



DA'WAH IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE SOCIETY:
A CASE STUDY OF TOKYO MOSQUE

BY

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ABSTRACT

This is a case study on Tokyo Mosque and the *da'wah* activities in Japan among contemporary Japanese and local Muslims. It deals with the arrival of Muslims in Japan and the establishment of Islamic *da'wah* organizations and mosques. It studies the Muslim perception and sensitivities in the context of the current *da'wah* situation in the Japanese society and relations with various religions and culture of Japan. The main aim of this research is to explore and analyse the origin of the organised *da'wah* activities at Tokyo Mosque and its impact. This study also traces the inner problematic issues related to *da'wah* and its challenges for the realization of peaceful coexistence among the Muslims and Japanese in Japan. The thesis specially focuses on the debate and dialogue of the Muslims with the followers of other religions and cultures in Japan as this will decide the future attitude of Islām and Muslims in Japan and its relation to the Japanese community. It attempts to assess the structure, organization and the pivotal role of Tokyo Mosque and its educational activities. It explores the position of Islām and Muslims and their interaction with a completely different culture of Emperor worship of the past and a highly modernized, industrial and civilized nation. This includes the study of the strategy Muslims have adopted for *da'wah* and their fresh understanding and analysis with reference to Tokyo Mosque. It deals, therefore, with Muslim participation and cooperation in dialogue, welfare and social activities with other religions. It discusses the salient features of Japanese culture and community and Islām and local Muslim community. Feasibility of Islām and its compatibility in the Japanese society has been studied to identify the progress of *da'wah* in Japan. An additional objective of this study is to examine the social and cultural development between Muslims and non-Muslims from the early days of the arrival of Islām in Japan. Expectations and apprehensions of the Muslims have also been identified. The thesis also analyses how far the Muslims are ready to consider sensitive issues arising due to the construction of mosques and the expansion of *da'wah* activities in Japan. The thesis further discusses the problems faced by the new generation of Muslims in Japan in holding fast to their Islamic belief and practicing the Islamic traditions in a non-Muslim, godless and atheistic society. Finally, it investigates how Muslims in Japan face and overcome the apparent materialistic society of Japan, which has now become their home. The thesis is followed by a conclusion and some recommendations.

خلاصة البحث

إن رسالة الدكتوراه هي دراسة حول مسجد طوكيو وأنشطتها الدعوية الإسلامية بين المسلمين اليابانيين والمقيمين في اليابان. وإنها تقدم فكرة عن وصول المسلمين في اليابان الذين أسسوا المساجد وكونوا الجمعيات الإسلامية هنا. وإنها تقدم التصور الإسلامي والحساسيات في سياق وضع الدعوة الإسلامية الحاضرة في المجتمع الياباني والعلاقات الثقافية مع مختلف الأديان في اليابان. والهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو استكشاف وتحليل أنشطة الدعوة الإسلامية التي تنظمها مسجد طوكيو وأثرها في اليابان. وإنها تقدم أيضا القضايا والمشاكل الداخلية المتعلقة بالدعوة الإسلامية وتحدياتها لتحقيق التعايش السلمي بين غير المسلمين في اليابان. وهذه الرسالة تركز بشكل خاص على المناقشة والحوار بين المسلمين مع أتباع الأديان الأخرى والثقافات المختلفة في اليابان حيث يؤدي ذلك إلى تحديد موقف مستقبل الإسلام والمسلمين في اليابان وعلاقتهم بالمجتمع الياباني. وإنها محاولات لتقييم هيكل وتنظيم للدور المحوري والأنشطة التعليمية لمسجد طوكيو. وإنها تستكشف موقف الإسلام والمسلمين وتفاعلهم مع ثقافة مختلفة تماما من عبادة الإمبراطور في الماضي، ولكن الشعب الياباني في الوقت الراهن أصبح قوما متقدما للحضارة والصناعة والتقدم التكنولوجي. وإنها تشمل استراتيجية جديدة لفهم وتحليل المسلمين في مسجد طوكيو للدعوة الإسلامية. وإنها تتعامل مع مشاركة وتعاون المسلمين في أنشطة الحوار والعمل الخيري مع الأديان الأخرى. وإنها تقدم السمات البارزة للثقافة اليابانية والمجتمع الياباني والإسلام والمسلمين في اليابان. وإنها دراسة الجدوى للإسلام وتوافقه في المجتمع الياباني لتحديد التقدم للدعوة الإسلامية في اليابان. وإنها تقدم دراسة التنمية الاجتماعية والثقافية بين المسلمين وغير المسلمين من الأيام الأولى من وصول الإسلام في اليابان. وكما إنها تسجل تحديد التوقعات والمخاوف من المسلمين في اليابان. وإنها تقدم أيضا دراسة محاولات مدى المسلمين مستعدون للنظر في القضايا الحساسة التي تنشأ بسبب بناء المساجد والتوسع في أنشطة الدعوة الإسلامية في اليابان. وإنها تناقش مزيدا من المشاكل التي يواجهها الجيل الجديد من المسلمين في اليابان في التمسك بعقديتهم وإيمانهم وممارسة التقاليد الإسلامية في بلد غير مسلم، وفي مجتمع ملحد. وأخيرا، إنها تحقق في كيفية المسلمين في اليابان وتواجههم وتغلبهم على المجتمع المادي في اليابان، والتي أصبحت وطنهم الآن. وتتبع هذه الرسالة ملخصها وبعض التوصيات أيضا.

APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis of Muhammad Abdur Rahman Siddiqi has been examined and is approved by the following;

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Supervisor

Thameem Ushama
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

Muhammad Abdur Rahman Siddiqi

Signature..... date.....

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To the 586 out 655 noble martyrs of the marine official goodwill delegation sent by Sulṭān Abd al-Ḥamīd II of Ottoman empire to Japan. These noble souls sacrificed their lives as an investment for Islām in Japan when their ship Al-Thugral capsized in the south Japan Sea near Wakayama on September 16, 1891. My sincere dedication goes to all past and present workers and leaders of the da‘wah movement in Japan and all over the world

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Is there any reward for good other than good? (Al-Qur'ān, al-Raḥmān:60).

A person is made by so many other persons who have helped him to be what he is today. There is nothing like a self-made man, though many people claim so. The man as he exists today is a combination and mixture of training, education, culture and environment in which he has spent a part of his life, in my case it is Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Japan and Malaysia. The support, encouragement, initiative and various kinds of cooperation all put together makes a person what he is now. I recall vividly how the short *tafsīr* of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah under the title Umm al-Kitāb written by my father, Mohammad Nematullah Siddiqi inspired me and I said to myself that one day I too will write something after doing research. So the dream came true. “Man proposes and God disposes.”

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As a last word, if any mistake is found in my thesis, it is only the responsibility of the writer and not any other persons.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SWT	<i>Subhānahu Wa Ta'ālā</i>
SAW	<i>Ṣallā Allāh 'Alayhi Wa Sallam</i>
RA	<i>Raḍiya Allāh 'Anhu</i>
ICJ	<i>Islamic Centre Japan</i>
ICOJ	<i>Islamic circle of Japan</i>
WW I	World War 1
WWII	World War Two

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONENTS			
Arabic	English	Arabic	English
ء	'	ض	Ḍ
ب	B	ط	Ṭ
ت	T	ظ	Ẓ
ث	Th	ع	'
ج	J	غ	Gh
ح	H	ف	F
خ	Kh	ق	Q
د	D	ك	K
ذ	Dh	ل	L
ر	R	م	M
ز	Z	ن	N
س	S	و	W
ش	Sh	ه	H
ص	Ṣ	ي	Y

SHORT VOWELS		LONG VOWELS	
أ	A	آ	Ā
إ	I	إي	Ī
أ	U	أو	Ū

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

O Prophet invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and excellent admonition and discuss things with people in the best manner (Al-Qur'ān, al-Naḥl:125)

The twentieth century witnessed a rapid movement of Muslims all over the world. They moved from their home countries, where they were the majority to countries where they became the minorities. Their movement was basically due to the poor economic and unsuitable political conditions in their home countries. In spite of their involvement in the economic activities of their new countries of migration, they could not ignore their sense of Muslim identity and the responsibility of Islamic *da'wah* i.e. calling people to Islām. This was obligatory for them as Muslims and necessary to protect their faith. As soon as they settled down in the new countries, they started organizing themselves into Islamic organization(s) and built mosques. These Islamic organizations and mosques adopted certain programmes, aiming to guarantee the maintenance of Muslim identity and protection of their faith among non-Muslim majority. Today, one observes these two activities of Muslims everywhere in the world, including Japan. Although the presence of Muslims can be traced back to 1891, the first settlement of Muslims was by those who came from the Kazan area of Russia. In Japan around 1917, these Muslims established a residential area named Maḥallah Islāmiyyah in Tokyo. This was the first Muslim settlement in Japan. The first school was established in 1927 by the Muslim community in Japan. In 1938, they

established a mosque. From the beginning, the Muslims demonstrated their seriousness towards the development of schools and mosques. These schools provided Islamic teachings to their children. This shows how serious the early Muslims were about Islamic education.

Despite all the economic progress and the presence of a number of religions today there is a sort of a spiritual vacuum in the life of the people of Japan. Various religions are trying to 'harvest' in the 'flexible' religious atmosphere of Japan. Shintoism and Buddhism have weakened in faith and lost the trust of the public because they could not save their Emperor and their country from defeat and surrender after the WWII in 1945. Now, many of Japanese are looking for new 'ways' of salvation. The society is lacking peace of heart and mind. This is observed in the statistics of suicide cases in Japan. It seems that people are not really aware of the value of life. People in Japan are facing ambiguities as to the reality of life and after death. There seems to be a strong quest for the true existence of a Supernatural Being (God). Amidst this confusion, Islām comes with a message of peace, satisfaction and harmony. Since 1881 until today Islām has been in Japan for about 150 years.

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ
اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

... then divided you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize one another. Indeed, the most honourable among you in the sight of Allāh is he who is the most pious of you. (Al-Qur'ān, al-Ḥujurāt:13)

The Japanese are very sensitive people in terms of having high standards of civilization, culture, education, discipline and polite manners. Other traits such as kindness, soft manners and cautious reactions to events and personal mutual contacts are special qualities of the Japanese society. Usually, the Japanese people like to trust and believe in others. They take the speaker at his face value, therefore, their response

in general to any discussion or message is positive in the first instance. This quality is very favourable for Islamic *da'wah* in Japan. Only a few Japanese would flatly decline or say “no” to any offer or suggestion about Islām unless it is really impossible for them to grasp it or is contrary to what is found in their culture and society.

Since there is no open opposition as such to Islām in Japan, it has a bright future there. However, there are some cases of misunderstanding among the Japanese about Muslims. Nevertheless, Islām in Japan has not been easy all the time. In general, the society as a whole is not against Islām. The Muslims are expected to demonstrate a high standard of morality, politeness, and honesty in dealings if they want a favourable response for Islamic *da'wah*. They must engage in welfare and cultural activities. There are social challenges that have to be met. Solutions to the problems of old perception have to be found. To foresee the future possibilities and prospects for Islām in Japan, the challenges and contradictions which exist in the contemporary historicity of Muslims in Japan must be addressed. The Japanese society needs to be impressed and convinced that they need Islām for happy, peaceful, and successful life.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Investigations into the earliest Muslim contact with Japan as revealed by recent excavation of imperial storehouses and temples in the city of Nara¹ show the long contacts of Muslims with the nation. During these excavations, they found some 19 fragments of Islamic ceramics made in Western Asia. These pieces of vase and pots were brought to Japan around 768 A.D. These treasure items travelled through land and marine Silk Road from Baghdad, Egypt, via India and China to Japan. They were

¹*The daily Yomiur*, Tokyo, July, 2009.

possibly used for keeping dates, saffron, dry fruits, etc. These items reached the city of Nara in Japan somewhere during the same period.

The first Japanese ancestors reportedly accepted Islām around 1909 and performed *hajj* in the same year. Today, the total number of Japanese Muslims stands at about 100,000. No serious efforts on the part of migrant Muslims to impress the Japanese in favour of Islām from “*da‘wah* perspective” have been conducted. The reasons are obvious, for example, the lack of Japanese language and social-cultural background of the Japanese. In spite of these shortcomings, the existence of Muslims and Islamic *da‘wah* is inseparable within the Japanese people today, like other non-Muslim countries have witnessed. Thus, one way or the other, Japanese Muslims are also involved in Islamic *da‘wah* programmes. Japanese are invited individually and collectively by Muslim organizations and individual Muslims to study Islām and find the truth and reality of a blissful life. Thus a good number of Japanese has accepted Islām (Morimoto², 1980).

The responses of the Japanese people and their attitude towards Islām and Muslims have not been studied seriously.³ There is no study which identifies the problems and investigates the support or otherwise of the Japanese people to Islām and Islamic *da‘wah* activities from the civilizational perspective. This phenomenon of slow growth motivates the researcher to look into the problems of *da‘wah* and its response from various angles and viewpoints. This requires serious research and investigation into the subject of the Japanese people and their socio-cultural and

² Abū Bakr Morimoto was a researcher on Muslim affairs. He had maintained a library in his house containing three thousand books. It is recorded that the Islamic Centre Japan tried to obtain those books at a reasonable price from his family. But his family sold all those treasures and valuable records and books to old book shop instead of to the Islamic Centre Japan. Now this treasure is not traceable anymore.

³ Abū Bakr Morimoto, *Islam in Japan Past Present and Future*, (Iskandar Choudari, Trans.), (Tokyo: Islamic centre Japan.

religious groups to the call of *da'wah* in Islām. The crux of the problem is that before doing Islamic *da'wah* work in any society we need to study and understand the problems, difficulties, impediments and possible cultural differences of that given society. Therefore, there is a need to study and analyse the response of the Japanese society.

There are some reports on the efforts of the Muslims on *da'wah* in Japanese society and research has been carried out on *masājid* (mosques). However, there is no proper research on the role and contributions of the Tokyo Mosque in the context of Islamic *da'wah* and as a representative of an Islamic institution in a non-Muslim society. Tokyo, the capital city, like other major capital cities around the world, is densely populated and contains many ethnic groups and tribes. In addition to this, there are so many foreigners from all over the world. If *da'wah* is conducted in a sophisticated and knowledgeable manner by the Tokyo Mosque is possible that it can serve as a regional *da'wah* centre and has the potential in the surrounding regional areas.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study plans to investigate certain important questions such as:

- 1) How was the Tokyo Mosque established in Japan?
- 2) What is the state of relations between Tokyo Mosque and other prominent mosques and Muslim organizations in Japan?
- 3) What is the role of Tokyo Mosque and its main activities in the field of *da'wah*?
- 4) How far the educational system of Japan is helpful for *da'wah*?
- 5) Is Islām compatible with other religions and culture of Japan?

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the study is to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To study and investigate the historical development of the institution of mosques with special reference to Tokyo Mosque
- 2) To evaluate the ways of *da'wah* adopted by Tokyo Mosque
- 3) To study the problems and challenges faced by *da'wah* activities conducted by Tokyo Mosque, Japan
- 4) To evaluate the educational system of Japan and see the relevance of *da'wah*
- 5) To identify the elements of compatibility and incompatibility of Islām with other religions and culture of Japan.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

Islām can meet the demands of the Japanese quest for peace of mind because it is founded on noble qualities of humanity such as brotherhood, equality, simplicity and direct approach to Creator, God, Allāh or *Uitsu no KAMI-sama* (the most respected and the supreme entity, the Japanese name of Allāh) in Japanese. The next ideal duties of the Muslims are to prove that Islām has the solutions and meets the requirements of body and soul, family and society as a whole. The Japanese have tried various theories and philosophies. Now they would like to give a chance to Islām. Can Islām and Muslims in Japan provide the proof of Islamic ability to resolve the social, individual, spiritual and physical problems? Can Islām be a practical religion that can contribute to their needs? These are the questions which constitute the essence of this research. Therefore, the significance of the research is as follows: