

**Sword as a Cultural Symbol or Weapon of Violence in Islam:
An analysis**

Pedang Sebagai Simbol Budaya atau Senjata Keganasan Dalam Islam: Satu Analisis

Muhamad Mumtaz Ali*, & Muneer Kuttiyani Muhammed**

Abstract

Orientalists like Washington Irving and Wilfred Cantwell Smith coined the idea and spread through their virulent writings that Islam spread through sword. This notion has been once again circulating in the media immediately after the incident of 9/11. Orientalists appear to have been uncomfortable with this allegation as they knew very well that political subjugation of people by sword was possible but winning over the hearts of the people by force was impossible. Historically, the Prophet's (s.a.w.) achievement was the total transformation of man individually as well as socially from all angles, familial, social, economic, cultural, intellectual, educational, moral, political, and spiritual etc. Many well-known scholars have already rebutted the allegation concerning sword of Islam. This paper looks into another dimension of the significance of sword in Arab culture. It tries to trace the socio-cultural value of sword in the history of Arabian Peninsula.

Keywords: Islam, sword, Prophet Muhammad, propagation, Orientalists, allegations.

Abstrak

Para orientalis seperti Washington Irving dan Wilfred Cantwell Smith mereka dan merebak melalui tulisan mereka bahawa Islam disebarkan melalui pedang. Idea ini sekali lagi diungkit media selepas berlakunya kejadian 9/11. Para orientalis kelihatan tidak selesa dengan dakwaan ini kerana mereka tahu bahawa penaklukan politik rakyat

* Professor in the Department of Usuluddin and Comparative Religion, IIUM.

** Research Assistant, Department of Usuluddin and Comparative Religion, IIUM.

melalui pedang adalah mungkin tetapi untuk memenangi hati rakyat dengan kekerasan adalah mustahil. Dari segi sejarah, pencapaian Nabi Muhammad (saw) adalah transformasi keseluruhan manusia secara individu dan juga secara sosial dari semua sudut seperti kekeluargaan, sosial, ekonomi, budaya, intelektual, pendidikan, moral, politik, rohani dan lain-lain. Banyak ulama yang terkenal sudah menyangkal dakwaan mengenai penyebaran Islam melalui pedang.. Kajian ini meneliti kepada satu lagi dimensi kepentingan pedang dalam budaya Arab. Ia juga cuba mengesan nilai sosio-budaya pedang dalam sejarah Semenanjung Arab.

Kata Kunci: Islam, Pedang, Nabi Muhammad, Penyebaran, Para Orientalis, Dakwaan.

Introduction

Effort has been made by some Western historians and writers over the years to introduce some cultural symbols of Arabia such as the use of sword as the symbols of intolerance and violence, arguing that they are rooted in the philosophy of Islam. Although Muslim scholars and writers in the past have responded and refuted such claims and allegations of writers like Washington Irving¹ and Wilfred Cantwell Smith,² it appears that some of the socio-cultural aspects of Arabs at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) seem to have not been sufficiently analyzed in those responses. It is also likely that some incidents which took place in the life

¹ Washington Irving (1783 – 1859) was an American author, essayist, biographer, historian and diplomat of the early 19th century. He is best known for his short stories "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820), both of which appear in his book *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*. His historical works include biographies of George Washington, Oliver Goldsmith and Muhammad. *Muhammad and his successors* is a well written historical treaty in general but some principles of Islam and certain aspects of prophetic life have misrepresented or not accounted well.

² Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000) was a notable Canadian scholar in Comparative Religion who encouraged dialogue and the interchange of ideas between faiths. He earned a doctorate in Islamic studies from Princeton University in 1948, and in 1949 he began teaching at McGill University, Montreal, where he founded the Institute of Islamic Studies. He recruited Muslim scholars and students to the faculty and graduate student body, involving them in a joint venture of scholarship formerly carried on largely by Western orientalis. *The Meaning and End of Religion* is his best known and controversial work.

of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) also need to be examined properly through a particular point of view in order to prove such allegations as baseless.

Allegation of Washington Irving

One of the main charges the Western writers have labeled against Islam is that it was spread all over the world by the use of sword. Such writings of orientalist have made negative impact on Western readers to a certain extent which causes a kind of fear in the minds of common people. It seems that a biased approach and self-created misconception prevented them to approach Islam neutrally and objectively. Washington Irving concludes for example in his famous book *Mohamet and His Successors* by saying that Islam spread over the world due to its forcible conversion. He writes:

The belief in predestination by Muslim as part of their six articles of faiths made them fanatics to wage war against the non-believers. The sixth and last article of the Islam faith is PREDESTINATION, and on this Mahomet³ evidently reposed his chief dependence for the success of his military enterprises. He inculcated that every event had been pre-determined by God, and written down in the eternal tablet previous to the creation of the world. That the destiny of every individual and the hour of his death were irrevocably fixed, and could neither be varied nor evaded by any effort of human sagacity or foresight. Under this persuasion the Moslems engaged in battle without risk; and, as death in battle was equivalent to martyrdom, and entitled them to an immediate admission into paradise, they had in alternative, death or victory, a certainty of gain.⁴

His attractive narrative style in the story of Ripwan Wrinkle could possibly be enough to impress the whole western readers admirably and for having a negative impression about Islam. And thus, the English

³ In the early writings of westerners, Mahomet has been used in place of Muhammad.

⁴ *Islamic Civilization and western orientalist, Irving and Islamic Determinism*, <http://www.islam4theworld.net/sirah/LifeMuhammadS/37B.%20islamic_civilization%20wes.htm> viewed March 12, 2015.

speaking readers took his writings on the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and Islam as granted. He repeats that Islam subdued other religions by force. The tendency to force non-believers to accept Islam is inherent in the very nature of this religion.⁵

Wilfred Cantwell Smith and others

Wilfred Cantwell Smith came up with a different allegation. He portrayed the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) as a man of violence: "Muhammad preached Islam with a sword in one hand and Qur'an in the other."⁶ All these apprehensions of these scholars have led the common people to believe Islam as the religion of violence. The series of deliberate misinterpretation about Islam and its Prophet (s.a.w.) still continue, particularly after the Pope Benedict XVI stirred a huge controversy in September 2006 by his irresponsible remarks reiterating old Christian accusations against the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).⁷ "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached".⁸

A Western writer writes; to say that Islam is a religion of peace is not true. Islam is committed to war, both by the example of Muhammad, who fought on until he subdued Mecca and then other tribes, and by the Qur'an teachings supported by numerous passages in the Hadith.⁹

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ David D. Grafton, "Conquest and Violence: The Christian critique of Muhammad", *Consensus*, Vol. 35, Iss.1 (2014): 3.

⁷ Pope Benedict XVI was giving a lecture at the University of Regensburg in Bavaria, when he quoted Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos' exclamation: Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.

⁸ Abdel Wahab El-Affendi, *About Muhammad the Other Western Perspective on the Prophet of Islam A Short Anthology of Western Writings on the Prophet Muhammad: From the 18th century to the Present*. (Surrey: Legacy Publishing Ltd, 2013), XV.

⁹ Abdul Maseeh, "Islam is a Violent Religion" in *Introducing issues with opposing viewpoints: Islam* edited by Luari S. Friedman, (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2006), 22.

Western Writers Themselves Refute the Allegations

Some western writers who have studied Islamic history objectively have unequivocally refuted that Islam spread over the world by sword. Although some early Western historians advanced such claims, more recent studies have shown that conversions did not happen suddenly at the point of the sword, but people living alongside Muslims gradually and voluntarily accepted the faith. Indeed, it is as the orientalist George Sale said: “I shall not here inquire into the reasons why the law of Mohammad has met with so unexampled a reception in the world for they are greatly deceived who imagine it to have been propagated by the sword alone, or by what means it came to be embraced by nations which never felt the force of the Mohammedan arms..”¹⁰

The noted historian De Lacy O’Leary wrote: “History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.”¹¹

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation of India, once said, “I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place in Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and his own mission.”¹² Another famous European writer, Thomas Carlyle, said: “Much has been said of Mahomet’s propagating his religion by the sword. It is no doubt far nobler what we have to boast of the Christian Religion, that it propa-

¹⁰ George Sale, The Koran: “Commonly called the Alkoran of Mohammed” in *About Muhammad the Other Western Perspective on the Prophet of Islam* edited by Abdelwehab El-Effendi, (Surrey: Legacy Publishing Ltd), 2.

¹¹ De Lacy O’Leary, *Islam at the Crossroads*, (London: Kagan), 8.

¹² Syed Ashraf Ali, *Gandhi and Islam*, <<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=25987>> viewed on 22nd April 2015.

gated itself peaceably in the way of preaching and conviction. Yet withal, if we take this for an argument of the truth or falsehood of a religion, there is a radical mistake in it.”¹³

Before we present a historical analysis, it seems imperative to examine whether Islam inherently bears the factors of violence and intolerance to non-believers. For this purpose we will study some verses of the Qur’an and several sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

Islamic View on Preaching the Belief

It is hard to believe that the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) would do contrary to what he was commanded by Allah almighty. The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) proclaimed that he would adhere to God’s commandments. And contrary to forcing people to accept Islam, God explicitly prohibited forced conversion: “*There is no compulsion in faith*” (2:256).

There is an interesting event related to the revelation of this verse. A man, who was among the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.), had two sons who embraced Christianity before the emergence of the religion of Islam. The two sons came to Medina with a group of Christians, and at that time their father insisted that they both should become Muslims. However, they refused their father’s request and brought the matter to the Prophet (s.a.w.). The father asked, “Oh Prophet of Allah, how could part of me enter hell while I am watching?” It was then that God revealed the above verse forbidding any compulsion in religion.¹⁴ Thus, the man’s two sons were free to remain Christians. The Messenger of Mercy (*rahmatu li al-ālamīn*) did not force them to become Muslims according to their father’s wish.

¹³ Thomas Carlyle, “The Hero as Prophet: Mahomet” in *About Muhammad the Other Western Perspective on the Prophet of Islam* edited by Abdelwehab El-Effendi, (Surrey: Legacy Publishing Ltd), 14.

¹⁴ Wahbah bin Muṣṭafā al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Wasīṭ*, (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2001), 148.

In another verse, the Qur'an says: "*But had your Lord so willed, all who are on the earth would have believed in your message, each one of them and all of them together - will you then be the one to compel people so that they become believers, O Prophet?*" (10:99). All admit, even those who accuse the Prophet (s.a.w.) of forced conversions, that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was a God-fearing person who obeyed Him wholeheartedly in everything. How, then, can he violate these explicit divine commands?

The Prophet (s.a.w.) was extremely keen to convey God's message and to lead people to salvation since his mission was to direct the people to the guidance of the Creator. However, it does not mean that he forced people to do so. The Qur'an describes his eagerness: "*Would you, perhaps, torment yourself to death with grief over them if they are not willing to believe in this message?*" (18:6). There is no historical evidence to prove that he tried to convert people by force against their free will. The comprehensive biographical sketches written about the Prophet (s.a.w.) over the centuries are enough to prove this truth. From the very beginning of his mission, the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was instructed to use a friendly and polite approach to call people to Islam. "*Invite (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious*" (16:25)

Despite the violent opposition of the *Quraysh*,¹⁵ the Prophet (s.a.w.) proceeded to summon people peacefully to Islam, and the Muslims were further commanded, for prudential reasons, not to respond to the violence of the *Quraysh*. Louy M Safi points out: "Muslim pacifism during the Makkan period was a political choice to effect peaceful change and to protect the community from self-destruction."¹⁶

There are many verses in the Qur'an which demand believers to wage war. All these verses advise believers to repel military aggression, and fight oppression, brutality and injustice? Islam does not allow its fol-

¹⁵ *Quraysh* was the most powerful and influential tribe in Arabia in the seventh century. The Prophet (s.a.w.) was born into the *Hāshimī* clan of the *Quraysh*.

¹⁶ Louay M. Safi, *Peace and the Limits of War; Transcending the Classical Conception of Jihad* (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2003) 20.

lowers to resort to violence to either Muslims or non-Muslims. The only valid reason for war and fighting is to defend Islam and Muslims against those who declare enmity and war towards Islam.

One of the misunderstood verses of the Qur'an is from *Surah al-Tawbah* which explicitly declares that the Muslims are to fight the Polytheists until they embrace Islam: “*Slay the mushrikīn (polytheists) wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish salāh and pay zakāh, then open the way for them...*(9:5)

The word *mushrikīn* in the context indicates specifically to the Pagan Arabs. This verse is not applicable for all pagans in all time. The reason for this all-out war against the Pagan Arabs was their continual fight and conspiracy against the Muslims to turn them out of Madinah as they had been turned out of Makkah.¹⁷

The occasions where Islam ordained Muslim community to take the weapon have specific reasons.¹⁸ The stand of Islam is very clear from its teachings and history. The war itself in Islam is not for the sake of war as a writer pointed out: “Even at the time of using sword, we can describe it as surgeon’s lancet and not a butcher’s knife.”¹⁹

Partial Hadīth Quotation

The *hadīth*, “Paradise is under the shadow of the swords” on which the orientalist criticize Islam, is a small part of the original saying of the Prophet (s.a.w.). If someone reads the full text of the *hadīth*, he/she will never tempt to come to the conclusion that Islam promotes war. Here is the full text of what actually the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Do not look for a fight with the enemy. Beg God for peace and security. But if you do end

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ This issue is to be handled as an independent topic. Since this article focuses on Islam’s propagation and use of sword in this way, the researcher gives much emphasize on examining the use of sword in the propagation of Islam.

¹⁹ Clinton Bennett, *Muslim and Modernity; Current Debates*, (London: Continuum Books, 2005), 206,

up facing the enemy, then show endurance and remember that Paradise is under the shadow of the swords."²⁰

The full Hadith pretty much fits with the historical context and the character of the Prophet (s.a.w.), who was sent as a mercy to humanity, and cared so deeply about not just human beings, but animals and other creatures as well. He would always tried his best to maintain peace and avoid war, unless the enemy forced him to do otherwise. War was always a last resort forced upon the Muslims.

Sword in Arab life: from *Jāhiliyyah*²¹ (Ignorance) Period to 21st Century

Here the researchers would like to make a brief survey of the socio cultural place of sword in Arab life and its various usages and implications from the *Jāhiliyya* history to the present day.

The sword is the most widely-used weapon in the history of battles just behind the arrows and bows. The use of sword as a weapon started in battlefields 16-17 centuries before B.C.²² By the advent of gunpowder in the nineteenth century, the use of sword began to diminish gradually and in the later period it disappeared completely from the warfront.

Arabic language is believed to be the only language which has more synonyms for sword. It is assumed that the word sword has 300 synonyms.²³ It could be assumed that if a word possesses innumerable synonyms in a language, it is definitely due to its extensive use and its impact in the society. Sword was an integral part of Arabs in *Jāhiliyyah* where the sword was considered an element which played a vital role in

²⁰ al Bhukhāri, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (Damascus: Dār Tuq al Najāth, 2001), 479.

²¹ The Arabic term *Jāhiliyya* refers to pre-Islamic age or the age of ignorance.

²² Robbie Gonzalez, *A brief History of the ancient science of sword Making* <<http://io9.com/5831683/a-brief-history-of-the-ancient-science-of-sword-making>> viewed on May 11, 2015.

²³ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *al Maḥzar fī 'Ulūm al-Lughah wa Anwā'ihā*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2010), 203. Sword has about 300 different synonyms in Arabic language. Perhaps Arabic may be the only language which has more synonyms of sword than any other language.

both individual and social life. The Indian swords were imported to Arabia even before the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.). Arabs had a special inclination towards Indian Iron especially the swords made by Indian Iron.²⁴ More than a weapon, the sword has often been considered a symbol of status among the Arabs who decorated their swords with Gold and precious stones according to their higher positions in the society. It was hard to see an adult Arab without a sword on his person. It has been reported that, *Khabbāb bin al-Arat*, one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), was a blade-smith (man who makes weapons like sword) in *Jāhiliyya* period.²⁵ Undoubtedly, the Arabs accumulated and used the swords as artillery for battles. It does not, however, negate the possibility of its cultural manifestation. Its presence as a symbol of Arab culture continued in the Arabia alongside with camel, desert and palm tree for a long time. It was not only in Arabia but also in other societies during that period that people used sword in battles as well as in their personal life.

It seems that with the advent of Islam, the use of sword gradually decreased to less or to the minimum level. The early teachings of the Prophet (s.a.w.) stressed believers on holding the patience and keeping away from resorting to defense even the at the time pagan's severe persecution. The Muslims were granted permission to defend their enemy only after the thirteen years of persecutions.²⁶ Even at the time of defense Muslims were strictly prohibited to target women, children and elderly people. The use of weapons indiscriminately is prohibited. Muslims were allowed to use weapons for defense.²⁷ The Qur'an is quite unequivocal in this respect: "*Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, and do not transgress. Verily Allah does not like the transgressors.*"(2:190).

²⁴ Muḥyū al-Dīn al-'Alawī, *Al-Da'wa al-Islāmiya wa 'Atwāruhā fī shibhi al-Qārah al-Hindiyah* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1986), 93.

²⁵ Imād al-Dīn al-fidah Ismail bin Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, (Ghiza: Hajr li Tabāthi wa al-nnashr, 1997), 148.

²⁶ Niaz A Shah, "The Use of Force under Islamic Law" *The European Journal of International Law*, vol. 24, No. 1 (2013): 344.

²⁷ Ibid.

The sword in the life of modern Arabs namely among the people of Saudi Arabia has become a part of their cultural symbol. The Arab cultural and traditional programs such as martial arts are associated with swords. 19th Feb 2014, the Telegraph newspaper published the news that Prince Charles at the time of his visit to Saudi Arabia danced with Arab Rulers and officials wearing Arab traditional dress and wielding sword in his right hand as part of Saudi Arabia's national cultural program.²⁸ As part of Arab culture and tradition the old sword which is no longer significant in the current modern lifestyle of Arabs continue to remain as a traditional symbol like their traditional dress. The sword in the Saudi national Emblem is not manifested as a symbol of weapon to be used for violence but as a means of culture.

The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and Sword

It was very common for an Arab in the 7th century to own and carry at least a sword throughout his life. The sword was an inevitable item even in the life of the Prophet (s.a.w.) since it was an indispensable object in the common Arabian life just like other symbols such as camel and long robe. It has been reported that the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) had owned at least 9 swords in different names in his lifetime. And each one has different names and a sword in the name of *Dhu al-Faqār* was the most prominent one among them which has been repeatedly mentioned in the *Sunnah*.²⁹ *Al-Ma'thūr*, also known as "*Ma'thūr al-Fijār*" is the sword which was owned by the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) before he received his first revelations in Makkah.³⁰ *Al-Battār* was another sword of the Prophet.³¹

²⁸ Prince Charles dances with sword in Saudi Arabia, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/prince-charles/10648236/Prince-Charles-dances-with-sword-in-Saudi-Arabia.html>> viewed April 12, 2015.

²⁹ *The life of Prophet Muhammad, Swords of Prophet Muhammad*, <http://seerah.hpage.ms/swords-of-prophet-muhammad_33232366.html#.VSvjmfYXuQ> viewed on 13 April 2015

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Al-Battār* sword was taken by the Prophet Muhammad as booty from the *Banū Qaynuqā*. It is called the "sword of the Prophets" and is inscribed in Arabic with the

Had he used his swords to resort to violence or to kill anybody, he would have killed or offended at least 9 people by each of his sword. But we never see throughout his biography any incident that the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) killed or offended anyone except one. It was also in the battle of *Uhud*.³² It is noteworthy that he did it not by his sword but by a spear of one of his companions.

Despite the fact that there were many³³ battles with enemies of Islam, the Prophet (s.a.w.) hardly used his sword in wars. The Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) refused to resort to the sword and fighting unless it was necessary and unavoidable. The Prophetic approach to war can be better appreciated by looking at some figures. From a total of 28 battles and 38 campaigns, the total casualties from those wars, including both sides, amounted to approximately 1284 lives.³⁴ The death toll comparing to the number of wars is so little. Since the Muslims were the winners of the majority of these wars, they wanted not to kill others indiscriminately. The philosophy they bore in their mind prevented them to resort to violent attack on others.

Someone can argue that the reason for the decreased numbers of casualties is because of the smaller number of combatants that participated in the various campaigns. But a careful examination shows that the percentage of people killed in these wars relative to the number of the people who participated in them amounted to about 1.5 %.³⁵ Since the

names of David, Solomon, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Zechariah, John, Jesus, and Muhammad. It also has a drawing of King David when cut off the head of Goliath to whom this sword had belonged originally.

³² Ibn Khalaf was the only person who was killed by the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

³³ The number of wars in which Prophet was involved is a contended issue. During the time of the Prophet (S) government in Medina, Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), himself participated in 28 wars which are called *Ghuzwa*, and sent troops 54 times for different wars making someone else as a commander. These 54 wars are called Sareea and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not participate in them.

³⁴ Did Muhammad lead Numerous Wars that were Barbaric and Bloody?

< <http://mercyprophet.org/mul/node/3325>> viewed April 12, 2015.

³⁵ Ibid.

Messenger of Mercy was victorious in most of these battles, the numbers of casualties indicate that he is not to be counted among the ruthless and barbaric warlords, conquerors, and military generals of human history³⁶.

The Prophet Used Sword in a Constructive Way

If we look at the history of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), we can see how he used his sword in his life time. Since it was a custom of Arab, he must have always carried his sword along with him. But it does not mean that he used it for violence. He carried his sword to the *minbar* (pulpit) in the masjid to deliver Friday sermon. Following the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), Muslims even today practice the custom of holding sword in the Friday sermon in many places including Kerala in India. There are some occasions in the Prophet's life in which the Prophet (s.a.w.) disseminated Islam "using sword" as a mean of propagation. Let us examine how he did it.

Once, the Prophet (s.a.w.) was leading a military expedition. The enemy fled on receiving the news. They were not able to go very far because the area was hilly and had to seek refuge in a narrow pass or a valley. The head of the tribe climbed up the hill to survey the field. The Prophet (s.a.w.) and his companions were dispersed due to the rain that day. The Prophet (s.a.w.) lay down alone under a tree. He hung his shirt on a branch of the tree so that it would dry up. The enemy spotting him alone confronted him: "Who will save you from me, O Muhammad?" The Prophet was perfectly calm and replied: "Allah". The enemy was so overwhelmed with the monosyllable that his hand began to shake and the sword fell on the ground. The Prophet picked it up and asked: who will save you now from me? The enemy replied "Nobody." The Prophet (s.a.w.) returned his sword and forgave him.³⁷ The result was that the enemy immediately uttered the phrase affirming God's Unity and Muhammad's Messengership and embraced Islam. He returned to his tribe to

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Muhammad bin Bahraq, *Hadāiq al-Anwār wa Matāliga al-Asrār fi Sīrat al-Nabiy al-Mukhtār*, (Beirut: Dar al-Hāwī, 1998), 294.

preach it to others.³⁸ Here one can see the magnanimity of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who forgave his enemy. It was only because of his magnanimity that the enemy embraced Islam.

Once, a stranger came to the Prophet (s.a.w.) as a guest. He was given food and a place to sleep. He was in fact an enemy and came with bad intentions. Early in the morning he relieved himself in the bed and left before anyone woke up. When the Prophet (s.a.w.) saw the filth on the bed, he started washing the bed with his own hands. He noticed that the guest had inadvertently left his sword behind. The stranger recognized the fact that he was missing his sword after he covered a distance and returned to recover it. He had thought that the people would still be asleep and that he would quickly make away with the sword. But he saw the Prophet (s.a.w.) cleaning his bed with his own hands. Instead of cursing or threatening that person, the Prophet (s.a.w.) softly stated that he had forgotten his sword and could take it away. As a result of this treatment the stranger spontaneously said: "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah".³⁹

Conclusion

The allegations by some western writers against Islam and Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) are historically baseless and unfounded. Several prominent Western writers themselves refuted such claims after sufficiently examining and affirming the true history of Muhammad (s.a.w.) and Islam. The verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet (s.a.w.), which appear to have encouraged believers to resort to violence, were either taken out of context or partially quoted. Use of sword in Islam is against evils, corruption, oppression, injustice, wrongdoing, and unjust killing of innocent people.

³⁸ Muhammad Hamidullah, Translated by Afzal Iqbal, *The Emergence of Islam, Lectures on the Development of Islamic World-View, Intellectual Tradition and Polity*, (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1999), 263.

³⁹ Ibid.