BILAL

CONTENTS:
1. EDITORIAL.
2. IS ISLAM RELIGION OF DESERT?
   HAJI A. K. SAIKO, JAPAN.
3. BASIC PRACTICES: FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM
4. SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET
5. TOLERANCE IN ISLAM
   A. M. ALANDRIUS

עַד־יָדָם תִּקְשַׁר וּלְתָפִין
And hold tight to the rope of God
and Do not divided among yourself

22 SAFAAR 1389 H.
Editorial:

After all our efforts and the problems we faced, the end result is this simple "Bilal", the publication of MSA - S.I.U., Carbondale.

The people who participated in this project have other duties and could only give us their spare time, therefore, this bulletin contains many errors and we hope our readers will excuse this because of our limitations.

This is the last edition of the Executive Committee MSA 1968/69 period, and we hope the next coming Executive Committee will have more efforts and endeavor to improve and to keep the "Bilal" published every quarter as the only Muslim media in S.I.U., Carbondale.

May God bless us!

Executive Committee MSA 1968/69

--- ISLAMIC EVENTS ---

(1) THE BIRTHDAY OF PROPHET - Wednesday Night, Zabi' Al-Awal 12, 1389 May 28, 1969

(2) THE NIGHT OF ISRA MI'RAJ - Wednesday Night, Rajab 26, 1389 October 8, 1969

(3) THE MIDDLE OF SHA'BAN - Monday, Sha'ban 15, 1389 October 27, 1969

(4) THE FIRST DAY OF RAMADAN - Tuesday Night, Ramadan, 1, 1389 November 11, 1969
Is Islam Religion of Desert?

by

Haji A. K. Saito
President of Japan Muslim Association

It is said that Islam is a religion founded by Mohammed (peace be upon him) in the desert. This expression is not suitable by eyes of muslims believers of this religion, because Islam was not made by him but through him the divine message was revealed. He was just a man of ordinary human beings. Though he was a man but of course a great man selected by the Almighty God as one of the prophets to convey His order. So we call him Prophet Mohamed, the divine messenger (peace be upon him) and respect him highly as the best of human models ever lived on earth. Our object of worship is solemnly to Allah only Who created everything in the universes, alas! the universes themselves, universal truth, natural law giving life to us and taking it from us. Without any doubt we believe Allah is al-knowing, omnipotent, eternal and limitless existence in time and space.

We surprise the rapid advancement of human sagacity to have photographed the back of the moon but we should surprise the back of the moon had been made already. By whom? Of course by the Creator, Whom we call ALLAH in Arabic. This is our foundental way of Islamic thinking. The Creator sent many messengers in the past to reveal his messages, and Mohamed of Arabia is the last messenger and Qoran is the last message. Standard of all thinking and action of the muslime starts from this point and induces to.

In Qoran, it is repeatedly stressed that this Book of divine message was revealed to the human being which will be divided into two categories ie, believer and non-believers, and further into true followers and pretended followers. One can easily understand when he reads Qoran that Islam is not for any particular persons, races, nations or communities.

Any one can be a muslime if he believes in One Almighty God and Mohamed (peace be upon him) is His last messenger, regardless of his personal ability, nature, rank, age, health, wealth, experience, etc.
Any one can be a muslim who lives in desert or jungle, in small village or great city, whoever he may be, Russian, American, Chinese or Japanese. Islam is not a religion for Arabs and of course not a religion of desert.

It is fact that Prophet Mohamed himself was born in Mecca and died in Medina and his sphere of actions was bound within the limit of Arab area, and it is true that most of his direct followers were Arabs but his target of teaching was widely for all mankind. Then Islam went on and on spread around into neighboring countries like fire in the field. Before long it spread among Iranians, Turks, Afghans and many races in the Turkistan (Russian, Chinese and Afghan) and expanded from this Central Asia towards west to Yugoslavia, Hungary, Spain or Finland in Europe, towards East to Balouchestan, Pakistan, India, then across the sea to Maldives Islands, Ceylon, Sumatra, Java, Malay-Pensinula, Sarawak Sulu, the Philippines even to Fiji Islands, towards North-East to Mongolia, Manchuria and China, and towards South-West to Egypt, Sudan Somalia, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria and other countries in Africa. There are approximately 600 million muslims all over the world today, you can find any muslims at any parts on the globe, and also you can see many different races and nationals with different costumes and styles speaking their own languages gathered at Mecca when the time of Haj, the pilgrimage. They come from tropical jungles in Africa, snow clad regions of Himalaya Mountains, vast pampas in South America, devasted deserts and densely populated cities of the world. Their numbers were estimated 1,300,000 during a few days in March in 1966.

Number of muslims living in deserts is much more less than those who live in other parts. For example, we find 95 million muslims in Indonesia, 85 million in Pakistan, 53 million in India, 50 million in China, 41 million in Nigeria, 12 million in Soviet, 5 million in Malaysia, 3 million in the Philippines and some more in non-desert zones. Thus it is obvious "Islam is not a religion of desert" but "Religion of people who believe in islam".

Source: Islam, The Universal Religion for all generations.
Wisma, Indonesia, Tokyo.

"Goodness is the only investment that never fails."
David Henry Thoreau
From Al Quran:
Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered (we are Muslims).

Koran, 2:136

Say:  He is God - One!
  God - the eternally sought after;
He did not have a son
and was no one's son
And there is no one equal to Him.

Say:  O unbelievers!
I do not worship what you worship
and you do not worship what I worship;
and I shall not worship what you worship
and you will not worship what I worship.
You have your religion and I have mine.

Koran CIX: 3-6

"Shallow men believe in luck
Self-trust is first secret of success..."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Not one student in thousand breaks down from overwork."
William Neilson

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."
Shakespeare, Julius Caesar
BASIC PRACTICES
(The Five Pillars of Islam)

The Testimony

The First Pillar is the testimony by the tongue that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger. Its meaning has already been explained in detail.

Prayers

A Muslim prays according to a specific format five times a day: before sunrise, at noon, late in the afternoon, at sundown and late in the evening. Prayer dissociates man for a few minutes from his worldly engagements to seek audience before Allah in complete prostration. It brings to the fore of his mind his real role in life and reminds him of his commitments to his God.

The Prayers can be held anywhere but preferably in a mosque, which can be any place the Muslims are gathered in for worship. Any of the Prayers can be offered in a group fashion with one man leading the rest; however, the Friday noon Prayer must be a congregational one held in a Mosque. The Friday Prayer includes also a preach by the Prayer leader. Any ordinary Muslim can and does lead those prayers, as far as he possesses more knowledge about Islam than the rest. Indeed, in Islam there is no organized church or priesthood. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, no one is allowed, therefore, to stand between man and his Creator.

Payment of Zakat

Muslims must pay "the Zakat," i.e. alms-giving. Zakat is a religious tax on capital not on income collected by the Islamic State only from Muslims and spent for their welfare. It amounts to an annual 2½ per cent of all cash balance and assets exclusive of that used for basic needs. Zakat is a basic materialistic sacrifice which reminds the Muslim that all his wealth was given to him by God. Outside the Zakat, a Muslim can, and is encouraged to give as much charity as he likes. The reward for charity is the Hereafter is the same whether it is given to needy Muslims or non-Muslims.

Fasting

A Muslim must fast a certain month of the year according to the Islamic lunar Calendar. During the period of fasting,
he refrains from eating, drinking or having sexual intercourse, daily from dawn to sunset without stopping the usual daily work. Fasting is a great spiritual, as well as physical training, during which the Muslim must fight himself off committing the smallest of the small sins. The month of Fasting is followed by a three-day celebration. The celebration is basically a thanksgiving to God for giving power to the Muslims to go through the period of fasting. It is called "The Feast of Breaking the Fast." Since the lunar year is ten days shorter than the solar one, this month moves around the four seasons.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage (Hajj in Arabic) to Mecca, at a certain day of the lunar year, is obligatory only to those who can afford it and that, too, only once in a lifetime. Mecca, today, stands at the site of a small house that the prophet Abraham and his son Ismail built for the worship of Allah. Allah rewarded them by calling it His own house and making it the center towards which all must face when performing prayers. This house is the first ever built by man for the sole purpose of the monotheistic worship of God. When Abraham saw the vision, he realized that he must sacrifice his son for the house, but Allah substituted instead the great sheet as the sacrifice. This is the place the Muslims are asked to visit in pilgrimage. The reason is simple: to remember the historical occasion and realize the importance of the place and to worship God; never because Mecca is the birthplace of Muhammad. Pilgrimage also stresses the equality of all mankind to the greatest degree; Muslims, men or women, from all over the world, using the same white robe: the worship of Allah. There is also a period of celebration connected with this.
SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET:

Equality of Man:
"Realize that you are no better than a white man or black man except in case that you distinguish yourself with righteousness."
(Ahmad)

Good deeds:
"Should I inform you of what will take you to Heaven? ....Fight in Jihad, feed the guest, say your prayers in time and maintain cleanliness."
(Hasan)

Self-Discipline:
"One who keeps himself under control on the occasions of temptation, fear or anger, will be protected by God from Fire: and one who shelters the destitute shows compassion to the weak and spends his wealth for his parents will enter Heaven."
(Bukhari)

Prayer:
"The Holy Prophet said: "Prayer is the 'Miraj' (spiritual ascension) of the faithful". "Pray to God as you would if you saw Him, for if you see Him not, He sees you."

Sign of a Hypocrit
"There are three signs which mark a hypocrit. He lies when he talks; he breaks his promise; and he misappropriates his trust."
(Bukhari)

Lawful, but not desirable
"Among lawful actions, that which causes the greatest displeasure to God is divorce."
Talking about tolerance, one cannot detach himself from the understanding that tolerance arises subjectively from oneself. This element of feeling arose pragmatically from the attitude of respect, understanding and self-correction, from one individual to the others, which bring to the self-reevaluation to understand one's problem. Concerning the religion, Islam stresses the point that the guilty is guilty and the innocent is innocent, to whatever religion he may belong.

Says Dr. Valier: It is not exaggeration to insist that Islam was not satisfied with preaching religious tolerance but that it waged a historic war. (Laura Veccia Vaglieri, An Interpretation of Islam, p. 25).

Tolerance suggests a sense of superiority tempered by charity. It is placing the honest application of justice between man and man above all other considerations. A lofty principle that corresponds with the Quranic declaration, "Surely we have accorded dignity to the sons of Adam."

(Quran XVIII: 70)

This can well illustrate the background of such a statement is that of Sir William Muir: "Leniency toward the conquered and their justice and integrity presented a marked contrast to the tyranny and intolerance of the Roman..."

The Syrian Christians enjoyed more civil and popular liberty under the Arab invaders than they had done under the rule of Heraclius and they had no wish to return to their former state. Not only does the authority of moral value, in the name of Islam, transcend every difference of religion, it goes far beyond that. One of Islamic moral principle is the conception that human being; where ever they live, are fundamentally one and the same.

Says the Quran: "O, people! Behold. We have created you from a male and female and made out of you nations and tribes so that you may know one another (and be good to one another). The noblest among you before the God is the best in conduct. Behold, God is the Knower, the Aware."

(Quran KLX: 13)

This implies that Muslim, by virtue of his faith, ought to be deeply attached to mankind as a whole and conscious of the fact that geographical border, political divisions, and
differences in appearance, race or language should not be a barrier between man and man.

Arnold Toynbee has said that "as things are now, the exponents of racial intolerance are in the ascendant and if their attitude toward "the race question prevails, it may eventually provoke a general catastrophe. Yet the forces of racial toleration, which at present seem to be fighting a losing battle in a spiritual struggle of immense importance to mankind, might still regain the upper hand if strong influence militating against race consciousness that has hitherto been held in reserve were not to be thrown into the scales.

For the tolerance of Islam toward other religions, clearly Quran states that:

...and I shall not worship what you worship and you will not worship what I worship, you have your religion and I have mine. Quran CIX: 3-5

It is conceivable that the spirit of Islam might be a timely reinforcement which would decide this issue in favor of tolerance and peace. --

---

MIDWEST-CONFERENCE:
The third Mid-west Conference of Muslim Students Association of U.S.A. and Canada was held during the last Easter Vacation, April 4-6 at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. The Theme of the Conference was "Role and Duties of Muslim Intellectuals Today and Tomorrow."

INDONESIA BANS AN ENCYCLOPEDIA:
Indonesia's Minister for Religious Affairs, Mohamad Dahlan, announced on March 6, in Djakarta, a ban on Volume 17 of the Standard Reference Encyclopedia published by Funk and Wagnals, according to the UPI. The Minister said that by showing a picture of the Prophet Mohammad holding a sword in one hand and the Koran in the other, gave the impression that Islam had spread by force. --

Asian Student
March 15, 1969