

احوز بلك من الشيطان الرجيم
بالحق اليه (الرحمان الرحيم)

What can Muslims and Japanese learn each other ?

Arabic Islamic Institute

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① I suppose you (most of you, or all of you, I should say) get the strong and unpleasant impression that the Japanese are not interested in Islam at all. Much to my regret, in fact, the Japanese mostly have no interest in Islam.

The Japanese, however, are not interested in Islam, not because they dislike it, but simply because they have no real knowledge of it. The information on Islam ever given to the Japanese is very superficial. If you ask an average Japanese, for instance, "What do you know about Islam?", he (or she) may answer in this way, "Well, let me see, a kind of religion, and well, let me see, I don't know more."

Another may answer in this way, "Alcohol as well as pork is forbidden, but four wives are given instead." Others will give you more or less the same answers.

They have no real knowledge of Islam. To make matters worse, they appear to be uninterested in religion itself.

I have given lectures on Islamic History at a Japanese college for 25 long years. Even the college students who ought to be eager for new knowledge appear to have the same mental tendency.

② I will show you some questionnaire about religion in Japan. This was conducted by the Asahi on the 5th. May '81.

Question : What is your religion ?

Answer

* Buddhism.....27%

* Shinto.....4%

- * Buddhism and Shinto.....2%
- * Christianity.....2%
- * Other religions.....1%
- * No religion.....62%
- * (No answer).....2%

Question to the above Buddhists

: Do you fulfill daily Buddhistic duties ?

- Answer * Yes.....67%
- * No.....33%

Question to the above No-religionists

: Do you believe in something great which is beyond the human being ?

- Answer * Yes.....55%
- * No.....45%

③ The above-mentioned questionnaire tells us:

- (a) The Japanese mostly have no interest in any ready-made religions.
- (b) Nevertheless, they have some kind of religious mind.
{ No human being can live as a human being without any religious mind. The statistics above justify this. }

④ Something great which is beyond the human being.

- * The Japanese tend to grasp such a SOMETHING as NATURE.
- * According to the Japanese religious mind,
 - (a) The NATURE gave birth to human being, animals, and plants, etc.
 - (b) So, human being returns to the NATURE after death.

- (c) The NATURE is eternal. The life coming from IT and returning to IT is short.
- (d) It is most desirable that one can succeed in getting a sense of harmony, or a sense of some spiritual union with the NATURE.
- (e) An example :

MATSUO BASHO (1644-'94). He was a great travelling poet, a most passionate lover of nature....a kind of nature troubadour. His life was spent in travelling from one end of Japan to another. " Haiku ", the shortest possible form of poetical expression, the seventeen syllable poem, made a great development after him.

古池や	蛙飛び込む	水の音
FURUIKEYA	KAWAZUTOBIKOMU	MIZUNOOTO

An old pond,
 a frog jumps into the water,
 hear the sound !

{ Japanese poets tend to use the fewest words to express their feelings. When too fully expressed, no room for suggestion is possible. Suggestibility is the essence of the Japanese poems." }

That sound is not mere low noise for BASHO. Like as thunder is not mere loud noise, but "thunder hymns His praise.....(Surah 13.14)" for muslims, so, that sound does something for BASHO, for the Japanese.

よく見れば	なずな花咲く	垣根かな
YOKUMIREBA	NAZUNAHANASAKU	KAKINEKANA

When I look carefully,
I see the NAZUNA blooming,
by the hedge !

In this poem NAZUNA (a kind of flower) is not mere one object of seeing. Like as BASHO is one subject, so NAZUNA is one subject, too.

Like as "the birds praise Allah in their flight... (Surah 24.41)", {in this manner, the birds are subjects practising TASBIH}, so NAZUNA actively does something by blooming.

[I am never saying that Islam and the Japanese worship of NATURE are same. Such a view is just ridiculous.]

⑤ Nature is the very bridge that connects muslims and Japanese.

- * There are, as you know well, many beautiful Surahs which mention natural objects and phenomena in The Quran. For instance, Surah 13.16 (15, Flugel), Surah 24.41, 43, Surah 45.3~ , Surah 88.17~20, etc.
- * The above-mentioned inclination of the Japanese suggests that they are ready to accept Islam.
- * When you Muslims teach us Japanese Islam, please mention those sublime and beautiful Surahs with regard to nature. And please don't mention alcohol and pork so much.

Thank you for your kind interest,

To me

السلمى