

In the Name of Allāh, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Islamic Crescents' Observation Project (ICOP)

December 23, 2006

## **We Fasted Because of a Sighting of Mercury and We Performed Ḥajj Because of a Sighting of Venus**

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What happened at the announcement of the beginning of the month *Dū l-ḥijja* of this year 1427 deserves a discussing statement and an explanation of the scientific facts, as Saudi-Arabia announced a successful sighting of the crescent on Wednesday, 20 December 2006 according to the testimony of a number of respected witnesses. This is not for the first time that a sighting of the crescent is announced there when there was actually no moon in the sky! It is well known that an observation of the crescent is managed after sunset close to the location where the sun set, because the new crescent is always close to the sun, and if its sighting was successful, the next day would be the First of the days of the [new] month, and if not, the next day would be the completing [day of the previous month] and the new month would begin on the day following after it. But relating to the situation of the moon on Wednesday, the moon set already before sunset in all regions of the Islamic world, for example the moon set in Makka al-Mukarrama 13 minutes before sunset. How could those respected witnesses observe the crescent after sunset, when actually the moon had set already before sunset? An acceptance of such testimonies reveals nothing else but ignorance or disregard of the scientific constants, which have become clear today as undeniable facts, and as indication for their correctness there are numerous proofs that we [can] see every day. We don't blame the witnesses of the past *Ramaḍān*, although it was bad that they observed the planet Mercury and took it for the crescent. As for the month *Dū l-ḥijja*, [this time] the brilliant planet Venus stood in westerly direction after sunset in the same place where the new crescent would be standing. Accordingly, it looks as if we fasted because of a sighting of the planet Mercury, and we will perform the Ḥajj because of a sighting of the planet Venus! Is it not time now for the responsible persons to understand that the reference to the scientific data will disprove such wrong testimonies, and that it is the optimal method to act according to the *ḥadīṭ* of Allāh's messenger (*ṣallā-Llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*): "Don't fast until you sight the crescent, and don't break your fast until you sight it [again], and if it is covered from you then estimate it!" (Tradition by al-Buḥārīyy and by Muslim in a similar wording), instead of our fasting because of a sighting of this planet or that airplane! We don't simply quote hypotheses or unconfirmed (*ḡayr mu'akkad*) *aḥādīṭ*, as we already took part in official meetings to confirm crescent sightings in most states, and we were witnesses of what happens. How often a witness came and attested a sighting of the crescent, but after a discussion with him we discovered that he had seen the planet Venus! In another case, the smoke of jet airplanes was the crescent! Other than this, they sometimes even aroused our laughter, as one of them asked about the manner of similarity between these [celestial] bodies and the crescent. In fact, there is no manner of similarity between them at all, only if the observer doesn't know the characteristics of the crescent, he will become induced to believe that he observed the crescent only by his sighting of any bright body in the sky. If the one who discusses with the witnesses has knowledge about the basics of crescent sighting, he will be capable to know what this witness has observed. But if

the one who accepts the testimony is not familiar with the simple basics about the crescent, the problem will be lying therein and the error will occur!

To get back to the crescent of the month  $\text{Dū l-ḥijja}$ , Saudi-Arabia announced a sighting of the crescent in spite of moonset before sunset on Wednesday, and we ask ourselves: How could these testimonies become accepted in spite of the presence of striking proofs, whose accuracy nobody discusses except for an ignorant one, and which confirm an error in these testimonies? Why is a disregard of science taking place in this procedure? Are the responsible persons trying to inform us about their lack of confidence in the accuracy of the astronomical calculations? We are amazed to the utmost degree here, not on account of their doubt about the astronomical calculations, but on account of their lack of interest in becoming convinced of them. Because it does not demand any effort or any expenditure of time to become convinced of them, but it demands only the desire for it! Here we are and we challenge whether the times of moonset differ from the predetermined times, as the Exalted and Highest spoke: **“The sun and the moon run their appointed courses;”** (55:5) If sometimes we did not see the moon set on the first or second day of the month, about 25 days will remain offering the possibility for every doubting person to control by his own naked eye how the moon will set in exactly the predetermined minute. We are unrestrictedly ready to present the times of moonset for each and any region in the world to convince the doubting persons! It is a pity and a shame for us to discuss this problem in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, at a time when the West used the astronomical calculations and got with them to Mars and Venus, which we can see from Earth, and which some people take for the crescent! These are the times of moonset in Makka al-Mukarrama for the coming five days, so that they can control them and convince themselves of the error in beginning the month  $\text{Dū l-ḥijja}$ : Sunday, 24 December – 21:39; Monday – 22:39; Tuesday – 23:38; Wednesday – no moonset; Thursday – 00:37. Worst in it is some people’s claim that the astronomical calculations are always accurate – with the exception of the close period around the creation of the new moon. In the measure as this argument is ridiculous, the easier is its challenging. Because the times of an eclipse of the sun are predetermined to fractions of a second, and in fact we stood in the year 1999 at the time of the eclipse in front of a mass of participants, and the participants observed how the disc of the moon left the sun exactly in the predetermined second. The calculation of the moon’s position in the moment of conjunction was confirmed in its accuracy by the proof of its observation through each and every single person! In fact, the accuracy of the astronomical calculations was already better in the era of the Babylonians thousands of years ago, as the measure of error which some people ascribe to the calculations in our era of today.

It is worth mentioning that a sighting of the crescent [even] on Thursday in our region was connected with extreme difficulties, as six observers in the Emirates tried an observation of the crescent by means of a telescope, but only three out of the six saw it through the telescope, whereas not a single one saw it by naked eyes! This points at the difficulty in sighting the crescent even through a telescope on Thursday. If a sighting of the crescent by naked eyes had happened on Wednesday, this would have meant that it would have been sighted on Thursday by naked eyes with complete ease. But [on Thursday] in Saudi-Arabia seven observers reported that they could perform a sighting of the crescent only through a telescope, and not a single one saw it by naked eyes or by means of binoculars, whereas a sighting of the crescent only through binoculars happened in Iran and Kuwayt. In Algeria a sighting of the crescent through binoculars was possible for 14 observers, and a sighting by naked eyes was only possible for four of them.

Concerning the beginning of the month  $\text{Dū l-ḥijja}$ , the majority of states followed the announcement of Saudi-Arabia, whereas a number of states announced the beginning of the month  $\text{Dū l-ḥijja}$  to be on Friday, 22 December, and the  $\text{Īd}$  of Sacrifice will be on Sunday, 31

December in these states. Among these states are: Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Turkey, Iran, and the Kingdom of Morocco; whereas Pakistan announced that the beginning of the month *Ḍū l-ḥijja* is on Saturday, 23 December because of the lack of a successful sighting of the crescent on Thursday there. This is correct because a sighting of the crescent in Pakistan on this day was only [possible] with extreme difficulties and by means of a telescope. A clear error should be pointed out still, which propagated until some people accepted it as an undeniable fact, namely the necessity to follow Saudi-Arabia in the month *Ḍū l-ḥijja* with regard of the *Ḥajj*. This is not correct, neither under a logical nor a scientific aspect, and also not under [an aspect of] *Šarī'a*. Because what is concerning the *Ḥajj* pilgrim who is going to Saudi-Arabia, he is obliged to what Saudi-Arabia announced him. But what is concerning the date of the *Īd of Sacrifice* in the Islamic states, it is valid since the era of the Messenger (*ṣallā-Llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*) that all regions perform their [own] sighting, this is because of the impossibility of communication between the regions far from each other, which became possible only since the past 50 to 100 years! A situation which confirms the invalidity of this hypothesis occurs when the crescent is not sighted in Saudi-Arabia, while it is sighted in the western regions. It is well known that a sighting of the crescent becomes easier the more we move to the West. Will the Kingdom of Morocco, for example, neglect a sighting of the crescent there, and not begin the month, [only] because of the lack of a successful sighting of the crescent in Saudi-Arabia? Of course not, as this is unacceptable in every respect! When a question about this problem [was directed] to *Šayḥ Ibn 'Uṭaymīn (rahimahu-Llāh)*, he confirmed the lack of necessity in following Saudi-Arabia, as well for the month *Ḍū l-ḥijja* just as for the other months. He said in his fatwā of 15 *Rabī'u l-awwal* 1421 AH literally: “The crescent is different in its *maṭālī'* between one country and another, in the *Ramaḍān* and in the other [months], and the decision is one for all [months]...” The question was: “We already informed ourselves about the fatwā of Your Eminence in the book '*Fatāwā islāmiyya*', that a sighting of the crescent in one country doesn't oblige the [other] countries to its decisions. Is this also valid for a sighting of the crescent of the *Īd of Sacrifice* (of the month *Ḍū l-ḥijja*)?”

We don't invoke it and we don't wish to be in contradiction with certain states, and we [don't] demand the disagreement of the Islamic states when beginning the months, but if we want to get to the adoption of the principle of unity of the *maṭālī'*, then it will have to be on the basis of a correct sighting, and not a sighting of whose error we are convinced! The Exalted spoke: “... but rather help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness, and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity;” (5:2)



A picture of the crescent of the month Ḍū l-ḥijja through a telescope, as it was seen by the observers in Saudi-Arabia on Thursday, 21 December

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Qur'ān verses cited from the translation of Muḥammad Asad