province 福建省.)



I took the next picture because of the baby ducks or possibly geese at the farm, but actually the photograph shows the family, with two donkeys and a dog and in the background a goat.... I thought the village was really nice, almost biblical.



During my time in Egypt Asser put this photograph onto my Facebook page, and a lot of his friends (more than 70) spotted it including Bosh Bosh, an engineer who had been in Sasashima (I liked her name. But I hadn't met her in Sasashima.) Also Kakihara Yumichan in Japan, and Meg (my daughter) in England saw it. Meg wrote "Cool Dad!" She hadn't known I was in Egypt.... I had somehow escaped..... The Egyptian farmers are very splendidly dressed and I think Asser looks good too.



On the last afternoon we visited a huge American style shopping mall. Asser wanted to take back something his wife had bought by mistake ... and he could kill two birds with one stone by taking me there. A friend and neighbour in Sussex, Bryan Thwaites aged 92 recently presented an essay on the future of civilisation. I just hope that the shopping mall I saw with Asser is not where Egyptian civilisation is going... I think Asser thought the same. And in the evening we walked together around the OBOUR New Town. It is full of magnificent houses, most of them filled with apartments, many unfinished and few lived in. There were almost no shops and the trees had not yet grown up. I wondered about the economics of new towns. Apparently there are many new towns in China, not as yet lived in maybe Thomas Pickety has something to say on this. Incidentally, OBOUR means ‘Crossing’. It is the name of the battle which the Egyptian army won at the end of the Yom Kippur war, thus regaining Sinai.

I was anxious that the Air Sinai flight would be cancelled again, but Asser was confident that it wouldn’t be and he was right. Actually the check- in counter was hard to find in the airport terminal. Egypt is a very big country with 88 million

people now. It had 37 million in 1970. It is very important for the Middle East and North Africa that Egypt remains stable. The Americans understand that well. The Egyptians accept the existence of Israel up to a point but they are uncomfortable with the settlements in the West Bank, and can't understand why the Israelis make so little effort to get along with their neighbours. Mark wrote to me in Egypt to say that I should not tell people who I did not know, that I was on my way to Israel..... Maybe that was why the Air Sinai flight in the airport was so hard to find..... It was a small plane and we had to identify our bags as we got on. I was surprised that the steward in charge of that looked just like President Obama, but of course East Africa is not far away, and that is where Obama's father came from. I had contemplated going by bus across North Sinai, but actually soon afterwards there were two big explosions there killing many people..... So it was best for me to fly over it.

(I must just mention that Asser did take me to Central Cairo at night. We walked past the Mausoleum of al-Sultan al Zahir Barquq, and the Mosque of Al-Aqmar..... It was very medieval, rather like being in a huge cathedral close in England. And there were almost no tourists. That very afternoon there was an incident inside a museum in Tunis with several people killed. Now in Japan, I am reading James Aldridge's CAIRO published by Macmillan in 1970. It is a very detailed description!)

(2) Neve Tsedek

The arrival in Tel Aviv was straightforward and they were friendly at the airport. It was nice to be in NEVE TSEDEK again with its coffee shops and free Wi-Fi and the scent of orange blossom everywhere. (Free Wi-Fi means that you are welcome to stay in a coffee shop as long as you like.) Neve Tsedek is the oldest part of Tel Aviv. When the Jews first started arriving in Israel they settled on the sand dunes north of Jaffa and that is Neve Tsedek. It feels a bit like Okinawa.



On this visit I wanted to spend time with my son Mark and his family, and to see Thomas Gross (愛大) who was just finishing a year in Tel Aviv, and I wanted to visit Ruth Cohn, an artist friend in West Jerusalem.

Here is a photograph of Mark with a pram full of shopping returning from the supermarket. Mark tries to go to the same cashier at this supermarket, who is Palestinian, and she tells him what the best offers are. “You can have three of those for the price of two”, she says..... So Mark goes back and picks up another one and gets it free. Shimrit approves of this!



And here is grandson Raphael trying to shut Tamara, his elder sister, into the fridge.



(3) Bauhaus Tel Aviv

I like Tel Aviv. It is a nice city to walk about in. But I didn't know quite why I liked it until I met up with Thomas. I met him a little way up Allenby Street. We walked down a street containing the Bialik Museum and also the Reuben Rubin Museum and later in the day we walked along Rehov Basel where Thomas's Hebrew teacher lives. Bialik was a poet and Zionist politician originally from the Ukraine, and Reuven Rubin was a Romanian born Israeli artist who studied at the Bezalel Academy. His landscapes have a Chagall feeling about them....

But what I didn't know was that there are over 4000 buildings in the BAUHAUS style in Tel Aviv, and we were walking through Conservation Areas collectively known as the White City. The buildings had been designed from the 1930's by German Jewish architects who had emigrated to Palestine then under the British Mandate. In 2003 UNESCO proclaimed Tel Aviv's White City a World Cultural Heritage Site.

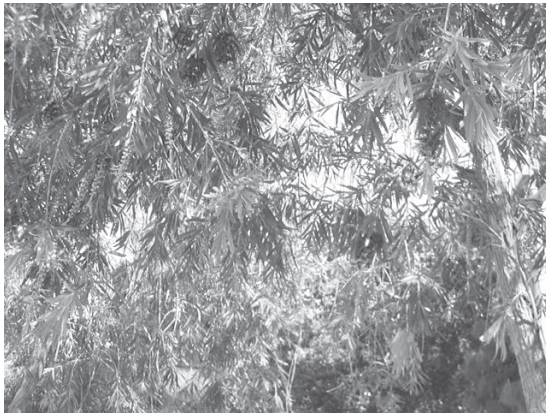
The original idea had been to have a new garden city on the sand dunes north of Jaffa. Between 1925 and 1929 Patrick Geddes, a Scottish urban planner was commissioned by Mayor Meir Dizengoff to draw up a plan. With the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany and the closing of the Bauhaus School in Berlin, architects began arriving in Tel Aviv from Germany....

On my next visit I am going to have a closer look at the buildings. Apparently they are a little different from Bauhaus buildings in Germany.... In Tel Aviv they are white to reflect the sun, with smaller and recessed windows, flat roofs made use of as gardens etc.... (the roof on the top of Thomas's apartment block was a good example) ...

We British don't know much about Bauhaus, at least I don't. I asked Ivan Cosby over breakfast in Toyohashi what Bauhaus meant to him. His answer was that Bauhaus was about the transition from traditional buildings with sloping roofs (愛大公館) to blocks (like the 教職員住宅) which he lives in now.

Thank you Thomas for making us British think.

.... In Basel Street there were some very fine mature Australian Bottlebrush trees. I have never seen such large ones. It seems that Australian and also South African trees and plants grow well in Israel and look good. Shuki Polack, Shimrit's uncle (he was originally from South India) apparently grows South African plants up on the Golan Heights and exports the flowers to Europe. I haven't so far had time to get up there, but, if he will invite me, I hope to go there in the future.



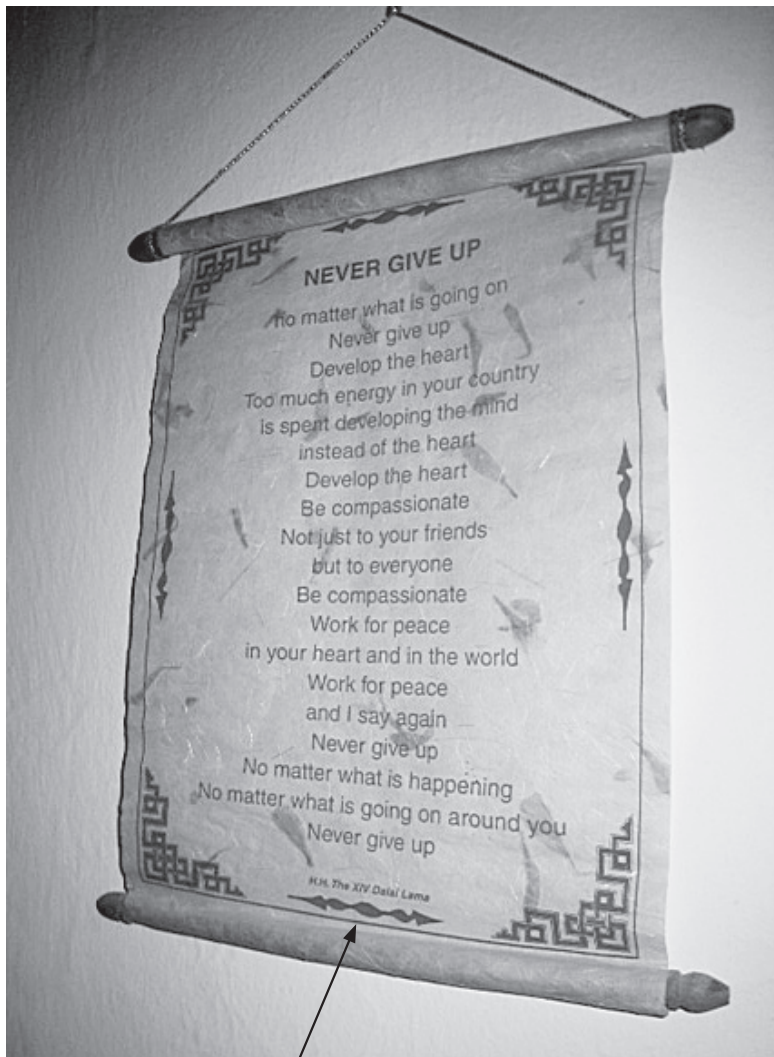
(4) West Jerusalem

During this visit I had a day in WEST JERUSALEM. It takes about an hour to get there by bus from Tel Aviv, then you have to get on a tram. Ruth Cohn used to live near Kyoto in 西向日 where she was studying calligraphy on the grand scale. Now she lives with her dog and two cats in a crumbling apartment on Yoel Saloman street in West Jerusalem. I had been there the year before and liked it very much. This time we went out to an agricultural college where they had a plant nursery and came back with agapanthus, and ferns and some fuschia which

we planted on her balcony ...



Ruth is currently having work done on the place and it had a creative feel about it. When I visited her the first time, she had this scroll hanging on the wall, but this time it had been put away. I hope when the work is complete she will hang it up again. It says more or less what I feel about the Middle East.



(5) Conclusion

* The population of Egypt was flashed up on a screen in Cairo at 88,117,022 people. It seems to have more than doubled since the 1970's. This means that there are always going to be a lot of poor people. That is basic economics.

(Asser in Egypt seemed to be pausing at one son—little Omar..... Mark's fourth—he will have two girls and two boys—is arriving in July in Tel Aviv.)

On the streets in Zagazig there were refugees from Syria selling kebabs..... During the Morsi period, many people in Egypt felt that the country was close to civil war like Syria. That is why the army took over again. There is a long tradition of army rule in Egypt. I think that Asser would have preferred El Baradei. El Baradei has had a distinguished career as the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 1997–2009, trying to halt the spread of nuclear weapons, and was the winner of a Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 but perhaps people felt that the army could do the job better. Certainly the army thought so.

Below is a photograph of Tuk Tuks in Alizizia. With the three wheels they are good for navigating the potholes.



- Mark's flat in Neve Tsedek is quite spacious by Japanese standards, but small

by English standards. I enjoyed sitting there drinking David Shimoni's coffee and eating Jakhnoon that had been cooked overnight (Sabbath food). Miranda Phillimore's cushions were on the floor. Elizabeth Clarke had just been visiting. Orme Clarke (William's great uncle I think) had set up the legal system in Palestine during the British Mandate period and that is the basis of the Israel legal system today. Israel is still a very British place in some ways. It is not just Allenby Street.

Here is a picture of Tamara with a balloon from 'Last Chance', the ¥100 shop in Zagazig.



* The art scene in Tel Aviv interested me a lot. Besides being introduced by Thomas to the Bauhaus White City, I visited the Tel Aviv Art Gallery. The entry was half price for Senior citizens. I asked 'How old do I have to be?' 'Sixty seven' was the answer. I was 67 in February, so I handed them my passport. (Again I felt Shimrit would have approved.) There were many good things in the museum. I particularly liked the Amy Segal film of an architects office in Manhattan showing architects working together, models of city centers, with the night views of

Manhattan through the office windows. A city center is a kind of sculpture. I thought of Nagoya which is being created all around me at the moment. It is actually very exciting to be in Sasashima now!!! I found myself also comparing the Tel Aviv Art Gallery with Pallant House in Chichester. The quality of thought is at about the same level in both though they draw on different traditions.

* In this short paper I try, maybe in a rather unprofessional way, to give a picture of normal everyday life in Egypt and Israel during that week. I was happy to have that glimpse of Egypt and Asser was very kind to show me. It was really an honour to be with him and his wife and also other members of his family in Alizizia. And in Israel, Shimrit looked after me very well. There are indeed problems to be sorted out both in Israel and in Egypt. I think there has to be more reaching out to the other side in both countries I agree with the Dalai Lama , we have to keep on trying and never give up..... Dreadful things will probably happen again, and good things too. We certainly shouldn't give up.

Below is a girl on a donkey collecting recycle rubbish in Zagazig.



My family is more involved in the Middle East than I had realised. Mark lives and works in Tel Aviv as part of a large Israeli family. From my point of view they are

very exotic. Shimrit's mother and her sisters were originally from Morocco, and Shimrit herself looks quite Spanish. And her father is originally from Iraq, the grandson of a very distinguished Rabbi.... The children are lovely, speaking mostly Hebrew at the moment, but understanding English.

And Meg my daughter is a leading Klezmer musician based in London. Klezmer is the kind of music that would have been played by the Jewish musicians in Chagall's paintings. Her boyfriend, Bogdan Vacarescu, a very good violinist from Bucharest in Romania, has recently been 'taking the EU to the Middle East', to Jordan. He and his band 'Paprika', or rather half his band, were playing in the Syrian refugee camp at Za'atari in May.

And in Edinburgh my sister and her husband and my niece Hannah have been raising money for Mercy Corps, a charity that is helping Syrian refugees. In Bristol, another niece, Rose is helping asylum seekers from the Middle East. She like Mark studied Arabic at Durham.

We are not looking the other way! And thanks to Aidai's new campus being next door to JICA in Nagoya and having no restaurant of its own at the moment, I was able to meet Asser and have a closer look at Egypt on the way to Israel.



ZAGAZIG and NEVE TSEDEK (March 16th–24th, 2015)

This last photograph is of Bogdan Vacarescu playing his violin in the Roman amphitheatre in Amman in May 2015.