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ABOUT ISLAM IN JAPAN  
SOME INFORMATION AND SOME PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS  
FROM THE FIELD,  
ESPECIALLY REGARDING DIALOGUE  
BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ISLAM IN JAPAN

**SUMMARY:** Islam arrived in Japan only during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but seems to have started spreading rapidly during the last 30 years. About nine-tenths of the (approximately) 120,000 Muslims presently living in Japan, however, are immigrants, the majority of whom reside there on a temporary basis. Because of this fact, Islam is still perceived as something foreign to Japan. A greater interaction is necessary with Japanese society in general and with other religious traditions present in the country in particular. The article examines the present state of such "interreligious dialogue", taking in consideration, in particular, dialogue between the Catholic Church and Muslims in Japan, offering some information and reflections from actual experience on the field.

The present article does not purport to offer a detailed history or to give an exhaustive social analysis of the actual situation of Islam in Japan. Instead, it offers some reflections on the rapidly growing presence of Islam in this country during these recent years, on the challenges and opportunities Islam offers to the Japanese society at large, and especially on the challenges and opportunities Islam offers to the Catholic Church, in search of a dialogue that may bring both religious traditions to a better mutual knowledge and, possibly, to some form of cooperation for the good of the whole Japanese society in the near future.

*A summary historical introduction*

The presence of Islam in Japan is a recent event. Individual contacts with relevant consequences between some Japanese and the Islamic world began to occur only in the

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