

*With the Name of Allah, Most Merciful, Ever-Merciful*

Islamic Centre of Japan Publications

# **THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM IN JAPAN – ITS HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT**

by

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## Introduction

*This paper arose out of two lectures that I delivered. The first was given in Tokyo on 7/5/1995 entitled, "Japanese/Middle-East Relations from an Islamic Viewpoint." The second was given in a meeting in Seoul, South Korea, 22-24 August 1997, entitled, "History and Development of the Message of Islam in Japan."*

I studied in Japan at the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Tokyo, from 1960-1966 and returned to Saudi Arabia as a lecturer at the King Sa'ud University, Riyadh, and then at the King 'Abdul 'Aziz University, Jeddah. I noticed that when we, Arab students who graduated from Japanese universities, returned to our countries, we were deeply affected by the land in which we studied. It is natural that a person is influenced by the land where he spends the most glittering part of his life, such that he is always thinking about it. However, the remarkable thing is that we, Arabs who studied in Japan, increased in our admiration and praise of Japan whenever we talked about it. In every gathering where we were present, we would gravitate towards the subject of Japan and discuss it at great length.

Perhaps there are many reasons for this, one of which is the resemblance between the Arabs and the Japanese in many qualities and shared customs due to the fact that we are both Eastern in our outlook upon life. One of the examples that I would give for this is that when my wife once fell ill in Tokyo in 1975 and stayed in hospital, she stayed in the same room as an elderly Japanese woman aged almost eighty. My wife's bed was near the room entrance while the Japanese lady was at the back of the room, with a thin movable curtain between them. The Japanese lady used to be visited by her son, who was aged around sixty. Whenever he entered the room, with my wife lying near the entrance, he would shield his eyes with his hand and turn his head away in order to avoid looking at my wife, exactly as the Arabs do in such a situation.

Further, the Japanese experience of continuous advancement in the fields of science and technology, whilst being an Eastern country, would provoke the admiration of Eastern Arabs and Muslims. This advancement would inspire them to defend themselves against the accusation that the Easterner cannot advance. It would also encourage them to attempt to catch up with the achievements of Japan, as well as have other effects.

One evening in 1972, I was present as usual at a weekly assembly that would be held every Thursday in Riyadh at the house of the late 'Abdul 'Aziz al-Rifa'i, the Saudi literary figure, historian and traveller. Scholars and literary figures from Saudi society, whether Saudis or non-Saudis, residents or visitors, would gather at this assembly. That evening, the topic of Japan and the Japanese had arisen as usual when a Saudi brother with a passion for collecting rare books, Muhammad al-Hamdan, whispered into my ear, "I have the book *A Japanese Journey* by 'Ali al-Jirjawi, written in 1907." My heart soared with joy! The following week, he brought the book for me and I glanced through it. I knew about the possessiveness of book-collectors towards their books so I did not dare to ask for the book to be photocopied, especially as its pages were very old and might have fallen apart during photocopying. I waited patiently for five years, during

which I had returned to Japan for the second time (1973-1978). During a visit to Riyadh from Tokyo in 1976 I met him and he invited me to lunch at the Intercontinental Hotel. There, I plucked up the courage to ask for permission to photocopy the book, which he granted. Ever since 1972, in every function, discussion or newspaper interview relating to Japan, I had been mentioning 'Ali al-Jirjawi, who had gone to Japan for the Conference of Religions in 1906 and formed an Islamic organisation along with an Indian, a Chinese and a Russian colleague. They began to invite others to Islam, and al-Jirjawi claimed that 12,000 Japanese embraced Islam, half of them during his visit to Japan that lasted 31 days.

From this point on began my concern with Japanese-Islamic relations and the history of Islam in Japan. I learnt about the visit of 'Abdul Rashid Ibrahim, a Turkic Tatar, to Japan and his book written in Turkish, *The World of Islam*. I learnt further that the only copy of this book in Japan rested in the University of Waseda, and I managed to make a photocopy of it. The book is in the Ottoman language, i.e. written in the Arabic script. I searched for six years for someone who could translate it into Arabic – a Syrian shaykh, Muhammad Subhi Farzat, finally translated it for me. Ten years later, another Syrian man, Sayyid Kamal Khoja, also translated it for me. I am currently in the process of editing and reviewing this translation in order to publish it in Arabic. I used to wish that the section of the book regarding Japan could be translated into Japanese, until Professor Itagaki informed me that this section had been translated by Professor Komatsu, currently a lecturer at Tokyo University; this is an effort worthy of gratitude.

## **Barkatullah, Noda & Yamada**

Next, I learnt about Maulwi Barkatullah, an Indian preacher, and his journal *Islamic Fraternity* that he published from Tokyo between 1910 and 1912. I left no corner of the world untouched in researching this journal, eventually obtaining two issues of it from the British Library. I even went to India to the city of Bhopal to find out more about this figure, for that was his native city.

I also learnt about Mr. Yamada from the town of Kamakura. He was the son of Yamada the Elder who went to Istanbul in the year 1893, as did Mr. Noda before him in 1891, to deliver gifts from the Japanese people to the families of the victims of the Ottoman steamboat *Al Tughrul* (*Family of Tughrul*) that sank off the coast of Japan in 1890. I visited Kamakura in 1978, just before concluding my work at the Islamic Centre and departing from Japan, with Al-Hajj Mustafa Komura and Br. Yusuf Yoshikawa. I also informed the late Abu Bakr Morimoto about the subject, and he went to Kamakura and obtained several important documents relating to Mr. Yamada.

I further learnt about Mr. Hajime Kobayashi and his book, *Japanese-Islamic Relations before the Meiji Era*, and translated it into English. Matters developed to the extent that I entrusted a network of my research assistants as far afield as Britain, Turkey, India, Pakistan and Indonesia to research the origins of Japanese-Islamic relations. At the

moment, we are attempting to gain access to the Ottoman Archive, where we hope to find some documents relevant to this subject.

I deposited a copy of all the material I obtained with Mr. Itagaki, formerly a lecturer at the University of Tokyo and currently a lecturer at the Tokyo-Keizai University, so that it would be accessible to Japanese researchers in this field.

I came across the text of a lecture delivered by ‘Abdul Rashid Ibrahim at the Muslim Youth Organisation (*Jam’iyyah Shubban al-Muslimin*) in Cairo, probably in the year 1933. In this lecture he said, “The Emperor of Japan once wrote to the Ottoman Sultan ‘Abdul Hamid, ‘You and I are both under pressure from the powerful states. Therefore, we should encourage our peoples to learn about each other. Thus, we would like you to send us some ambassadors to explain to our people who you are and what your religion is’.”

From this and similar incidents, it becomes apparent that both the Japanese and the Muslim peoples began to take an interest in each other for several reasons: political, economic, expansionist, cultural and humanistic. This was because there were two independent empires in Asia: the Japanese and the Ottoman, both under pressure from the West, so it was natural that there would be attempts at mutual communication, understanding and co-operation.

### ***Al Tughrul* and the Beginning of Japanese-Ottoman Relations**

History tells us that there was a very important official visit paid by Prince Komatsu, a relative of Emperor Meiji, to Sultan ‘Abdul Hamid, who conferred the highest honours upon him. This was followed by the visit of the paddle-steamer *Al Tughrul* captained by Admiral Osman Pasha, who was accompanied by more than 600 soldiers and recent graduates of the Naval Academy. This steamboat departed from Istanbul and sailed via the Suez Canal, Jeddah, Aden, Bombay, Colombo, Singapore and Hong Kong. It and its crew was welcomed at every port by Muslims with joy and support, so it really was a steamboat of friendship and love.

The delegation stayed in Tokyo for three months, during which Admiral Osman Pasha presented gifts and accolades to Emperor Meiji. The steamboat then departed for Istanbul but while it was still near the Japanese coast, it was hit on the evening of 16<sup>th</sup> September 1890 by a severe storm that wrecked it and drowned more than 500 of its occupants, including the captain; only about 60 people survived.

This disaster shook both Japan and the Ottoman Empire, but proved to be an important point in the history of Japanese-Islamic relations and the spread of the light of Islam in Japan. The survivors from the disaster were transported in a Japanese steamboat to Istanbul, where the martyrs in the accident were buried. A memorial monument and museum were built for them that are still standing. From that time until today, the incident is commemorated every five years, alternately in Japan and Turkey. I attended

one of these commemorations in 1974 with the late ‘Umar Mita in Japan, at the exact spot where the steamboat sank, in the prefecture of Wakayama. The wife of the late former Turkish President Ozal also attended the commemoration in Japan in 1990. This illustrates the depth of Japanese-Islamic friendship and the sincerity of the Japanese people in its humanitarian relationships with its friends.

The other important incident was that two young Japanese volunteers, the previously-mentioned Noda and Yamada, a journalist and merchant respectively, collected donations from the Japanese people for the families of the martyrs of the accident, and took them to Istanbul: Noda in 1891 and Yamada in 1893. Sultan ‘Abdul Hamid conferred honours and gifts upon them and asked them to remain in Istanbul and teach the Japanese language to a number of Ottoman officers, including Mustafa Kemal Pasha, later President of the Republic of Turkey. The two Japanese men embraced Islam, and can be regarded as the first Muslims in the history of Japan. Official visits to Japan followed, for a number of sources mention a special Ottoman envoy named Muhammad Ali who visited Tokyo and Yokohama in 1902 and negotiated with Japanese officials regarding the building of a mosque in Yokohama, a project that was never realised.

Soon, the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) shook the world in general and the Arabs and Muslims in particular. Arab, Turkish and Persian poets, as well as others, celebrated the heroism of the Japanese people. The well-known Egyptian writer ‘Abbas Mahmud al-‘Aqqad mentioned in one of his books (the name of which I do not remember, but I thank the person who directed me to the reference) that a number of Egyptian officers, and he listed their names, were so impressed by the Japanese victory that they went to Japan and volunteered for its army, married Japanese women and had children by them. Some of these officers returned to Egypt whilst others remained in Japan. Although I was amazed at this report, I was also sceptical of it, for how could officers in one country volunteer for the army of a foreign country? However in 1978, I visited the Foreign Office Archive Library in Tokyo with Professor Motoko Katakura and al-Hajj Mustafa Komura to search for various documents, especially the *Islamic Fraternity* journal. There I saw correspondence from the turn of the century between the British and Japanese governments that spoke of British officers learning Japanese in London for several months before going to Japan and enlisting in the Japanese army, training in the use of various Japanese weapons. I am not able to name these Egyptian officers, for despite searching for it, I have not been able to find the reference again. One of them was probably Ahmad Fadli, whose life has been studied and researched extensively by his biographer ‘Abdul Rahman Suzuki, who settled in Cairo.

At this point, I would like to mention that Sultan ‘Abdul Hamid, may Allah have mercy upon him, sent an expert military analyst, Purtu Pasha, to monitor the Russo-Japanese War. This man compiled a two-volume book about his journey and observations during the two-year period 1904-5.

## The Conference of Religions in Japan, 1906

Another development that concerns research into Japanese-Islamic relations at the turn of the century was the spread of reports about a Conference of Religions that was to be convened in Tokyo in 1906, and to which representatives of the major world religions were to be invited. The Muslims received this news in the following form: the Japanese were convening a conference to compare religions in order to choose the religion that they saw was most fitting. This was the version of the reports reaching Baku, Kazan, Krym, Istanbul, Cairo, Tehran, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Jakarta.

We do not know who spread this version of the reports: was it the Japanese government, wanting to encourage the Muslims to come to Japan in order to further political objectives and institute a Japanese-Islamic dialogue to face the West? Or were there expansionist objectives, since Japan had adopted a Greater Asia policy with the aim of expanding its control over Asian countries, many of which were populated by Muslims? Or was its aim to balance the Christian missionary influence that had invaded Japan after the latter had opened its doors to outsiders? ‘Abdul Rashid Ibrahim has another view: that it was the Christian missionaries who spread these reports in order to damage the Muslims and depict their thinking as superficial. In any case, many Muslims prepared to travel to Japan in order to attend the conference.

There are reports that delegations from Istanbul and Iran went to Japan. ‘Ali Ahmad al-Jirjawi, the Egyptian Azharite scholar and journalist, wrote in the *Sahifa* newspaper that he was going to Japan accompanied by a Tunisian man. In Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta, material was written about Islam in order to be sent to Japan. The Mufti of Java, Sayyid al-‘Alawi, and a Muslim New Zealander, ‘Abdul Rahman Thompson, wrote a paper about Islam in English to be presented at the conference; they were assisted in this by Selim Bek, the Ottoman Ambassador to Jakarta.

However, we do not know if a single one of these people really went to Japan or is the idea pure fiction, and whether the conference really took place or was it all just “hot air”? Further, if the conference was really convened, did Muslim representatives attend or not?

The Japanese newspapers *Chugai Koho* (12<sup>th</sup> May 1906) and the *Japan Times* (8<sup>th</sup> May 1906) mentioned that a gathering was convened in the YMCA Hall in Tokyo on 7<sup>th</sup> May, attended by the representatives of different religions and denominations: co-operation amongst religions was discussed; the Christians explained their religion; Count Okuma (founder of the University of Waseda and former Japanese Foreign Minister) attended and announced that he, as a politician, supported the message of this gathering and that mutual co-operation and goodwill amongst religions was necessary. Mr. ‘Abdul Rahman Suzuki wrote in an article in the Japanese journal *Arab*, currently issued from Tokyo, that the conference was held in September. The *Iqdam* newspaper of Istanbul, on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1906, mentioned, according to Tokyo-based correspondents of the French newspaper *Rappel* in June of the same year, that preparations for the conference had begun.

However, we remain in doubt about the actual convening of this conference for which invitations were issued, and it has not been proven to us that a single Muslim attended any such conference. All that is said is that ‘Abdul Rahman Thompson and the Mufti of Java attended it. It is also said that Husayn ‘Abdul Mun’im attended from India; it is even said that ‘Abdullah Quilliam, the Shaykh of Islam of Britain and Ireland, attended.

## **Al-Jirjawi and his Japanese Journey**

Now we turn to ‘Ali Ahmad al-Jirjawi, the Egyptian Azharite who is, if the reports are genuine, one of the first Arabs to visit Japan. He was a lawyer who used to publish the *Al-Irshad* newspaper from Cairo, and learned of the Conference of Religions through his journalistic work. As with other Muslims around the world, it was related to him that the Japanese were convening this conference in order to choose the religion which they saw to be true. According to his book *Al-Rihlah al-Yabaniyyah (A Japanese Journey)*, printed in Egypt in 1907, he invited Al-Azhar University to send a delegation but no-one responded, so he decided to go himself at his own expense, accompanied by a Tunisian whom he did not name. It would have been usual to go via Europe or South Africa, so he first went to Tunisia but then changed his mind and route. He returned and proceeded via the Suez Canal, Jeddah, Aden, Bombay, Singapore and Hong Kong. At Hong Kong, a Chinese Muslim named Sulayman embarked: he knew Arabic and was travelling to Japan for the same purpose. In Yokohama he was received and joined by a Russian, Mukhlis Mahmud, and in Tokyo he found an Indian of Arab origin named Husayn ‘Abdul Mun’im. These four, along with the Tunisian, formed an organisation for preaching Islam and rented a house to serve as their headquarters. People began to contact them and twelve thousand people from different classes of society embraced Islam, half of them during the 31-day stay of Jirjawi in Japan. As for the conference, a careful reading of his book shows that Jirjawi did not attend it: rather, he is quoting from the conference lectures. He further mentioned that he went to Kyoto by train, and said that the train stopped first at Osaka and then at Kyoto, contrary to reality, for the actual train journey stops first at Kyoto and then at Osaka. I have read the book several times, and from my reading, his description of Japan and his mention of names seemed to come from someone who had not actually set foot in Japan. I used to explain this away with excuses such as: the man did not know Japanese, a language foreign to him; he was accompanied by a Chinese man who would read Japanese writing, which resembles Chinese writing, with Chinese pronunciation; the Arab would hear this and Arabicise it, resulting in something that was not Chinese, Japanese or Arabic.

All these matters made me doubt that the man ever went to Japan. Five years ago, I read in a source that quoted from the *Islamic Fraternity* journal that Barkatullah, who reached Japan in 1909, mentioned that an Arab reached Hong Kong and from there went to Taiwan, thinking that he was in Japan. He saw a large number of Chinese Muslims and thought that they were Japanese converts to Islam, and wrote a book that was translated into Hindi or another Indian language. Barkatullah, it seems, was sceptical of much of this book. From the Khuda Bakhsh Library of Patna, India, I obtained this Urdu translation of Jirjawi’s book, published in Lahore in 1908, i.e. a year after its publication

in Cairo. Further, there are allusions in ‘Abdul Rashid Ibrahim’s book *The World of Islam* that an Arab claimed such-and-such; it would seem that he too belied Jirjawi’s claims.

I thus decided to set the record straight regarding Jirjawi, and to attempt to establish conclusive proof as to whether or not he reached Japan.

## **My Travels to Investigate Jirjawi’s Journey to Japan**

I travelled to Upper Egypt in 1994, to Jirja and to Jirjawi’s village Umm al-Qar’an, visiting his place of birth and the mosque in which he used to pray. They told me there that he used to own 25 feddans (over 100,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of land – a large area by Egyptian standards – and that he sold five of these, bought a ticket and travelled to Japan. The villagers said that he was a righteous, God-fearing, generous man who would return to his village every three months and distribute gifts amongst the needy. In my visit to Upper Egypt, I was assisted by the noble brother Ibrahim Abul Wafa al-Sharqawi and his generous, hospitable family in Najma’ Hammadi. Despite my intense respect for the people of the coastal areas, I would say that one who does not go to Upper Egypt has not completed his visit to Egypt, so beloved to the hearts of Arabs and Muslims.

From the village, one of Jirjawi’s relatives travelled with me by train to Cairo, where we saw the house in which Jirjawi lived and died in 1961. I was also accompanied in this visit by ‘Abdul Rahman Suzuki and Dr. ‘Abdul Basit al-Siba’i, my colleague as a student at Tokyo University. In the house, we met the wife of Jirjawi’s brother and three of the latter’s daughters. I found two photographs of Jirjawi and several papers, some of which I photocopied. I learnt that his books and belongings had been taken by his sister’s son and sold for the measly price of 80 pounds. We were told that Jirjawi used to receive letters from Japan, China and Istanbul, and that he had a watch presented to him by the Emperor of Japan, but I was not able to find it. I was told that he had not married because when he returned from Japan, a fire broke out on his steamboat, and he was so traumatised that he was not attracted to women.

I later met the Consultant Muhammad ‘Izzat al-Tahtawi, who had written about Jirjawi in the journal of Al-Azhar in 1978, and he told me that Jirjawi was a friend of his father and was an honest, righteous man who always spoke about Japan.

This was what I arrived at by himself. Further, Br. ‘Abdul Rahman Suzuki used to tell me two things: firstly, that Jirjawi’s book *A Japanese Journey* was available in a bookshop near Al-Azhar, so I went and bought 40 copies of it, had them bound and presented them as gifts to Japanese and Arab friends; secondly, that Jirjawi stayed in 1906 in the Grand Hotel opposite the Port Authority in Yokohama, and that he had visited this hotel in 1982 and found the name and seal of Jirjawi in the hotel’s old records. I was impressed by this report and tried to certify it in every way possible: I sent friends, Japanese and non-Japanese, who contacted the Grand Hotel and asked about Jirjawi’s seal but were unable to satisfy me. I went by myself to the Grand Hotel in the

summer of 1993, accompanied by Salim ‘Abdul Rahman Khan, Head of Da’wah Matters at the Islamic Centre. I requested the hotel management to allow me to see their old records, but they told me that the ownership of the hotel had changed and it had been renovated several times so that it was now no longer as it had been, having become a five-star hotel. However, at my severe insistence, they promised that if they found anything, they would send it to me. I visited them again the following year but received the same reply. I also attempted, twenty years ago, to obtain the names of all passengers disembarking at the port of Yokohama in 1906; however, the records only mention numbers, not names, although these mention that some Turks entered the country there: perhaps an Egyptian was considered a Turk at the time.

Another thing I did was to attempt to trace Jirjawi’s companions whom he mentioned in his book, i.e. the Indian, Chinese and Russian, for perhaps one of them was more meticulous in writing and recording the detailed facts left vague by Jirjawi. I used all my experience and contacts in China, Central Asia, Kazan, Bachkiria and India. I even visited India for this purpose and, as I mentioned before, I currently have a support team of people based in Britain, India, Indonesia, Turkey and Egypt, all of them researching Jirjawi and documents related to Japanese-Islamic relations. This work is still ongoing.

All that remains for me to say in this regard is that Mr. ‘Abdul Rashid Ibrahim mentioned in his book *The World of Islam* that he met the previously-mentioned Count Okuma, former Foreign Minister of Japan and founder of the University of Waseda, who told him that an Egyptian had visited the country a few years earlier, wanting to convert the Emperor to Islam, but he did not know whether he was able to meet the Emperor or not. In my opinion, there was no Arab at that time with such ambition except Jirjawi. Finally, Mr. Suzuki stated that Jirjawi reached Japan in December 1906 and therefore did not attend the conference held in September, and that he was not able to see the Emperor but instead met the Prime Minister, Katsura.

It is not a new phenomenon to doubt the visit of a traveller to a certain land. I have read recently that a researcher at the British Museum who is fluent in Chinese has refuted Marco Polo’s claim that he visited China. The issue of Jirjawi’s visit to Japan remains open to question and awaits the efforts of dedicated researchers, both Japanese and Arab, in presenting evidence to confirm or reject the hypothesis.

## **Ahmad Fadli**

Ahmad Fadli represents an important wing of contributors to the establishment of Japanese-Islamic relations and the message of Islam in Japan. I do not wish to compete with Mr. Suzuki here, for as I said, he has researched the matter fully. In fact, I presented to him whatever relevant documents I had and I thank him for the information he provided to me regarding Jirjawi. Ahmad Fadli wrote the book *Sirr Taqaddum al-Yaban (The Secret of Japan’s Progress)*, that was published in Egypt in 1911, in order to introduce Japan to the Arabs and Muslims. Further, ‘Abdul Rashid Ibrahim mentioned that Ahmad Fadli knew English and French, and that he translated his speech at the

University of Waseda. He also said that he visited Ahmad Fadli's house in the village of Nippori (now in the heart of Tokyo) but did not find him; instead, he found his Japanese wife with her young daughter. 'Abdul Rashid said that these were the first Japanese mother and daughter in Islam.

## **Maulwi Barkatullah and His Role in the Call to Islam in Japan**

Another personality who played an important role in Japanese-Islamic relations and the call to Islam in Japan was Maulwi Barkatullah, founder of the Chair in Urdu Studies at the Tokyo University for Foreign Languages, 1910-1914. Of Indian origin, from Bhopal, he reached Japan in 1909 and was a contemporary of Ahmad Fadli and 'Abdul Rashid Ibrahim. He worked with Ahmad Fadli in publishing the *Islamic Fraternity* journal in 1910 but after about a year, the latter left him and Barkatullah published the journal by himself. The journal had an Islamic missionary viewpoint and began to attack British policies in India and the Islamic world, because of which the British government put pressure on the government of Japan, which shut down the *Islamic Fraternity* in 1912. Barkatullah was very active in matters of religion and politics, being one of the leaders of Indian independence from the British; he also headed the first national Indian government-in-exile, in the year 1916.

## **Hasan Hatano**

Hasan Hatano, his wife and father-in-law, a Count in the old Imperial system, embraced Islam at the hand of Barkatullah. Hatano published the journals *Gunjin* and *Islam* after the closure of the *Islamic Fraternity*, and also the *Islamic Brotherhood* journal from 1918. The latter was a monthly publication in English with photographs. Access to this journal would probably shed light on the nature of Japanese-Islamic relations and the early burgeoning of the Islamic community in Japan. I have researched the *Islamic Brotherhood* journal for twenty years and continue to do so, but have only found two copies of it, in the British Library. I have deposited copies of these in the library of the Japanese Parliament and given them to Japanese researchers specialising in the field. As indicated earlier, Barkatullah was politically-active in obtaining the support of the Japanese people and government for the Indian independence movement. He was also in touch with thinkers and politicians in Egypt.

## **'Umar Yamaoka, the First Japanese Pilgrim**

Omar Yamaoka was a student of 'Abdul Rashid and the first Japanese pilgrim (he performed the Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca in 1909). He was one of the giants who anchored Japanese-Islamic relations and introduced Islam to the Japanese people. He was a symbol of the early Islamic presence in Japan, and enriched the Japanese library with many books. I suggested to Br. 'Adil Oki that his Master's thesis at the

International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur should be about ‘Umar Yamaoka and his era and thought, but I do not know whether or not he did that.

## **Ahmad Arija**

There is a need for a Japanese researcher to trace the effect of Ahmad Arija and his pioneering role in the call of Islam. He was a Christian and worked as the head of a cement company. When he visited Bombay in 1909, he saw a mosque, entered it and announced his conversion to Islam. He translated a number of books about Islam, and participated in one of the Japanese translations of the Qur’an. He was also in contact with Islamic thinkers worldwide.

## **Tatar (Kazan) Immigrants and Other Minorities**

The Turkic Tatar minority that settled in Japan at the beginning of the 1920s and the Indian and Arab traders who settled there from the end of the nineteenth century onwards contributed to spreading Islam in Japan and to deepening the mutual understanding and co-operation between Japan and the Islamic world.

Indian Muslims were influential in founding the Kobe mosque in 1935. Qurban ‘Ali and ‘Abdul Rashid Ibrahim made great efforts, with the Tatar minority and Japanese thinkers and politicians behind them, in building the Tokyo mosque in 1938. The presence of Hafiz Wahbah from Saudi Arabia, Sayful Islam al-Husayn from Yemen and Dr. Mahmud Fawzi, Egyptian Consul in Kobe and former Vice-President of the Republic of Egypt, had a major role, as did the visit of delegations from Indonesia, Malaysia, China and India.

## **The Role of Universities and Cultural Organisations**

The Islamic cultural organisations (most of whose members were non-Muslim) that were formed between the First and Second World Wars played a major role in mutual Japanese-Islamic understanding. The institution of Arabic language faculties in the University of Foreign Languages in Tokyo and Osaka had a pioneering cultural role, matched on the other hand by Al-Azhar University’s introduction of the teaching of the Japanese language in the 1930s, the Al-Azhar delegate to Japan in 1941, ‘Abdullah Togai and the Lebanese trader on the Tokyo stock-exchange, the Shaykh Kamil Tabbarah. Tabbarah was a contemporary of Togai and deciphered the ancient Japanese written symbols, a problem that Japanese experts of language had been unable to solve. (I found documentation of the press-conference that Tabbarah held to announce his solution of the riddle of the ancient Japanese script.)

## **The Association of Japanese Muslims – the first organised gathering of Japanese Muslims**

Before and during the Second World War, a number of Japanese embraced Islam in China, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. At the end of the war, they returned home and in 1953 founded the first Islamic organisation whose members were all Muslims: the Association of Japanese Muslims. The founders included Sadiq Emaizumi, ‘Umar Mita, ‘Umar Yamaoka, Mustafa Komura and ‘Abdul Munir Watanabe, may Allah have mercy on them, as well as Omar Eukibe, may Allah prolong his life, and others. This formed the first post-war Japanese Islamic launch-pad. The association performed a pioneering role in strengthening the Islamic presence in Japan, spreading Islam and strengthening Japanese-Islamic relations in many ways. Al-Hajj ‘Umar Mita visited India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and in Makkah al-Mukarramah he translated the meanings of the Noble Qur’an into Japanese, assisted by ‘Abdul Rashid Arshad, Mustafa Komura and the support of the Muslim World League. The translation was made widely-available by the late King Faysal b. ‘Abdul ‘Aziz Al-Sa’ud. After Mita, Professor ‘Abdul Karim Saito repeatedly visited the Arab and Islamic countries. The association also sent groups of Muslim students to study in Al-Azhar and the Arab countries; they now form an important body of academics in the Arabic language and Islamic culture departments of Japanese universities, and work extensively with Japanese companies who have dealings with Arab countries. They also inherited the roles of these pioneers in the administration of the Association of Japanese Muslims.

## **Professor Nazir Ahmad Barlas**

I should not forget Professor Nazir Ahmad Barlas, lecturer in Urdu at the Tokyo University of Foreign Languages during the period 1932-1949. He was a Japanophile and enriched Urdu journals in India with articles and papers about Islam in Japan. I have translated some of these into Arabic, and others are currently under translation.

## **The Role of Arab Academics**

I should also not forget the late Professor ‘Ali Hasan al-Samani, who taught at the Tokyo University of Foreign Languages, educating generations of Japanese, and was given a Medal of Honour by the Emperor of Japan. Further, Dr. Ra’uf ‘Abbas has outstanding contributions in this field, known to the Arabs and Japanese, as does Dr. ‘Abdul Qadir Hatim who loved Japan and wrote his book *Sirr Taqaddum al-Yaban (The Secret of Japan’s Progress)*.

## **The Role of *Jama'ah al-Tabligh***

*Jama'ah al-Tabligh* from Pakistan had a pioneering role in reviving the message of Islam in Japan through its four visits to the country between 1956 and 1960. This has continued since then until the present time.

In their first visit they came via Rangoon, capital of Burma (Myanmar), where they met a Japanese Muslim judo instructor who directed them to a Japanese Muslim named Suda in the prefecture of Yamanashi near Tokyo. Suda knew Russian but not English, so he turned to Mr. Saito, a former employee in the Japanese embassy in Kabul during the Second World War who could speak Persian, Pashto and English, for help with translation. This encounter with *Jama'ah al-Tabligh* led Saito to embrace Islam, taking the name 'Abdul Karim, and he had a subsequent pioneering role in preaching Islam in Japan. He became a professor at one of the Japanese universities, specialising in Middle East studies, and dozens of Japanese students entered Islam through him; we sent them all to study at Al-Azhar. Professor Saito became President of the Association of Japanese Muslims and was one of the founders of the Islamic Centre of Japan. He was also a member of the World Supreme Council of Mosques and the Supreme Islamic Council in Cairo, and represented the Muslims of Japan at a number of international conferences.

Others who embraced Islam at their hands included Khalid Kiba, who became a prominent Islamic personality, a jurist in Islamic Law, one of the founders of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth in Riyadh, a member of the founding panel of the Muslim World League in Makkah al-Mukarramah, and one of the founders of the Islamic Centre of Japan, serving as its director in several spells. He was also one of the co-ordinators in the Co-ordination Committee of Islamic Organisations.

The *Jama'ah* also helped direct 'Umar Mita towards working for Islam in Japan and translating numerous books and articles into Japanese; the most important work he did was to translate the meanings of the Qur'an into Japanese. The *Jama'ah* also sowed the seeds of Islam in provinces where Islam was previously unknown, such as the island of Shikoko, particularly the city of Tokushima.

## **'Abdul Rashid Arshad, one of the Giants of the Call to Islam in Japan**

We should not forget the late 'Abdul Rashid Arshad, a Pakistani Pathan and telecommunications engineer who attended a training course in Japan in 1959, to be joined by a group of *Jama'ah al-Tabligh*. He played a major role in the call to Islam in Japan, many respected Muslims, including Khalid Kiba, embracing Islam at his hands. He also assisted the late 'Umar Mita in translating the meanings of the Noble Qur'an. 'Abdul Rashid was working on laying telephone lines between Makkah and Madinah when he acted as the agent for the Muslim World League in Makkah in recruiting 'Umar

Mita from Japan. Mita lived with ‘Abdul Rashid in Makkah, and the two of them worked together on the translation; they were assisted later by Mustafa Komura.

It was ‘Abdul Rashid Arshad who encouraged me, the author of these lines, to travel to Japan after I had graduated from the Agricultural College (of Lyallpur/Faisalabad, Pakistan). He used to say to me, “Japan is like a bigger Pakistan, full of ripe fruits: all you have to do is pluck some of them and place them in your basket. Amongst the Japanese who have embraced Islam, there are people who are like the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him).”

### **The Muslim Students’ Organisation and the Joint Islamic Board**

In early 1961, we established the Muslim Students’ Organisation of Japan. This was founded by myself (an Arab), ‘Abdul Rahman Siddiqi (a Pakistani), Ahmad Suzuki (a Japanese), Zuhail and Rahmat Shah (Indonesians) and Muzaffar Ozay (a Turk). The Muslim Students’ Organisation formed a Joint Board with the Association of Japanese Muslims, comprising ‘Umar Mita, ‘Abdul Karim Saito and ‘Abdul Munir Watanabe from the Japanese side and myself, ‘Abdul Rahman Siddiqi and Muzaffar Ozay from the students’ side. This Board looked after the Islamic message in Japan between 1961 and 1966. Amongst the activities carried out by the Board were:

1. Printing of ‘Umar Mita’s publications about Islam and Muslim life.
2. Translation and publishing of the book *Mabadi’ al-Islam* (English version: *Towards Understanding Islam*) by Abu l-A’la Mawdudi.
3. Support for the publication of a fortnightly Japanese newspaper entitled *The Voice of Islam in Japan* by Br. Faruq Nagase.
4. Celebration of the Islamic festivals.
5. Organising of missionary tours to various parts of Japan.
6. Despatching of Japanese Muslim youth to Al-Azhar University in Cairo. These included Ahmad Suzuki, Tayyib Moto, Amin Takamatsu, Khalid Hikoji, etc.
7. Purchase of a Muslim cemetery in the prefecture of Yamanashi. This was later transferred to the Association of Japanese Muslims.

During this period, *Jama’ah al-Tabligh* ceased coming to Japan; the Joint Board took the responsibility of calling to Islam in Japan.

### **The Founding of the International Islamic Centre**

This was founded in early 1966 by people concerned with the message of Islam, both Japanese and foreign residents of Japan. During the period 1966-1973, this centre and the Association of Japanese Muslims fulfilled the role previously discharged by the Joint Board.

## **Muhammad Jamil, another Giant of the Call to Islam**

One of the most important torch-bearers of the call to Islam during this time was the late Muhammad Jamil, a leading scholar in Pakistan and head of the Noble Qur'an Society in Karachi. He was assisted in this work by Matlub 'Ali (one of the current directors of the Islamic Centre), Dr. Abul-Khayr Kashafi (lecturer in Urdu at the Osaka University of Foreign Languages and at Karachi University), Dr. 'Abdul Basit al-Siba'i (former head of the Muslim Students' Organisation and one of the founders of the Islamic Centre of Japan, currently one of its consultants), the late 'Abdul Karim Saito, Khalid Kiba and others. He established a base in Tokyo from where he published numerous booklets about Islam in Japanese and visited every corner of Japan, his activities even reaching Korea.

## **King Faysal and his influence in anchoring the Islamic Message in Japan**

In 1973, immediately before the petrol crisis, the late King Faysal b. 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Sa'ud sent the author of these lines, Dr. Salih al-Samarra'i, to Japan to call to Islam, and in doing so to join Khalid Kiba, Dr. Musa Muhammad 'Umar, As'ad Qurban 'Ali, 'Abdul Rahman Siddiqi, 'Ali al-Zu'bi and Dr. 'Abdul Basit al-Siba'i. These people, in co-operation with other Japanese and expatriate Muslims, re-formed the International Islamic Centre under the name, "Islamic Centre of Japan." Others who participated in this were Al-Hajj 'Umar Mita, Professor 'Abdul Karim Saito, Khalid Kiba, Al-Hajj Mustafa Komura, 'Abdul Munir Watanabe, Matlub 'Ali, Dr. 'Umar Daraz Khan, Dr. 'Ali Hasan al-Samani, Husayn Khan and others. This took place in 1974 and coincided with the Oil Crisis, which led the Japanese to study the origin of this new power, oil. They realised that most of it came from Islamic states, so numerous Japanese studied Islam and then embraced it. During this period, the numbers of individual Muslims and Islamic groups increased up and down the country, from the far north ('Abdullah Arai's group) to Sendai (Muhammad Sato's group) and Tokyo (Dr. Shawqi Futaki and Muhammad Sawada).

## **The Islamic Centre of Japan and its Activities**

The Islamic Centre fulfilled a very important role in the call to Islam. It published over forty books and booklets about Islam in Japanese, as well the Japanese-language quarterly journal *As-Salam* (Peace). Thousands of Japanese were guided to Islam by way of the Centre, which also organised and sent numerous delegations to the Hajj, as well as sending many Japanese Muslim students to Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries. An Islamic presence became apparent in all areas of Japan.

The current headquarters of the Islamic Centre consist of a six-storey building. The land was a gift from the late King Khalid b. 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Sa'ud, and the construction was

supported by the generosity of Prince Ahmad b. ‘Abdul ‘Aziz, Deputy Interior Minister, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Also during this period, Libya, to its credit, sent four callers to Islam: two of them, Dr. Muhayd Motilan and Shaykh Yahya Munir, to the Kobe Mosque (the latter one still works there); the other two, Shafiq-ur-Rahman Khan and ‘Uthman Imam Shaykh al-Aman, to Tokyo. Further, one of the current directors of the Centre, Fadlullah Abu Bakr Shang, was also sent from Libya.

As for Egypt, it also has a pioneering role in the call to Islam in Japan, beginning from ‘Ali Ahmad al-Jirjawi and Ahmad Fadli to the Al-Azhar delegate in the 1940s ‘Abdullah Togai, the late Dr. ‘Ali Hasan al-Samani, lecturer in Arabic at the Tokyo University of Foreign Languages in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Al-Azhar delegate to the Kobe Mosque in the 1990s, Shaykh Muhammad Sallamah. The role of Dr. Nabil Fathullah from Al-Azhar University’s Engineering Faculty and Dr. Mustafa Hamzah from Al-Mansurah University cannot be forgotten, and their reward is written with Allah. These two studied at the University of Tohoku in the city of Sendai, 400km north of Tokyo, and established a branch of the Islamic Centre in Sendai. Further they taught Arabic to a number of Japanese youth, of whom some embraced Islam.

During the period before 1973, we used to estimate the number of Japanese Muslims as being between 1,000 and 3,000. Now when we are asked, we reply that a few years ago, the Japanese government estimated the number of Japanese Muslims as 50,000. However, this number increases daily since Japanese people embrace Islam all the time: one, five, ten, fifty or up to a hundred daily. Their number could be estimated as 100,000 although the true figure could be higher or lower than that. What we can say with confidence is that their number is increasing without limit. As for non-Japanese Muslims in Japan, their number is not less than 300,000.

## **The First Islamic Law Conference in Japan**

The Islamic Centre convened a three-day conference about Islamic Law (*Shari’ah*), in co-operation with the Muslim World League and the Chuo University, in Japan in 1977. This was attended by the paternal uncle of the current Emperor, members of the Supreme Court of Japan and around 300 leading Japanese lawyers. The conference lectures were published in Japanese, English and Arabic, and resulted in widespread interest in the Islamic Shari’ah in Japan. A number of Japanese academics and scholars compiled books and studies related to Islamic Law and comparison with secular law. The most important of these works is the book authored by Khalid Kiba and Professor Sanada, Principal of the Comparative Law Institute of Japan and Dean of the Civil Rights Faculty at the Chuo University. The theme of this book is “the superiority of the Islamic Shari’ah over secular law, the necessity of the Islamic religion for the Japanese people, and the responsibility of the Muslims in presenting Islam to the Japanese people and to all the people of the world.”

In the 1970s, the Centre also organised two large seminars about Islam and the Islamic civilisation, in Tokyo and Kyoto, in co-operation with the two largest Japanese newspapers, *Asahi* and *Mainichi*. The seminars were addressed by Dr. ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Fida, first Chancellor of King Sa’ud University, and Dr. Tawfiq al-Shawi, then a consultant at the Saudi Ministry of Petroleum, and were attended by thousands of Japanese.

## **The Islamic Organisations Co-ordination Committee**

In 1976, the Centre was instrumental in forming the Co-ordination Committee for Islamic organisations in Japan. The late Professor ‘Abdul Karim Saito remained General Co-ordinator for twenty years. The committee was re-formed during the Islamic camp that was held at the foot of Mount Fuji on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1999. The participants, who represented the Muslims of Japan from the far north to the far south, unanimously elected Khalid Kiba as General Co-ordinator.

When we compare the present situation of Muslims with the 1960s, we notice great progress. For example, when we first came to Japan in 1960, the Japanese would say “Israel” when they heard the word “Islam” because the Japanese change “l” to “r” in their language, and we would eat halal meat once a week, sufficing with fish for the remainder of the time. Now, by the Grace of Allah, the Japanese say “Islam” (or sometimes “Isuramu”) instead of their old name for it, “Kaikyo” (derived from the Chinese “Hui-Hui”). Halal restaurants and shops selling halal meat are widespread across the length and breadth of Japan. When heads of state of Muslim countries are hosted by the Japanese government, halal food from Tokyo’s Turkish or Pakistani restaurants is served to them.

## **The Current Islamic Presence in Japan**

Muslims are found everywhere in Japan, from Hokkaido in the north to the smallest of the Okinawa Islands in the south, adjacent to Taiwan. Forty-three Japanese Muslims performed the Hajj in 1997 at their own expense; the Islamic Centre sent two guides with them. Japanese people convert to Islam regularly, whether at the Islamic Centre or with other Islamic organisations. As for the number of Islamic organisations and associations in Japan, I counted twenty Japanese Islamic associations and forty Islamic associations for foreign residents in 1984. Currently, the number of Muslims in Japan, whether Japanese or foreigners, continues to increase.

The number of marriages at the Islamic Centre between Japanese women converts to Islam and foreign Muslims is increasing. The Centre arranges the marriage ceremony and issues certificates after the couple have registered their marriage with the Japanese authorities, in order to avoid legal problems. Other Islamic organisations also make such facilitations, independently or by arrangement with the Islamic Centre in order to obtain official documents, since the Centre has legal recognition.

Here arises the problem of the second generation of Muslims with regard to upbringing and education, as well as the education and training of new Muslims. The Islamic Centre holds weekly classes to teach Islam, the Qur'an and the Arabic language, as do a number of other Islamic organisations. The Centre has also purchased land adjacent to the Tokyo Central Mosque in order to establish an Islamic school, break the barrier of the fear of prices in Japan and encourage Muslims all over Japan to establish schools.

### **Rebuilding of the Tokyo Mosque & the Spread of Mosques and Prayer-Halls in Japan**

We should not forget the efforts of the Islamic Centre, in co-operation with many Muslims inside and outside Japan, to rebuild the Central Tokyo Mosque that was built in 1938 but demolished in 1986. Further assistance was provided by the Turkish Religious Affairs Authority, who participated with Japan-based groups to rebuild the mosque. The reconstruction work is proceeding at a steady pace and will be completed, if Allah wills, in Spring 2000.

A long series of mosques and prayer-halls, whether bought or rented, has spread over the length and breadth of Japan. Here, Muslims gather for prayer. Usually, a library and a refrigerator to sell halal food are also found. This facilitates the living of an Islamic life for Muslims and enables them to have a base where they can invite Japanese non-Muslims.

### **Japanese Pioneers in the Call to Islam**

One of the matters for which Allah, Glorified and Exalted, is Praised is the presence of a large number of Japanese Muslims who have graduated from Japanese or Islamic universities, have an excellent understanding of Islam and present a shining examples as Muslims. They have set up many electronic web-pages in Japanese to call their people to Islam and have presented television programmes about Islam and its civilisation that have impressed the Japanese public highly. Such people include Professor Kosugi, Mr. Hamanaka, Ibrahim Okubo, Professor Onami, Professor Isozaki, Professor Omori, Khalid Higuchi, Toka Komatso, Yahya Endo, Ma'mar Shinohi, Professor Shiro Tanaka, Khalid Kiba, etc.

### **Foreign Pioneers in the Call to Islam**

There are also many non-Japanese Islamic personalities: Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis, Arabs, Turks, Sri Lankans, Burmese, Africans, etc. who have the honour of being responsible, after the will of Allah, for establishing mosques, prayer-halls and halal restaurants and making a home for Islam in Japan.

## **Shaykh Ni'matullah Khalil Ibrahim, another Pioneer in the Call to Islam in Japan**

We also do not forget a great caller who exerted blessed efforts in the field of the call to Islam in Japan and Korea, Shaykh Ni'matullah Khalil Ibrahim Yort, who lived in the Two Cities of the Noble Sanctuaries (Makkah and Madinah) for a lengthy period and has been here in Japan with us since 1996, in his fifth visit to Japan. He previously worked in tandem with the late Muhammad Jamil in Japan and Korea, and is now with the Islamic Centre, managing the matters of inviting to Islam and encouraging the Islamic community in Japan to fulfil the obligation of calling to Allah. A large number of people have entered into Islam through him. He also works to increase the mutual co-operation and understanding amongst the different Muslim nationalities and groups, and to establish many mosques, prayer-halls and associated Qur'an-schools.

## **The Pioneering Role of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Call to Islam**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is to be thanked for allowing its entire embassy in Tokyo to be used as the principal place for prayer during the last ten years after the demolition of the Tokyo Mosque. It also established a beautiful building on its embassy's plot of land to serve as an Arabic Islamic institute and mosque, donating this building and renting an alternative place throughout this period to serve as its embassy in Tokyo. Lately, it has bought a new headquarters for its embassy. In addition, the government, people and institutions of Saudi Arabia, such as the Muslim World League of Makkah al-Mukarramah and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, offer generous support to Islam in Japan.

## **The Role of Other Islamic Countries**

Thanks are also due to the Indonesian consulate in Tokyo which opened its embassy for prayer to Muslims of all nationalities. It also allowed its school in Tokyo to accommodate a large number of worshippers on Friday. The embassies of Malaysia and Brunei also opened prayer-rooms within their buildings. With all respect to the other Arab and Muslim embassies in Tokyo, the best example for every Muslim has come from the land from which Islam shone forth and from which our noble Messenger, may the best of blessings and peace be upon him, and his companions, the lamps of guidance, came. They sacrificed their lives and spread throughout the civilised world, may Allah be pleased with them, grant them pleasure and reward them with the best of rewards on our behalf. The best example has also come from countries youngest in Islam: Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. Perhaps the situation is described by the noble Prophetic tradition, "My nation is like the rainclouds: it is not known whether the best part is at its beginning or end."

One of the earliest people to support the Islamic Centre, materially and literarily, was Hamad al-Hajiri, Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Tokyo, at a time when the Centre was in dire need of such support. Well-wishers from the State of Kuwait also participated in supporting Islamic work in Japan, in the 1960s during the activities of the Muslim Students' Organisation and since the 1970s until after the establishment of the Islamic Centre. Muslim brothers in Indonesia and the government of Malaysia are also thanked for participating in supporting the rebuilding of the Central Mosque of Tokyo. At this point, I should also congratulate the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran for establishing a prayer-hall for Muslims at its headquarters. May Allah reward all of them with the best of rewards on behalf of Islam and the Muslims.

### **The Role of Japanese Universities and Scholars & Japanese-Islamic Friendship Associations**

Again, I would like to emphasise the role of established Japanese universities in teaching Arabic, Urdu and other Islamic languages. Such institutions include universities in Osaka and Tokyo, numerous language faculties that were set up after the Second World War in various universities and independent centres for academic research supervised by various government ministries and agencies. These have all played a pioneering role in Japanese-Arab-Islamic cultural exchange.

Naturally, a person tends to regard history as having started from his time and only remembers the personalities with whom he was in contact and knew closely, without demeaning the great role of others. The pioneers, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, whom I remember in this regard include:

- ◆ Hajime Kobayashi (some of whose writings I have translated)
- ◆ Professor Naito, who is regarded as one of the earliest Japanese researchers into Islam and the Muslim world. He is over 90 years old and was a friend of 'Umar Mita and Mustafa Komura. Professor Naito confided to me in 1986, while we were on a train with the late 'Umar Mita on our way to the inauguration of the Osaka Mosque established by Mustafa Komura, that he had been a Muslim for many years.
- ◆ Professor Izutsu, a profound Qur'an-researcher. The late Amin Islami, Imam of the Tokyo Mosque from 1938-1953, informed me that Izutsu had accepted Islam at his hands. I think he told me that he had taken the name Haydar or Ja'far.
- ◆ Professor Miyajima
- ◆ Al-Hajj Nur Tanaka

Amongst our contemporaries there are:

- ◆ Kunio Katakura, former Ambassador of Japan to Cairo and his wife, the Arabist and Islamophile Professor Motoko Katakura, many of whose students, both male and female, embraced Islam because of her writings about it.
- ◆ Professor Yuzo Itagaki
- ◆ Professor Nakamura

- ◆ Professor Sanada
- ◆ Professor ‘Abdul Karim Saito
- ◆ Khalid Kiba
- ◆ Professor Hisham Kuroda
- ◆ Professor Goto
- ◆ Dr. Kosugi
- ◆ Dr. Onami
- ◆ Professor Shiro Tanaka (the last three are all Muslims)
- ◆ Al-Hajj Mustafa Komura

Earlier figures included:

- ◆ Al-Hajj ‘Umar Mita, translator of the meanings of the Noble Qur’an
- ◆ ‘Abdul Munir Watanabe, Head of the Islamic Centre

As I said, all of these people are amongst the numerous native Japanese who have striven and continue to strive day and night to strengthen Japanese-Middle-Eastern and Japanese-Islamic relations and the Islamic message.

In addition, Japanese associations of friendship with Arab and Islamic countries also have an important role. Further, Islamic minority organisations that represent various Islamic nationalities resident in Japan (Indonesian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Arab, African, etc.) play a major role in the Islamic message and in mutual understanding and co-operation with Japan.

### **The Korean Professor, Jamil Lee**

I must also mention the great efforts of Professor Jamil Lee from Korea in his writings about Islamic relations with the Far East, and his book about Islam in Japan that the author of these lines has had translated from Turkish into Arabic.

### **Research into Documents regarding the History of the Islamic Message in Japan**

There are some matters, the analysis and pursuit of which require the co-operation of other researchers, whether Japanese or non-Japanese. These are:

- 1) Who was behind the invitations or announcements for the Religious Conference that was to be held in 1906?
- 2) Did the Conference actually take place?
- 3) If the Conference did take place, which Muslims attended it?
- 4) Did al-Jirjawi visit Japan, or did he visit Taiwan and think that he was in Japan?
- 5) Research into the following journals:

- a) *Islamic Fraternity*, published by Barkatullah from 1910 to 1912.
- b) *Gunjin*, published by Hatano in 1911.
- c) *Islam*, published by Hatano during the same period.
- d) *Islamic Brotherhood*, published by Hatano in 1918.

These journals, if found, will shed light on the early days of the Islamic message and Japanese-Islamic relations.

- e) Other Japanese journals and newspapers, national archives, etc.

## **Conclusion**

As I end this paper, I would like to express my humble opinion about Japanese society.

Japan is a beautiful country, with its towering green mountains and its fresh streams, rivers and lakes. It is a country populated by a peaceful, disciplined people of elevated stature in terms of culture, civilisation and education. This country accepts all beneficial ideas without abandoning the beauty of its Eastern culture, and this is a big thing in itself. Sometimes this nation is misunderstood as being engrossed in itself, but every nation has its distinguishing characteristics and circumstances that make it as it is.

I conclude my words with one statement: Islam has an excellent opportunity in Japan; it matches the Japanese people's disposition, and they can embrace it with ease.