

IMEMGS

Research Papers : Muslims in Japan No.2 1

**National Conference of
Mosque Representatives**

-Record of the first meeting February 11, 2009-

(English Version)

Institute for Multi-ethnic and Multi-generational Societies
Tokyo, Japan

October, 2023

1-16 Hibarigaoka, Nishitokyo-shi, Tokyo 202-0001

Order

This is a report of the first conference of mosque representatives, "Talking about the Muslim Community in Japan," held at Waseda University on February 11, 2009, the first of its kind in Japan, and sponsored by the Laboratory of Asian Studies, Faculty of Human Sciences, Waseda University. Exactly 100 years ago, in February 1909, Abdulreshit Ibrahim, who made great contributions to the Islamic community in prewar Japan, met with Shigenobu Okuma, founder of Waseda University, and this conference was held exactly on the 100th anniversary of the meeting. Representatives from major mosques and Islamic organizations participated in discussions on the current status of their activities and the future of the Muslim community in Japan.

As of March 2009, there are an estimated 100,000 foreign Muslims and 10,000 Japanese Muslims living in Japan, and more than 50 mosques have been established throughout the country. The presence of the Muslim community is increasing, but correspondingly, there are many issues that must be overcome in the future, such as issues rooted in daily life, Islamic education, cemeteries, and relations with Japanese society. The purpose of this conference was to share information on the current status of activities in each region and how to deal with these issues, and to make use of this information in future activities. This report is published as part of the results of the JSPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research "The Impact and Evaluation of Multicultural Policies on the Lives of Muslims in Japan" (Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C), Issue No. 21530567). The First Conference of Mosque Representatives itself was made possible by the JSPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research "Research on Socio-Economic Activities and Religious Networks of Muslims in Japan" (Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C), Project No. 19530476) and "the Asian Muslim Network" in the "Research on Islamic Area Studies" of the National Institutes for the Humanities.

In addition to the ongoing survey research on Muslims in Japan, fieldwork on Japanese people and local communities in Japan is also planned. The record of this conference is intended to serve as a basic reference material for the above-mentioned research and surveys on Muslims in Japan in general, as well as for research on the "Asia Muslim Network" in the "Research on Islamic Area Studies" of the National Institutes for the Humanities. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the representatives of mosques in each region, Muslims in Japan, and the general public for their cooperation in this conference. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of them.

August 2009

Hirofumi Tanada, Faculty of Human Sciences, Waseda University (htanada@waseda.jp)

Table of Contents

ORDER	1
CONFERENCE PROGRAM	3
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MOSQUE REPRESENTATIVES	4
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	45
OUTLINE OF THE 1ST MOSQUE DELEGATES MEETING	46
LIST OF EDITORS, MEETING MINUTE TAKERS, AND MEETING ORGANIZERS	53

Conference Program

Program on Muslim Network in Asia, Islamic Area Studies Center, Waseda University

Laboratory on Asian Societies, Faculty of Human Sciences, Waseda University

“Muslim Communities in Japan”

First Preparatory Meeting of Representatives of Masjids in Japan, 11 February 2009

Venue: Meeting Room #302, Okuma Memorial Tower (Bldg. #26 Waseda Campus)

Program:

Chair: Hiroshi KOJIMA, Faculty of Social Sciences, Waseda University

- 13:00-13:05 Opening Remarks Hirofumi TANADA, WU Faculty of Human Sciences
13:05-13:10 Introduction Hirofumi OKAI, WU Faculty of Human Sciences
13:10-14:40 Short Speech by Representatives (10 min. per person)
13:10 Sapporo
13:20 Otsuka
13:30 Kanagawa
13:40 Islamic Center Japan
13:50 Islamic Circle of Japan
14:00 Nagoya
14:10 Niihama
14:20 Toda
14:30 “Situation of Japanese Muslims” Mr. Mimasaka HIGUCHI, Former President
of the Japan Muslim Association

14:45-15:15 Break/Salat (ASR 14:54)

Roundtable Discussion

- Part 1 15:15-16:15 “Future of Muslim Communities in Japan”
(Panel Discussion among Representatives)
Part 2 16:15-16:25 Questions and Comments from the Audience
16:25-16:30 Closing Remarks Hirofumi TANADA

Notes: Salat MAGHRIB 17 : 18 ; ISHA 18 : 44

Room #301 is reserved for prayer and #303 for refreshments.

Minutes of the Meeting of Mosque Representatives

Kojima:

My name is Hiroshi Kojima from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, and I will be your moderator today. Dr. Tanada and I were classmates in graduate school, and we have been co-hosting the Islamic Population Research Roundtable every three months since 2000. Last summer, I was invited to the opening ceremony of the Gifu Mosque, and thanks to Mr. Qureshi, I was able to sit in the front row. If you open the website of the Gifu Mosque project, you will see me sitting next to the Imam of Saudi Arabia.

Please refrain from recording or filming by non-journalists. Please limit your reports to 12 minutes or less. Mr. Abdul Gani Enam, who was scheduled to come from Hokkaido, was absent due to a cold, so we would like to have a representative from the Otsuka Mosque to speak. Before we begin, I would like to extend greetings from Hirofumi Tanada, today's coordinator.

Tanada:

Hello everyone. My name is Tanada from the School of Human Sciences at Waseda University. Thank you very much for joining us today for the First Mosque Representatives Meeting. I would like to thank the many representatives of mosques who have gathered here today. We are also pleased to have the participation of observers in this conference. I am very happy that we were able to hold this conference. I think it is very meaningful to hold such a conference at Waseda University. In fact, exactly 100 years ago, in February 1909, Shigenobu Okuma, the founder of Waseda University, held a meeting with a Turkic Tatar Muslim named Abdulreshit Ibrahim, who was visiting Japan at the time. In 1910, Ahmad Fadhli, an Egyptian who was also in Japan, gave a lecture on Islam in the auditorium of Waseda University. It is a great pleasure for us to be able to hold the conference of mosque representatives at a university that has such various connections with Islam in one way or another.

Now, this conference of mosque representatives is the first of its kind in Japan. Since 2004, our research group has conducted a survey on the life and awareness of Muslims, a nationwide mosque survey covering more than 50 mosques from Hokkaido to Kyushu, and a survey on the education of Muslim children in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Based on these experiences, we have planned this conference. However, as you can see, we were not able to invite representatives of all mosques in the country. Once again, we hope to

hold such a conference. I hope that this conference will allow Muslims from all over the country, as well as the general public, to exchange information about the Muslim community and frankly exchange opinions. I would be more than happy to engage in fruitful discussions with the representatives of the mosques and the general public in attendance. I hope that this meeting will be a success, even if it is a long one. I hope that all of you will make use of today's outcome in some way.

With that, I would like to conclude my opening remarks. Once again, thank you very much for your time today.

Kojima:

Now, Mr. Okai of the Graduate School of Human Sciences will give an introduction.

Okai:

My name is Hirofumi Okai of Waseda University, who has just been introduced to you. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you very much for gathering here today.

Let me give you a brief introduction. As mentioned by Mr. Tanada earlier, the history of exchange between Japanese society and Islam is about a hundred years long. However, in the long history of a hundred years, there has probably never been a time when the relationship between Islam and Japanese society has been considered as deeply as it is today, especially for ordinary Japanese people, including ourselves, and for the people living in Japanese society. For example, there are now more than 50 masjids in Japan, ranging from Hokkaido to Okinawa, and while there were only a few in the early 1990s, they are now located all over the country, and at the same time, Muslims are spreading their lives all over the country. The Muslim population itself has decreased by about one-third since its peak in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, local Muslim communities are springing up all over the country, and it seems to us that Islam is gradually but surely taking root in Japanese society. At the same time, however, we have heard from our survey participants that the problems of education, cemeteries, maintenance and survival of mosques, dealing with local communities, unjustified prejudice, and other issues are left to Muslims to resolve on their own. We understand that these various topics are sometimes presented as realistic and urgent issues, and we are deeply grateful to you for sharing them with us, as we understand that you have given us an opportunity to reexamine the relationship between Japanese society and Muslim community. Thank you very much.

Under these circumstances, we hoped that the conference would provide an opportunity to discuss the issues and problems faced by Muslims throughout Japan and

how to respond to them, and to exchange opinions about the desirable Muslim community and, by extension, the desirable Japanese society. As a first step in this joint effort, we have invited seven mosques and organizations to participate in this conference. Please refer to the program in your hand. This time, we have invited representatives not only from the Kanto region, but also from Nagoya, Shikoku, and many other areas. The speakers will speak on five main topics. The first is the current situation of the lives of Muslims in each region, the second is the activities of mosque organizations in each region, the third is the relationship with the surrounding community and local residents, the fourth is the problems they are facing or will face in the future, and the fifth is any other special message they would like to convey. We will hear about these issues in the context of each community and organization.

The following is a brief introduction of the speakers. Unfortunately, Mr. Abdul Gani Enam, who was scheduled to come from Hokkaido, was unable to attend this year's event, Mr. Saleem Khan for Islamic Center Japan, Mr. Ishrat Ali Hashimi for Islamic Circle of Japan, Mr. Qureshi Abdul Wahab and Mr. Sher Afzal Rekha for the situation in Nagoya, Mr. Shahid Akira Hamanaka for the Niihama Masjid and other areas in Shikoku. Mr. Akira Hamanaka will report on the situation in Shikoku, including Niihama Masjid, and Mr. Laith Siddiqui will report on Toda Masjid in Saitama. In addition to the above, Mr. Mimasaka Higuchi, former president of the Japan Muslim Association, will give a report on the general situation of Japanese Muslims. After a short break, we will have a thematic session titled "The Future of the Muslim Community in Japan," which will build on the previous report. We would like to deepen our discussion in order to make the conference not only meaningful for the lives of Muslims, but also to send a message to the Japanese society. Thank you very much for your cooperation today. This is a brief introduction to the conference.

Kojima:

Now, without further ado, Mr. Nagai of the Otsuka Mosque, please accept my best regards.

Nagai:

Assalamu aleikum. I would like to finish in time. Before I go any further, I would like to say that we are well known as the Otsuka Mosque, but today I dare to say that we are the Otsuka Masjid. Otsuka Masjid is a part of the activities of the Japan Islamic Cultural Center. It is the most important center of our activities, and what we usually call the Otsuka Masjid is exactly the same thing as the Japan Islamic Trust. I am a member of

the board of directors of a religious corporation. Since Mr. Siddiqui is here today, I would like to add a few words to what I have already said.

We own a four-story building. The second floor is the men's prayer space, with a maximum capacity of 70 people. The first floor is the women's prayer hall and study room, the third floor is the meeting room and study room, and the fourth floor is the office. Recently, a full-time Qur'an teacher has been assigned separately from the imam to lead prayer services, as more and more people, especially children, are requesting Qur'an recitation. We are putting a lot of effort into children's education.

From here, let me talk about it in line with the given assignment. The most unique feature of Otsuka Masjid is its convenient location, a five-minute walk from Otsuka Station on the JR Yamanote Line. The Masjid is a place of collective prayer, but at the same time it is a place for believers to learn and a place where they can ask for help if they need it. For non-believers who are interested in Islam, it is a place to visit. Therefore, an important factor is to be located in a place that is easy to visit. In this respect, it is very fortunate to be located near a train station and along the Yamanote Line, which makes it easy to visit. Many mothers and women come to learn as well as to attend group prayer services. Some come with their small children in strollers and one or two more children. In some cases, children studying in the masjid may come alone. For this reason, we feel that the proximity of the masjid, which is a five-minute walk from the station, is very important. The masjid is an extremely important place for the devoted believers, and they all wish to live nearby if possible. As the activities of Otsuka Masjid have taken root, there are people who have moved into the neighborhood, and there are also people who dare to locate their company offices near Otsuka Masjid. However, the area around Otsuka Masjid is a commercial area, and there are few rented houses, so the range of choices in terms of quality is very limited. Also, rents are quite high. Therefore, moving from the suburbs to the neighborhood of Otsuka Masjid is not feasible. In reality, there are not many Muslim residents in the neighborhood. We are not aware of the living conditions of the residents in the neighborhood, i.e., our fellow residents. We are not aware of the living conditions of our neighbors, i.e., our fellow residents, so we will not discuss it here.

Next, I would like to talk about our activities. Due to our location in the city center and easy access to transportation, we have a large number of participants in our Friday prayer services and Saturday study groups and dinners. Other activities and numbers are as follows. The number of participants in Friday services is about 130 on weekdays and about 200, if Friday coincides with a holiday,. For both Eid (Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha) services, there are about 600 participants, many of whom take the morning off

even on Fridays. Since only about 250 people, including those on the rooftop, can prayer at the same time, the service must be divided into three sessions. While the first service is being held, the second service is being held, but there is no place to enter, so the streets are overflowing with people. During the month of Ramadan, the entire Qur'an is recited and prayerped every year. We invite two people who have recited all the verses of the Qur'an to lead the service. The number of participants varies from day to day, but between 70 and 40 people gather. During the fasting period, we prepare iftar (dinner after the fast) for 30 people on weekdays and 60 people on weekends. About 30 people eat together on weekdays and 60 on weekends. On Saturday afternoons, a regular women's study group is held. Many mothers bring their children, so the hallway and prayer hall are filled with the sound of their children's voices, making the place very lively. After the sunset service, the women have dinner with their children and return home as needed. After the Maghrib service at sunset, the men will have Isha'ah service and study sessions. They have dinner and return home late. Once a month, some groups stay overnight on Saturdays for study sessions. Indonesian people want to study in Indonesian. Those who live in the Kanto area want to meet each other once a month. These study groups are planned with this in mind and provide an opportunity to learn in one's own language and to prayer at leisure without worrying about the time to return home.

Children's Qur'an recitation classes are also available. We offer early morning, morning, and afternoon classes, as well as Saturday-only classes, depending on their preference. Small children can take the class at their own time, but we will take care of the pick-up and drop-off problems, and school-aged children can take the class at a time that does not overlap with their school schedule. Upper elementary and junior high school students attend Saturday-only classes.

As for the number of people who gather for the obligatory prayers, the early morning Fajr prayer has 10 to 20 people, the noon group prayer has about 20 people including children, the sunset Maghrib prayer and the evening Isha prayer each have about 20 people. We have a large washing area to facilitate the washing of bodies, which is an Islamic obligation, and we receive many requests for this service. The washing of the bodies is facilitated by the service activities of the believers.

Nearly 10 children are studying in the permanent kindergarten, which is separate from the four-story building. Although it would be ideal for the children to live near the masjid, parents have to take their children to and from the school for the reasons mentioned earlier, which is one challenge. For this reason, there are only about 10 children at the preschool. Some mothers leave their small children with us and go out to

work part-time, so we need a nanny. The kindergarten is made possible by female believers who offer their services free of charge.

Once a year, in the fall, a three-day, two-night Tarbiyah (educational) camp is held. The camp is held once a year in the fall, with arrangements made so that it does not coincide with Ramadhan. About 100 families participate in the camp, which is held in lodges at campgrounds in Yamanashi and Kanagawa prefectures.

On New Year's Eve, we will hold a children's recitation of the Qur'an. Last year, 59 children presented. Whenever we have visitors from abroad, we hold lectures and study sessions at the masjid as long as their availability permits.

Many people come from far away to enter the faith or get married, and we try to accommodate them as much as possible, even if they apply on short notice. We expect to receive about 40 applications each year.

We accept tours as part of an extracurricular class at the university or as a working class. There are two or three tours a year that are visited by a dozen or so people who register in advance.

It is our relationship with the local community that we believe is most important. At the Minami-Otsuka Cherry Blossom Festival, we will have a curry rice stand and distribute materials about Islam. We will also sell curry rice at the Otsuka Awa Odori dance in late September and deliver it to the neighborhood. We have been told by residents on the upper floors of our apartments that the laundry hanging on the rooftop is not a good view, and when we installed an external air conditioner, they complained about the proximity of the neighbor's windows. We are working to properly discuss the issue and resolve it immediately. We told you that there were about 600 people attending both Eid prayer services and that people would overflow onto the street in front of us. So incidents that should have been complained about happen twice a year. We have reported this in advance to the police department so that any complaints can be handled calmly.

There are no major problems that we are facing. The masjid is being operated properly. If the site becomes larger in the future due to reconstruction, there will be problems such as the cost of electricity and whether the funds collected from believers will be sufficient to cover the cost. That is all. Thank you very much.

Kojima:

Due to time constraints, we would like to hear next from Mr. Maymon Mohamad Anwar from the Kanagawa area.

Maymon:

Assalamu aleikum. Hello everyone. My name is Maymon Mohamad Anwar from Kanagawa prefecture. I would like to talk to you all according to the materials that I have distributed to you.

In Kanagawa, there is one Muslim community in the Yokohama area. The other is in the Ebina and Sagamihara area. There is one mosque in each area, but I do not know much about the situation in Ebina and Sagamihara. Today I would like to talk about the Kawasaki and Yokohama areas in the eastern part of Kanagawa and Ota Ward in the southern part of Tokyo, the so-called Keihin Zone.

In the 1980s, as Japan developed, a large number of foreign laborers came to Japan to fill the need for labor. Among them were many Muslims from Pakistan and Bangladesh, who worked in the Keihin industrial area. There are many Muslims in a small town factory in Ota Ward, and although they perform daily prayers at home, they earnestly wanted to gather at a mosque for Friday group prayers, so at first they rented the facilities of the Ota Industrial Promotion Association in the Kamata area to hold their services. This was in 1990 or 1991. Many Muslims came from the coastal areas of Kawasaki and Yokohama for prayer. Because it was a difficult place for inland people to get to, in 1992 or 93, another Musallah was built near Hiyoshi station in Yokohama, and in 1996, Kohoku Musallah was built. The musallah was located in a rented apartment, but due to the small size of the room and problems with the neighbors, it became necessary to build a larger mosque. During that time, foreign Muslims also established themselves in Japan and became economically affluent, which led to the opening of Jaa'mi Masjid Yokohama in December 2006. In Kamata, too, Musallah is operated mainly by Bangladeshis. With the establishment of Yokohama Masjid, Hiyoshi Musallah and Kohoku Musallah are no longer needed and the majority of Muslims are now gathering in Yokohama. Therefore, the Yokohama Masjid has become the center of the local Muslim community. However, those who cannot come by any means use the Musallah in the Kamata area.

Yokohama Masjid is located far from the station, making it somewhat inconvenient in terms of public transportation. However, it is very close to the Tsuzuki Interchange on the Daisan Keihin Expressway, making it very convenient for those coming by car. It is a spacious two-story building, with the second floor being a men's prayer space that can accommodate up to 450 people. On the first floor, there is a prayer space for women, a restroom where uduh can be performed, a kitchen, and a study room for children.

Activities include, of course, the five daily prayer services and Friday prayers, with 50 to 80 participants, varying from weekdays to holidays. During Ramadan, about 100 people gather together in Tarawih and Iftar. Although it has only been in existence for

a little over two years, it has become a center for the community. In addition to that, we also provide education for the children, although not in the form of a proper kindergarten. On Fridays, we have a women's study group where we teach the Qur'an to new Muslimas and children.

As for interaction with the local community, we opened a stall at a local festival last year. The area where Yokohama Masjid is located is mainly an industrial area, so there are few private houses around. In the early days, we thought that the neighbors might not understand what kind of facility a masjid in the community would be, so we invited them and staffs of the local government office and the police to a briefing session to explain the purpose of the facility and other matters. I think more activities like this are needed.

I would like to talk about the challenges, not only in the Yokohama/Kanagawa area, but also as challenges common to all Muslim communities in Japan. The first is that each region has its own Muslim community, but they are mainly language-based. In mosques where Pakistanis mainly congregate, when lectures are given or scholars are invited, Urdu is inevitably the main language. In the Bangladeshi community, they will call Bengali scholars because Bengali is the language they speak. At Yokohama Masjid, we try to avoid this as much as possible, but I think this is a tendency in Japan as a whole. I feel that we are isolated. It is not that there is no network among the Muslim community at all, but I think there needs to be a little more interaction among Muslims.

The other is education for children. Otsuka Masjid has a kindergarten, but Yokohama Masjid does not have one yet. In other areas, the Urayasu masjid and the Ebina masjid are making efforts to operate a kindergarten. I think there is a need to unify the curriculum and teaching materials a little more. In each masjid, the people who were involved in the construction of the masjid are also managing it. I hope that Japanese Muslims and the next generation of young people will be more involved in the operation and that the activities will become more active. In Japan, there is still prejudice against Muslims, perhaps due to the influence of Western media. I would like to convey the message that although Muslims are religiously different, they are people who live in Japan and obey Japanese laws. Especially since the number of Japanese Muslims is very small, a gathering of Muslims inevitably looks like a gathering of foreigners. This is where prejudice arises. At the Yokohama Masjid, when many people gathered for Ramadan, a passerby reported the incident to the police. It was not because they were beaten up or something was said to them, but because they felt uneasy because there were so many foreigners there. In order to alleviate the image of foreigners as strange people, I believe that more interaction with the Japanese community is necessary.

Currently we only have a kindergarten, but in the future we hope to establish a primary and secondary school for Muslims. A school for Muslims is a place that provides an Islamic environment that includes not only Islamic studies but also a regular curriculum, and aims to educate the next generation. 50 years ago in England, I heard that regarding the self-identification of Muslims, after overcoming difficulties in the second generation, the third generation became aware that "I am a British Muslim". Learning from the British experience, I believe that Japan needs to establish facilities to educate the next generation as Muslims at an earlier stage. That is all. Thank you very much.

Kojima:

On behalf of the Islamic Center Japan, we will hear from Saleem Khan.

Saleem:

Bismillah Rahmani Rahim. I will speak in English at the beginning and in Japanese when I get tired.

On behalf of Islamic Center-Japan, It's Chairman Dr. Salih Ai Samarrai, Board of Directors and members we thank all Waseda University people for inviting us to this meeting. Japan has good relations with Muslim countries from Meiji Era as history witnesses. Waseda University has good relations with Muslims, Abdur Rashid Ibraheem Turk tatar visited Waseda University before 100 years, and his son studied in Waseda University, other Muslim graduated from Waseda University, among them was one of Islamic Center-Japan founder, director Dr. Musa Muhammed Omar. Dr. Salih Al-Samarrai informed me that Marhoom Abubakr Morimoto received many important documents for his book "Islam in Japan" from Waseda University. Dr. Musa Muhammed Omar.

In 1961, Dr. Salih Al Samarrai with others founded the Muslim Students Association in Japan. It was legally registered (*Shukyo Hojin* : Religious organization) with the Japanese government in 1980. As a result of the so-called "oil shock" in 1974, many Japanese were awakened to the Islamic world and they contacted Islamic Center-Japan for more As a result of the so-called "oil shock" in 1974, many Japanese were awakened to the Islamic world and they contacted Islamic Center Japan for more information on Islam.

Islamic Center Japan has been one of the pioneering bodies of da'wah movement in Japan. Now, Alhamd-Lillah, Islam has spread to all corners of Japan.

In the beginning, Islamic Center Japan provided both moral and material support in

the establishment of mosques, musallas and organizations all over the country. Thus the da'wah movement in Japan was built over many years and ICJ played a key role. Islamic Center Japan is presenting Islam to Japanese and looking after Muslim matters according to Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, it's slogan verses from Holy Quran. : Bismillahil Rahman Rahim (Arabic remarks follow, but are omitted).

Let me tell you from here in Japanese. How do I teach you all about Islam? I give lectures at various occasions and talk about da'wah and Islam. I always tell everyone, "Please study Islam and join Islam of your own will. " Many people come, but it is not good to join Islam for marriage. Marriages end in quarrels. But Islam does not end. When I told them this, three women gave up converting. I am a Muslim for Allah. I want as many people as possible to believe in Islam. But the three women left, claiming that they were joining Islam for their husbands. I cried. A week later one woman called me and said, "Now I really want to join for the sake of Allah. The other woman came three times in one month. Finally, she said, "I truly and sincerely enter Islam."

Shahada (confession of faith) is also given. "La Ilaha Illallah Muhammadun Rasulullah ". There should be no compulsion to join Islam. After you have converted, you must observe Islam on your own. We hold study sessions and send books for this purpose. We also published a book on Islam in Japanese and gave it away for free. 50 books were available, but now only 8 books are left. We also have Ramadan prayers, special lectures, and study sessions on the Qur'an. On the second and fourth Saturdays, we also hold Qur'an classes for children; 50 to 70 people attend. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha prayers are also held, with 150 to 200 people attending. As for Friday prayers, they used to be held before the establishment of Tokyo Jami'i. During Ramadan, Iftar is held only on Sundays and not every day. We will have a big Iftar party on the 26th. We have a website in Japanese and Arabic. We have appeared on TV such as NHK, TBS, and other TV stations to talk about Islam, and we participate in international conferences. We also have picnics. We used to have a three-day picnic, but due to their economic situation, it has been shortened to more than 150 participants by the lake near Higashimatsubara Station. We barbecue and cook curry and rice, and people look forward to it and come to enjoy the food. Muslim children enjoy playing soccer with Japanese and making friends. It is a very exciting event. We have been participating in this event for 15 years now, and recently we held it again with everyone. We also go to the cemetery in Yokohama to pray. We deal with cemetery issues and answer Islamic questions by phone or email.

I have been an Imam at the Tokyo Jamii, Hachioji Mosque, and Yokohama Masjid Friday prayers. The Arabic Islamic Institute's Hutbah is conducted in Urdu as well as Arabic, and I have served as Imam for the same. We also offer services related to halal

food. This is an issue that is not easily understood by the Japanese. We sometimes give reports on this, and Dr. Samarai writes his reports in Arabic.

An important part of our future plans is to establish a Islamic school, and in 1990 we purchased 350 million in land next door. Since then, however, we have been going through a difficult period and have not been able to raise as much money as we would have liked. Please pray for us to start as soon as possible.

Finally, I would like to thank all the teachers and students involved in today's meeting and all the participants. Assalamu aleikum. Thank you very much.

Kojima:

Next, we will hear from Ishrat Ali Hashimi of the Islamic Circle of Japan.

Hashimi:

Assalamu aleikum.

Islamic circle of Japan has been established with a vision to seek the pleasure of Allah by following the guidelines as given by Allah in Quran and his Messenger Prophet Mohammed (SWAT) in the daily life and to create a pious and peaceful society .

The aqeedah of ICOJ is "lailaha illal lahu Muhamadu rasoolullah" That there is no prayer worthy but Allah and Prophet Muhammed is his Messenger.

Every member of the ICOJ has strong belief in the oneness of Allah, His being the supreme authority ,creator of the world. Every member of the ICOJ believes in all the messengers sent by almighty Allah on various occasions prior to Prophet Muhammed (swat) including Prophet Jesus, Moses, Ibraheem, Zakriya, and all Every member of ICOJ has strong belief that Prophet Muhammed is the last messenger of Allah and that there will be no other prophet after him. .

The belief on Angles of Allah, Life after death, the Day of judgement.

Islamic Circle of Japan (ICOJ) is a non-ethnic, non-sectarian, open to all, independent, grass root organization based in Japan working for establishing a pious, Allah fearing and peaceful society. For more than a decade now ICOJ has been working to spread the message of Allah by arranging various Dawah programs, publications, personal contacts and other means. Simultaneously its main focus has also been on tarbiyah of the members as well as other Muslims in Japan so Muslims that Simultaneously its main focus has also been on tarbiyah of the members as well as other Muslims in Japan so that Muslims in Japan, who being the representatives of Islam here, can reflect a positive

and true image of Islam to the locals. With a separate department of Taleem-u-Tarbiyah various tarbiyah programs are organized besides encouraging the members as well as other Muslims to With a separate department of Taleem-u-Tarbiyah various tarbiyah programs are organized besides encouraging the members as well as other Muslims to read, learn and understand Islam by reading the Quran & Hadeeth and other Islamic literature.

With the blessings of almighty Allah, a small number of young persons with a thirst to create an Islamic society in Japan and to fulfill their With the blessings of almighty Allah, a small number of young persons with a thirst to create an Islamic society in Japan and to fulfill their responsibilities towards amar bil maroof wa nahiy anel munkar, established Islamic Circle of Japan in 1992.

History of Islam in Japan is just around a century old only & the Muslim community in Japan is very small. However there have been various efforts by individuals as well as collectively to introduce Islam here however the language being a major barrier in this part of the world and with a small number of immigrants from Muslim countries there is need to spread the message of Allah and his Prophet (SAW). Although there have been various efforts by individuals as well as collectively to introduce Islam here however the language being a major barrier in this part of the world and with a small number of immigrants from Muslim countries there is need to spread the message of Allah and his Prophet (SAW) with zeal. For these immigrant Muslims in order to represent Islam in its true shape it is required that they follow Quran and Sunnah. For these immigrant Muslims in order to represent Islam in its true shape it is required that they follow Quran and Sunnah

ICOJ was thus established with the sole purpose to attain the pleasure of Allah by creating a pious society and to follow Quran and Sunnah. individuals took the initiative to carry out Dawah work in Japan collectively and to observe set guidelines of Allah (SWT) and Prophet (SAW) in the day to day life. Initially few individuals took the initiative to carry out Dawah work in Japan collectively and to observe set guidelines of Allah (SWT) and Prophet (SAW) in the day to day life.

With this objective Alhamdulillah Islamic Circle of Japan was established on Oct.11, 1992.

With Japan Mosque Foundation (JMF) as one of its main departments At present with the grace of almighty Allah ICOJ has established five(5) permanent mosques, one each in central Tokyo,one each in Chiba, Tochigi, Chiba, and Tokyo. Besides it is managing temporary prayer places (in Besides it is managing temporary prayer places (in rented

apartments) as well as arranging Salatul Jumma (Friday prayers) at various other places. In the holy month of Ramzan ICOJ arranges for Huffaz to recite Quran in Salatul Taraweeh at various places in Japan besides the regular prayer places .ICOJ also takes the responsibilities of arranging Eid ICOJ also takes the responsibilities of arranging Eid prayers at various places in Japan.

With the establishment of a proper Baitulmal, ICOJ allhamdulillah has established the system of Zakat as well as Sadaqatulfitar. ICOJ also provides the relief to all deserving persons, Muslims as well as non-Muslims as much as possible with its meager resources.

For Burial of dead bodies in accordance with Islamic procedures ICOJ has a separate department to look after the related matters.

Islamic book service provides a variety of Islamic literature, Tafaseer of Quran, books of Ahadeeth, Seerah, books on seerah of Sahabah, Islamic books for children in Arabic, Urdu, English, and Japanese.

Under the Islamic Research Academy ICOJ has published various booklets related to basic Islamic teachings as well as Introductory books on Islam in local Japanese language.

Along with Dawah work, the relief and welfare work is one of the important tasks which ICOJ has been doing since its establishment.

ICOJ has departments Shahadah, Audio & Video, Book service, Research Academy, Publication, Relief & Welfare, Public Relation, Taaleem & Tarbiyah, Bait-ul-mal, Burial, Education.

And Japan Mosque foundation has established five mosques; one in Chiba, one in Gunma, one in Tochigi, one in Tokyo. like this Hira mosque in Chiba, Quba Mosque in Gunma, Babul Islam in Tochigi, and Masjid-E-Abubakar in Mito

Establishment of a Muslim International school is one of the main projects of ICOJ in hand at present. The beginning has been made with the establishment of the Hira evening school & Quba Evening School at Gyotoku & Tatebayashi respectively. At present two evening schools are being run in Gyotoku & Tatebayashi wherby four subjects are taught v.i.z Quran, Math., Islamic Studies & English. Alhamdulillah evening schools have been successfully running with a good number of students at both places.

Organizational structure of ICOJ is one President, Naib Umar and Secretary general.

This is my introduction to the Islamic Circle of Japan. As I mentioned earlier, it has not been very long since Islam entered Japan. It has been gradually appearing in front of you since a hundred years ago. Although things are gradually improving, the image of Islam and Muslims is still not good for the Japanese people. There are still many issues to be addressed. I would like to talk with you all later. Thank you very much.

Kojima:

Thank you very much. Next, we will hear from Mr. Qureshi Abdul Wahab from the Nagoya Mosque.

Qureshi:

Assalamu aleikum. Congratulations to all of you so very much. I am truly happy that we have made this gathering possible after a hundred years.

Since 1988, we have been making a lot of efforts with our neighbor Rekha. It was very unfortunate for Muslims that there were no places of prayer. Thanks to Allah and everyone's hard work, we have managed to establish mosques in various places, and since the Nagoya Mosque was opened in 1998, we have done many things over the past ten years. They can be intimidating. How can we make friends with the Japanese? How can we be close to the Japanese? If we just want to prayer, we can do it anywhere. But now that we have come to this country, we want to somehow communicate with the Japanese people.

When the Nagoya Mosque was built, many Japanese visited us. When we saw them, we called out to them and asked them to come inside, but most of them took the booklet and left. They run away. The only problem for Muslims was about parking, but it took us ten years to get it together. What is still important is how to shape the image of Muslims to the Japanese. How do we present the face of Islam to the Japanese? We are still lacking in this area. As the Nagoya Mosque, we would like to start by making the mosque more accessible to Japanese people. It was in this context that the Babul Mosque in Gifu was born. It is not only for Muslims that we have poured our efforts into it. The purpose is how we can be closer to the Japanese people. I am happy to say that many Japanese come from far away, talk with us at the cultural center, and leave. For my part, I do not just introduce Islam, but how can I present an image of Islam? How can we bring Muslims and non-Muslims closer together instead of dividing them? This is the purpose of what we are doing. Many ministers attended the opening ceremony of

Al-Hamdulillah and Gifu Mosque, and there were also participants from the embassies of non-Muslim countries. How can we do what we can to be as close as possible instead of running away when you see our faces? That is my objective.

Alhamdulillah, we are continuing our efforts for this purpose, and Japanese are beginning to visit our mosques. For this purpose, each of us must continue our efforts to become closer to the Japanese people. Not only must we become closer, but we must also show them something. For my part, I feel that it is not "Pakistanis" but "Islam" that is at work. When they see us, they take it as "Oh, there are Muslims". Rather, when we see a Muslim, we want him to feel "safe," "I want to be close to him," or "I want to talk to him." With this wish in mind, we are doing our best, but we still have a long way to go. But we must not give up.

We at Nagoya Mosque would like to present the face of Islam and the image of Islam as a wonderfully close presence in front of you, rather than spreading Islam. I have heard your stories here, and it seems that you are still afraid of Muslims and want to stay away from them. One hundred years later, Alhamdulillah, thanks to the fact that we are able to have this talk here, and thanks to Waseda University and everyone else, I believe that we will be able to become closer to them in the future. I am happy to say that when the Nagoya Mosque opened, at least 1,400 people came from all over Japan. Many people still visit us today. I believe in only one thing, Islam, but I think it is more important to be close to the Japanese people than to explain it to them. My friend Mr. Sher Afzal Rekha is here. I am sure he will be able to talk to you, so I will end my talk here. Thank you very much.

Rekha:

Assalamu aleikum. First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Tanada, then Dr. Kojima, and all the people, staff and laboratory members of Waseda University. I think it is very important that you have given us this opportunity for the first time in Japan. We must all work together to make the gap between us and the Japanese as small as possible. First of all, I would like to tell you a little joke. Qureshi and I are representing the same mosque. We have twin brothers, a girl and a boy, who attended the same elementary school. On Monday, the teacher gave them a homework assignment to write an essay titled Our Cat. On Tuesday, the teacher collected the homework and found that the twins' essays were exactly the same. The teacher called the children and angrily told them that their essays were exactly the same. The child replied, "But teacher, we only have one cat. It's the same cat, so it's only natural that our essays should be the same. So when Qureshi and I talked, we were repeating the

same thing.

From what I have heard from other representatives, they are engaged in activities similar to our Nagoya Mosque. When we think of mosques in Japan, the first was in Tokyo and the next was in Kobe. Before the mosque boom began, at the end of the 1980s, the Qureshi brothers and I started working together. It was our dream to build a mosque from scratch. With hard work, we were able to establish our first original mosque in Nagoya before the boom started in Tokyo. This spread and now we have a mosque in Gifu as well. Some mosques are prefabricated depending on the region. The activities are almost the same, but the Nagoya mosque is the one with the most mosque-like appearance. As for future plans, we would like to help homeless people with food and other necessities, since the economic situation is not so good. Also, as I suggested to Qureshi, we would like to have a dinner party once or twice a year with the community. We cannot invite everyone in the area, such as Gifu or Nagoya, but we are talking about inviting at least 10 or 20 people from the area where the mosque is located so that we can have a meal and discuss how to deepen our relationship.

Other than that, we have the same problems as other mosques. The biggest problem is the stereotyping that not only Nagoya and Gifu but all of Japan's Islamic societies face. Unfortunately, the wounds are very deep. Japanese society does not receive information about Islam directly, but indirectly through western media. As you know, the relationship between the western world and Islam is not good because of the history of aggression. The information that comes through the media of such countries only worsens our image. To put it bluntly, we see typical stereotypes in Japanese society. Unfortunately, there is a history of aggression and war between Islam and the West. However, there is no such history between Japan and the Islamic world. We know each other very well because we have known the Europeans for 1200 years. In the case of Japan, Japanese people have had no interaction with the Islamic world. Yet, in Japan, negative propaganda by the media is mainstream. It is a big nuisance. We do not have high expectations. Japan is a very unique society, made up of one ethnic people. We come to Japan as strangers, so we do not have high cultural expectations. However, we will do our best to reduce the problems of stereotypes and diversity, and we hope that Japanese people will study Islam and see us in person, rather than riding on the propaganda of the West. Let us work together to bridge the gap.

Our children have had similar feelings at school. I am from Afghanistan, and when the attacks happened in 2001, my child, who was only in the fifth grade, was told that he was a terrorist at his elementary school and came home crying every day. No matter how many times I explained this to his teachers, it did not change their mind that all

Muslims are terrorists. Islam does not = terrorist, it is only the result of politicians using it. Islam means peace. Let us all strive to change this situation. That is all I have to say.

Kojima:

Next, I would like to ask Mr. Hamanaka of Niihama Mosque.

Hamanaka:

I must confess that I, as someone from Shikoku, feel a bit uncomfortable speaking here. I was so absorbed in listening to what the representatives had to say that I almost ran out of things I wanted to say. I made some notes in advance, but I feel that they are meaningless. For now, I would like to tell you about the situation in Shikoku. In the Kanto and Tokai regions, there are many foreign workers and many Muslims, so it is only a matter of time before a masjid is established. Shikoku has very few foreign workers and Muslims. Nevertheless, there are as many as four masjids in Shikoku. I would like to explain the location of each masjid along with the geographical relation of Shikoku. The first one is Matsuyama, which was established in 1981, mainly by Malaysian students. In 1994, with the increase in the number of foreign students, we founded an organization called MICC, and we have been making Musallah on a lease basis. The study group called Usrah has had good times and bad times and has continued throughout the years. We hold elections once a year and the representative announce the schedule of events for the year, so depending on the representative, the year's activities can be completely different. Some years, we are invited to work with very enthusiastic representative and gather information about Muslims in the prefecture, but other years we are not invited to work with them at all. The total number of members is about 50 to 100, consisting of international students and their families. Then there are about 10 Japanese and about 30 foreign workers, mostly Indonesians, who live in the area.

Here is the difference between Musallah and Masjid. In my talk today, musallah is a lease. It can be extinguished or moved. A masjid is a place of prayer that has already been purchased and established.

Next, in November 2001, Takamatsu Musallah began using the warehouse of a Pakistani used car dealer as Musallah. However, this company had to relocate, and the warehouse had to be given up once again. Although Musallah has ceased to exist, we continue to meet on Fridays only at the office of the vendor, as we used to gather for Jumu'ah services. 15 to 20 people seem to attend the services. Takamatsu consists

mainly of Pakistani used car dealers, and if their families are included, there are 20 to 30 members. There are more than a dozen Japanese, about 10 foreign students, Arabs, and Indonesian foreign workers. The Indonesians, however, are located in town factories in Kagawa Prefecture, but are not well represented among these members as they are difficult to reach.

Next is Niihama Masjid, when I built the store in 2003, I built the first floor as a store and the second floor as a masjid. Since it is called a masjid, it has been purchased and will not be moved. It consists of about 10 Japanese, 10 Malaysian students from Niihama National College of Technology, and roughly 150 Indonesian workers and their families.

Next is Tokushima Mosque, our newest mosque, which opened in March 2008. The land was purchased in a town factory about a three-minute walk from Tokushima University. In January 2009, last month, the interior work was completed and a very beautiful masjid was built. The masjid was purchased by everyone who contributed money to the purchase. Its members are mainly international students from the Faculty of Medicine at Tokushima University. Tokushima mosque is performing prayers properly five times a day. Since it is located only a three-minute walk from the Faculty of Medicine campus, each of the five (morning, noon, and evening) prayers is attended by roughly 10 or more people. It is a very active masjid, holding study sessions for about an hour after the Isha'ah prayer. They consist of 20 to 30 international students and their families, foreign workers, and less than 10 Japanese.

As I mentioned, Shikoku does not have a large number of Muslims. The vessels were built first, and now we are in a situation where we are trying to decide what to do. Looking at the history, one of the characteristics of Shikoku is that there was a Khalid Institute in Tokushima around 1980. It is written that there were more than 10 Japanese Muslims there. However, after that, I think there are still some Japanese Muslims left, but they are not connected to the Tokushima Masjid. Tokushima Masjid was established by foreign students. Therefore, we are in a situation where we have to find Japanese Muslims from now on.

As I mentioned earlier, Matsuyama started in 1981, so it can be said that it has been active from an early stage in spite of the small number of Muslims.

I would like to share with you some surprising news. I explained earlier that Niihama Masjid has about 150 Indonesian workers, but due to the recent economic downturn, they have lost their jobs, and the number has decreased to 30. 120 of them had to return to their countries, and from almost 200 members, the number has now decreased to about 50. I am wondering if the same thing is happening in other masjids in other areas.

Since even the Japanese are being reduced, this must be a very big problem in each masjid.

We will talk again later in the theme session. Sorry for the lack of content. Thank you very much.

Kojima:

This is the last representative. Best regards, Mr. Laith Siddiqui of Toda Mosque.

Raees Siddiqui:

As-salamu alaykom. Thank you so much, Dr. Kojima and Dr. Tanada, for organizing this kind of conference for the first time in 100 years, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I would like to talk about the Muslims in my community. Until 1983, there was a Tokyo Jaa'mi' (*Tokyo Kaikyo Jiin*). In the early 80's, because of the bubble economy in Japan, workers from countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Iran started coming to our area. As a result, there were about 3,000 Muslims living in Saitama Prefecture, and many of them worked in the Kawaguchi, Nishi-Kawaguchi, and Warabi areas. Until Tokyo Jaa'mi' closed on December 31, 1983, people there (Kawaguchi, Nishi-Kawaguchi, Warabi) used to come to 'Tokyo Jaa'mi' for Friday prayers. However, after the *Tokyo Kaikyo Jiin* closed, there were calls to build a mosque. First, we decided to start Friday prayers, and after talking about it together, we decided to rent a room at Toda City Hall. I was called from Tokyo to be the imam. Later, a movement was started to build a mosque. As a result of fundraising for the construction of the mosque, we were able to save approximately 6.5 million yen over a period of 15 to 6 years. We decided to buy the land, but we knew that we could not buy the land with 6.5 or 7 million yen, so we decided to do something about it. As a result of this campaign to do something about it, we purchased the land and established Toda Mosque in 1999. We are now in the process of registering as a religious corporation under name of the Islamic Society of Japan. The official name of the mosque is Madina Masjid Toda.

When the mosque was built, there were about 3,000 Muslims living in Saitama, but now there are only 1,000. This is due to the fact that Muslim workers could no longer work in Japanese factories because of the recession and other factors in Japan. After losing their jobs at the factory, we all thought about what to do and decided to start a car business. Then came the boom in used car exports to Russia, and many Muslims moved to areas such as Toyama, Niigata, and Yashio. As a result, there are now only about 1,000 Muslims in Saitama.

Roughly 120 people gather at the mosque on weekdays and roughly 200 on Fridays.

On weekdays, 20 to 30 people gather for Fajr and Ishah prayer. On Saturdays, we do Zikr, which is calling out to Allah and saying Allah loudly from the heart, in a study group. Also, during Ramadan, one or two Haafiz come and conduct the evening prayer. Unlike you, during the month of Ramadan, we also serve food every day during Iftar and after the evening prayer. So please come and join us. We serve two meals a day to about 80 to 100 people. What makes us different from everyone else is that we have our own space. The mosque is located on a lot that is about 1,000 square meters and has four floors, so we have 700 to 800 square meters. So we have a lot of space. The lower 300 square meters is the mosque. Also, on the second and third floors, (bell rings) it's been that long, I wanted 20 minutes....

Next, regarding my relationship with the people around me, I have prayed with many Muslims in Toda for a long time. So, unlike you, the people around me knew what Islam was all about. That is why complaints are made only occasionally. On the other hand, in mosques, the Qur'an is read loudly at night, but the people around me are inside their houses listening to the Qur'an. I would like to tell you one example, an elderly man who had cancer lived near the mosque. His brother told me that the person used to come to his brother's place from the hospital. He told me that he used to come to his brother from the hospital because the suffering of his illness became somewhat easier when he heard the Qur'an.

Our mosque is on a big street and there is a gas station on the other side of the street, but we do not have a bad relationship with anyone except the owner of that gas station. The owner of that gas station seems to think that the price of their land has gone down because a mosque was built here, but that is not really true. It is inevitable because land prices are falling all over Japan.

Regarding the future, there are not so many problems, but in the future we would like to build an international school for children and a home for the elderly. The nursing home cannot very well be in a mosque, but we would like to buy a piece of land nearby and build it there. Even now, we have space, so if you are not Muslim and do not have a place to live or food to eat, please come. This is one advertisement. People who have been to other mosques are told to go to Toda Mosque, and we accept them. People from Pakistan and Bangladesh also come straight to Toda Mosque.

The other point I would like to make is that Islam is a message of peace, a message of love, and also a message of tolerance. And this Islam is not ours. It is Allah's, and it is the Islam that Allah has given us. And Islam is the Qur'an. Muslims just have it. This message is for the people of the world. It is Allah's call to you all. So I would like to ask Japanese scholars or teachers to study this message as a message of mutual

understanding, a message of respect, a message of love, a message of peace. The fact that Waseda University gave a lecture on Islam 100 years ago is because of its connection with Islam. That is why we are holding this kind of conference today after 100 years. What I would like to ask the professors of Waseda to do is to study this message carefully and to share it with their students or with the people of Japan, and as Mr. Qureshi from Nagoya said earlier, if the professors have this real message rather than me speaking in such a fashion, people who are interested will surely follow you. So, what I would like to ask you is that you should be aware of the fact that Islam is a religion. So what I am asking is that you study Islam very carefully. At the very least, the most important thing is not to make people join Islam, but to inform them about Islam. If you inform people, they will surely come to Islam. That is all.

Kojima:

Thank you very much. As time is running out, Dr. Higuchi will continue to talk about the situation of Japanese Muslims.

Higuchi:

As-salamu alaykom. After this, it will come down to the Asr prayer, and I would like to finish it in 10 minutes.

Thank you very much for inviting me here today. The theme given to me today is "Overview," and I believe that what you have just said is an overview of Islam in Japan, so due to time constraints, I would like to talk about a different topic today, "Identity of Japanese Muslims." I would like to talk about "Identity of Japanese Muslims," which may be off-topic for some of you foreigners here. I would like to introduce myself, I was into the faith in 1963, 45 years ago, so before most of you were born. I would like to tell you about those days, but due to time constraints, I will refrain from doing so.

After I graduated from college, I studied Arabic. This led me to Islam, and I studied at Azhar University for two and a half years. I studied, but in my case, I enjoyed it and learned a little Arabic. I spent two and a half years in a student dormitory at Azhar University, where there were about 3,000 people from about 75 different countries, and I think that is the source of my faith today. After that, I joined Japan Airlines. The Middle East boom was taking off at the time, and I spent 3 years in Iraq, 4 years in Saudi Arabia, and about 13 years living abroad, including some time in Egypt.

My relationship with the Japan Muslim Association began when I joined shortly after getting faith and I am still a member today, 45 years later. I started as a member, became a board member, vice president, and then president for 12 years. I have known many of

the old-timers here for a long time.

That is how I introduced myself, but now I spend a lot of time talking with Japanese religious people, and that is how I spend my time. This may be self-promotion, but I heard a Hokkekyo person say that when studying religion, if you organize it with "know," "understand," and "can do" in mind, you can understand the doctrine. So, when I look back a little, I see that we are the elders. There are some Japanese who are old, but in reality, we are the elders among Japanese Muslims. We are poor elders. To "know" means to study the content of the teachings, to "understand" means how to accept the teachings as one's faith, and to "be able" means how to put into practice what one has understood and clarified.

Human life is limited. So I decided to publish a book titled "Living as a Japanese Muslim" a year and a half ago. As an advertisement, I have written about my experiences and thoughts as a Muslim. I always wondered what the identity of a Japanese Muslim is. I have always wondered what the identity of a Japanese Muslim is. So what is identity? It can be a proof of one's existence, a proof of one's living, a recognition of oneself, a sense of belonging, and so on. In terms of the current state of Japanese Muslim society, what is different from the 1960s, when I first joined the religion, is that it has become very diverse. In those days, the Muslims were uniformly divided into two groups: those who lived before and during the war and young people who had just graduated from university and were aiming to go abroad. The number of Japanese Muslims was said to be 3,000. In a sense, it was a uniformity.

That is now very diverse. Behind this diversity, as you know, the status of Islamic countries has also risen very much, and with Japan's economic development, human, cultural, and economic exchange has deepened, and international marriages have increased there. There are many Muslims who have married internationally, and as you can see here, their international marriage partners range from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Indonesia to Arab countries. So, there is a great diversity. So, I don't want you to misunderstand me, I am talking about Japanese Muslims.

I was a Muslim working in a corporation. Companies are relatively lenient toward foreigners, but they are very strict toward Japanese. As you know, Japanese companies have a kind of corporate precept of strictness. For example, punctuality, competition, efficiency, productivity, and achievement of objectives are, in a sense, precepts. In this context, we have a sense of solidarity, a sense of corporate solidarity. What I think is that this sense of corporate solidarity is similar to the Azabiyya or tribal solidarity of the past. Those who break this precept are doomed to disappear from the industry, whether they are individuals, corporations, or companies. So, as company people, our superiors,

colleagues, and subordinates are all doomed. The reality is harsh. There is a performance review once a year. This determines your position and your salary. This has a great impact on the family, which is very important in Islam. I thought that the evaluation of a Muslim is the evaluation of Islam. So I never wanted people to say, "He is not good because he is a Muslim. If my reputation was worse than other people's, and if there were rumors that said, "Look at me, I pray during work hours, I fast, and that's what people who are religious do," then I would not be able to proselytize Islam. I was the only Muslim among thousands of employees. I don't think people on the side of the majority would understand how difficult it was to be a minority in such a harsh environment.

A few years ago, Mr. Masahiko Fujiwara wrote a book titled "*Kokka no Hinkaku*" (The Dignity of the State). The book became a million-seller and was well received, and I read it with great interest. In the book, Masahiko Fujiwara states that human beings need a certain form of spirit or morality. As I read this book, I also wondered what is the dignity of a Muslim. I believe that dignity is very important in our life in the company and with our colleagues. Japanese people's dignity was nurtured by Bushido in the Kamakura period (1185-1333), and Islamic dignity was nurtured by the Sunnah, and their personalities and morals are very similar. Therefore, I thought that if we associate with our friends with the dignity of Islam, we will not feel any drawback. I don't have time for this, so I will skip it.

So what is the time to be aware of identity? I think, after all, it is not a question of work or religion, but work and religion. I think it is very important to balance and harmonize these two. I am most conscious of the fact that I am a Muslim, a Japanese Muslim, when I pray and when I practice fasting. Also, there is the issue of abstaining from alcohol and pork, which is essential in Japanese society, and the issue of clothing. However, if we are too inclined to do so, we will build a wall between ourselves and others. This wall should never be built. Some Muslims may be autistic and build a wall and think only of themselves and God, but this will not be accepted in Japanese society. After all, I believe that without a foundation for living, without this foundation, missionary work is impossible. Therefore, I think it is important to solidify the foundation of one's life, not only in work, but also in how one harmonizes with religion. As the Hadith says, "This religion is firm; believe in it with flexibility. He who hastens an ass will not reach his destination, nor will the ass die. This is from a book titled "Islam" written by a Gulf scholar, Abdullah Abu Illah, which was translated by my friend, Kimitaka Kondo. I would like to end my speech with this. Thank you very much.

Kojima:

Thank you very much. Sorry for ringing the bell so often. We will now take a break.

Tanada:

The Udo location is the hot water room on the left as you exit. The prayer room is room 301. Break time is until 3:25 pm. Then tea, coffee, etc. will be available in room 303. We will also have Halal snacks available for your enjoyment. We also have some Indian sweets, which we don't know if they are good for us, but we have those as well. So please join us again at 3:25.

Theme Session

Aqeel Siddiqui:

I came to Japan as a student in 1963, and I would like to look back on that time for your reference. At that time, there were only two mosques, the Kobe Mosque and the Tokyo Mosque. Of course, Islam was not well known. There were only a very small number of Muslims, including university students, expatriates, Pakistanis, Iranians, and so on. Halal, haraam, ... I lived on bread and eggs for a few months. Even so, I later realized that I had done something terrible. I had to eat a lot of bread, because there is an emulsifier, which is in all breads. But at that time, I had no knowledge about emulsifiers, so I ate them. Now I cannot eat it. But when I think back to that time, I wonder what people would think if we held a prayer service. If it was at the station, if it was at school, etc. I was very concerned about that. So I would put it all together and do it at home. I didn't have a serious faith in Islam at that time, but I was still very careful. Now, 30 or 40 years have passed since then, and things have changed a lot. Many mosques have opened, many halal food stores have opened, and knowledge about Islam has increased. My knowledge of Islam has also increased.

What is so nice now is that we can do prayer anywhere. I don't have to worry about it. Even when I am going somewhere by train, if the train stops at a certain station, I do prayer there. So I feel like I can do prayer in a department store or in a store. When my friends and I go there for work-related reasons, they remind me, "It's time to prayer now, isn't it? We are having coffee, so please go prayer. I think the fact that it has come to that time of the year is due to your awareness of Islam and Allahu Akbar's . . . (unknown). So, although there are people who still find it difficult to do prayer, I think it is a matter of the heart. On the contrary, it is time for Japan to remind us and tell us that it is time to prayer. There are many more mosques.

Therefore, in the future, as you mentioned, I am concerned about the issue of education. We are blessed with good teachers like those at Waseda University, and as I mentioned earlier, if the Japanese people take the initiative in introducing Islam, we will be able to solve the education problem. When we go there with beards, we are immediately mistaken as terrorists and we are inclined to stay away, so I would like to ask the Japanese people to do something. I would like to ask the Japanese people to make an effort to learn about Islam. Islam is a religion of peace. This is actually a religion of peace, far removed from the terrorists and so on that are now being called. Now the image is completely collapsed, so please help us and help us put together that collapsed image. Thank you very much.

Kojima:

Thank you very much. If you are a representative and do not have enough time to speak, I can give you 5 minutes.

Raees Siddiqui:

Continuing on from what I said earlier, what I would like to say to you is that Islam is actually an Arabic word, and its meaning is Peace, Peace. First of all, before I start, I would like to say that I have been the head of the Pakistani Association for 17 years. During that time, I was in the newspapers, in the media, and I had to talk and discuss with the Metropolitan Police Department, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of their biggest concerns was that terrorism might occur in Japan. They were very concerned about the possibility of terrorism, especially after 9/11, asking what would happen if terrorism occurred in Japan, and what would happen to them. I always told them that terrorism would never happen in Japan. It will never happen. Do you guarantee that? I guarantee it. What if it happens? No, it will not happen. That was the conversation that was always going on. The reason why terrorism does not occur in Japan is that Japan and Islam have nothing hostile in common. For example, there was no conflict between Japan and Islam during or before World War II. There was no war, and when the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb on Japan in World War II, the Islamic community, including the Indian community, which had many Muslims at the time, and Saudi Arabia, supported Japan. And we have always thought it was unfortunate that Japan suffered such a terrible fate. So terrorism will never happen in Japan. But it is Japan that is the most afraid. They are afraid that terrorism will happen here. But it will never happen. Nothing has happened in the past eight years after 9/11, and I don't think it will happen again. This is because Islam and Japan are getting closer. There is

a certain level of understanding between each other. Also, what I would like to say to Japan and to the Japanese professors is that the Qur'an was not created by Muslims. The Qur'an was given by Allah, nor was it created by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Prophet Muhammad also said, "These are not my words, they were brought to me by an angel, and I pass them on." So this is a message for Japan, for all people in the west, east, north, and south. Therefore, if possible, I would like Waseda University to establish such a department for research with the help of its professors. If there is a place to study the Qur'an, we will understand what the Qur'an is all about. This is the first Qur'an translated into Japanese, and it was translated for the first time decades ago by Dr. Abubakar Morimoto. I made a mistake, Dr. Omar Mita translated it. That is why I want more people to read it, and I want a department to be created to study it. That is all.

Kojima:

Thank you very much. Now, Mr. Nagai, I would like to ask for your cooperation.

Nagai:

After listening to your stories, some of you mentioned that they run away from us because we are foreigners. So, I would like to remind everyone about Mr. Niametullah. We held a prayer service for the people of Gaza at Yoyogi Park the other day. At that time, Mr. Nematullah brought a happiness card in his pocket. And that's not all. He also carried a heavy pamphlet. There were Japanese people in the distance, but when Mr. Nehmatullah started handing them out, they all came up to him. In short, it would be easy for me to give out pamphlets to everyone, but everyone wants to receive pamphlets from Nehmatullah. They come to me. I want you all to remember him and become him. If you do that, they will not run away, they will come to you. That's all.

Saleem:

After closing the Tokyo Mosque, we built the Ichinowari Mosque. I was in there, and I went to talk to a real estate agent with Ibraheem Okubo. I asked if there was any opposition, saying, "We are going to build a mosque, but all the houses around it are Japanese." The real estate agent said, "The Japanese are not opposed to religion." He told me to be careful on garbage day and to observe not to make loud noises at night for prayers or speeches, etc. He said that if I would observe these rules, he would be willing to build a mosque. There is also a story about the Hachioji mosque. The Hachioji mosque is the mosque where I was the imam for Friday prayers after it was completed, but the neighbor there were very opposed to it. He was a Japanese who was a devout believer in

Buddhism. As soon as he saw the car coming, he immediately called and called the police. So my wife and I went to consult with them. She is a Japanese Muslim and we got married in 1983. She was a Muslim before we got married. She said, "You don't know the Japanese way, so first you go to greet the people next to you, in front of you, and behind you with a souvenir. I was with a Saudi embassy official who said, "I'm sorry, but we don't have that kind of money. So I bought some souvenirs myself and told my neighbor, "I am going to be the Imam at the Friday prayer. I was told that in Japan, souvenirs do not have to be expensive, so I brought some rice crackers. The next week, the neighbor I mentioned earlier said, "Sir, next time, please park (your car) in front of my house." This is very important. Now I am living with Japanese people and in a house in Suginami Ward. Everyone around us is Japanese. When I got my PhD, my Muslim friends gathered in Karachi restaurant. But I told them that I would miss them if I did not invite my neighbors as well. My wife said, "They probably won't come," but I knew I had to invite them to dinner once, so I took it upon myself to call them. Then they all happily came to Karachi Restaurant. Once, the same Japanese person, an old lady, got sick, but there was no car for the night. Instead of asking the Japanese, she came to me and said, "Doctor, please, can you take my mother to the hospital?" I took her immediately.

I teach Arabic at Chuo University. Nowadays, due to the influence of the Japanese mass media, the image of Islam is five prayers, not eating pork, not drinking alcohol, and that is the only image. Islam says that we must respect our parents. Also, when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was asked, "Whom shall I respect the most?" he said three times that it is your mother. A Japanese person might say, "My mother is not a Muslim." But Prophet Muhammad taught us all about Islam. He said that we must respect, be kind to, and cherish our parents even if they do not believe in Islam. We must convey that to the Japanese.

A Japanese man died and left a will that 20-30 million yen be used for his funeral. The man was against this and the woman agreed. His wife asked me what she should do about this. For example, I left a will that I would donate all my property to the Islamic Center. But this is not possible in Islam. There is an example in the story of Prophet Muhammad. He has the right to spend only 30% of his entire estate, but the rest belongs to his children and others. Islam decides everything from small things to big things. If we abide by them, we and our neighbors will be happy.

I will say one last thing. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said in a hadith, "The angel Jibril comes to me at any time and says, 'Be careful of your neighbors. If Islam runs out, my neighbor will take my money and my house,'" he said.

The Japanese are detail oriented. Once I went to take these clothes (to the cleaners).

Then the old lady said, "Are you *Sensei* (Teacher)?" I thought, "How did you know me when I came here for the first time? Then the old lady said, "I know you. On Mondays, you go to the Islamic Center, and after that you go to the used car auction and buy this. I know everything about you."

Fifteen years ago I worked with a Japanese woman at the Arab Islamic Center. She came to our Suginami Ward. At that time, everyone said, "One person, an Indian and a Muslima lives here. She thought that he must be Mr. Saleem. Just then I came out. My name is not written there. Japanese people never forget if you do something good. We must teach Islam to the young people of Japan.

Maymon:

I had to say first of all, thank you so much for this opportunity. Gathering representatives of mosques from all over the country to talk about various topics is, in a sense, a task that we Islamic organizations have to do. However, from the perspective of coexistence and coexistence with Japanese society, I think what you have done at Waseda University is very important. As you have said before, and as I said myself (in my speech), the interaction between Japanese society and Islam has become an issue. As Mr. Saleem mentioned earlier, there are cases where real estate agents and Japanese people are not against Islam, and there are also cases where people say that they would never rent a house if it were for religious reasons, and there are also cases where people do not want to rent to foreigners, and even more so if it is for religious reasons. There are also cases in which they would never rent to a foreigner if it were for religious reasons, and even more so if it were for religious reasons. Therefore, there are a variety of issues, from the specific to the universal, that need to be considered in order to improve the situation. There is also the issue of Japanese society as a whole and the media getting information about Islam directly from the Islamic world without the filter of the West, but I think each one of us must also be careful about our individual actions.

As Saleem mentioned earlier, the Japanese are watching us. We foreigners stand out even by ourselves, but if we are involved in religious activities, we stand out even more. After all, if you are doing something good personally, people around you will talk about it. Therefore, each individual's actions are also very important. At the same time, however, I think the issue for your society is how to educate the next generation. As Higuchi-*sensei* mentioned, there is also the issue of the identity of Japanese Muslims (which became an issue for Higuchi-*sensei* because he himself joined the religion). Children born in Japan, especially those who are half-Japanese or, as they are called these days, double, have one or both parents from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Arab countries,

etc. They learn about the culture of those countries, but they are very much influenced by Japanese schools. In Japan in particular, the stakes are high, and there is an impunity for everyone to do the same thing. In this situation, the question arises as to how to properly protect one's own Islam and one's identity, whether to live as a Japanese or as a Muslim.

As I mentioned a little earlier, there was a similar problem in England, especially among the second generation, who were very confused, but when the third generation arrived, they decided that it did not matter that our ancestors were Turkish or Pakistani, we were Muslim British. But it took 50 or 60 years to get to that point. In Japan, will it take another 50 or 60 years to do the same, or will we take a lesson from the British example and consider whether we can speed up the process? I think this is very important. So the number one issue going forward is how to raise the next generation in the community. In other words, I think it is very important how to raise them as good Muslims, good human beings, and good Japanese.

Higuchi:

Earlier I selfishly talked about the identity of Japanese Muslims, but looking back now, I think it would be more balanced overall if I talked about what is going on among Japanese Muslims, so I would like to talk a little more about that.

The Japan Muslim Association was founded in 1953 by 47 founders. Therefore, it has been more than 50 years since its establishment. We have been operating with annual membership fees from 250 to 280 families, some of whom are single members. The important thing is that we have put a great deal of effort into dispatching foreign students since our establishment. I was one of them, so in that sense, I am very grateful to my seniors. So far, we have sent 60 to 70 Japanese students to Islamic countries. As you know, these students studied there and came back to Japan, and are now teaching at various universities in Japan. Doshisha University's Department of Monotheism has been converting students to Islam, and Kyoto University and Takushoku University have traditionally had a strong relationship with the Islamic world, and there was a professor named Ippei Tanaka. When I went to Cairo, there were six of us, and the other five were all from Takushoku University. These people, including some younger than our generation, studied there, graduated from Azhar, graduated from Madinah University and those who can read and write Arabic, those who studied well, are now back home and active. Takushoku University has established a Shari'ah institute and they regularly do Tafsir. They are doing it starting with the first chapter of the Qur'an, and each of them is assigned a chapter to be in charge of. They are not conspicuous in such teaching, but

they are very serious about it.

When I joined the faith, there were no such Japanese. Therefore, the foreign students who have been mentioned earlier, such as Mr. Samarai, Mr. Musa, Mr. Rahman Siddiqui, and Mr. Aqeel Siddiqui, had such knowledge, and we learned from them. There were no books on Islam. It was under these circumstances that the Japan Muslim Association was established in 1953. Of course, the influence of the Turks was strong at that time, but in 1956, the Pakistani Tabligh began to come to Japan. The Tabligh movement lasted for 5 or 6 years, and all the people who joined during this period were sent to Pakistan for training, although this was not our generation. In 1957, two Japanese young men went to Azhar for the first time under the influence of Turkey and Pakistan, and in the 1960s, there were 8 and 6, at one time 14 people in the student dormitory. That was our generation, and then two more went to Madinah this time. I believe that these people are playing a central role in supporting the Japan Muslim Association. We have established a scholarship program on the occasion of the 50th anniversary, and we provide scholarships to students who are studying hard. Another important thing is publishing. As Mr. Raiis Siddiqui introduced, this Qur'an is now in its 9th edition. 2000 copies are printed each time, so 18,000 copies have already been distributed. It is not available in bookstores. We have the Quran in Arabic here, so it's not so much about selling copies, but more about handling it. And we publish Hadiths. This is our publishing activity.

Another important thing is the management of the cemetery. We have obtained official approval for a cemetery in Enzan City, Yamanashi Prefecture, and are operating an Islamic cemetery there. The number of Muslims is expected to increase in the future, which means that all of them will die, so the question is what should we do with them. Islam allows the reuse of cemeteries, which is a great help, but it is not an easy task.

The other is domestic and international relations. Domestically, it is called the Interreligious Dialogue, and we are members of two groups formed by five Japanese religious organizations: the World Federation of Religions Committee of Japan and the World Conference of Religions for Peace. Here in the dialogue, there is a strong demand to hear from Islamic leaders, so we act as a contact point and invite Islamic leaders from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria to come and talk about Islam, and we are deepening our discussions with Japanese religious leaders. Internationally, I am a member of the World Islamic Federation in Mecca, RiseUp in Southeast Asia, and the Islamic Association of Pacific and South Asia. We are also members of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Egypt, where there are always, international conferences held. All of them are conducted by people who can speak Arabic, which means that we are able to interact

with each other very well. There is still a lot going on in terms of activities.... Do you have any additional information, Mr. Nagai? It would be unbalanced if the name of the Japan Muslim Association is not mentioned. So, Japanese Muslims are doing their best, although they are few in number. It takes time. Please understand.

Hamanaka:

I am sorry that I am only listening. Let me tell you what kind of problems we have in the field. Shikoku is a very remote place, so the cemetery issue is very difficult. Whenever there is a death in Shikoku, we are always in a panic to find a way to deal with it. We cannot do anything about it at present, so we are thinking about it as an issue for the future.

As I mentioned earlier, there is a problem that although vessels have been created, we are not doing much activity. There are about ten Japanese Muslims in each of the four prefectures of Shikoku, and they are of four types: those who joined Islam on their own and are still practicing Islam, those who joined Islam on their own and have drifted away from it, and those whose wives are foreigners or whose husbands are foreigners and who joined Islam through marriage. If the husband is a foreigner, he is properly educated and often understands Islam to a certain extent even if he does not come to the masjid. On the contrary, there is a problem in the case of an international marriage where the wife is a foreigner and the husband is Japanese. Recently there have been some kind of arranged marriage tours, and in many cases, the men are getting married in Indonesia and returning to their home countries, and the men are converting to Islam for the marriage. He has little knowledge of Islam, and when we have a party here, it is only the wife, and the husband does not participate easily. We tried to get him to participate in the party, but if we pushed Islam too much, he would not come to the party the next time. Since they are one of the few Muslim communities in Shikoku, I would like to gradually pull them in Muslims who are Muslims in name only. The Muslim population density is very low and it is tough to conduct events, but we have to do something. We would like to get together once every two months for a study group, and for that purpose, we would like to call for a cooking class or some other name for the group. We have been thinking about it, but have not been able to do it. I think it is important to hold events on a regular basis.

There is also the issue of children's education. Muslim children in places like Shikoku have no opportunity to be exposed to Islam at all. They are in the same situation as ordinary Japanese children. I would like to do something to help them, but the distance makes it difficult for them to come together. Some kind of special event would be

necessary to bring them together. National organizations such as the Japan Muslim Association probably hold events only in Tokyo, but I would like to see them tour the region, even if it is once a year. It could be a meal, an Islamic talk, anything. We would like to have an event that is not too high level, but something that everyone can enjoy, and we would like to get together anyway. It would be difficult to hold such an event in Shikoku by any chance, so if it were held in Okayama or some other place in the Chugoku-Shikoku region, we would be able to participate even if we are forced to, and if there is something good, we can leave with some inspiration. As a Muslim from the countryside, I think it would be a good opportunity for us to call out to all the Muslims in the center of the country if they would do something.

Aqeel Siddiqui:

Mr. Hamanaka, please introduce your Internet homepage. You are running a very fine homepage.

Higuchi:

You are doing wonderful activities, Mr. Hamanaka. Please promote yourself. I think there are a lot of people who are taking advantage of your webpages.

Hamanaka:

I have a website called Islamic Home Page. You can find it by searching for "Islam HP". The design is based on the Islamic image of the moon and stars in blue color. I would like to update it more often, but I myself have been so busy that I have hardly been able to do so. I have received help from Mr. Tanada and Mr. Okai of Waseda University, who have provided me with information about mosques and other Islamic information. I am thinking that if I lay out some useful references, such as about the original Arabic of the Qura'n, people will come to the site. I sometimes receive e-mails from people who say, "Thank you. I am a Muslim now. I have referred to this website." I have not counted, but I think 200 to 300 people have converted to Islam because of my website. I used to chat enthusiastically with some of them, and some of them joined Islam after shahadah. After all, even though Japanese people study Islam on their own, they seem to come closer to us by being able to ask questions immediately when they have something they want to ask and hear the answers quickly. I think this is one of the reasons why I have been entering the chats quite a bit. Unfortunately I have not been able to participate in the chats much myself lately, but I will have to find the time.

Islam is not only about belief, but also about practice, as well as prayer, of course. I am

sorry to be so personal, but I belong to a badminton association. Malaysia is an Islamic country where badminton is the national sport. I am actively working with coaches of the Malaysian national team to bring them to Japan. Or, we can bring Japanese players to Malaysia. I myself have been involved in such exchanges recently. I plan to go Malaysia next week.

Higuchi:

I have one question for Mr. Hamanaka. Mr. Hamanaka is very trusted by the community. He gets along well with both the mayor and the council members. Do you intend to run for councilor or mayor yourself? (All applaud). I don't think there are any good leaders among Japanese Muslims yet. When Japan was on its way to modernization, there were quite a number of cultural Christians such as Inazo Nitobe and Jo Nijima. Because of their enlightenment, Japanese people respect Christianity. Yet Islam is not respected. A foreign Muslim came to me the other day and asked me who are the famous Japanese Muslims today. He asked if there are any delegates, or if they are running for elections. There are no famous Japanese Muslims today. There were some members of the Diet who called themselves Muslims, but they have already disappeared. In short, the current situation is that there are no good Muslim leaders among the Japanese Muslims. Therefore, we need local candidates to run for office, to gain their trust, and to say, "Ah, he is a Muslim, he is a Muslim. If people start to see him as a Muslim, and if they start to look East and then look Islam, I think the future will be bright. There are scholars, but there are also people whose personalities are questionable. I am looking to you because they will be looking at your personality. Please do me a favor.

Hamanaka:

I am not thinking of becoming a member of the Diet, but I would be happy if such people emerge from various regions.

Kojima:

Now, I would like to talk to the person from the central Islamic region mentioned by Mr. Hamanaka. I don't think there is a central or local region in the world of the Internet, but physically, there is still a central and local region.

Nagai:

I am attending today by invitation at the Japan Islam Cultural Center, a religious organization, but I am actually also a board member of the Japan Muslim Association.

Four years ago I returned from a long overseas assignment in the South American country of Suriname. In Suriname, they can tell that I am Japanese by looking at me. An Indian over there said to me, "Do you know Akira Hamanaka? He was from Indonesia and had been sent to Suriname to teach Islam. Suriname, like Indonesia, was a Dutch colony, so after slavery was abolished, many laborers were brought from Java. Because of this, more than ten percent of the population is Indonesian, and many Islamic leaders are of Indonesian descent. One of them, named Arifin, who shares my name, told me that he was with Mr. Hamanaka in Libya. Another said, "I am in the used car business. Do you know Mr. Saleem?" Because of this, I knew the name Mr. Hamanaka, but did not know what kind of person he was. Then, three and a half years ago, when I reached the age of retirement, I went to Shikoku to visit him. At that time, we had a talk and were treated to a meal, but this time I would like to go and cook with him. The Japan Muslim Association has a branch manager, but Mr. Hamanaka is not a branch manager. I have been trying to encourage branch chairs to hold study sessions, but there has been no response yet. I hope to hold one at Mr. Hamanaka's place. I will do the cooking, but you all can't eat beef bowl. I once cooked a beef bowl at the Otsuka Mosque using Australian meat. Let's plan it from now on.

Kojima:

I would like to talk to the Born Muslims.

Hashimi:

I am Pakistani. When we accomplish something in Pakistan, it is very easy if we have a Pakistani to guide us. When we came to Japan we have been working in our own way, but without the help of Japanese people it would be difficult. I would like to take this opportunity to ask the Japanese Muslims who are here now. Please, Japanese Muslims become leaders and lead people from other countries. How will you work in Japan and how will you convey the message of Islam? We need the leadership of Japanese Muslims who understand the feelings of Japanese people. When I listen to you, there are various activities going on in various places, but they are just done as individuals or as Japanese people. Please pull all the people of Islam together and convey the message together. Please do so.

Qureshi:

Among Japanese Muslims, some speak out and some say nothing. Among Japanese Muslims, I see quite a few who say they don't want to be with foreigners anymore. There

are many reasons for this, such as not keeping promises or being loose with time, but I think one reason is cultural differences. It is no use looking at the bad parts, so I hope to see the good parts and somehow work well together. I would like to walk this path together. Best regards.

Saleem:

In 1985, one Japanese student joined Islam. Her name is Makihara-san and her Islamic name is Hajara. A woman called the Islamic Center and said she wanted to join Islam. I asked her where she lived and told her that if there was a mosque near her house, she could study there and then join Islam without going to the Islamic Center. She said she wanted to learn Islam properly and join the mosque of her own volition, not because of her marriage. I gave her the contact information of a mosque in Fukuoka and told her to go there. However, she insisted on joining the Islamic Center. The next day she came to the Islamic Center from Fukuoka and first asked if I knew Mr. Hajel Makihara. I had taught him Arabic, introduced him to the Arab Islamic Institute, and performed a shahada for his initiation. When he was married, I taught his wife many things when she visited my home. The woman who visited the Islamic Center was the child of Hazel Makihara's sister, who was influenced by him to join the faith. These are the times we live in now. The most important message is to show as much good character as possible to one's family and neighbors.

I recently had dinner with 15 students. One of them asked me if Muslims keep their promises. I replied, "We keep them. That is the command of Islam." I gave an example. Many Japanese take their business seriously. We have accidents from time to time, such as pork mixed in with beef, but that is human nature. 90% of them follow the rules and do their business. A mother told her daughter to sell watered-down milk. The little girl, who was not yet old enough, replied, "If no one is watching, Allah is watching." Allah blessed her.

Sometimes Islam can be scary because of problems with the Islamic government. When we hold study groups at the Islamic Center, we sometimes get calls from the police. This is the responsibility of the country of Japan. At one o'clock in the night, my cell phone rings and I am told, "The light on the fifth floor of the Islamic Center is on. Who is there?" When I immediately go to check, he replies that he will be there until morning, so it can be OK during the Subuh prayer. Also, when more than 100 people gather, the police must be notified. We all learned the name of Mr. Ogawa, the Setagaya police officer in charge. Children from the Islamic Center attend international schools in various locations. For better advancement now, volunteer work must be done. My second child,

Rasim, is in the 11th grade at an international school. I told him to clean the center, send out books, and answer phones. I later issued certificates for these volunteers. The school has a certificate and they are recognized for their volunteer work.

Let us all work together for the sake of Islam and for the sake of humanity. Insha Allah.

Kojima:

Since it is now time, after Mr. Aqeel Siddiqui, I would like to ask Mr. Higuchi to speak one last time.

Aqeel Siddiqui:

One thing I would like to ask of the Muslims in Japan. I think Japanese people tend to pull back. They don't come forward. On the contrary, foreigners actively come forward and speak. I would like you to do something to change this. You need to step forward and take leadership. This is not something to be shy about. When they don't know something, they give up immediately. I think everyone is doing this with the intention of having someone who knows more about it talk about it. These are not the times we live in. I would like to see you step forward a little more and actively engage in Islamic da'wah and Islamic activities.

Raii's Siddiqui:

I have lived in Japan for 35 years and have heard many stories. Suicide is very common in Japan, more than 30,000 a year. Suicide is the worst thing in Islam. Why is suicide wrong and why do Muslims not commit suicide? Muslims always have hope with Allah. I know that God is with me no matter how hard things are. I am a human being born from Allah, so there is always help. That is why I do my best no matter how hard it is. Life is a gift from Allah. We must cherish that life by all means. If Japanese people know the teachings of Islam, suicide will decrease and one day be eliminated. Islam is for the sake of Japan and the Japanese people. If 30,000 people live, it will be for the sake of Japanese society and for the sake of Islam. It is better to join Islam, but even if you do not join Islam, I want you to know Islam first. What I would also like to ask of the students is to let them know about Islam. All of Islam is good, but I would like you to inform them starting with what is good for Japan among them.

Another problem is the lack of a home for Islam in Japan. What I would like to ask those who are serving as chairpersons and others in the Japan Muslim Association is to expand the scope of their activities and create a home for them. The publication of the bilingual translation of the Qur'an, for example, has been well received by Japanese

wives married to Pakistanis, and I think it is wonderful. Please take more leadership from now on. Earlier, Dr. Higuchi said to Mr. Hamanaka, "There are still no good leaders among Japanese Muslims," and we, too, expect that good leaders will emerge from the Japan Muslim Association.

Kojima:

Are there any questions or comments from the floor?

Floor:

My name is Nasser Nakagawa. I would like to ask Mr. Raii's Siddiqui. You mentioned earlier that terrorism will never happen in Japan. Please tell us specifically about that.

Raees Siddiqui:

In the first section I spoke about my experience in responding to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice. Terrorism never happens in Japan. In the past, it was often reported in the newspapers and other media that al-Qaeda might have entered the country, stirring up concern. Each time I was asked for an explanation. As I said earlier, there is no incident between Japan and Islam. As long as there is no incident, there is no terrorism. Nor does Islam cause terrorism. It is only a political issue, and terrorism is happening in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. There is nothing in the Qur'an that tells us to commit terrorism. There are problems between human beings, and that is where terrorism occurs. However, Muslims living in Japan, like us, do not have political problems. So why does terrorism occur? There are no factors that cause terrorism. This is why I am telling you this.

Kojima:

Do you have any other questions or comments?

Floor:

My name is Muhammad Zubair. I am a Pakistani journalist and I have been covering the issues of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iraq. I would like to ask a question about what Mr. Nakagawa mentioned earlier. Mr. Siddiqui is very clear that there is no terrorism in Japan, but is that really true? I myself think that we still don't know whether 9/11 in the U.S. was really caused by Muslims or not. Not only myself, but also American researchers are continuing their research. Why did this happen and who did it? A former U.S. congressman, David Duke, is doing research, and according to him, the

event may have involved someone from the Israeli Mossad and the CIA. There are many people with these claims. We don't even know if al-Qaeda's Bin Laden really did it. He may have used Islamic people. So I cannot say that there is no terrorism in Japan. What we must never forget is to be clear to the end. In the Iraq war of 2003, President Bush kept saying that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Even the United Nations was convinced, and war broke out. In the end, however, the CIA and others admitted that they had made a mistake. One mistake led to a war of that magnitude. So I think we need to look into this until the end. That is all. Thank you very much.

Kojima:

Do you have any comments about his current comments?

Raees Siddiqui:

I believe that from the beginning, even if the Muslims had done what they did on 9/11, there would have been a controlling entity behind it. Neither Al Qaeda nor the Taliban would have had the resources to attack the World Trade Center in the US. The Taliban and al-Qaeda were too busy fighting a war against the people of North America to have had time to plan for 9/11. Afghanistan and Pakistan are neighbors, so I think they were well aware of the Taliban regime. I believe that they were desperate to run an Islamic regime in Afghanistan and did not want to wage war outside of it.

One more thing, what was the payoff for Al Qaeda to blow up the center? I don't think there was anything. In many ways, I believe that even if Muslims did it, there was another organization behind it, brainwashing the youth, and unfortunately we can't say for sure, because eight years later, it's still unraveling. As many studies say, Islam is the most widespread religion. Muslims now outnumber the Christian population. It is my judgment that they may have let an incident like 9/11 happen in order to stop the momentum.

Hashimi:

Mr. Siddiqui says that there is absolutely no terrorism, and I believe so too. This is because of the character of the Japanese people and the Japanese policy toward Islam. I believe that the Japanese way of doing things will not cause terrorism in other aspects. No one will rebel against the uniquely Japanese character.

Raees Siddiqui:

To terrorize or to let terrorize? The two are very different. Don't get me wrong. There

is a big difference between a Muslim committing terrorism and letting a Muslim commit terrorism.

Kojima:

Do you have any questions in another area?

Floor (graduate student):

Thank you all for the wonderful talk today. There are existing religions in Japan. For example, my religion is Shinto. Is it possible to coexist with such existing religions? If there is a festival at a local shrine, how do you get involved? I would appreciate it if you could explain your position.

Maymon:

Finally, the conversation has changed from politics. There are many ways to interact with the community, Japanese people, and Japanese society. For a long time, I have been involved in Kawasaki City's exchange programs for foreigners and coexistence between foreigners and Japanese. I believe that even if religions are completely different, there is no particular problem with coexistence and coexistence as long as a little care is taken. Even though Japanese people are close to non-religious, Japanese culture is actually based on Buddhism and Shintoism, as in the case of local festivals. It is not impossible to associate with the Japanese as long as you do not go against Islam, such as praying with your hands together at a shrine. In the Japanese community, we will probably go with them to the drinking establishment as the case may be. I don't think there is any such thing as absolutely no going to shrines or that going to shrines is forbidden by Islam. It is not impossible if there is no compulsion from the other side. In Japanese society, it is often said, "If you go to a hometown, you must follow the hometown." (When in Rome, do as the Romans do.) This is a big problem. When Japanese people go around the world, do they follow the rules of other countries? I don't think so. There is a range that can be followed. As long as we recognize that range, I think we can coexist and coexist well without any problems.

Aqeel Siddiqui:

In response to your current question, let me give you an actual example from the Otsuka Mosque. The Awa Odori Festival and other festivals are held, and regardless of religion, we do set up our stores during the festive part of the festival. We are not forced to prayer at the shrines. Everyone gets along well during the festival part, and we do not

intend to oppose it. We do things as if we were saying, "When in the township (5), follow the four (4)." (When in Rome, do as the Romans do until 80%.)

Saleem:

If there is no religious problem, it is okay. Even if the daughter is the only Muslim in the family, if there is a death, she will attend the funeral. If she is the only Muslim in the family, she will attend the funeral because if she does not, she will be excluded from the community. I teach at a university, and I tell my students that if someone has a death, they are allowed to go, but they should be careful not to do anything that is contrary to Islam.

I once worked for a West German brokerage firm, we had 250 employees. After I joined the company, I told them, "I never drink alcohol, so if you have a party for me, bring orange juice. I told them, "I never touch alcohol. "I worked there from 1987 to 1991 and never touched alcohol. It was always orange juice. I think I was able to accomplish this because people respected my will and because of my own will.

After our marriage, I visited my wife's hometown in Yamagata Prefecture. My mother-in-law was not a Muslim at the time, but later converted and is laid to rest in the grave of the Japan Muslim Association. She respected my inability to lay hands on a Buddhist altar. She also woke me up at that time for morning prayers. My mother-in-law took me to the temple to introduce her son-in-law to everyone. I did everything but violate Islam, such as bringing souvenirs. When I return to Yamagata, I always visit "him" at the temple. As long as it is not against Islam, there is no problem. I myself sometimes go shopping to the festival in Takaido Higashi.

Nagai:

I am not sure if I have answered your question directly with what you have just said, so I would like to add something on my part. The Otsuka Mosque sponsors the Cherry Blossom Festival and the Awa Odori dance festival, and has a stall. From my point of view, there is absolutely no religious flavor to this. It is simply a local pastime. I believe that everyone, including Chairman Siddiqui, agreed to participate in this event.

There is a Tenso Shrine in the neighborhood, but we are not involved in this one at all. It is a grand festival, with neighbors carrying omikoshi (portable shrines). Participating in the festival means making a donation, so I think that is the only thing that will stop us.

Kojima:

Lastly, I would like to extend a greeting from Mr. Tanada.

Tanada:

Thank you all very much. I regret that I have to end this discussion just as it is getting heated. I know there are those who still have more to say and would like to ask questions, but I would like to conclude at this point.

I think many issues were raised today. There was talk of Japanese leadership, such as running for office, but I think these are issues that the Muslim community needs to address. There are many things that need to be considered in order for Japanese Muslims and foreign Muslims to walk together. For this purpose, it is important to strengthen the network of mosques. Mr. Nagai of the Japan Muslim Association has suggested that we hold local events, and I hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity. Although I am not a Muslim, I felt as I listened to him that it would be very good for new connections to be made.

I would be very happy if this seminar has given Muslims living in Japan an opportunity to think about how they envision their future, regardless of whether they are Japanese Muslims or foreign Muslims. Look Islam, not Look East, will be important for the future of the Japanese people. In addition to the representatives, there are also Muslims attending today's conference as observers. I hope that all of you, including these people, will take what I have said today and think about the future. As a researcher, I would also like to continue my research on Muslim communities and their thoughts. Thank you very much for your cooperation. I would like to conclude with a request for your cooperation. Thank you very much for your time today.

List of Participants

Mosque representatives, etc.		Observer participants
Aqeel Siddiqui.	Mosque representatives, etc.	undergraduate
Qureshi Haroun.	Mosque representatives, etc.	undergraduate
Akira Nagai	Mosque representatives, etc.	undergraduate
Akira Hamanaka	Mosque representatives, etc.	researcher
Raees Siddiqui	Mosque representatives, etc.	researcher
Abdul Gani Enam.	Mosque representatives, etc.	researcher
Maymon Mohamad Anwar	Mosque representatives, etc.	high school teacher
Qureshi Abdul Wahab.	Mosque representatives, etc.	high school teacher
Shel Afzal Rekha	Mosque representatives, etc.	journalist
Saleem Khan.	Mosque representatives, etc.	journalist
Abdul Samad.	Mosque representatives, etc.	Other General
Ishrat Ali Hashimi.	Mosque representatives, etc.	Other General
Mimasaka Higuchi	Mosque representatives, etc.	Other General
		graduate student
Waseda University personnel (organizer and affiliation at the time of the event)		graduate student
Hirofumi Tanada	Organizing members and faculty	graduate student
Hiroshi Kojima	Organizing members and faculty	graduate student
Hirofumi Okai	Organizing members and graduate students	graduate student
Tomoyuki Tezuka	Organizing members and undergraduates	university faculty
Sayoko Numata	Organizing members and undergraduates	university faculty
Atsushi Yamagata	Organizing members and undergraduates	university faculty
Kiju Ishikawa	Organizing members and graduate students	university faculty
Hirofumi Tanada		university faculty
		university faculty
		university faculty
		university faculty
		university faculty
		university faculty
		Muslim, foreigner
		Muslim, foreigner
		Muslim, Japanese
	Other observers on the day of the event	Muslim, Japanese

Outline of the 1st Mosque Delegates Meeting

On February 11, 2009, the 1st Mosque Representatives Meeting "Talking about the Muslim Community in Japan" was held at Waseda University, hosted by the Asian Social Studies Office of the School of Human Sciences of Waseda University, with the participation of representatives from major mosques and organizations from all over Japan. The conference was attended by representatives of major mosques and organizations from across Japan, who discussed the current state of activities and the future of the Muslim community in Japan.

Exactly 100 years ago, in February 1909, Abdulreshit Ibrahim, who had made significant contributions to Islamic society in Japan, met with Shigenobu Okuma, founder of Waseda University, and the conference was held exactly 100 years to the day.

It is estimated that about 100,000 foreign Muslims and 10,000 Japanese Muslims currently reside in Japan, and more than 50 mosques have been established throughout the country. The Muslim community has developed rapidly over the past 20 years, and its presence is growing daily. Correspondingly, a number of issues rooted in daily life have been raised by Muslims and researchers. There are many issues to be overcome in the future, such as education, cemeteries, and other issues related to Japanese society. In the case of Muslims in particular, life as a minority is largely left to the formation of a strong community and the resolution of problems by individuals and families on their own.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this meeting was to share information on the current status of activities in each region and how to deal with problems, and to make use of this information in future activities.

The meeting began with seven organizations and nine people - Otsuka Masjid (Mr. Akira Nagai and Mr. Akeel Siddiqui), Yokohama and Keihin area (Mr. Maymon Mohammad Anwar), Islamic Center Japan (Mr. Saleem Rahman Khan), Islamic Circle of Japan (Mr. Ishrat Ali Hashimi), Nagoya and Gifu area (Mr. Qureshi Abdul Wahab and Mr. Sher Afzal Rekha), Niihama and Shikoku area (Mr. Akira Hamanaka), Toda Masjid (Mr. Laith Siddiqui) --The following individuals gave presentations on the status of their activities in the region. In addition to these presentations, Misa Higuchi, former president of the Japan Muslim Association, gave a presentation on the "general situation of Japanese Muslims,

This was followed by a theme session, "The Future of Muslim Communities in Japan," which was based on the presentations. The theme session dealt with important issues such as the formation of second and third generation Muslims' identity as Muslims, the

issue of Islamic inheritance, the role of masjids in local communities, and the situation of Japanese Muslims.

The representatives of each masjid and organization presented specific initiatives, and these remarks were of great help not only to the representatives but also to the general Japanese audience of observers in thinking about coexistence with Islam, and the direction to resolve such issues was discussed. Many of the representatives expressed the opinion that "at present, each masjid and organization is facing the problem individually, and information sharing and collaboration are not very active" and confirmed that "it is urgent to establish a masjid network at the national level" and that "mutual understanding and collaboration with local communities in Japan are essential. Mutual understanding and cooperation with local communities in Japan are indispensable. The participants also expressed their hope that Japanese Muslims would take the lead in the activities of the Muslim community as a whole, although foreign Muslims have been the focus of attention in the past.

This was the first time for representatives of masjid organizations from all over Japan to meet in one place, and the conference was a great success, not only because of the extended time for lively discussions, but also because the discussions continued even after the conference was adjourned. The organizers also provided a space for prayer and *uduh*, and the *Asr* and *Maghrib* prayers were held without delay during the breaks and after the conference. Refreshments during the breaks included Halal food snacks made in Japan, which was a unique feature of a conference of this nature. The total number of participants was about 55.

Created on February 21, 2009

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جاپان کی نامور ”جامعہ واسیدا“ میں اسلام پر تحقیق: تحریر ناصرنا کا گوا
جاپان میں مسلمانوں کو کیا کیا سماجی مسائل اور مشکلات کا سامنا ہے اس پر بحث کیلئے اجلاس کا اہتمام کیا گیا











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(as of August 2009)

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Appendix:

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