

Revisiting Islam in Japan

Ahmad Rashid Malik



Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI)

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Ahmad Rashid Malik

*Ahmad Rashid Malik holds doctorate from La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia, and Master from the International University of Japan, Niigata, Japan. He authored *Pakistan-Japan Relations: Continuity and Change in Economic Relations and Security Interests* (New York & London, Routledge, 2008). He is a former Fellow of the Japan Foundation in Tokyo and Korea Foundation in Seoul. He contributes opinion pieces in newspapers in Pakistan and abroad besides publishing a large number of research papers, edited books, and monographs. His area of research interest is political economy. Presently, he is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.*

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Preface

To present an accurate picture of Islam in Japan is an arduous task. There is a variety of aspects such as cultural, social, strategic and political to explain the status of Islam inside Japanese society. For years, I was not clear as to how to present an honest and true perspective of Islam and Muslims in Japan.

Therefore, the Japanese perspectives on Islam were divided in three parts to conduct this study. The Japanese constantly developed a civilizational dialogue with Muslims in both pre-World War period and the post-war era. Part one is the period prior to and during the World War I in which a romantic encounter appeared between the Japanese and the Muslims. Probably, Islam has little to do with the Japanese at that time, as it was a period of hard politics in world affairs. The Japanese state comprising the monarchy and an imperial army as well as public at large developed a supporting stance toward Islam and Muslims for enhancing their colonial interests.

The second period commenced right after the World War II in which Japanese accepted Western notions of Islam and Muslims. This is a reversal of their earlier perception of Islam, but they did not abandon understanding of Islam altogether. Moreover, at that time, Japan was a defeated nation. This situation continued till the oil shocks, which also forced Japanese to study Islam and revive links with Islamic countries. Japanese's sympathy toward Islamic world was the result of such policies rather than genuinely supporting Islam and Muslims, unlike the war-time era. However, officially, Japanese policy has not been anti-Islam even during this period.

The third period started right after 9/11. The image of Islam and that of Muslims was largely tarnished during this period. Muslims living in Japan faced oppression by law-enforcing authorities and society. This study looks into these issues and suggests way forward to promote Islam and Muslims' interaction within Japan. It mainly focuses on the situation of Muslims living in Japan and the challenges they confront in everyday life while working and living in Japan. The study also makes an attempt to deal with the question of terrorism in Japan and the response given by Muslims in that country.

I have lived in Japan in connection with studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s and completed a doctorate research at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia in 1998. Lately, my interest about the study of Islam in Japan renewed in 2010-2011 when I was working as Fellow of the Japan Foundation in Tokyo. This opportunity allowed me to interact with Japanese intelligentsia, public and Muslims living in Japan. The study is the result of such interactions and participant observation during my time in Japan.

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Ahmad Rashid Malik
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Revisiting Islam in Japan

Introduction

A comprehensive and critical analysis of Islam in Japan is the need of the hour in order to understand and promote Islam-Japan interaction and to see where it stands today in this complex world, what challenges it confronts, and what is the way forward to build a better citizenry relationship between Muslims living in Japan and native Japanese citizens. The task is, however, cumbersome.

This study focuses on the geographical and strategic reasons as the starting point of low contacts between Islamic countries or Islam and Japan up to the World War II. It further explores the early contacts between assertive Muslims and Japanese after the Meiji Restoration in the last quarter of the 19th century that cemented throughout the wars and Japanese imperial subjugation of the Asian continent. Japanese interaction with Islam was revived after World War II, which this study explores.

The latest and much more active interaction of Japan with Islam was the result of the oil shocks in the 1970s and economic interests with the oil-rich Middle East. ‘Terrorism’ and the so-called ‘Islamic Fundamentalism’ and many misperceptions about Islam misrepresented Islam and Muslims in Japan after 9/11. Muslims spent more time in Japan defending Islam than preaching its ideals as religion after that period. The last part of this study deals with actions to be taken to further consolidate Japan-Islam relations.

As far as the methodology of this study is concerned, its sources of information are based on printed material, conversations with a number of people in Japan, and first-hand personal observations over a period of time. Information and data have been modified on several occasions, and source material has been listed in the last part of the study. The effort undertaken in this study is significant as it explores several important missing pages of history of Japan’s advancement in Asia and its links with Muslims that have not been highlighted in explaining big events of world wars. The author, however, does not

claim the authenticity of this study to be the final, but strongly believes that it tends to promote the greater cause of understanding of Islam in a complex Japanese society by gathering, re-interpreting, and re-analysing the information for much better conclusions and suggestions. The study, therefore, lays the groundwork for the conduct of similar studies in future.

Background

Globalisation has not had much impact on the acceptance of Islam in Japan over the years, and it is still viewed as an ‘alien’ religion in Japan. It is interesting to note that the Japanese interaction with Islam spanned over 13 decades and is as old as the Meiji Restoration itself, but Islam is still on the crossroads and confronts ambiguous postures.

Amalgamation of various religious thoughts governs the social life of the Japanese. For instance, native Japanese religion — Shintoism — and South Asian-inspired religions like Buddhism, Christianity etc. together with the overall blanket of the Chinese doctrine of Confucianism have been identified with the state, society, and government in Japan. All of them have a far-reaching impact on the Japanese social, political, and economic life. Like Islam, Christianity was viewed as the religion of the West in Japan, but it was regarded as westernisation and modernisation. It had an appeal to the Japanese long before and even after the Meiji Restoration. Hinduism and Judaism were also treated as alien religions by the Japanese people. Along with Shintoism and Buddhism, there is a variety of religious thoughts in Japan.

Other than the old religion, Tenrikyo, which was established in 1838 by Miki Nakayama, a Japanese woman who claimed to have experienced divine revelations, other noted newly man-made religions include Oomoto, Soka Gakkai, Mahikari, Makuya, and Aum Shinrikyo — a mixed combination of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, currently known as Aleph.

The amalgamation of non-revealed religions in Japan caused public havoc rather than teaching a religious doctrine for prompting peace in society. This variety of so-called religions and cults in the real

sense make Japanese people almost non-sensitive and non-serious toward revealed religions. If one finds that there is a religious segregation or racism in Japan, he or she has to go a long way to explore these realities, especially Japanese societal values, political trends, strategic necessities and economic compulsions. One may find some partial clue but not a clear answer.

Challenges

Islam, nevertheless, faces more challenges than any other religion in Japan because of its assertive participation in society, government, and the state. Islam confronts somewhat hostility in its entirety and not a receptive environment in Japanese society. There are stereotypes and misperceptions attached to Islam, and Japanese people normally perceive Islam from that angle. It is also a weak premise to equate the strength of Islam with Muslim colonial subjugation in the 19th and 20th centuries. Today, Islam represents a much more assertive response than during the colonial era, but the Japanese misperceptions have not been much changed.

Some Japanese converts to Christianity and students who went in a big number to Western universities became agents of anti-Islamic propaganda as they wrote in Japanese language against Islamic values and norms without understanding them in depth in a critical manner and in its entirety. Immediate post-Meiji Japanese learners' thinking was moulded by Christianity and its miss-represented notions of Islam and Muslims.¹ After the Russo-Japanese War in 2005, such thinking began to change. That has been explained in the subsequent pages.

Moreover, the Japanese women marriages with Muslims in Japan, countered such anti-Islamic propaganda to a large extent through a strong social network. According to Raees Siddiqui, a religious scholar in Tokyo, Islamic freedom and respect to women and a ban on alcohol and illicit sexual relations promoted such marriages in Japan among the Japanese women in the 1980s and 1990s. Japanese women who married Muslims normally face ostracism, exclusion, and discriminatory attitude from their families, as they do not accept a member of an alien society in their families. Thus, they receive cold shoulder from fellow Japanese. So, a complete assimilation is still not

the way of life in Japan, but some transition is on the way that would take a long time to complete.

Furthermore, according to Hajji Mustafa Fujio Komura, a Japanese native convert to Islam, Japanese perceived Islam as ‘a barbaric, aggressive, and inferior religion that came from barren deserts of Arabia’.² Some view Islam as a religion of ‘underdeveloped Asian countries’ such as western China, Malaysia, and Indonesia whom Japanese had subjugated during wars. However, with the rise of China, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia, and Japan’s growing trading and investment links with this area, together with the Middle East oil boom, has to some extent reversed those largely held misperceptions among the Japanese.

Japan’s militant organisations developed links with some assertive political and semi-military organisations in some Islamic countries in the 1970s. No doubt, unlike its Western counterpart, Japan neither has a ‘Jihadi culture’ or ‘Jihad’, ‘Taliban’, ‘al-Qaeda’, ‘Hamast’, nor ‘Hezbollah ist’ sense on its soil. For example, imbedded with Communist ideology, the Japan Red Army (JRA) was founded in 1971 with its base in Lebanon after the radical leftist movement at home dwindled due to police crackdowns and factional infighting.

The JRA carried out a massacre at the Lod Airport in Tel Aviv on May 30, 1972 by Kozo Okamoto, Yasuyuki Yasuda, and Tsuyoshi Okudaira, before Japan entered the rich nations’ club. The attack led to the death of 25 people, with scores injured. JRA terrorists Yasuyuki Yasuda and Tsuyoshi Okudaira died on that day, but Okamoto was captured who was released by Israel in 1985. He was granted asylum in Lebanon where he still resides. The JRA ring leader Fusako Shigenobu has been serving imprisonment in a jail in Japan.³ She announced disbanding of the group in April 2001.⁴

In May 2011, Osamu Muraoka died in a prison hospital in Tokyo.⁵ That created panic in the government of Japan, which led it to offer apology and ransom of US\$ 1.5 million to Israel through dispatching of a Diet member, Kenji Fukunaga, as a special envoy who met with the Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir on June 4, 1972. Several of the

Arab states 'sympathised' with the act of the JRA because it represented support by a foreign nation for their cause without having to act on their own. The apology by the Japanese government must have been seen as a rejection of that cause. The Japanese government's gesture toward Israel antagonised many Arab governments but just in their hearts who thought of passing on sanctions against Japan.⁶

In July 1973, along with Palestinian guerrillas, Maruoka was one of five persons who hijacked a Japanese Airlines Boeing 747 while on a flight from Paris to Tokyo. They forced the plane to land in Dubai for abortive talks on a ransom and the release of two imprisoned JRA members. After taking the jet to Libya, the group freed all the passengers and crew, blew up the aircraft, and slipped into hiding. Maruoka joined four other commandos in hijacking another JAL Paris-Tokyo flight in September 1974. They forced the D.C-8 jet to land in Dhaka and took US\$ 6 million in ransom in exchange for its passengers and crew. The hijackers also won the release of three left-wing activists from Japanese prisons.

They flew to Algeria and went into hiding. Maruoka was arrested in Tokyo in 1987 when he returned to Japan under a false identity. He was reportedly planning to enter South Korea to disrupt the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympics. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1993 and the sentence was made final by Japan's Supreme Court in 2000.⁷ Pakistani law-enforcement authorities should learn from the Japanese terrorist activities and see how Japan finally overcame such terrorist activities.

However, during the past several years, and especially after 9/11, more misperceptions and prejudices were added in support of the anti-Islamic Western, Jewish, and Hindu propaganda that equated Islam with terrorism and Muslims as militants destroying the peace of the world. The post-9/11 Japanese media paid much attention to the anti-Islam propaganda in a sensational, and dramatic manner. Japanese law-enforcement authorities strictly monitored the activities of the Muslims and grilled few of them with suspicions on their alleged links with al-Qaeda and Taliban. The 9/11 incidents forced the Japanese law enforcement authorities to adopt a more strict immigration policy for the Muslims. However, no notable arrest was made in Japan of any

Muslim activist of these militant organisations responsible for the 9/11 events, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

These events, however, diluted the pre-9/11 efforts that were being made to promote better Islamic thoughts and ties in Japan. Therefore, it would not be wrong to assume that over the years, Japanese misunderstood Islam more than they understood it. The Christian and Jewish propaganda, together with the changing attitude of the Japanese government and role of the Western countries, contributed much to this misunderstanding.

Huntington's thesis was not simply on 'Clash of Civilisations' between Islam and Western Civilisation. It was also a clash between Islam and Confucius Civilisation.⁸ To Judith Berling, Confucianism is often characterised as a system of social and ethical philosophy rather than a religion. In fact, Confucianism built on an ancient religious foundation to establish the social values, institutions, and transcendent ideals of traditional Chinese society. It is a 'civil religion' in the sense of religious identity and common moral understanding at the foundation of a society's central institutions. It is also a 'diffused religion' its institutions were not a separate church, but those of society, family, school, and state; its priests were not separate liturgical specialists, but parents, teachers, and officials.

Confucianism was part of the Chinese social fabric and way of life; to Confucians, everyday life was the arena of religion."⁹ The Japanese, Korean, and Chinese societies are built around Confucius values. Unlike Huntington's Clash of Civilization, this study finds no clash between Confucianism and Islam. As such, no 'Civilizational' clash ever happened between Islam and Confucianism. Japanese wars were not between Islam and Buddhism, but they were largely viewed in the Asia-Pacific geo-politics perspectives.

It was in this sense that the official Japanese policy toward Islam had been logical and positive over years. Muslims felt Japanese official policy as somewhat extraordinary admiration of their thoughts and values. Japan always had promoted dialogue with Islam that was started in the 1930s. That was when the Imperial Japanese army and government expanded their sphere of influence from Manchuria and

Mongolia into China, thereby provoking British and American embargoes of oil and other crucial resources.¹⁰ At that time, key figures in Japan's Foreign Ministry, army, and navy established a study group on Islam and led a government campaign to increase knowledge and affinity with Islam.¹¹ Japanese Prime Minister Hayashi Senjuro's close involvement with Muslims earned him the sobriquet, 'Father of Japanese Muslims'.

Foreign Minister Tani Masayuki (1942-43), in Prime Minister Hideki Tojo's¹² Cabinet (1941-44) emphasised on recognising the rightful status of Muslims in British and American colonial lands.¹³ Japanese well understood Muslims values and norms especially when the people of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) refused to bow down to Tokyo instead of Mecca.¹⁴ Later, the execution of Tojo by the infamous Tokyo Military Tribunal in 1948 also discouraged Japanese leaders' and people's interaction with Muslims. That was the end of the first but a short glorious interaction of Islam and Japan that also ended with the end of World War II.

On Iran issue, Japanese Foreign Minister Kono Yohei also set up a dialogue on Islam in March 2000 by creating an understanding between Islam and Confucius Civilisations.¹⁵ The study proposed greater understanding of Islamic history, *Ummah*, economy, and Japan's relations with Islam. Japan has forcibly countered Huntington thesis of 'Clash of Islam and Confucius Civilisations'. Without any iota of war or clash, it was thus easy to diffuse Buddhist/Shinto tranquillity with Islam and the Muslims.

For obvious reasons, therefore, Japanese people have not viewed Islam as a faith of society but as an active political force shaping the strategic and political landscape of the world, particularly its confrontation with the West. Mostly, the oil embargo in the 1970s, the eight-year-long Iran-Iraq War, the Palestinian cause, the Iraq's destruction, the Afghan crisis, and the 9/11 events shaped and re-shaped the opinion about Islam in Japan. Unlike in the past, when Turks were viewed as active Muslims and friends of Japan against the West during the First World War, Pakistani and Iranian Muslims were viewed as anti-West, especially by the anti-United States policy holders in Japan by its civil society and the state.

Pakistanis faced the harsh international propaganda of their country's involvement in the alleged nuclear proliferation. The Iranians face their show-off with America and Europe who branded them as fundamentalists. That made these Muslims face an identity credibility crisis in Japan rather than their basic involvement with bread and butter alone. They could hardly explain their countries' positions to fellow Japanese. They could not respond well. There are foreign policy differences between Japan and the United States, but they are largely viewed as strategic partners.

The case of Muslims or Islam is viewed in a different perspective in Japan because of the stereotype comments passed by the Japanese media, people, and the state, which are influenced by Western media. Facing a strong and dynamic Japanese media, it is normally very difficult for the Muslim community in Japan to respond accurately to that entirely odd situation where they have to explain their positions without full command of Japanese language, norms, and values. They are thus constrained by formulating a specific response.

Seclusion

The question as to why Japan remained aloof from Islam goes back to history. The strong presence of Buddhism in China from Tibet to Korea and up to the Japanese Archipelago, were the factors as to why Japanese could not get attracted to Islam. The Japanese Island remained close till 1853. So, an isolated country and its geography had played a major role in not initiating a debate or preaching of an Islamic doctrine. Hence, attraction with foreigners was not promoted, and Islam remained isolated in Japan. With the Arab conquest of the Indian Sub-continent in the 8th century, Islam began to flourish, particularly in the northwest and east of the Indian Subcontinent. Islam did not go north from Indonesia; neither did it go beyond western China to influence Japan or North-East Asia and the Russian Far East. Central and South China, thus, became a buffer between Islam and Japan. The Arab traders virtually had no trade or trading links with North East Asia that was completely underdeveloped with harsh weather conditions not suited for small vessels to sail in the sea and with no

commercial benefits at that time. North-East Asia was considered to be a ‘black hole’ for Islam in those days.

Therefore, the Japanese remained completely unaffected by the spread of Islam in South-East Asia and western China. It was not until the Portuguese and Spaniards arrived in Japan in the 16th century that the Japanese learned about the Arabs.¹⁶ Some view suggests that the Malay sailors contacted the Japanese who served on British and Dutch ships.¹⁷ Thus, the Japanese knowledge about Islam remained vague, misleading and very little as they learned through the third party — Portuguese and Spaniards as representatives of the Western Christianity and modernity of those days. Today, the anti-US and Western drive are sending no different messages to the Japanese about Islam. Thus, Islam has faced a ‘real prosecution’ in Japan over the past several decades, and has had to defend itself more than it preached its doctrine.

Furthermore, Japan’s interaction with Islam was quite limited which came during the dawn of the 20th century more as a matter of political exigency than preaching Islam as a universal religion or a doctrine in Japan.¹⁸ Moreover, at the time when this interaction started, Islam was viewed as a religion of defeated people — the last of the Mughal Empire to the British, the division of the Ottoman Empire of Turkey into pieces, and taken over most of Islamic countries by the Western imperialists as colonies. Today, the events of 9/11 and Huntington’s theory of the “Clash of Civilisations” have reshaped these realities. This state of political affairs of the Muslims has not impressed the Japanese and they have tactfully adopted an aloof posture towards Islam. That posture of sympathy due to the wars and subjugation was overshadowed by the rising Islamic fundamentalism in a number of Islamic countries, especially, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. But a better impression has remained of the oil-rich Arab states of the Middle East, Malaysia, and Brunei in South East Asia and condemnation of actions against the Moro Liberation Front (MLF) in the Mindanao southern part of the Philippines and Muslim movements in Thailand where Japanese have large commercial interests.

Moreover, Islam was not preached in Japan the way the Buddhist monks or the Christian priests preached their religious doctrines as mentioned above. Language erected a strong barrier. Pronunciation in Japanese is being considered the greatest hurdle in learning the Arabic language and reciting versus of the Holy Qur'an among native speakers of the Japanese language. At the same time, Islam prohibits idol worship and other such practices that are common in Japanese society. Thus, Islam is considered as a threat to the Empire system, its worship, and its divinity, which was considered *Shirk* (polytheism) – something never endorsed by Islam and both stood as enemies.¹⁹ In a homogeneous society like Japan, Muslims are drawn from a number of countries and were hardly welcomed. Political necessities during the wars, however, overlooked these differences for the time being, as Japanese army needed the support of the Turks, Russians, Tatars, Chinese, and Indian Muslims to make successes across Asia, especially, Manchuria, China, and East Asia. That, however, does not mean that Japanese misperceptions of Islam have been overcome. Islam was not recognised as a religion by the state in Japan.²⁰ According to one account, Japanese people first came to know about Islam sometime around 1877 as a part of Western religious thought.²¹ During the period of its isolation, Japan also banned *Sirat Al-Nabi* (The Life of the Prophet), a book written by a Chinese scholar.²² The action was a religious and intellectual discrimination against a dominant religion.

Early Interaction

Furthermore, a Resource less and non-trading Japan had never attracted the attention of the Arab traders who preached Islam in East Asia. No trade was carried out directly between the Arabs and the Japanese until the Meiji Restoration in 1868.²³ Prior to that, no authentic record has been found about Japan-Islam contacts.²⁴ It was only in the early 1920s that trading contacts were initiated between Japan and the Middle East. The Meiji Restoration made contact with the Ottoman Turks that continued during the Taisho and Showa eras. Formal diplomatic relations were established between Japan and Turkey in 1875. The then Japanese Crown Prince Komatsu Akihito visited Istanbul to meet the Ottoman Emperor Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1887.

It has been found that Malay head of State, Maharaja (later Sultan) Abu Bakar of Johor, made a state visit to Japan in 1883.²⁵ An Ottoman ship, Ertugrul, made a goodwill visit of Japan in 1890, which carrying 609 men, led by Admiral Uthman Pasha, Sultan's brother. Meetings were held with Japanese Emperor Mutsuhito, Prime Minister Yamagata Arimoto, and other dignitaries. While the ship was returning and was still in Japanese waters, it sank due to a horrible typhoon, drowning 540 of passengers, including the Sultan's brother.²⁶ The dead were buried in the nearby areas of Japanese Islands. Since then, Turks and Japanese mark this sad incident.

One of the survivors was a Japanese journalist, Shotaro Noda, who later met Hamid II in Istanbul and converted to Islam. He took name of Abdul Haleem Noda. He can be called the first Japanese Muslim.²⁷ During the same spirit, Torajiro Yamada went to Istanbul and embraced Islam.²⁸ Some other studies have revealed that a native Japanese known as Torajiro Yamada was probably the first Japanese Muslim who visited Turkey out of sympathy for those who died in the aftermath of the shipwreck of the Ertugrul.²⁹ He converted to Islam there and took the name Abdul Khalil and probably made pilgrimage to Makkah.³⁰ Whatever the truth may be, both should be considered early Japanese converts to Islam. The other early converts to Islam were Mitsutaro Takaoka who converted to Islam in 1909 and took the name Omar Yamaoka after making the pilgrimage to Makkah and Bumpachiro Ariga, who about the same time went to India for trading purposes and converted to Islam under the influence of local Muslims and subsequently took the name Ahmad Ariga.³¹

Muhammad Ali, one of Sultan Abdul Hamid's envoys, visited Japan in 1902 with the intention of building a Mosque in Yokohama. It was an unsuccessful attempt to build a Mosque in Japan.³² The first Mosque was built in Osaka for Russian Muslim prisoners in 1905.³³

Modern diplomatic contacts were established much later with Turkey and Egypt in the 1920s to protect Japanese shipping lanes through the Suez Canal.³⁴ Similarities were established with Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon by the late 1930s to protect Japanese markets, particularly cotton goods in the Middle East.³⁵ It was just prior to the

outbreak of World War II that Japan took an interest in oil exploration in Saudi Arabia.³⁶ These events had great impact on Japan-Islam relations during the World War II and some years later. However, the outbreak of the World War II disrupted trade between Japan and the Middle East as the Suez Canal was closed to Japanese shipping. Moreover, Japan's diplomatic ties with Egypt, Iraq, and Turkey were also cut off.³⁷

Modern Contacts

There have been two 'Islamic booms' in Japan. The first was the Islamic political boom in Japan that started during the First World War (1914-1919) and some years earlier. A number of Muslim intellectuals and activists played significant roles in Japan's drive against the West. They included, *inter alia*, Mufti Abdul Rashid Ibrahim, Mullah Qurban Ali, Maulvi Baraktullah of Bhopal, and Mian Abdul Aziz. The second 'Islamic boom' was diplomatic and academic that started in the 1970s in connection with the 'Oil Shock' in which a number of measures were adopted by the Japanese government to prevent the after effects of the 'Oil Shock' on Japan's economy.

We thus see how, for a variety of reasons, a number of thinkers came to see the adoption of Islam as an indispensable ingredient in Japan's imperial project, without which it was doomed to failure. A great number of factors prevented such a discourse happening as elaborated below:

Muslims received official Japanese patronisation from the last quarter of the 19th century to the end of World War II. Limited political contacts emerged between the Muslim political activists and the Japanese at the beginning of the 20th century. These activists were Turks, Russians, Tatars, Turko-Tatars, Chinese, Indian Muslims, and a handful of them were Egyptians. Like Russians, Chinese were also minorities in their country and felt seclusion from their fellow countrymen.³⁸ Japanese, which always remained fearful of Russia and willing to subjugate the Chinese, happily 'used' these Muslims for their own imperial interests rather than genuinely forging links with Islam and the Muslims.³⁹

These Muslims were drawn from a number of non-Muslim countries, other than the Ottoman Turkey. Many of them lacked experience and knowledge of how to preach Islam; they also did not have suitable knowledge about Japanese cultural values to preach Islam. Moreover, lack of funds and the absence of modern Islamic literature prevented them from attracting the Japanese to Islam.⁴⁰ All these contacts appeared as a result of political upheavals, and sought Japanese support against Western imperialists under Japan's later Pan-Asianism and the Greater East Asia 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' policy. Islam's impact on Japan at the dawn of the 20th century was also attributed to the fact that Muslims' number had risen in China, especially in Taiwan and Korea.⁴¹

Later, the Turks, after the Japanese success over Russia in 1905, started friendly intercourse with them through a treaty of friendship. They also sent a naval mission for training in Japan. Interestingly, a pro-Islamic propaganda was launched in 1906 when a number of reports appeared in Muslim journals of India, Persia, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, and other countries to the effect that a Congress of Religions would take place in Tokyo, and that the Japanese would seriously consider adopting Islam as their national religion.⁴² Hitherto, Japanese had seen Islam in the context of the Ottoman Empire and its rivalry with the Europeans and their rift with the Arabs as stated above. Islam, to the Japanese, was still the religion of the people of the desert who were defeated by Western powers as already noted. Unfortunately, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire further diminished the prestige of Islam in Japan and put a stamp on it for its disapproval as a popular religion for the Japanese.

Ibrahim Affair

During the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917, around one thousand Russian soldiers escaped to Manchuria and China from the maritime provinces and eastern Siberia, Tatar, Bashikir, Mesher, and Zabaikar districts of Russia. These early Muslim arrivals of Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajik, Kirghiz, Kazakh and other Muslim refugees from Central Asia and Russia into Japan formed the first Muslim community in Japan during the late 1920s. These Muslims were given political asylum by Japanese authorities by settling them in several

main cities of the country. Some Muslims also took asylum in Korea, then part of the Japanese Empire.⁴³ A small number of native Japanese converted to Islam through contacts with these political asylum seekers. They may not have been true converts but used their so-called religious conversion for political purposes. The Japanese government asked the Ottoman Empire to send *Ulema* (Islamic scholars) to Japan.⁴⁴

Other than the Turks, the Russian Tatar Muslims came in contact with the Japanese after the Balkan Wars. Mufti Abdurresid (Abdul Rashid) Ibrahim, a Russian Tatar journalist and political activist from Western Siberia, Russia, who was a leading figure among Muslims collaborating with the Japanese, visited Japan for the first time on February 02, 1909 via Vladivostok.⁴⁵ He descended from the famous historical and Islamic city of Bukhara, now in Uzbekistan. He got immense interest in Japan after the Russian defeat by Japan in 2005. He first organised Muslims in Russia. He thought that Japan was in the best position to play a role according to his strategy. He was considered as a great Pan-Asian Islamic scholar in those days in Japan. Komatsu Hisao has written in detail in a recent publication about him.⁴⁶ The Japanese got considerable information about Russia from him and highly patronised him.⁴⁷

Impressed by Japanese social system and heroic values, he wanted to emulate the Japanese educational system for Russian Muslims.⁴⁸ He was of the view that Japanese progress and development had become possible only after they had adopted Western technology, but assimilated it with their cultural values. Muslims could not adopt Western technology and also, unlike Japanese, lost their values to the West during the Ottoman Empire due to rapid Westernisation that resulted in their decline as well as great challenges faced by Islamic societies threatened by Western powerful nations.⁴⁹ He found Japanese virtues in total accord with the doctrine of Islam. According to him, Japanese could be the most perfect Muslims in the world.⁵⁰

Ibrahim translated *Asia in Danger*, in Turkish and Russian languages, a pamphlet written by Hasan Hatano Uhno, one of the pioneers of Japanese Pan-Asianists who had adopted Muslim names. The pamphlet was widely distributed in the Muslim world.⁵¹ Ibrahim's

activities were instrumental in establishing training programmes for the Japanese agents to be sent to Islamic countries under the guise of Muslims, a tactic that the military authorities were to use during the World War II. He also thought that if the Japanese converted to Islam, they would help liberate Muslims from Western oppression.

Japanese imperial ambitions and the Muslim search for modernity and political sovereignty coincided with each other.⁵² Ibrahim claimed that Islam was the key to allow a stable Japanese presence in China.⁵³ He wrote that China was Japan's natural market, but there was undeniably great hatred between the Chinese and the Japanese. The only way for Japan to successfully penetrate the Chinese market was to establish close connections with the Chinese Muslims. Their economic constraint will also cause the Japanese to incline towards Islam.

Ibrahim and his Japanese associates established The *Ajia Gikai* (The Asian Society) on June 7, 1909 to advance Japan's Asian cause of solidarity with Asian people.⁵⁴ His purpose was to create feelings of oneness among Muslims at that hour of despair, and he wished to create the Union of Islam. He thought the liberation of Asia and China under Japan's leadership was essential to stop merciless invasions of Western powers in Asia, as also Russian designs.⁵⁵ He made efforts in China by pleading the Japanese case to Chinese Muslims. Japan was his only hope and the place that could implement his Islamic ideals. He worked for pan-Asianism that would strongly serve both Japan's war-time purpose and ideology. Undoubtedly, the Ottoman Empire confronted with a series of fatal problems; as the Young Turks revolution in 1908; could not afford to advance an Eastern policy as Ibrahim embraced. At the same time, a new nationalist ideology of Turkism began to gain a broader influence among Muslim intellectuals.⁵⁶ So, naturally, Ibrahim-Asian solidarity encountered a fatal discourse at the end.

After the Balkan Wars, he went back to his native town Tara in Russia in the Volga-Ural region in around 1918. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Ibrahim migrated to Turkey in 1923. This was the end the Caliphate and Pan-Asianism — a dream that never came true for which Ibrahim and Japanese ruthlessly struggled for. This was still not the

end of the story. There is a small postscript. Ibrahim was approached by the Japanese authorities in Ankara, and he once again came to Japan in October 1933. He continued to talk about cooperation between Muslims and Japan. He criticised Japan's expulsion from the League of Nations in March 1933, and wrote that "the League was nothing else than a trap set by Western great powers for putting Japan under their control and preventing Japan from playing a leading role in liberating Eastern peoples under Western rules."⁵⁷

Ibrahim was reactivated and started political activities. He was linked to Toyama Mitsuro's *Genyosha* (Dark Ocean Society), an organisation of ultra-nationalists of Japan. Earlier, the organisation was known as *Kokuryukai*. Ibrahim was highly critical of Japanese law that authorised Christianity as one of Japan's official religions, but excluded Islam.⁵⁸ He participated in the organisation of the *Dai Nippon Kaikyo Kyokai* (The Greater Japan Islamic Society) that came into being in 1938 and was formed by General Hayashi Senjuro (who later became Prime Minister) to interact with 300 million Muslims under Japan's *Toa Shin Chitsujo* (New Order in East Asia) policy.⁵⁹ Ibrahim died in Tokyo on August 31, 1944, at a time when Japan's defeat seemed inevitable. He was buried in Tama Muslim graveyard on the outskirts of Tokyo.

An Egyptian scholar, Syed Ali Jarjawi, made some headway in introducing Islam to the Japanese. His Arabic book, *Rahla Al-Yabania* (Journey to Japan) was considered an informative account of Islam in those days in Japan. He also made efforts to convert the Japanese to Islam. Umar Yamaoka was said to be the first Japanese Muslim who performed Haj in 1909.⁶⁰

In 1923, the Teijiro Sakuma organisation was founded in Shanghai, which was the first important Japanese-sponsored Islamic organisation specifically designed to arouse western Chinese Muslims from their age-old lethargy and to unite them in a great Pan-Islamic movement. Sakuma believed that Japan had failed to Japanese Korea and Formosa (Taiwan) and, therefore, as an alternative, Japan should adopt Islam, which would lead to Japan becoming part of a great pan-Islamic movement to check Russian penetration into the Islamic world and prevent the entry of Communism into Japan.⁶¹ A 'Muslim Japan'

notion attracted a large number of activities and scholars toward Japan. The Japanese puppet government in Manchukuo used these western Chinese Muslims in a considerable number to consolidate their rule.⁶²

Japanese Pan-Asianism movement, led by Shumei Okawa, naturally coincided with the Pan-Islamic movement. Selcuk Esenbel maintains that members of Japan's military and civilian elite who espoused an 'Asianist agenda' and their Muslim contacts formed an 'Islam circle' in Japan in the late Meiji period and for many years kept in touch, advocating closer relations. That was later termed as 'Islam policy' (*Kaikyo Seisaku*). All these contacts, research, and other forms of interaction finally allowed Japan to adopt Islam-oriented policies during wars.⁶³ Esenbel, however, overlooked the Pakistan Movement for the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims, which Japanese opposed for their military and political run over British India.⁶⁴

The majority of Muslims that took refuge in Japan were Russian Tatars, led by Mullah Abdul Haji Qurban Ali, a military priest. Other than Teijiro Sakuma in China, an ultra-revolutionary Japanese, Mitsuru Toyama, in Japan, who formed *Genyosha* (the Dark Ocean Society) in 1881, in Kyushu, which also patronised them. Besides, they were patronised by Lt. Col. Hashimoto Kogoro and General Matsui Iwane. Qurban Ali formed the Tokyo Islamic Order in 1924. In 1927, Toyama provided him with funds to build an Islamic School (*Madriisa*) at Okubo in Tokyo.⁶⁵ In the same year, a place of worship was arranged at Yoyogi in Tokyo. Later, Qurban Ali formed the Federation of Muslims in Tokyo in 1928.⁶⁶ He published a Turkish language monthly, called *Japan Mukhbiri* (Japan Information) and *New Japan*, a newsletter in Turkish language from Tokyo.

The puppet government in Manchuria set up an Islamic League in Manchukuo in July 1932 with 166 branches, along with a total membership of 15,000, and operated under the aegis of the Concordia Society, a single-party organisation. Manchukuo became the Centre stage of Japanese contacts with Chinese Muslims. A member of the royal family of the Manchukuo government, P'u Kuang, a younger cousin of the 'Emperor' P'u Yi," converted to Islam, adopting the Muslim name of Ali⁶⁷, known as Pu Kwan Ali. The conversion was

reported in a number of periodicals in the Muslim world, and both he and his wife, Ayesha, (who had previously converted) played an important part in Japanese Islamic affairs after 1935, attending, for example, the dedication of the Tokyo Mosque in 1938. This further increased Japan's Islam-related activities in China. Later, the Centre was shifted to Peiping. Among other activities, it published the periodical *Islam* every ten days. Apart from this periodical, more monthlies under Muslim names *Hui-kuang Yueh-k'an* (Light Monthly), *Hui-kuang Yueh-k'an* (The Awakening), and Hsing-shih Pao Yueh-k'an, also appeared.⁶⁸ Japanese conveyed Emperor P'u Yi Ali 'their deep regard for Islam'.⁶⁹

Another Muslim, Ayaz Ishaki, probably a Tatar-Turkish, who came to Tokyo in May 1933 and organised another group, called *Idel Qural Turko-Tattar Cultural Society* at Mejiro, in Tokyo.⁷⁰ Among others, another notable figure was Abdul Karim Bochia. He did the groundwork to build the first Islamic mosque in Kobe.⁷¹ A Pan-Islamic Conference was held at Tokyo *Kaikyo Gakko* (Tokyo Islamic School (*Madrissa*)) in Tokyo on June 7, 1934. The Conference was attended by a number of leading figures, namely; Mufti Ibrahim, Toyama Mitsuru, Okawa Shumei, Hayashi Senjuro, Ahmad Urkati, Hayashi Senjuro (who later became Prime Minister in 1937), Akio Kawato, Kurban Ali, Admiral Ogasawara Chosei, Vice Chief of Staff General Ichikawa, General Iwane, Matsui Kanzaki Isaku, former Minister of Law, and many others.⁷²

The second Islamic mosque was built at Ohyama in Yoyogi in 1938 with donations extended by leading Japanese companies such as Mitsui, Mitsubishi, and Sumitomo, and local Muslim minority.⁷³ The Saudi Prince Wahaba attended its inauguration. Similarly, Yemeni Crown Prince Husain visited Tokyo in 1938 to propagate the pro-Japanese line of the *Kaikyo Seisaku* policy.⁷⁴ The *Dai Nippon Kaikyo Kyokai* (The Greater Japan Muslim League) was set up in 1938 with Mufti Ibrahim as the Muslim representative and Hayashi Senjuro as the official head of the organisation. An Islamic School (*Madrissa*) was also built beside the Mosque, which has now turned into the Turkish Cultural Centre.⁷⁵ This was the beginning of the Islamic literate in Japan, strongly attached to Japan's war-time and political needs and support that were strongly backed by Japanese imperial

army and active civil society members. It was against this backdrop that Islam-related activities were permitted on Japan's soil.

The Muslim political activists and refugees were used by Japan to fight side-by-side with the Japanese in North-East Asia, particularly against the Russians, Chinese, Koreans, Indo-Chinese and Burmese. The Japanese Imperial government did a lot of work to use the Chinese Muslims for their political interests, especially during their war with China in 1937, by the South Manchuria Railway Company and by the Kwantung Army.⁷⁶ Being devoted and hard-working soldiers, these Muslim militants played a supporting role in Japanese successes in North-East and South-East Asia during the wars.

The Indian Muslim contact with Japan also came as a result of widespread Muslim disenchantment with the West, particularly with the British rule in India. Maulvi Barkatullah of Bhopal was one of the early Indian active revolutionaries who came to Japan in 1909 to seek Japanese support against the British. He took up an assignment with the School of Foreign Languages (now Tokyo University of Foreign Languages) to teach Urdu. He edited two journals, called *Islamic Fraternity* and *El-Islam*.⁷⁷ His publications and writings were banned by the government in British India. As a result of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, he was forced to leave Japan in 1914. Later, Barkatullah joined the San Francisco-based Gadhar Party.

These Muslims provided the Japanese with means of contact with the Islamic world. The way the Japanese came to know about Islam was through political upheavals and manoeuvrings.⁷⁸ A Provisional Government of India was formed on December 1, 1915 in Kabul by Indian nationalists, including Muslims and Hindus. Afghanistan, Russia, Germany, Turkey, China, and Japan supported the Provisional Government. Maulvi Barkatullah acted as Prime Minister of this government with Raja Mahendra Pratab as President. After the Afghan government withdrew its support, the Provisional Government came to an end in 1919. Barkatullah died in San Francisco on September 20, 1927.⁷⁹

The best known Indian Muslim who ever visited Japan was Mian Abdul Aziz, from Peshawar, today in Pakistan, who was the President

of the All-India Muslim League. He was invited by the Kobe Mosque Organisation Committee to perform the opening ceremony of the first Islamic Mosque in Japan, on October 11, 1935. Feroz Japan wala, an Indian Muslim, made a handsome donation to build this Mosque.⁸⁰ Later, the Tokyo Mosque was built in 1938. This shows the active participation of the Indian Muslims, now also Pakistanis, in Japan with regards to Islam. During his one-year stay in Japan, he made a critical study of the religious life in Japan, constitutional developments, agriculture, industry, and status of women. He published his observations in a book in 1941, entitled *The Crescent in the Land of the Rising Sun* published in 1941 from Great Britain.⁸¹ The outstanding aspect of this book was that Bernard Shaw, a famous British play-writer and the co-founder of the London School of Economics, wrote its preface.

Aziz examined education, marriage, religion, government, health care, and class privilege in his writings. The book written by Aziz was the first and a unique study of Islam in Japan. He may be regarded as an early Muslim Indian expert on Japan, keeping in mind that not much was written by foreigners about Japan at that time, unlike today when a number of stories, comments, and news appeared in the media around the world about Japan in Muslim countries. Aziz delivered lectures about Islam in the conditions prevailing at that time in Muslim countries. He had a keen interest in spreading the message of Islam in Japan with the official patronisation extended to him by the Japanese Government. In fact, it was for the first time that someone had embarked upon a mission to preach Islam in Japan.

He delivered several lectures at the India Club in Kobe, the Indo-Japanese Association also in Kobe, the Japanese Council of the Pacific Relations in Kyoto, and the Oriental Culture League of Japan in Osaka, during 1935-1936. Many other Muslim scholars such as Noorul Hassan Barlas, in connection with Urdu language teaching in Tokyo University of Foreign Languages and Alimullah Siddiqui, both from India, some way contributed to the introduction of Islam in the 1930s.⁸² A noted Lebanese businessman and a literary person, Abdur Rahman Qulelat, also came to Japan along with his family. This family gave a great deal of assistance to Muslims in Japan.⁸³

The Japanese-Turkish honeymoon ended when Turkey, at the end of the World War II, declared to fight against Japan on February 23, 1945. Gaining national independence from Western imperial powers, the Muslim movements in the Indian Subcontinent (the Pakistan Movement), Malaya (Malaysia), and Indonesia also did not support Japanese militaristic postures in Asia. National leaders in these countries either kept a distance or banned their support for the Japanese imperial interests. Therefore, prior to the World War II, trading, diplomatic, and political contacts between Japan and the Middle East that remained limited, and saw a further downward trend for obvious reasons.

Islamic Approaches

The fast-emerging 'field of Islam in Japan' drew the attention of many from scholars to diplomats and businessmen to common persons alike. Muslims living in Japan wanted to see entire Japan converted to Islam. This desire or dream was no different from the wartime interaction. Today, the reality may not be the same. It is interesting to analyse the Arabic scholars' approach to Islam in Japan and then to see the same romanticism of the Hindu leaders of the Indian Subcontinent during the British era and a philosophical approach of the poet-philosopher of Pakistan in contrast to such an approach and see a proper place of Islam in Japan. The Egyptian scholar, Mustafa Kamil's⁸⁴, approach to Japan seems to be fit into war stories, foe-and ally-making processes.

There was a general tendency of the Muslim scholars and rulers as well as amongst politicians and masses that they consciously or unconsciously supported Japan during its conflicts and wars with the West. However, when Japan came into conflict with Asia, Muslims were generally supportive of Japan's policy. They viewed Japan as a powerful Asian player against the West and not against the East. Japan, however, had a different policy. It considered itself to be the 'Super Star of Asia' alone with both coercion and cooperation. The case of the Japanese-installed puppet Manchurian government and Muslim honeymoon with the Japanese was short-lived, which was destined to doom, as much humiliation cannot be brought onto the common Chinese people and some others. Moreover, Chinese Muslims who were ethnic Chinese did not invite to humiliate their

own Chinese fellows. It was Japan's hard politics that kept them divided for the time being until Japan's strength was shattered and Chinese were united by their Communalist liberation struggle.

A majority of the undivided British Indian Muslims disfavoured Japan's liberation drive and kept themselves away from their effort to 'liberate them from the British colonial yoke' to bring them under the 'Japanese colonial yoke' like the Koreans, Chinese, Burmese, Indo-Chinese, Malaysians, and Indonesians. No Islamic country was actually liberated by Japan, but many Muslims experienced Japanese colonial invasions. No doubt, Japan's drive against the West weakened them and paved the ultimate way to liberation. Liberation came because of their own national struggles and movements. This does not mean that they hated Japan, but Japan's support would have complicated and jeopardised their national cause of liberation.

Moreover, Muslims should try to shed the trend of projecting the 'light of Islam in Japan'. This romanticism must be ended, and the Muslims should try to be more rational. Muslims have seen the situation in the 1930s. The Japanese archipelago is surrounded by non-Islamic or more specifically, the Confucius culture. Historically, the Confucius culture has the power to survive in a monarchical hierarchy, extreme capitalism, acute socialism, and in a totalitarian political system, up to a democratic order based on Western democracy. Isolated events and some interaction could not terminate this historically sustained system. Christianity and Hinduism also could not make their headway not only in Japan but also almost into this whole region with just a few exceptions.

In short, Japan's interaction with Islam was a political exigency and a military strategy penetrating into a civil society for strategic reasons. Today, it has economic diplomacy, but simple-hearted Muslims view it as if Japan was going to be converted to Islam. This promotes apprehensions in Japan rather than advancing of goodwill between Japan and the Muslims.

Muslims should simply see that Mustafa Kamil, Ali Ahmad al-Jirjawi, and Muhammad Ali emotionally appealed, but miserably failed to advance the cause of Islam in Japan. However, less of a

preacher and more of a philosophical, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the originator of the idea of Pakistan, succeeded in predicting the economic success of Japan after it defeated Russia in 1904. Iqbal strongly warned in the decade of the 1930s when Japan was politically and militarily marching over Asia. On the other hand, his Indian contemporaries such as Gandhi, Pundit Jawaharlal Lal Nehru, and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore were preaching Japan's political success. Iqbal, on the other hand, never predicted conversion of Japan to Islam in his Persian and Urdu volumes of prose and poetry, but he firmly stood for emulating the economic model of Japan without compromising on the national essence.

Japan's defeat in 1945 had a great impact on its interaction with Islam as government and the people engaged in political and economic reconstruction after the war. Cultural contacts between Japan and Muslim countries and people could not revive soon after the war for obvious reasons. Japanese revival, nevertheless, also witnessed some sort of Islamic revivalism in the 1950s in Japan. Some assertive relations were then re-established in the early 1950s. The first Japanese language study of the Holy Qur'an, done by Shumei Okawa, for instance, was published in 1950 after his death in 1946 as a war criminal. Some Japanese went for studies to Egypt and Saudi Arabia by the late 1950s. In the same way, students from Muslim countries joined Japanese universities at the same time.

In the private sector, the Japan Muslim Association was established in 1953. The first-ever *Tabligi Jamaat* (Islamic Preachers Party) started undertaking journeys into Japan during 1956-1960. The Pakistanis wished to overtake the position of the Turks, which they took during wars but in a non-military, non-political, social, cultural, and economic manner. Toshihiko Izutsu published another Japanese language understanding of the Holy Qur'an at that time. Islamic literature of the Pakistani religious scholar Syed Abul A'ala Maududi was translated into Japanese in the 1960s. During 1950-70s, Saudi Arabia made enormous efforts in Japan to support Islamic activities.

The second 'Islamic Boom' in Japan was the Arab Boom which appeared in the early 1970s. The significance of the Middle East oil dominated Japan's post-war relations with Muslim countries. The oil

embargo in the early 1970s made Japan a 'pro-Arab' country. The late King of Saudi Arabia, Shah Faisal, sent *Da'ees* (Preachers of Islam) giving Islamic awareness and the much-needed support during the oil shocks in the early 1970s.

Since then, Japan's relations with the oil-exporting Middle-eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and also Iran have been strengthened at the expense of the pre-war relations with Turkey and Egypt. At the same time, the Islamic Centre of Japan (ICJ) was established in Japan as the Japanese government showed keen interest in Islam-related activities in the early 1970s. The Centre organizes many literary Islamic activities. The ICJ organised a symposium on the 'Relations between Japan and the Muslim World and One-Hundred Years of Islamic History in Japan' in collaboration with the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Jeddah in 2000.

A number of Japanese universities initiated courses on Islamic Studies such as the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and the University of Tokyo, especially the Association for Islamic Studies in Japan (AISJ), which is a scientific and educational society founded in 1963, with the aim to promote research on Islamic studies and to have academic contacts with institutions in the Muslim world. Other universities related to Islamic studies were included: Doshisa University, the Osaka University, Waseda University, and the International University of Japan (IUJ). Oriental, Asian, and international studies programmes in Japanese universities also throw light on different Islamic aspects. Similarly, ICJ published books in Japanese language and distributed them freely to promote Japanese understanding of Islam. A prominent *Sharia* Conference (Islamic Law), in collaboration with the famous Rabita Alam-i-Islami, Chuo University in Tokyo, and the Council of Islamic Organisation of Japan, was held in 1977. The notable aspect of this conference was that Crown Prince Noruhito Takamatsu attended the event.

Continuing the same policy of cultural promotion for economic and political necessities with international obligations and constraints, Japanese governments and multinationals supported programmes for Japanese to study Arab and Muslim philosophy, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Politics, Culture, and the Economy to find better policy options for

Japan. Leading Japanese universities and research institutes played a significant role in creating such awareness and cultural sensitivities among Japanese to promote economic relations between the oil-rich Middle East, Iran and Japan. It was also encouraged to send Japanese students to universities in Muslim countries.

Japanese translations of Holy Qur'an were published in 1920, 1937, 1950, and 1957, respectively, which were contributed by non-Muslim Japanese. An authorised Japanese translation of the Holy Qur'an by its translator, Haji Umar Mita, were submitted to the Muslim World League in Makkah in 1970 and published by Takumi Kobo Printing Company of Hiroshima in 1972.⁸⁵ Mita was the first Muslim Japanese scholar to publish such work. He also translated Maulana Muhammad Zakaria's book *Hayat-e-Sahaba* in Japanese language. Earlier, in 1957, he went to Pakistan on invitation and undertook various journeys in connection with *Dawa* (preaching) activities.⁸⁶ Moreover, with Saudi support, an Arabic Islamic Institute was set up in Roppongi in Tokyo in 1983 to support Arabic and Islamic learning.

Japan also viewed its relation with Pakistan as an important Muslim country and an influential player among the Islamic *Ummah* in the larger context of its oil policy toward the Middle East, which aimed at strengthening Japan's ties with the oil-rich Middle East. With the diminishing of the 'Oil Shocks' and more emerging conflicts with Islam and the Muslims, especially in terms of the 'Clash of Civilizations', the active roles and the Islam-oriented activities of the native Japanese Muslims and their sympathies also disappeared. The government was left with more options than civil society to deal with Islamic orientation, cooperation, and conflicts.

Religious Cults

In Japan, number of religious cults exist. These trends of cults do not promote divine and eternal doctrine, but personal religious agenda of cults. Among them, the most active ever generated was the Aum Shinrikyo. The cult was a combination of Hinduism and Buddhism.⁸⁷ The cult also contained some of the beliefs of Christianity. The word 'Aum' is a Sanskrit word, which means 'Supreme.' Japanese word

‘Shinrikyo’ means ‘Truth’. So the word is a combination of Sanskrit and Japanese language. Its cult leader, Shoko Asahara, acted as a Hindu *Sadhu* in Japan and used young women to spread the cult’s doctrine all over Japan. His real name was Chizuo Matsumoto, which he changed in 1996 after visiting India.⁸⁸ He wore a pink religious robe and had a long beard and hair similar to a Hindu *Sadhu*. He first started *Yoga* in a one bedroom apartment in Shibuya-Ku ward of Tokyo after failing to get into the Tokyo University. After Japan, Asahara’s largest following was in Russia.⁸⁹

The cult acted so violently on March 20, 1995 that it killed 12 people and injured 54 seriously, and affected more than 5,500 people in three Tokyo crowded subway stations including Chiyoda, Marunouchi, and Hibiya lines by spraying nerve gas, Sarin, manufactured in an illegal factory.⁹⁰ This was an act of biological terrorism in Japan.

History of this cult began in India in 1986, and *Aum* philosophy was globally spread through scattered Buddhists. Asahara spread his philosophy under the shadow of Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. He was trained in India and returned in 1987. Besides his close links with Hindu leaders in India, he was well-connected with the Buddhist spiritual leader, Dalai Lama. This was a real indigenous Japanese terrorism with philosophical and training links with Hindu extremists in India. *Aum Shinrikyo* attracted brilliant young university graduates, particularly scientists, and put them to work developing biological and chemical weapons.⁹¹

Understandably, such links and religious philosophy of Hinduism caused havoc among the Japanese people. The government came up with stern action and hanged 13 members of this cult by 2004, including the cult leader Asahara along with a number of other criminals.⁹²

Strangely, the crackdown against Asahara did not create any impact on Japan-India relations as such which is normally the case in such situations. That, however, is still a matter of concern. Buddhists and Hindu travellers get a receptive welcome in Japan in spite of these deadly incidents. The incidents, nevertheless, created confusion and

panic among various religious communities in Japan. It was a Japanese version of home-grown bio-terrorism having links with Hinduism and Buddhism.

It is unknown that Japanese who are accustomed to conducting thorough investigations, why they did not go deep inside by tracing Aum Shinrikyo's links with Hinduism (India) and Buddhism, especially Dalai Lama? Asahara's secret links with India were not disclosed. What secret financial and other links were created between Asahara and a number of other countries, besides India, such as Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Germany, and United States⁹³ were not highlighted much, debated, and investigated. None of the Muslim countries and groups were ever linked with the Aum Shinrikyo cult and its destructive activities.

Controversies

The blasphemous fiction, *The Satanic Verses*, (*Nauzubillah*), in the 1980s, the desecration of the Holy Qur'an in the 2001 and 2010, and the police leakage of classified data in Tokyo in 2010 went like a watershed in Islam-Japan relations. These events have some relevant consequences for the Japanese society and its relations with Muslims living in Japan.

i. Desecration of Holy Qu'ran

There were two events related to desecration of the Holy Qur'an in 2001 and 2010, respectively. There was a replication of a much more serious offence launched against the Holy Qur'an in May 2001 in Tokyo —four months prior to the 9/11 events. Pages of the Holy Qur'an were torn and thrown in front of a car dealer's office of a Pakistani Muslim in Toyama Prefecture in addition to leaflets denigrating Islamic culture. A week earlier, several copies of the Qur'an were stolen from a Mosque in Toyama and the copies seemed to have been torn and left in front of the above mentioned place. Derogatory printed flyers against Islam and Muslims were also found on the site.

Therefore, more than 200 Muslims from across Japan gathered in front of local government buildings and police headquarters in Toyama and later in Tokyo to press for the culprits to be arrested. The Muslims and the Embassy of Pakistan in Tokyo took serious notice of the incident and sent a note of protest asking the government of Japan to stop desecration of the Holy Qur'an. The Embassy expected that the incident should not evolve into a more emotional issue for Muslims and Pakistanis in Japan and asked for its investigation and arrest of the culprits. A nine-member delegation of Pakistan Association of Japan met with Foreign Ministry officials in Tokyo and handed over a letter of protest on May 25, 2001.⁹⁴

The police remarks to maintain a balance between freedom of speech and the protection of the local Muslim community failed to hold transparent investigation. Conversely, Muslims considered this event as 'religious racism and discrimination' in Japan against Islam and Muslims and the Muslims living all over the world.

On desecration of the Holy Qur'an issue in the United States of America on the ninth anniversary of the 9/11 on September 11, 2010, Muslims in Japan conveyed their utter resentment and launched a peaceful protest rally in front of the US Embassy in Tokyo and presented a protest memorandum to US Ambassador on September 17, 2010 to prevent the occurrence of similar events in the future to build a peaceful international society. The protest was directed at the citizens of the United States. The Japanese law enforcement authorities allowed the launching of a peaceful demonstration under the existing laws in Japan for similar reasons. This also has shown that some kind of accommodations has been seen in Japan with the rise of the number of Muslims living in Japan. The most active Muslim community is the one comprising the Pakistani economic migrants who started pouring into Japan in a big number in the 1980s and now number around 10,000 legal emigrants.

ii. The Security Leakage Enigma

There is a constant Islamic and Muslim link with terrorism as mostly projected in the Western countries. Japan, however, has not focused on that assumption. It can be concluded, therefore, that Japan

has been less discriminatory toward Muslims than most of Western countries and that the actual threat of terrorism arising from within the Japan-based Muslim community is insignificant,⁹⁵ rather non-existent.

Conversely, on October 28, 2010, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department's 100 to 140 documents dating 2004-2009 were leaked online across the globe onto the Internet in 21 countries and regions via file-sharing PDF software. The data was leaked to the Internet through a server in Luxembourg, making it difficult for investigators to track where it had originated.⁹⁶ The Japanese government finally admitted their authenticity in late December 2010⁹⁷ and found that the act was likely done by an insider of the Police Department.⁹⁸ These leaked documents revealed that Japan was increasingly manipulated by anti-terrorism policy of Western countries and, more specifically, the United States.⁹⁹ Interestingly, most of these documents were written in English - not in Japanese — for the purpose of cooperating with the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other US intelligence agencies by Japanese authorities.¹⁰⁰ The documents themselves showed that the FBI had asked the Japanese police to interrogate Muslim residents about possible terrorist plots against the United States.¹⁰¹

The Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department noted in its own Japanese language assessment that the threat of terrorism from Muslims in Japan 'should not be under-estimated' because of their possible antagonism toward the Self Defence Forces (SDF) deployment in Iraq and support for the United States against 'War On Terror'.¹⁰² The information-gathering activities of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department's Public Security Bureau, Third Foreign Affairs Division, have sprung not from a real concern about Japanese domestic security, but, rather as a sort of diplomatic bargaining chip *vis-à-vis* the United States.¹⁰³ It should be noted that the concerned Division is responsible for measures against international terrorism, and was established soon after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States. The Division broadly keeps an eye on Muslims and their private affairs. While approaching them as collaborators, it monitored their movements with suspicion, regarding them as possible terrorists.¹⁰⁴

The leakage of these classified documents served the purpose of spreading panic among the Muslim community and native Japanese Muslims living in Japan and it seemed that it was intentionally done ahead of the Yokohama Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit that was scheduled to be held on November 13-14, 2010 when unprecedented security measures were taken throughout Japan, particularly in the Tokyo and Yokohama metropolitan areas. The leakage event might be considered a major embarrassment for the Metropolitan Police ahead of the APEC Summit.

In many Western countries, this would have resulted in some massive lawsuits filed by individuals under individual privacy and human rights violations. Under Japanese law, such public leakage was a grave crime that comes under the sanctity of personal information and cooperation with the law-enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Anger was high among public and those who cooperated with such agencies as their names, affiliations, passports, addresses, and telephone numbers were put on global internet reach and later openly sold in the form of a book in Tokyo, thus risking the lives of those suspects and informants. Among the leaked documents was a list of foreigners living in Japan for decades being monitored by the police.¹⁰⁵ A number of embassies of Muslim countries, mosques, community associations, centres, institutes of Arabic/Islamic language, culture and education, etc., were put on the watch lists of Japanese intelligence, spying, and law-enforcement agencies, which was something not very dissimilar from the Soviet times in the former USSR.

The stories published in several newspapers and internet blogs about Muslim residents of Japan's interrogation by the police and intelligence agencies were terrifying and shocking. They were making it difficult for them to continue to stay in Japan through obtaining nationality or resident permit, together with recession and economic hardships facing Japan. These changing security and economic scenarios in Japan were badly affecting them. How this would impact their countries' foreign policies toward Japan and the United States, and, more importantly, Japanese business with their countries, is the question to be answered in the near future.

Should these deteriorating Japanese security relations with Muslim foreigners be considered the outcome of Koizumi's anti-terrorist policy after 9/11? If so, Japan has paid a heavy price for it. Civil liberties were badly affected; as were human rights. Japanese domestic harmony has also been affected during the past several years after 9/11. The episode put the Muslims in Japan in shock over anti-Islamic terrorist activities committed by none other than the police — the custodians of security and law and order. Many unforeseeable matters may still unfold.

The individuals whose personal information was contained in these documents have criticised the way the police has handled the situation. Great personal damage has been suffered by the people whose names and photos were displayed on the internet with target of investigation or other labels attached.¹⁰⁶ It was a breach of the public and individual confidentiality obligation of government employees and the individuals reserve the right to sue such agencies under the law.

So much so that a publishing house, Dai-San Shokan,¹⁰⁷ went ahead with publishing such classified documents in the shape of a 469-page book entitled, *Ryushutsu Koan Tero Joho Zen Deta* (Leaked Police Terrorism Information: All Data), in November 2010 in Tokyo, adding to public anguish and creating more chances for lawsuits.¹⁰⁸ The police did not take any action against the publisher because it did not officially confirm that the data had come from the organisation. The Tokyo District Court issued two provisional injunctions to the publisher to stop the publication and sale of the book, based on demands from 13 Muslim residents of Japan whose personal information was carried in it¹⁰⁹ and who claimed ¥42.9 million as compensation to recover damages from the President of the publishing house, Akira Kitagawa.¹¹⁰ The Japanese National Commission on Public Safety also stood by the plaintiffs for the protection of their safety.¹¹¹ Appreciating court decisions, *Yomiuri Shimbun* wrote:

The court's decisions were based on the judgment that the publication violates those people's privacy. Suspension of publication is approved only in exceptional cases since such an action may violate the freedom of expression guaranteed in the Constitution. We think the court made an appropriate decision because the damage should be kept from multiplying.¹¹²

In this perspective, it is evident that the purpose of the leakage was to provoke the Muslims in Japan to stand against the government, its law-enforcement agencies, the media, and so on, but, the legal system has so far prevented such an untoward situation to develop.

Commenting on this terrible mistake or Japanese *Kubuki* drama-style episode, the London-based *Economist* maintained:

Japanese culture is highly private. But its approach to top-secret documents is surprisingly lax. There is no standard for handling classified information within or across ministries. Politicians sometimes disclose sensitive information by mistake. But at first glance the latest slip-up looks more Keystone Kops than anything else.¹¹³

It appears the leak was not accidental, said the *Asahi Shimbun* and other major local media, citing police sources and independent information technology experts who analysed the leaked information.¹¹⁴

There is a large number of Indian information technology experts hired by Japan since 2000 who seem to be normally anti-Muslim and Pakistan and more pro-Israel, United States, and other Western countries than before under their new foreign policy agenda. Japanese police, under pressure from the US authorities, trawled Tokyo in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, in search of intelligence data among the city's tiny Muslim community.¹¹⁵ It will be interesting to see how the United States responds to this leakage, especially in light of the furore over *Wikileaks*.

The leakage has its international implications as well in relation to Japan's contribution to the 'War on Terror'. The sulphuric leakage has much serious consequences for Japanese domestic security and its international relations. The incident was no less than a security catastrophe. *Asahi Shimbun* noted that:

The Islamic community in and outside Japan will surely view Japanese police and Japan itself with distrust. We are also seriously concerned that it could cause Japanese to develop a prejudice against Muslims. We don't want the same thing to ever happen again.¹¹⁶

Nevertheless, whether true or not, such events have constantly re-shaped or are re-shaping the security policies of both Japan and the United States.

Social Issues

There is yet another dimension of looking at the low level of Japanese society's ties with the Muslim migrants, workers and visitors. The Muslim migrant community should also bear responsibility for creating a negative image of Muslims among the local Japanese hosts. Among the social issues and immigration-related illegalities, the activities of the Muslims who came to Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly from Pakistan and Iran, gave a great setback to Japan-Islam relations. The arrests, deportations, punishments by the Japanese law-enforcement authorities damaged the image of the Muslims in that country to a very large extent, notwithstanding that the Japanese local hosts were in the process of learning from these migrants. The process was suddenly halted mid-way. Japanese, who are normally law-abiding citizens, felt uncomfortable with Muslim migrants and workers and tried to avoid them in their future interaction.

Above of these issues, the immoral activities of the Iranian drug mafia,¹¹⁷ especially in the Tokyo area greatly damaged Japan-Islam harmony. This has damaged the long process of local friendship achieved during the wars and later in several decades through mutual goodwill. Drug dealing and petty crimes were the major reasons as to why Japanese immigration authorities cracked down on Iranian immigrants at the end of the 1990s, who had come to Japan in a large number. The social evils also included other common civil abuses such as theft, rape, paper-marriages, cheating, submission of fake documentations, false legal statements, and fake passports produced to the Japanese authorities over the years. These were the dark aspects of the Muslim migrants and workers that cannot be overlooked in analysing Japan-Islam relations in the contemporary atmosphere.

Their task to rectify this untoward situation is Herculean. They have to fight back colonial and imperial past full of misconceptions, prejudices, discrimination, and vilification of their faith as well as

something destroyed by themselves – not at the behest of others. Conversely, the practical manifestation they have exercised in contemporary Japanese society ran counter-productive and they have to rebuild their own image rather than the image of Islam.

Many would argue as to why these crimes are attributed to the category of ‘Muslims’ when people from other religions also commit crimes, but they were never attributed to ‘Christians’, ‘Buddhists’, ‘Hindus’, or any other belief system. The reason is that the Muslims are completely identified with Islam, and they are more practicing, active religious community than the others. Islam should not be judged this way, but, unfortunately, that is the case. Islam is understood this way as it is a comprehensive system of life that creates a balance in worldly and spiritual aspects of human life. It is this kind of understanding that one finds missing in Western approaches and treatment of Islam. Muslims should mould according to Islam rather than the other way around which creates misperceptions and suspicions.

Moreover, a ‘normal’ or an educated Muslim has been more welcome into Japanese society than uneducated Muslims. They must understand this difference while living in a society where everyone can read and write as comparing to those from a number of Muslim countries where uneducated, unskilled, or semi-skilled workers join the Japanese society. In this way, the Muslims must understand Japanese inclination toward the West where individuals are universally educated and face less economic hardships than Muslims going to improve their economic fortune in Japan.

These hard realities also create differences, which can be bridged only through the developmental process in those Muslim countries whose citizens go in large numbers to Japan. Therefore, naturally, anything that happens to the Muslims in Japan or elsewhere is known as Islam. This perception can hardly be changed, and the Muslims need to be much more careful in their daily dealings with the local Japanese and authorities. There should be an effort on the part of the Muslim community in Japan to struggle against the perpetual stereotype image of Islam and Muslims that colonial discourse and

Western as well as Japanese media are teeming with but with their own (Muslims') actions and not simply words and arguments.

Furthermore, Japanese immigration laws are based on the country's geographical conditions and strategic location too, besides other factors, and a complete comparison of them with similar laws in the West could be misleading. Japan's arable area is 25 per cent, whereas 75 per cent is mountainous and not liveable because of its topography and harsh weather conditions around the year. The Japanese Island has a total area of 3,74,744 sq. km as compared to 1,636,000 sq. km of Iran, 7,78,720 sq. km area of Pakistan, and 7,70,760 sq. km. area of Turkey. Bangladesh, with an area of 1,33,910 sq. km is much less than Japan, but it is not an Island country and geographically well connected to the bigger Asian continent. Therefore, Japanese immigrations laws should be seen in this perspective by migrants to that country.

Educational Gulf

Muslim scientific educational record is at least 1,000 years earlier than that of Japan. It should be noted that world's three oldest universities were Islamic universities that included the University of Al-Karaouine, Morocco that was established in 859 AD, followed by Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt, founded in 975 AD, and the Nizamiyya University, Asfahan, Iran, which was set up in 1065 AD. Muslim scientists made headways in, *inter-alia*, mathematics, invented decimal 'O' (Zero) and '.' (Point .0-5) invented algebra, discovered the solar system, set up a space observatory, earth sciences, geography, economics, and navigational direction instrument, *etc.*

In contrast, Japanese scientific achievements stand nowhere in terms of basic scientific discoveries made by a number of Muslim scholars. Japan's oldest university was founded in 1885 in Tokyo named as the Keio University. However, the latest report of the Times Higher Education and QS Top of 2010 indicated that among the top 100 universities in the world, there was not a single university from the Muslim countries that is included in the ranking. The University of Tokyo ranked as 22 in the world and the highest in Asia. Japan hosts over 756 national, public, and private universities as of 2008. Each of

47 Prefectures caters to a number of science and arts universities for local students. Tokyo metropolitan area, for instance, alone hosts over 76 universities, excluding similar institutes of higher education.

There are a number of prestigious universities, such as the Osaka University, Kyoto University and Waseda University that compete with their counterparts in the West, such as the Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford, and Yale universities. Japan has produced ten Nobel Laureates till now. Five Nobel Laureates have studied at Kyoto University and the other five at Tokyo University. This is a great distinction and a matter of honour. The entire Muslim world comprises one-fifth of humanity, but has less than one per cent of its scientists who have generated less than five per cent of its science and made barely 0.1 per cent of the world's original research discoveries each year in the 57 Muslim countries.

The number of the Muslim students has been on the rise in Japan from 1,957 in 1986 to 6,758 in 2004.¹¹⁸ This educational interaction is a great source of social change and assimilation. According to a report, 76,492 Japanese university students studied abroad in 2006. Of these: 46.1 per cent studied in the United States, 24 per cent in China, 8.1 per cent in Britain, 4.3 per cent in Australia, 3.1 per cent in Germany, 2.9 per cent in Taiwan, 2.8 percent in France, 2.4 per cent in Canada, 1.6 per cent in South Korea and 4.8 percent in other countries.¹¹⁹ The number of students who have studied in universities in Muslim countries is, thus, not mentionable. The Japanese anti-Islamic books, comments, and propaganda have enlarged the already existing gulf between Islam and Japan.

Moreover, these comparisons are enlarging the distance between Japanese and the Muslims in the educational field as quality and ranking deeply impact Japanese minds and preferences. Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has set a target to draw up around 300,000 international students to its universities by the year 2020 which would double the existing strength from 150,000 in 2010. Universities in Muslim countries are lagging far behind these targets, or even not inviting the Japanese students to study at their campuses. The existing cultural gap is inevitable to increase between Japan and the Muslim world in the

foreseeable future with little effort being made by Muslim students to be included in this 2020 educational target of MEXT. Muslim countries should also reciprocally adopt policies to attract Japanese students to their universities.

Muslim students in Japanese universities are making some headway, and are bridging the gap by holding conferences. For instance, The Muslim Student Association of Japan (MSAJ) held its annual conference in Osaka in August 2008 with 280 foreign and 130 Japanese delegates. Two guest professors from the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, namely; Esam Hamed Ai-Abdul Hafidh and Mohammad Al-Bhatairy, were invited from Saudi Arabia, and one from Al-Azhar University in Egypt, Dr Samir El-Shaikh, for Islamic lectures.¹²⁰ Such interaction needs to be strengthened.

Population Dilemma

To find the correct number of Muslims in Japan is something of a mystery; a matter of speculation.¹²¹ In a country like Japan where the number of hens and eggs are easily available over the years, decades, and centuries; ascertaining the accurate number of the Muslim population in the country is no less than a puzzle. The data of the 47 city ward offices, along with the Tokyo metropolitan area, could easily have provided this information, but, for unknown reason no accurate data is available. As no survey has ever been conducted in Japan to assess the number of Muslims living in Japan, it is difficult to give an authentic figure.

Different sources put the number of Muslim population in varying figures. Some reveal this number to be 0.2 per cent of the total Japanese population or 200,000-250,000 in all.¹²² According to a web source, the number of non-Japanese Muslims in Japan is 100,000, with 10,000 native Japanese Muslims.¹²³ According to Hiroshi Kojima, the total Muslim population as of the end of each year is estimated to be approximately 5,300 in 1984; 12,300 in 1990; 30,000 in 1995; 47,600 in 2000; and 56,300 in 2003.¹²⁴ Another source reveals the Muslim population to be around 100,000, with 30,000 Indonesians as the single largest Muslim group in Japan.¹²⁵ However, another source put the figure at between 60,000 to 70,000 in 2005.¹²⁶ Therefore, as an

accurate data on Muslim population is not available in Japan for one or the other reason, one has to rely on this information.

The gathered information reveals that the number of native Japanese converts does not exceed several hundred. Most of them are Japanese women who are married to foreign Muslim men, and their number does not exceed 7,000.¹²⁷ The number of native Japanese Muslims is impossible to ascertain. Between 80 to 90 per cent of Muslims in Japan are foreign-born. The largest share of this population consists of Indonesians, followed by Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Iranians, respectively. In 2004, Indonesians living legally in Japan numbered 23,890. The number of legal immigrants from Pakistan was 8,610, Bangladesh 10,724, and Iran 5,403 totalling less than 25,000. Taken together, Indonesian, Iranian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants (48,627) constitute 70 per cent of this group. Although a considerable number of Malaysians live in Japan, the majority of these residents are of ethnic Chinese descent and they are not Muslims.¹²⁸ There is a need for religious census to be undertaken in Japan to clarify these growth trends and many other socio-religious and cultural parameters for development, and for political and economic reasons.

On the other hand, slowly and gradually, Islamic activities are on the rise in Japan these days. Mosques are springing up in Japan. Ever since the establishment of the first Osaka Mosque, there are now around 62 mosques all over Japan, with a large number of *Musalas* (small informal prayers places in public parks).¹²⁹ Information gathered by Abu Hakeem Ahmad Maeno put the number of mosques at 55.¹³⁰ From 1906 to 2001, 24 such mosques were built. The post-9/11 era has seen an increase in the number of mosques, i.e., 31 were built up to 2009. The Muslim Students Association of Japan (MSAJ) has completed building eight beautiful mosques in different parts of Japan. It is continuing to build or financially support building of one or two additional mosques each year in some part of Japan where there is no mosque in the city or near the university.¹³¹

The Muslim community owns a number of religiously-oriented associations in Japan that include, *inter alia*: The Council of Islamic Organisation, The Islamic Society of Japan, The Tokyo Islamic Centre, The Matsuyama Islamic Cultural Centre, The Japan Muslims

Peace Federation (JMPF), The Japan Muslim Association, The Islamic Research Institute (IRI), The Islamic Circle Minhaj-ul-Qur'an, The Young Muslims Federation, The International Muslim Centre Japan, The Islamic Centre, Tajweed-ul-Quran Japan, and a number of other organisations.

Prominent Islamic organisations, such as Rabita Alam-i-Islami (Makkah, Saudi Arabia), and The Japan Islamic Trust made contacts with Islamic organisations and their officials to hold regular seminars and conferences. These active organisations are participating in the spread of Islam in their own way.

The following is a list of places where Islam is being taught to students in Japan:¹³²

- Islamic Circle of Japan, Tokyo
- Hira Masjid, Chiba
- Otsuka Masjid, Tokyo
- Tokyo Jamia, Tokyo
- Nagoya Masjid, Aichi
- Gifu Baab Al-Islam Masjid, Gifu
- Fukuoka Masjid, Fukuoka
- Tableegh Jamaa'ah, Tokyo

The Islamic *Dawah* raises a serious question in Japan: How Muslim communities will stand in relation to Japanese society in the future, is a critical issue too.¹³³ Bridging such odds, some Islamic scholars have suggested that *Dawah* preaching should be based on *Sufi* (Mystic) style of Islam that could much easily be accepted in Japanese society because of syncretic approaches¹³⁴ where, besides Buddhism, Shintoism, Christianity, and many other belief systems and religious thoughts already exist. *Sufi* style preaching and spread of Islam was successful in the Indian Subcontinent where many religious thoughts prevailed in society.

Recommendations

Most discussions on Islam and science have been limited to the many great achievements of Muslim scientists like Al-Beruni, Al-Tusi and Al-Khwarizmi. About one thousand years ago, the Muslim world made remarkable contributions to science, notably in mathematics and medicine. Baghdad in its heyday and southern Spain built universities to which hundreds of thousands of learners flocked. Scholars surrounded rulers. There is a need of setting up Islamic schools in Japan to educate Muslim children according to their faith. Islamic rituals and festivals are not the only way of promoting the cause of Islam in Japan.

Other than cultural, social, political, and economic reasons on the part of the Japanese, as mentioned above, some responsibility may also be borne by Muslim *Da'ee* (preachers) and their idle patrons back in their countries. Further, over the past several hundred years, Muslim scientists' contribution to science has been non-existent with a few isolated examples. Japanese made a lot of endeavours in applied sciences in almost every field. This may be encouraging them to refrain from learning only religious narratives and to apply new scientific discoveries and new businesses. To them, Islam appears somewhat stagnated, out of date, non-scientific, and something not moving forward with time. To reverse these notions and trends is a Herculean task to be undertaken by Muslim scientists.

Therefore, there is a need to introduce a scientific study of Islam as the concept of natural parity in Islam, *Tawheed*, *Risalat* and the finality of Prophethood. Muslim scientific and literary achievements and Islamic teachings should begin from these aspects instead of mere ritual dictations to new converts. Islam is a dynamic and daily practical system. It is a system (*Dee'n*) that it is not a religion (a collection of dogmas) *per se*. A practical manifestation of Islamic way of science, technology, family order, social life, economic system, taxation, *Zakat* (alms giving), usher (agricultural tax), and usury (interest or *Soo'd*) - a difference between profit, loss, and fixed interest rate are essential themes that could attract the attention of a new convert or a learner of Islam in Japan.

The experience of Islamic banking, for instance, based on profit-loss sharing rather than fixed interest rate has an appeal for leading Japanese financial institutions such as Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp., Mizuho Corporate Bank, and Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, which are considered the starting point to promote trade and investment between Muslim countries and Japan. The Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC) decided to move into the Islamic *Sukuk* (Bonds) recently. Their trust in Islamic banking enforced as Islamic banks stood steadfast during the global financial crisis. This introduced a new dimension in Japan-Islamic banking relations, a new financial relationship between Japanese financial institutions and Islamic way of doing financial business — something never tested before.¹³⁵ This would yield good results and help shift Japanese capital toward this new financial system. As Japanese finance is global in nature, it would mark a great shift in global banking system in the foreseeable future.

Moreover, as there is no comprehensive Islamic library in Japan, people lack information and data about Islam and Muslims' activities. The active websites, to some extent, are filling the gap left by the absence of a source data material to be kept in a library.

Cremation of the dead is a modern tradition in Japan. On January 18, 2008 *Kobe Shimbun* reported that the shortage of Islamic cemeteries has become a serious problem for Muslims in Japan, especially those who live in the Osaka region. Tokyo and Hokkaido have special cemeteries for the Muslims. Nowadays, people in Japan tend to think that burial is a bad thing from the point of view of sanitation and the environment. There is currently no law which prohibits burial in Japan. However, some large cities like Tokyo and Osaka have local ordinances, which prohibit it. If a municipality or the manager of the cemetery does not allow it, the dead cannot be buried. A Muslim graveyard was built in the Yamanashi Prefecture in 1968. For Muslims — who maintain custom of burial and not cremation — this creates a special cultural and religious difficulty. Since death, too, is a reality of life, this is really a serious problem. The Japanese and Muslims should find ways to cooperate and show more sensitivity to mutual cultural and religious needs.¹³⁶

Prospects

One should not be surprised of Japanese aloofness as well as their interaction with Islam as mentioned in this study if the findings of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, published in 1946 by famous American anthropologist, Ruth Benedict, are still considered relevant to contemporary Japan. This study thus endorses that wisdom, too. The study has indicated many instances of interaction of Muslims with the Japanese imperial army, diplomats, politicians and social elites. There was cooperation as well as a gap.

Islam was and is viewed as an alien religion in Japan. Islam was absorbed only to the extent by Japan which promoted its wartime imperial interests prior to the World War I, during the inter-war period up to the end of the World War II. At the beginning of the 20th century, Muslims were used by Japan for its anti-West drive. They were used against Russia, China, Korea, Western imperial powers, governments in South-East Asia and India. The final results remained unfulfilled because of Japan's defeat in the World War II. The lofty honeymoon ended in a tragic end in 1945. Therefore, the Muslim community in Japan or its occupied territories was depressed and could not recover from that mishap. In the present Islamic insurgency and militancy around the world, Japan, at least, has to share some historical blame to rectify the situation.

Muslims were left alone, and their activities came under the Allied Powers till the Peace Treaty was signed in 1951. Muslims still face not so comfortable a time in Japan. Not much literature has been produced on Islam-Japan relations in the past several decades following the end of World War II. Islam is still viewed as an isolated religion in Japan.

Mostly *Immamat* is conducted by non-native Japanese Muslims. There are, however, five Japanese-origin Imam¹³⁷ as majority of the Japanese have remained uninvolved. That is because of their sense of superiority, and they naturally maintain a physical distance from the fellow Muslims living next door to them or working side-by-side with them.

Having explained the interaction of Islam and Muslims in Japan and its people, it should be added that most of the non-Japanese Muslims in Japan were either political asylum-seekers prior to the World War II or economic migrants from certain Muslim countries who went there to earn their bread and butter after the 1970s, but they also became a source of Islamic way of life and interaction with the local populace. Muslims never went as scholars or preachers to convince Japanese, except just a few. As Japanese schools do not add much to Islamic literature, the younger generation remains completely aloof from Islam.

These matters, along with the 9/11 events, further disenchanted the people in Japan from Islam. There is a general perception among the Muslims in Japan that their activities are being closely monitored by law-enforcement authorities and they do not get a free hand to go ahead with their meetings and activities. According to Keiko Sakurai, there is no indication that the Muslim community is radicalising or could conceivably constitute a threat to Japanese society.¹³⁸ The Holy Qur'an's desecration in Toyama and its burning again in the United States, the Danish anti-Islamic cartoon campaign, and the media's sensationalising anti-Islamic news and commentaries could be the possibilities to radicalise the Muslim community in Japan in future if such trends were not reversed.

Appendix
List of Mosques in Japan

Serial	Mosque	City	Year
1.	Kobe Masjid	Hyogo	1935
2.	Tokyo Jamiy	Tokyo	1938
3.	Balai Indonesia Musallaa Kanto	Tokyo	1962
4.	Arabic Islamic Institute Musallaa	Tokyo	1982
5.	Ichinowari Masjid	Saitama	1991
6.	Matsuyama Islamic Cultural Centre Musallaa	Ehime	1994
7.	Isezaki Masjid	Gumma	1995
8.	Hinata Masjid	Chiba	1995
9.	Sakaimachi Masjid	Gumma	1997
10.	Ebina Masjid	Kanagawa	1998
11.	Gyotoku Masjid	Chiba	1998
12.	Nagoya Masjid	Aichi	1998
13.	Toda Masjid	Saitama	1999
14.	Otsuka Masjid	Tokyo	1999
15.	Toyama Masjid	Toyama	1999
16.	Yashio Masjid	Saitama	2000
17.	Ohanajaya Masjid	Tokyo	2000

18.	Asakusa Masjid	Tokyo	2000
19.	Ashikaga Masjid	Tochigi	2000
20.	Tsukuba Masjid	Ibaraki	2001
21.	Osaka Masjid	Osaka	2001
22.	Shinanjo Masjid	Aichi	2001
23.	Shirai Masjid	Chiba	2001
24.	Fuji Masjid	Shizuoka	2001
25.	Hachioji Masjid	Tokyo	2002
26.	Gifu Fatih Masjid	Gifu	2002
27.	Niigata Masjid	Niigata	2002
28.	Tatebayashi Masjid	Gumma	2003
29.	Niihama Masjid	Ehime	2003
30.	Oyama Masjid	Tochigi	2005
31.	Iwaki Masjid	Fukushima	2005
32.	Kyoto Masjid	Kyoto	2005
33.	Yokohama Masjid	Kanagawa	2006
34.	Tokorozawa Masjid	Saitama	2006
35.	Osaka Ibaraki Masjid	Osaka	2006
36.	Toyota Masjid	Aichi	2006
37.	Nagoya Port Masjid	Aichi	2006
38.	Hamamatsu Masjid	Shizuoka	2006

39.	Sakaki Masjid	Nagano	2006
40.	Omitama First Masjid Madinah	Ibaraki	2006
41.	Sendai Masjid	Miyagi	2007
42.	Mito Masjid	Ibaraki	2007
43.	Sapporo Masjid	Hokkaido	2007
44.	Kasugai Masjid	Aichi	2007
45.	Yuki Masjid	Ibaraki	2008
46.	Kanuma Masjid	Tochigi	2008
47.	Tokushima Masjid	Tokushima	2008
48.	Babu-l-Islam Gifu	Chubu Gifu	2008
49.	Beppu Masjid	Oita	2008
50.	Okayama Masjid	Okayama	2008
51.	Otaru Masjid	Hokkaido	2009
52.	Fukuoka Masjid	Fukuoka	2009
53.	Mie Masjid	Mei	2009
54.	Omitama Second Masjid Anwar Madinah	Ibaraki	2009
55.	Okachimachi Masjid As-Salam Masjid)	Tokyo	2009

Source: Maeno, op.cit.

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Ken, Japan, the International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan.

Takenori Horimoto, Professor, Department of Policy and Contemporary Studies, Shobi University, Saitama-Ken, Japan.

Raees Siddiquie, Director, The Islamic Society of Japan, Tokyo, Japan.

Tayab Khan, Pakistan origin resident of Kawasaki, Japan.



Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI)
Sector F-5/2, Islamabad, Pakistan
Tel: 0092-51-9204423, 0092-51-9204424, Fax: 0092-51-9204658
Email: strategy@issi.org.pk Website: www.issi.org.pk