

By Abdul Seifullah
OAKLAND, Calif.—Slightly less than two years ago a short, stocky elderly man with a distinguishable neatly trimmed gray beard appeared on the podium with the Honorable Wallace D. Muhammad at a regional meeting of the Emam's followers in Los Angeles.

"This man is an old and dear friend of the family's," Emam Muhammad explained. Whenever you see him, give him your utmost respect and aid him whenever possible."

That occasion provided the first meeting for many Muslims of the World Community of Al-Islam in the West (W.C.I.W.) with Professor Muhammad Abdullah, Emam, Islamic scholar, teacher and long-time propagator of the Islamic faith. Additionally, he appeared with Emam Muhammad last August as one

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of the featured speakers at the Spiritual Life Jubilee in Atlanta.

Last winter, at the request of Emam Muhammad, his long-time friend and former instructor was appointed to the official capacity of Emam of the Oakland Masjid and of the entire San Francisco Bay Area. In a Bilalian News interview, he reflected upon life in Al-Islam, his friendship with the Honorable Wallace D. Muhammad and his father, the Honorable Master Elijah Muhammad (peace be upon him) and upon the spread of Al-Islam.

"My work in Islam I inherited from my mother's side," he explained. "For four and five generations, they were the hafis of the Quran; they were the physicians and they were the Emams. So directly or indirectly I inherited the interest."

As a young boy in the small village of Ahsanpur, Pakistan, Emam Abdullah took an interest in Islamic studies and, along with other students, wrote a pamphlet on the life of Prophet Muhammad.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

"Since my father was a schoolteacher he wanted me to be a teacher. So after completing secondary school I went to an Islamic college and got my training and then I started teaching.

"When the Muslims in the Fiji Islands wanted a teacher to teach Arabic, assist in the propagation of Islam and to take care of the school, I offered my services and taught there for 28 years. All of my children were born there and my eldest son was the first student from there to come to the United States for an education," he said.

During a visit with his son, a student at the University of California at Berkeley in 1955, he met

Emam Muhammad Abdullah: Propagator of Al-Islam

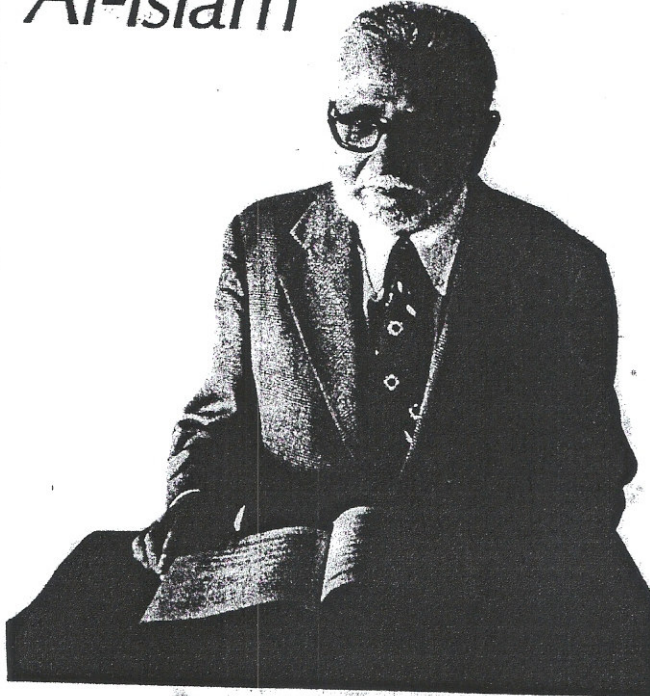


Photo by Saadat Ahmad

for the first time Muslim followers of the Honorable Master Elijah Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the Nation of Islam.

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Shortly thereafter, having moved to the United States, Emam Abdullah had accepted a position at an Islamic center in Philadelphia when he learned that the son of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was a minister at another center in the city.

"So I called him without consulting the director of the center, Emam Wallace D. Muhammad answered the telephone and I told him that I had corresponded with his father and wished to meet him. He was vague.

"So I called him again—he didn't refuse. He said he would call me back but he didn't call. So I called him once more for the third time and this time he invited me for dinner. We talked and when I came to know that he already knew Arabic, I got him interested in the Urdu language. In Urdu we have very rich literature in Islam."

His new student proved to be very bright and conscientious. "I was amazed that there was no difference in his accent, articulation or enunciation," Emam Abdullah said.

psychology of the people.

"But he had studied the psychology of the Bilalian people. There were other Muslims who were in this spirit too from Pakistan and other areas. But they had not studied the psychology of the people, though they spent a lot of money. So they were not successful.

"But Elijah Muhammad knew the psychology of the people. He had no racial hatred as people think. He had the same love for Muslims in the Eastern part of the world as other Muslims had."

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad confided in Emam Abdullah that he was not against the five pillars of Al-Islam and other Islamic principles.

"He said, 'I want my followers to pray five times a day. I want them to fast during the month of Ramadan. But if I overload them they will run away.' He said he just wanted his followers to call themselves Muslims, to introduce the word Islam to them and to point them toward the Holy Quran.

"Now there is no doubt that during the time of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, the intelligent people in Muslim countries respected him because we respect a person living in another part of the world who does even a little thing for the cause of Islam.

"And those who were intelligent respected him and admired him because he introduced the word 'Islam,' he introduced the name 'Muhammad,' and he introduced the Holy Quran. He was a Muslim. If he were not respected he would not have received any financial aid from Libya, which is a very staunch Muslim country. He would not have been invited or respected in Pakistan.

SELF-IMPOSED ERROR

"Yes, there were some Muslims who thought he claimed to be a prophet but he never taught that revelations came to him and for his followers not to follow the Quran, and I have never seen Muslims worshipping Master Fard Muhammad.

"He was tackling the situation according to the need of the times to

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"I told him that he was the only person that, the community could look to because of his education in Islam. I told him that if the leadership were taken by any other person the result would be the same as what happened in the Moorish Movement because of the lack of proper leadership.

"So when I heard that Emam Muhammad was appointed the new leader at the passing of his father, I was very happy."

Reflecting on the work of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and his struggle to elevate Bilalian people, Emam Abdullah said others had tried the same thing but failed because they didn't understand the

teach a message to Christians. He said to them that since you accept man as the son of God, come to me and I'll show you the father."

Emam Abdullah said the Honorable Wallace D. Muhammad has done much work to make clear to his followers the symbolic teachings of his father. He said the work of Emam Muhammad has attracted the respect and admiration of Muslims from throughout the Islamic world.

"I believe the time is soon coming when you will need more missionaries from here in the United States, not from Pakistan and Egypt. The world will need missionaries from here.