

The Interplay Between Islam and Civilization: the Case of East Asia

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Abstract

Among the various civilizations of the present day which are all grounded in world religions, only Islamic civilization has established clear rules, not only in moral and ethical codes but also in the form of legal prescriptions, for the regulation of relationships between the different cultures it has assimilated, and relationships vis-à-vis other civilizations.

This paper is concerned firstly with presenting models of the rules of Islamic civilization governing both internal and external relationships, and secondly, taking a closer look at Islam in East Asia.

The expansion of Islam into Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa, Indian subcontinent, and Eastern Europe was achieved as a result of military conquest under the *Khilāfah - Dār al-Islām* model which was first, was first established for reasons of political stability, after which these societies gradually become Islamicized through voluntary conversion.

On the other way, in East Asia Islam came through peaceful means without conquest by force, so the pattern of its Islamicization is different from *Khilāfah-Dār al-Islām* model.

Insofar as the Islamicization of East Asia was not implemented through the military conquest model of *Khilāfah - Dār al-Islām - Dhimmah*, it traces its roots not to the *Sharī'ah*, but rather to *Tauhīd*, the concept of the Oneness of Allah. Islam was spread through linking it to already existing *Tauhīd*-like religious elements, and giving them new vital meaning.

And the civilizations in the region before the advent of Islam are dominated by Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism, which are all eclectic and inclusive rather than exclusive contrary to Western Civilization which is based on the Christianity.

In China under the policy of restoration of Chinese culture by the *Ming* 明 dynasty, Muslims of Central Asia started to assimilate themselves into Chinese

culture. From then on, Taoism Confucianism, Buddhism and Islam were lumped together as 'the four teachings' of China and Muslims became an integral part of Chinese self-understanding, while the Muslim community has neither established political supremacy nor been integrated into *Khilāfah - Dār al-Islām* in the history of Islam in China

The Malays are one of the four major Muslim ethnic groups which have a population of around 20 million in the contemporary Islamic World, i.e., the Arabs, the Turks, the Urdu speaking Muslims in Indian Subcontinent and the Malays, and they are the absolute majority of the Muslims in East Asia, mainly living in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and the south of Thailand.

According to *Abdurrahman Wahid*, the former president of Indonesia, the Republic of Indonesia is *Dār Sulh*, State of Truce, which is neither an Islamic state nor an Enemy state but a state which does not institutionalize the Islamic law but allows Muslim citizens freedom to practice their religion, based on *Dār Sulh* theory of *Shāfi'ī* legal school.

Indonesia's constitutional principles are summarized into so called *Pancasila*, five principles, and the first is belief in *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (a deity which is great and unique) .In enacting the constitution, the Islamic groups failed to make Islam the official religion but succeeded in making 5 official religions, Islam, Catholic Christian, Protestant Christian, Hindu and Buddhism, all of which are supposed to believe in *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*, i.e, *Tauḥīd* (monotheism). Thus Indonesia Islam has not presented itself as state religion enforcing *Sharī'ah* but a universal religion of *Tauḥīd* that can make all the religions return to their original message of monotheism.

Japan had no direct contact with Islam until Meiji(1968-1912) Era. That is why Muslim is still an absolute minority in Japan and they live almost neglected and unknown and they have little influence in it thus far.

But the situation is gradually changing now, and the most important event in view of the civilizational dialogue of Islam was the initiative of *Kono Yohei*, ex-foreign minister of Japan, to establish an Islamic studies circle inside the ministry in 2000, one of the main pillars of which is promoting 'the inter-civilizational dialogue with Islamic World", as well as the amalgamated *Shintoic-Islam* theology are embraced after the Second World War, for the Japanese civilization boasts a highly syncretic religious culture, where world religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism has already being practiced alongside the indigenous religion of Shinto since long before.

Thus we can expect to open up new civilizational horizons through the civilizational dialogue between Islam and the East Asian Civilizations.

Introduction

Civilizations are born through the amalgamation of regional cultures. As such, the civilization by nature tends to have a unifying influence, and to be expansionary. Accordingly, civilizations are burdened with the need to resolve both internal problems arising between the different cultural elements they have assimilated, and external problems arising from relations with other civilizations.

The various civilizations of the present day- such as the Western and Eastern Orthodox Christian, Islamic, Indian and Chinese civilizations, are all grounded in world religions, but among these, only Islamic civilization has established clear rules, not only in moral and ethical codes but also in the form of legal prescriptions, for the regulation of relationships between the different cultures it has assimilated, and relationships vis-à-vis other civilizations.

This paper is concerned firstly with presenting models of the rules of Islamic civilization governing both internal and external relationships, and secondly, taking a closer look at Islam in East Asia.

1. The open character of Islamic universalism

The Islamic nation is charged with the divine mission as stated in the Qur'anic verse "Let there be a community among you who call to the good, and enjoin the right, and forbid the wrong."(3:104). As such, it has a universal character and requires expansion.

However, its universalism is not so imperialistic that it forces its values unilaterally on the others but is open to bilateral mutual understandings as expressed in the Qur'anic verse "O mankind! We created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes in order that you might come to know each other," (49:13) and famous Prophetic *ḥadīths*, "Seek knowledge, even unto China" and "Wisdom is the believer's stray camel. Wherever he finds it, he has the most right to it."

Islam emphasizes both the common origin of human beings and the diversity amongst them. From its perspective, those on its borders are not regarded as enemies but as neighbors to become acquainted with and knowledge is the common property of human beings beyond geographic and ethnic boundaries.

2. The Islamic system of governance

Islam needs an institution of governance in order to secure the safety of its mission from inside and outside.

The Islamic civilization's fundamental system of governance was established during the period extending from the conclusion of the Constitution of Medina to

the end of the reign of the "rightly guided" caliphs. This system, the *Khilāfah (caliphate)* - *Dār al-Islām* (the Abode of Islam) system, guarantees the peaceful coexistence of multiple religious groups under the supremacy of an Islamic leadership.

Under this system, *Ummah Islāmīyah*, the Islamic community, bears the responsibility for maintaining internal peace and order, and for supplying the military required for defense against external forces, while non-Islamic groups are exempt from military duties but required to pay tribute in lieu of those duties. Domestic peace and order are maintained through the application of the Islamic legal code (*Sharī'ah*), and military actions with respect to external forces are governed by Islamic international wartime law.

This system recognizes the equality of all religious denominations under the law, and allows them freedom of self-government in their private affairs. It not only guarantees the protection of (1) *nafs*(life), (2) *māl*(property), (3) *'aql*(reason), (4) *dīn*(religious beliefs), and (5) *nasl wa'ird*(lineage and reputation), but also makes no discriminations based on race or ethnic group, and does not compel the use of any specific language as the official or national language except that Arabic language is used as a ritual language, respected and studied as *lughah al-Jannah*, language of Paradise among pious believers.

3. The two types of contract model of an Islamic state

According to *Ali Bulaç*, a contemporary Turkish Islamist intellectual, there are two models by which the Islamic system of governance is applied.

The former is the social contract model, whereby the system is upheld through voluntary agreement among multi-ethnic groups as in Madina, where Arab Muslims of Mekkan *Muhājirūn* and Madanise *Anşār*, Jews, and Arab non-believers affiliated with *Anşār*, and some foreign Muslims affiliated with *Muhājirūn* like *Salmān the Persian* and *Bilāl the Ethiopian* lived within the bounds of the Constitution of Medina. However, this model was short-lived because of treachery of the Jews and neither developed practically nor theoretically in Islamic history.

The later is the governmental contract model or ruler-imposed *dhimmah* model, established in the reign of the rightly guided caliphs, whereby non-Muslim peoples subjugated by military conquests that offered them the choice of the Qur'an (convert to Islam), payment of *jizyah* (tribute), or the sword, were accorded protection and certain rights on the condition of their recognition of the supremacy of Islamic public law¹.

The expansion of Islam into Middle East, Central Asia, North Africa, Indian

¹Ali Bulaç, *İslām ve Demokrasi, İz Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1995, p.174*

subcontinent , and Eastern Europe was achieved as a result of military conquest under this *dhimma* model, and as such, *Khilāfah - Dār al-Islām* was first established for reasons of political stability, after which these societies gradually become Islamicized through voluntary conversion.

4. The Islamization of East Asia

By the term East Asia, I mean Chinese civilization in North East Asia and Malay civilization in South East Asia.

As for Japan, there is no consensus among scholars of comparative civilizations about whether there is an independent Japanese civilization or whether it is merely on the periphery of Chinese civilization, but I prefer to use the word 'Japanese civilization' because at one time the Japanese proclaimed the universal character of their culture and tried to assimilate all Asian nations under Japan's hegemony in the name of *Daitoua-Kyoei-Ken* 大東亜共栄圏 (the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere).

In East Asia, contrary to the other areas of Islamic world, Islam spread not through the device of military conquest, but rather through the peaceful missionary activities of Muslim traders.

Insofar as the Islamicization of East Asia was not implemented through the military conquest model of *Khilāfah - Dār al-Islām - Dhimma*, it traces its roots not to the *Sharī'ah*, but rather to *Tauḥīd*, the concept of the Oneness of Allah. Islam was spread through linking it to already existing *Tauḥīd*-like religious elements, and giving them new vital meaning.

5. The Advent of Islam into China

Islam came to China as early as the *Tang* 唐 dynasty(618-907) around 8th century. The first Muslim settlers in China were Arab and Persian merchants but their impact on Chinese society was minimal.

The Mongol *Yuan* 元 dynasty(1279-1368) boosted the Muslim presence in China. Muslims in China and from Central Asia served in the Mongol court and they consisted of the majority of the second caste next to Mongols.

But Central Asian Muslims had little motivation to learn Chinese and this hindered closer contact and mutual understanding between the Muslims and the Chinese. Only under the policy of restoration of Chinese culture by the *Ming* 明 dynasty(1368-1644), Muslims of Central Asia started to assimilate themselves into Chinese culture. From then on, one could speak of "Chinese Muslims" and no longer about "Muslims in China"².

It must be noted here that the population of Muslims in China in

1944(before Communist rule) numbered 48,100,000³ and "Taoism Confucianism, Buddhism and Islam were lumped together as 'the four teachings' of China"⁴ and Muslims are now "an integral part of Chinese self-understanding"⁵ (*Tu Weiming*, Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy at Harvard Univ.), while the Muslim community has neither established political supremacy nor been integrated into *Khilāfah - Dār al-Islām* in the history of Islam in China

6. Muslim Confucians

In Chinese, Islam is called *Hui* 回 and a Muslim humanist who has a background of Confucian literature is called *Huiru* 回儒 (Muslim Confucian).

The earliest work still extant written by these *Huiru* is *Zhengjiao Zhenquan* 正教真詮 (Genuine Annotation of the Orthodox Teaching) by *Wang Daiyu* 王岱輿, published in 1642.

Wang Daiyu, sobriquet "*Zhenhui Laoren* 真回老人 (elder of Islam)", was born in a Muslim family and received Islamic education in Arabic and Persian in his childhood, then at the age of 20 he started learning Chinese and after 30, he concentrated himself on reading Chinese history, Confucian writings as well as Taoist and Buddhist works. He was "conversant with the four teachings (Islam, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism)" and often had dialogues and discussions with non-Muslims and the content of them is compiled into *Zhengjiao Zhenquan*. He left two other works on Islam, *Qingzhen Daxue* 清真大学 (Great Learning of the Pure and True) and *Xizhen Zhengda* 希真正答 (Correct Answers on the Uncommon Truth).

In the third preface of *Zhengjiao Zhenquan* dated 1657, *Ho Hanjin* 何敬 suggested that *Wang Daiyu's* contribution to Islam is comparable to contribution of *Zhu Xi* 朱子 (d.1200), the founder of Neo-Confucianism, to Confucianism.

7. The Chinese character of *Huiru's* works

Wang Daiyu wrote his works in Chinese and it means that his thoughts are expressed in Confucian and Taoist terminologies. So we can easily discover in his *Zhengjiao zhenquan* its "Chinese" quality, for he quotes the sayings of *Yao* 堯, *Syun* 舜 (legendary sage kings in Chinese history), *Confucius* 孔子 and *Mencius* 孟子 as references and he highlights the similarity between Islamic values and

² Lee Cheuk Yin, "Islamic Values in Confucian Terms: *Wang Daiyu* and His *Zhengjiao Zhenquan*", Osman Bakar(ed.), *Islam and Confucianism*, Kuala Lumpur, 1997, p.78.

³ 加地伸行(Kaji Nobuyuki)『現代中国学 (Modern Chinalogie)』Tokyo, 1997, p.160.

⁴ Osman Bakar, "Confucius and the Analects in the light of Islam", Osman Bakar(ed.), *Islam and Confucianism*, p.68.

⁵ Tu Weiming, "Towards a Global Ethics: Spiritual Implications of Islam Confucian Dialogue", Osman Bakar(ed.), *Islam and Confucianism*, p.33.

Confucian ethics. And *Liu Zhi* 劉智(d.1730) says, in his *Tiangfang Xingli* (天方性理:Islamic philosophy), "Islamic religious texts are almost same as the teachings of *Confusious and Mencious* (天方經大同孔孟旨也)⁶.

Wang Daiyu tries to explain the loftiness of the Allah using Confucian and Taoist concepts as follows.

The True God is the Only One, the Original Being with no beginning, and not the being who takes the form of others. Nothing is compared to Him...

The true One is the Only One, not the Number One. The number One comes from the Only One. The sayings, "one origin brings ten thousand differences", "ten thousand phenomenon return to one", also refers to the Number One. The saying, "the nameless is the beginning of heavens and earth, the named is the mother of all things", also means the Number One.

The Number One is the seed of a myriad things in this universe, and the True One is the master of the Number One. *Tao*道(The Way) comes from the True, that is why *Qingzhenjiao*清真教(the religion of Pure and the True: Islam) honors only *Qingyi*真一(the True One)⁷.

After *Wang Daiyu*, Huiru, Muslim Confucian scholars such as *Ma Zhu* 馬注(d.1640) and *Liu Zhi* 劉智(d.1730) developed cosmological theory, on the foundations of *Tauhid* concepts to give birth to a fusion of Islam and Chinese culture which is referred to by Dr. *Sachiko Murata* (村田幸子), Japanese Islamologist as Islamic Neo-Confucianism.

8. Contemporary Chinese Islam

Under the communist rule of the Chinese People's Republic, Muslims suffered severe persecutions and their numbers were reduced drastically from 48 million in 1944 to some 20 million at present. But since 1980s we have seen a renaissance of Chinese Islam. A lot of mosques have been built, many books on Islam have been published in Chinese, and they have started to send their children to Middle Eastern countries, Pakistan, and Malaysia for Islamic studies.

The most distinguished figure of the new generation of Chinese Muslim intellectuals is *Zhang Cheng Zhi* 張承志. He is a one of the most famous and influential contemporary Chinese novelists as well as a researcher of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who is a specialist in the history of the *Jahriyah* order in China.

He empathizes the contributions of Chinese Islam to Chinese culture in the

⁶ 劉智(Liu Zhi)、訳注『天方性理(*Tiangfang Xingli: Islamic philosophy*)』卷一、イスラーム地域研究第5班「イスラームの歴史と文化」事務局、Tokyo, p.1.

⁷ Lee Cheuk Yin, "Islamic Values in Confucian Terms: *Wang Daiyu* and His *Zhengjiao Zhengquan*", Osman Bakar(ed.), *Islam and Confucianism*, pp.75-94..

past and the former's importance for the future of the later, saying, "*Hui Min* 回民, Chinese Muslims speak Chinese the same as *Han Zu* 漢族, the Chinese, wear Chinese clothes and keep Chinese traditional cultures, especially the concept of *xian* 孝 filial piety. ...

I believe that Chinese Islam pays more serious attention to the traditional ethical values of China such as *chi* 恥 honor, *xin* 信 trust, *cheng* 誠 fidelity than the non-Muslim Chinese *Han Zu* do

The Culture and spirit of the Muslim nationals in China is continuing to influence *Han Zu* and even pressuring the advocates of Chinese culture into self-reflection in various ways."⁸

9. The Islamicization of the Malay world

The Malays are one of the four major Muslim ethnic groups which have a population of around 20 million in the contemporary Islamic World, i.e., the Arabs, the Turks, the Urdu speaking Muslims in Indian Subcontinent and the Malays, and they are the absolute majority of the Muslims in East Asia, mainly living in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and the south of Thailand.

The first contact between Islam and the area occurred early in the 8th century when Arab merchants arrived and the conversion of the natives to Islam started in the next century from among the people of Ache the "*veranda of Makka*".

In Southeast Asia, *Muzaffar Shah*, the fifth ruler of the state of Malacca, who ruled from 1445 to 1459, was the first monarch in the Malay world to declare himself a Sultan in the Islamic sense, a move that gave considerable impetus to the Islamicization of the surrounding regions. Muslim states arose throughout the Malay world, but since there was no tradition among the Southeast Asian states of the kind of centralized government practiced in the Middle East, India or China, the new Islamic states made no attempt to compel the masses to convert. As a result, Islamicization proceeded very gradually in a social environment in which there was room for both local traditions (*adat*) and Islamic teachings (*agama*) to be practiced.

10. The Typology of Islamicization in Malay World and *Dār Sulh* theory

According to Abdurrahman Wahid, the 4th President of Indonesia, ex-secretary general of *Nahdatul Ulama*, the Islamicization of the Malay World is classified into the following 4 types.

⁸ 張承志(Zhang Cheng Zhi)「中華文明の中のイスラーム(Islam in Chinese Civilization)」片倉もとこ(ed.)『イスラーム教徒の社会と生活(Societies and Lives of Muslims)』Tokyo,1994, pp.1877-188.

(1) *Ache* model: Small villages developed gradually into capitals of Kingdoms like *Parelak*, *Samudera Pasai* in Ache. At the first stage of Islamicization, there remained no non-Muslims in the village and the law practiced was Islamic Law and it became the state law when it developed into the capital. There was no conflict between Islamic law and local customary law due to the absence of any customary law that was contrary to Islamic law in any way.

(2) The *Minang* Model: There was no centralized state that could enforce the law regardless of whether it was Islamic law or customary law. The attempt to enforce Islamic law was rejected by the society, and this led to *Paderi* War. Conciliation was achieved in 1846 by formulating that "Custom is based on Islamic law and Islamic law is based on Qur'ān (*adat bersendi shara 'shara' bersendi Kitabullah*). But the customary law continued to be practiced and the commitment to the Islamic law was only a lip-service.

(3) The *Goa* model: The legitimacy of the centralized state or kingdom had been established long before the advent of Islam. Islam was brought by merchants and penetrated gradually. Islamic law and customary law has co-existed without conflict under the rule of the kingdom.

(4) The *Java* model: A Syncretism of Hinduism, Buddhism and native religion had become Javanese court culture and *agama bayangan* (shadow religion) existed parallel to the official religion, i.e., Islam. One could be *santri*(practicing Muslim) or *abangan*(nominal Muslim) as one wished⁹.

Consequently, *Abdurrahman Wahid* says that *Nahdatul Ulama* accept the Republic of Indonesia as *Dār Ṣulh*, State of Truce, which is neither an Islamic state nor an Enemy state but a state which does not institutionalize the Islamic law but allows Muslim citizens freedom to practice their religion, based on *Dār Ṣulh* theory of *Shāfi'ī* legal school.

He says furthermore that Indonesia should not aim for an Islamic state according to the *Shāfi'ī Dār Ṣulh* theory and the state must be neutral to any religion¹⁰.

11. *Pancasila* and *Tauhīd*

In the contemporary Malay world, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei are states in which Muslims constitute a majority. Malaysia and Brunei declare that Islam is their official religion but Indonesia does not make Islam her official religion. However, this does not mean that Indonesia is a secular state.

⁹ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Hindari Negara Berasumsi Agama", Imam Anshori Salah(ed.), *Islam, Negara, dan Demokrasi*, Jakarta, 1999, pp.46-47.

¹⁰ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Agama, Negara, dan Sikap Moderat NU", Kacung Marijan(ed.), *Mengurai hubungan Agama dan Negara*, Jakarta, 1999, pp.340-341, 347.

Indonesia's constitutional principles are summarized into so called Pancasila five principles and the first is belief in *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (a deity which is great and unique).

In enacting the constitution, *Nahdatul Ulama* and other Islamic groups failed to make Islam the official religion but succeeded in making 5 official religions, Islam, Catholic Christian, Protestant Christian, Hindu and Buddhism, all of which are supposed to believe in *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*, i.e., *Tauhīd*(monotheism).

Thus in Indonesia, we can duly say that Islam has presented itself not as a state religion enforcing *Shari'ah* but as a universal religion of *Tauhīd* that can make all the religions return to their original message of monotheism.

In this context, Dr.*Said Aqiel Siradj* who obtained a doctorate from *Umm al-Qurā* University in *Makkah*, secretary general of *Syura of Nahdatul Ulama*, says, "It is not impossible that those who are formally categorized into Jews, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians and so on are practicing Islam (*ber-Islam*) in reality."¹¹

If we know that *Nahdatul Ulama*, the largest Muslim organization in the world with 40 million followers, has inter-religious character, it does not seem strange that *Abdurrahman Wahid* is the president of World Council for Religion and Peace, founding member of Institute Simon Perez and councilor of International Dialogue Foundation on Perspective Studies of *Shari'ah* and Secular Law in the Haag.

After the birth of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945, belief in the principle of the Oneness of Allah became a state imperative, and in addition to Islam, and Catholic and Protestant branches of Christianity, the Buddhism and Hinduism practiced in the archipelago underwent transformation into Indonesian-style *Tauhīd* or monotheistic religions.

12. Civilizational Dialogue in Malaysia

In Malaysia, 30% of whose nationals are Chinese with Confucian and Buddhist religio-cultural backgrounds, the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur organized an International Seminar on Civilization Dialogue between Islam and Confucianism, the first of its kind on a large international scale, which was attended by scholars from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, U.S., and Japan, in 1995.

And in 1997, the Center for Civilizational Dialogue was established at the University of Malaya. "The main aim of the Center is to promote studies, teaching, and research on world civilizations, and try to carry out civilizational

¹¹ Said Aqiel Siradj, *Islam Kebangsaan*, Jakarta, 1999, p.83.

dialogues between different religions and cultures with the view of creating a spiritually and ethically-based human civilization and a world community that is truly multi-cultural, based on mutual understanding and respect."

Anwar Ibrahim, ex-vice-prime minister of Malaysia says, "It is our conviction that a civilizational dialogue between Islam and Confucianism would greatly contribute towards global peace and understanding. ... centuries before Enlightenment in the West, there had already been established productive engagement between Muslim Malay Sultanates of Southeast Asia and Confucianist Ming Dynasty of China. Trade, rather than war, was the governing mode of relations."¹²

Osman Bakar, deputy-vice chancellor of University of Malaya says, "The Malay-Indonesian World (particularly Java, Sumatra and The Malay Peninsula) was Hindu-Buddhist before the coming and spread of Islam from the thirteenth century onwards. ... For a long time, there were important contacts and close cultural interactions between the Islamicized Malay-Indonesian World and Buddhist Indochina, especially Thailand and Cambodia, as well as between the Malay World and China. There is no doubt that Southeast Asia was culturally enriched by the encounter of Buddhism and Islam on its soils."¹³

13. The syncretic character of Japanese Civilization

The Japanese civilization boasts a highly syncretic religious culture, where world religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism are being practiced alongside the indigenous religion of Shinto.

The original Japanese religion was *Shinto* 神道 (the Way of God) but Buddhism and Confucianism were introduced in the 6th century without abolishing *Shinto*.

From the *Nara* (710-784) Era to the first half of *Muromachi* (1392-1573) Era, the dominant religious school in Japan was *Ryobu Shinto* 両部神道, Two Parts *Shinto*, which advocated *Honchi Suijaku* 本地垂迹 theory. *Honchi* means original base and *Suijaku* means leaving a mark. In this *Honchi Suijaku* theory, Buddha is considered the Origin and Japanese gods are incarnations of the Origin, Buddha.

But in *Muromachi* era, Yoshida Kanetomo established a new school, *Yuiitsu Shinto* 唯一神道, The One and Only *Shinto*. *Yoshida Kanetomo* (d.1511) He reversed the *Honchi Suijaku* theory and made the *Amenominakanomushi* 天御中主神, the Central Lord of the Universe, the Supreme God of *Shinto*, the Origin and made Buddha its incarnation. He says, "The seed appeared in Japan, then

¹² Anwar Ibrahim, "Islam-Confucianism Dialogue and the Quest for a New Asia", Osman Bakar(ed.), *Islam and Confucianism*, pp.14-15.

¹³ Osman Bakar, *Islam and Civilisational Dialogue*, Kuala Lumpur, 1997, p.17.

branches and leaves came out in China and it bore fruits in India. So according to this theory, Buddhism is the fruit of all religions and Confucianism is the branches and leaves of all religions and *Shinto* is the root of all religions. Thus the other three religions (Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism) are branches of *Shinto*.¹⁴

This *Yuitsu Shinto* became the main stream of Japanese religious thoughts and has developed into *Kokka Shinto* 国家神道, the State Shinto in Meiji era.

As Yoshida's saying shows clearly, Japanese religious culture is highly syncretic, chauvinistic and eclectic at the same time in response to foreign cultures. So we should take this character of Japanese Civilization into consideration, if we analyze the relation between Islam and Japan. For example, the fact that Ito Hirobumi(d.1909), the first prime minister of Japan, witnessed the Islamic affirmation, *lā ilāha illā Allahu, Muḥammadun Rasūlu Allahi* (No god but Allah and *Muḥammad* is His Messenger) in front of '*Abdurrahshīd Ibrāhīm*, Tatar Pan-Islamist, in 1909, should be interpreted in this cultural context of Japan.

14. *Daitoua Kyo-eiken* and Islam

Malaysian philosopher *Osman Bakar* says, "...it(Islam) has been able to understand and speak to Hinduism, Buddhism, and the religions of China, Korea and Japan. Only Shintoism, which is native and unique Japan, has not been theologically encountered by Islam"¹⁵

Under the prewar state *Shinto* and national ideology of the *Daitoua-Kyo-ei-Ken* 大東亜共栄圏 (Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere), research directed at finding ways of integrating Islam as a national strategy led to the birth of a theology that attempted to equate Allah with *Amaterasuomikami* 天照大神, the Sun Goddess in the *Shinto* pantheon.

Nūr Allā h Muḥammad Tanaka Ippei, the first Japanese that performed Ḥajji in 1924, says,

"Our Imperial Way (*Shinto*) has already showed the spirit of *Daido Gutsu* 大道俱通, the Great Way inter-connected (all the true religions have the same origin) and clarified the fact that Our Way (*Shinto*) alone penetrates this (the Great way), by accepting Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity without rejecting them. But we have not yet had a chance to know the truth that the respected teaching of Islam which was preached by Muḥammad, the Saint of Arabia in the Last Age (末世) is the same as the essence of our *Shinto*. So my claim of 'Mission of Japanese Imperial Shinto for the (Asia) Continent' is to promote spiritual relations with Muslims in the

¹⁴ 山田孝雄(Yamada Takao), 『神道思想史(*History of Shinto's Thought*)』, Tokyo, 1942, p.71.

¹⁵ *Osman Bakar, Islam and Civilisational Dialogue*, p.13.

world with the belief that *Amenominakanonushi*, the Central Lord of the Universe, the Supreme God of Shinto, is no other than Allah."¹⁶

15. Contemporary 'Japanese Islam'

This amalgamated *Shintoic-Islam* theology was embraced after the Second World War by *Muhammad Şafā Sawada*, who converted to Islam from the *Yuiitsu Shinto* founded by *Kanetomo Yoshida*.

He says, "According to *Yoshida Shinto*(*Yuiitsu Shinto*), worship of the Creator of the Sky and the Earth is the true teaching of Shinto passed down by *Amenokoyanenomikoto*. ... Anyway the innermost secret of *Shinto* is *lā ilāha ill ā Allah* in Arabic."¹⁷

His *Shintoic-Islam* theology is accepted positively among some *Shintoists*.

Another example of *Shintoic-Islam*, was the conversion of *Deguchi Kyotaro* of *Omoto* to Islam in the presence of *Shaikh Aḥmad Kuftarū*, Grand *Mufī* of Syria.

Omoto is one of the sects of Shinto, which is ecumenical in character in the meaning that it advocates *Bankyo Dokon* 万教同根(all the religions have same root) and has about 200,000 of followers.

Omoto sent its special councilor *Deguchi Kyotaro*, one of the descendants of its founder, with its director of international affairs *Nishino Syoryu* to Syria to study Islam and they spent a few months with *Shaikh Aḥmad* and practiced *Ṣalāh* and *Saum Ramaḍān* and performed *Hajj*.¹⁸

The most curious and typically Japanese case is of *Okawa Ryuho*, the founder of newly founded Buddhist sect *Kofukuno Kagaku*, Science of Happiness, which claims that it has 3 million of followers.

He claims that he is the reincarnation of Buddha and he was once possessed by the spirit of Jesus Christ. Furthermore he says in his book titled *Allāno Daiyogen* (Allāh's Great Prophecy), "Who is Allāh? ... In short, the one who *Muḥammad* called the God is Me Myself. ... the one Who made *Muḥammad* write *Qur'ān* is Me Myself."¹⁹

There appeared to be no reaction to his claim even from among Muslim Foreigners in Japan because it sounds quite natural in Japanese religio-cultural context.

As for Japanese academism, the most important work concerning the

¹⁶ 田中逸平(Tanaka Ippei)「イスラム巡礼白雲遊記(*Hakuun's Report of Islamic Pilgrimage*)」前嶋信次編(Maejima Shinji, ed.)「メッカ(Makkah)」Tokyo, 1975, pp.169-170.

¹⁷ 澤田沙葉(Sawada Şafā)『イスラーム案内(*Introduction to Islam*)』Tokyo, 1994, p.203.

¹⁸ 'Imād Naddāff(ed.), *al-Shaikh Aḥmad Kuftarū yataḥaddathu, Dār al-Rashīd*, Beirut, 1418-1997, pp.347-348.

¹⁹ 大川隆法(Okawa Ryuho)『アラーの大予言(*Allāh's Great Prophecy*)』Tokyo, 1991, p.17.

civilizational dialogue of Islam is late Prof. Dr. *Izutsu Toshihiko's magnum opus, Sufism and Taoism*(1966-67), which set research paradigms for comparative studies of Islam among Japanese Islamologists such as Prof. Dr. *Sachiko Murata* who published *The Tao of Islam*(1992).

16. Islam and Japan Today

Japan had no direct contact with Islam until Meiji(1968-1912) Era. That is why Muslim is still an absolute minority in Japan. The number of Muslim foreigners and of Japanese Muslims are roughly estimated 100,000 and 10,000 respectively, although the exact number is difficult to obtain due to the absence of reliable statistics from an official census or a central Islamic organization. They live almost neglected and unknown, so there has been little conflict between Muslims and Japanese society and they have little influence in it thus far.

But the situation is gradually changing now, and the first indicator of the change is the start of the Islamic Area Studies Project. Prof. Dr. Sato Tsugitaka, the team leader of the project says, "One attempt in coming to a better understanding of Muslims both in the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds, is the five-year project entitled Islamic Area Studies. This project has been planned under the aegis of the Japan Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, scheduled to begin in April 1997, and to continue through March 2002." (<http://www.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/IAS/HP-e2/neoproject.html>)

And the most important event in view of the civilizational dialogue of Islam was the initiative of *Kono Yohei*, ex-foreign minister of Japan, to establish an Islamic studies circle inside the ministry in 2000, one of the main pillars of which is promoting "the inter-civilizational dialogue with Islamic World".

Mr. *Kono* says, "I have always held the view that it is important for conducting Japan's foreign policy to deepen our understanding of Islam, which has more than one billion followers, representing one-fifth of the world's population, and which is increasing its influence in various parts of the world. For this reason, I established a Study Group on Islam, with support of Dr. *ITAGAKI Yuzo*, sitting beside me today, and the Group recently issued a report.

While participating in the discussions of the Study Group, I have come to reinforce my wish to visit the Gulf countries, as soon as possible, which gave birth to Islam and formed a historically great civilization. Also, the United Nations designated the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It is exactly in such a meaningful year that I wished to realize my tour of dialogue with Islam." (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/fmv0101/fmspeech.html>)

Conclusion

In East Asia, Islam came through peaceful means without conquest by force, so the pattern of its Islamicization is different from *Khilāfah - Dār al-Islām* model.

And the civilizations in the region before the advent of Islam are dominated by Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism, which are all eclectic and inclusive rather than exclusive contrary to Western Civilization which is based on the Christianity.

So we can expect to open up new civilizational horizons through the civilizational dialogue between Islam and the East Asian Civilizations.