

## The History of the Islamic Cultural Center Osaka

During the 1920's the Muslim community of Kansai, consisting of Arab and Indian businessmen embassy staff, and many Turkish immigrants was concentrated in Kobe. They built Kobe Mosque in 1935. Many left during WWII, the embassies were closed, and after the war the businessmen, unable to compete with the new 'Japan Incorporated', returned to their homelands. Today, some of the most active Muslims in Japan are students from Muslim lands. These international students established the first regular Friday prayer in Osaka at Osaka University, Suita Campus.

In the early 1990's, the Osaka Muslim Association (OMA) composed of these students, together with a few businessmen and prominent Japanese Muslims established a committee and opened the Islamic Culture Foundation Osaka (ICFO) bank account for the purpose of gathering donations to purchase some land for a mosque in Osaka. The search began for a suitable location in the city center. However, the high cost of land was prohibitive. Finally in 2005 they decided to find a large family house, which could be bought with the funds available and would immediately provide them with a usable facility.

In November 2005, they were fortunate to find an almost new house located near to Osaka University Suita campus, JICA, and Toyokawa monorail station. This site was ideal as a permanent location for the members of Osaka Muslim Association (OMA), who had given so much time, energy, and charity to the project. As their existing prayer room at the university was too small, and restrictions had been placed on its use, these Muslim families were in great need of a place to pray, meet, and study Islam.

On 12<sup>th</sup> December 2005, a company (*chukan bojin*) called Islamic Cultural Center Osaka ICCO, was set up, a committee was appointed, and an agreement to buy the property for 32 million yen was signed. The balance of donations collected so far was 14 million yen, leaving the ICCO committee and OMA to raise the outstanding amount by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2006. With the help of MSAJ, emissaries were sent to various locations in Japan, and collection boxes were filled by the generous hands of the Muslim population of Japan, may Allah grow their reward for them in Paradise. The success of this project is due to Allah and the wonderful help which was extended by the brothers and sisters of MSAJ. Fortunately, after the contract was completed on the morning of Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup> 2006, there was enough money left to build a wudhu area and extra toilets.

### Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony, lead by Imam Mohsen of Kobe Mosque, began after the sunset prayer on Saturday evening, 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Special guests included representatives of Kobe Mosque, Tokyo Mosque, OMA and MASJ. The opening party on Sunday afternoon, April 23<sup>rd</sup> was a relaxed, family affair to which local city officials, local police representatives, and the new neighbors were invited.

The center has provided not only a place for prayer but also a place for the Muslim community to meet, exchange information and plan and carry out da'wa related activities. Muslim missionaries and lecturers sponsored by WAMY have visited from Japan and abroad

The community is growing steadily as more of the students from the university begin to use the facilities, and we hope that future visitors planning to stay in Osaka will take up residence in vicinity. Our greatest hope is that the number of Japanese visitors to our center will increase, and that they will enjoy the warmth of Muslim hospitality and be attracted to Islam.

We have maintained cordial relations with local authorities and the local police department, who first introduced us to the local community and continue to help us in many ways. At the Eids the parking area is closed to cars and used to accommodate the extra worshippers. The neighbors and the local city hall have kindly allowed us use of their parking facilities at these busy times and we in return try to show them the good manners and hospitality of Islam.

### Registration as a Religious Organization

In June 2008, ICCO applied to Osaka Prefectural Government for registration as a religious organization. This will make it possible to raise money to extend the mosque and protect the property for future generations. Documents related to accounting and activities are submitted every three months, and the process takes three years.

### Change of Legal Status

In accordance with the new Japanese Company Law introduced in December, 2008, the status of *chukan bojin* Islam Bunka Center Osaka was officially changed to *shadan bojin* Islam Bunka Center Osaka.

### Future developments

Our community is growing, and we need to reform the mosque to make a larger place for prayer. We depend on Allah and are in need of your generous donations to cover the running expenses of the center and insha'Allah, to complete this important new project, which will cost about 1.5 million yen. In addition, the land next door to our Center is on sale for 10 million yen. This will expand our land by 50% and make it possible to build the first purpose built mosque in Osaka, insha'allah.

### Donations

Please send your donations to this project to Islam Bunka Center:

- Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ Ltd. 0005, Semba Chuo Branch 521, Account 1332958
- Post Office Account: 14090 34979761