

Islam in Japan: From Confinement to Muslim-Friendly

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Abstract

Islam is a minority religion in Japan. The development of religions originating from outside Japan experienced a vacuum during the closure of Japan in the Tokugawa era. However, the Meiji Restoration and the United States occupation of Japan after the Second World War brought about a mental revolution in Japan, leading to the acceptance of new values and diversity. The growth of Islam globally has also influenced the development of Islam in Japan. This article aims to explain the development of Islam in Japan up to contemporary times. The research is historical and the sources were collected through library research. The data sources for this research include news, reports, statistics, journal articles, and books about Islam and its history in Japan. The analysis process uses a social history approach. The research indicates that Islam began to develop its preaching after opening up, the United States revolution, and the 1973 oil crisis. Japan has developed positive relations with Muslim countries by protecting Muslims in practicing their worship and embracing their beliefs. The global growth of Muslims has also encouraged Japan to develop halal tourism, which has become a popular issue in the contemporary era. However, the Japanese government does not want to interfere in the issue of religious education, as it is separate from formal school matters. Additionally, the availability of Muslim burial grounds is still constrained due to cultural differences.

Keywords: Development, history, Islam, Japan, Muslim minority

Introduction

Each country has a unique history of Islam's development, including Japan. The Islamic community in Japan is still considered a minority group since Islamic teachings arrived in Japan much later than Buddhism and Catholicism, only around the end of the 19th century AD. Japan isolated itself from foreign influence during the Tokugawa era for 250 years before the Meiji restoration. As a result, Japanese society was slow to interact with Islamic teachings. This was due to the political and religious interests of the empire, which aimed to avoid being influenced by foreign values. The empire's isolationist policies began in the 17th century AD. The Meiji restoration in the 19th century marked a turning point for Japan, as it opened up to new values and ways of thinking. Political and trade relations with the Ottoman Empire, Arab traders, and Muslim traders from Southeast Asia in the 19th century AD were the initial stages of Islamization in Japan. The process of Islamisation continued during the First and Second World Wars, and persisted even after the phenomenon of the World Oil Crisis. Opportunities for Islamic da'wah increased after the 1973 Oil Crisis. The Middle East, which was the world's oil supplier at the time, caught the attention of the Japanese government for establishing cooperation. This had an impact on the development of Islamic preaching in 20th century Japan.

During the 20th century, Islam developed in Japan, as demonstrated by the emergence of numerous Islamic organizations. One such organization was the Japan Muslim Association, which was the first organization founded by native Japanese people. Other organizations that followed include the International Islamic Center, Islamic Center Japan, Islamic Culture Society-Japan, and Japan Islamic Congress. These organizations are responsible for carrying out Islamic da'wah in Japan. Islamic da'wah in Japan was also initiated by students. Those who have established their religious knowledge usually form an Islamic missionary community and preach Islam in major Japanese cities such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, and Hiroshima. The development of Islam in Japan is progressing, although not rapidly. The process of Islamization and the provision of Islamic facilities are starting to accelerate.

Studying the history of Islam's development in Japan and its minority communities is intriguing. Japanese Muslims live in a country with advanced technological skills and prowess, which often leads to atheism. It is important to note that this text is a fragment and does not provide any further context. Japanese Muslims live in a country with advanced technological skills and prowess, which often leads to atheism. Based on the

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latest findings in 2022, new religions associated with science and political parties have been discovered. One such religious organization is 'Happy Science', which reportedly has 200,000 to 300,000 followers. Another is SGI (Soka Gakkai International), whose exact number of followers is not yet known. SGI is a major supporter of one of Japan's main political parties, Komeito. Islam, along with another new religion, is included in the 1% minority 'religious' group.¹ This article aims to explain the development of Islam in Japan from the era when it was closed until it opened again, and its significant contemporary developments.

Methods

The research employed the historical research method, which consists of four stages: heuristics or source collection, source criticism, interpretation or analysis, and writing.² Source collection was interviews with people who had lived and visited Japan as well as literature studies. The library sources consist of news about the development of Islam in contemporary Japan, report documents on statistics and conditions of religious groups in Japan, then journal articles and books about Islam and its history in Japan. The validity of the sources is tested through external and internal criticism, followed by synthesizing the facts obtained through historical explanation. The analysis process employs a social history approach, which is a method of examining historical phenomena that reflects the social life of a community or group. This approach encompasses various aspects of human life.³ There are two models of the social history approach for explaining social change. First, the historical evolution model, for example, (1) bureaucratic changes: traditional, colonial and national; (2) class changes: upper class, middle class and lower class; (3) change of location: village, city and metropolitan; (4) changes in education: Islamic boarding schools, madrasas and schools. The historical power model, which includes religion and modernization, penetration of other religions, creative personality, and post-industrial society, is employed as a framework.⁴ The research examines the development of Islam in Japan, influenced by immigrants and local residents who converted to Islam. It uses sociological theories to analyze historical events. The resulting history is written with attention to chronological aspects.

Social Conditions of Japanese Society

Regarding religious beliefs, it was previously known that Japanese people could practice multiple religions simultaneously. This practice continued even after Christianization following World War II, with some individuals incorporating teachings and worship from up to three different religions. This phenomenon is still observable in contemporary Japanese society, where individuals may have wedding ceremonies according to Shinto traditions, celebrate Christian holidays, and hold funeral processions in accordance with Buddhist customs. In rural Japanese households, one can find Shinto worship equipment, but some also attend church.⁵ This is influenced by the Japanese culture of etiquette ideology, which emphasizes the importance of behaving well in social relationships with oneself, neighbors, co-workers, and nature. According to the Editor of JIL Indonesian Edition (2006) and Syahraeni (2017) some individuals may consider it taboo or shameful to perform religious rituals regularly, yet they exhibit unkind behaviour towards other living beings.⁶

The impact of Japan's post-World War II industrial and technological development on Japanese society is reflected in the phenomenon of religion not being the primary factor in shaping its identity. Modern Japanese life, particularly urbanization and industrialization, has led to a greater focus on non-religious matters.⁷ The Japanese government does not control religious affairs. According to a 2018 survey by NHK, 62% of Japanese people do not follow any religion, while 31% identify as Buddhist, 3% as Shinto, 1% as Christian, and 1% as Other. The remaining respondents did not provide an answer.⁸ The challenge of obtaining precise figures is attributed to the disparity between the Japanese government's stance and that of Japanese society on the status of religious beliefs. The Japanese government delegates religious affairs to its citizens, resulting in infrequent religious population censuses and limited availability of accurate data. This is because of

¹ Japan Luggage Express (2022), *Agama-agama dan persentase di Jepang*, accessed Februari 1, 2024, <https://www.jluggage.com/blog/id/agama-agama-dan-persentase-di-jepang/>.

² Louis Gottschalk (1986), *Mengerti Sejarah*, Translated by Nugroho Notosusanto, Jakarta: UI Press, p. 135.

³ Sartono Kartodirdjo (1993), *Pendekatan Ilmu Sosial dan Metodologi Sejarah*, Jakarta: Gramedia, p. 50.

⁴ Kuntowijoyo (2003), *Metodologi Sejarah*, Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, p. 166.

⁵ Sayidiman Suryohadiprojo (1987), *Belajar dari Jepang: Manusia dan Masyarakat Jepang dalam Perjuangan Hidup*, Jakarta: UI Press, p. 196.

⁶ Andi Syahraeni (2017), "Islam di Jepang," *Rihlah: Jurnal Sejarah dan Kebudayaan*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 80-101.

⁷ Djam'annuri (1981), *Agama Jepang*, Yogyakarta: Bagus Arafah, p. 6.

⁸ NHK (2018), *日本人の宗教的意識や行動は、どう変わったか、～ISSP 国際比較調査「宗教」・日本の結果から～*, accessed Februari 1, 2024, https://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/research/yoron/pdf/20190401_7.pdf.

differing views on Japanese society, including groups for whom religion is important, those for whom it is not, atheists, those who believe in God but have no religion, and those who preferred not to answer. The Japanese people prioritize their actions and contributions to society, as well as good behavior and manners, which are instilled from childhood.⁹

The Process of Islamization in Japan from the Tokugawa Era to the War Period

During the early Islamization of Japan, expansionism, economics, and culture were shaped by the diplomatic relations between the Japanese Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Islam was first introduced to Japan in 1877. Around that time, the life of the Prophet Muhammad was translated into Japanese. This helped to introduce Islam into the intellectual discourse of the Japanese people, but only as a subject of study and contemplation.¹⁰ Since the country's founding, many Muslim foreigners have started coming to Japan. The first Muslims were mostly Malay sailors who served on Dutch and British ships.¹¹ The Kobe Muslim community has its roots in Turkish-Tatar immigrants who arrived in Japan during World War I. At that time, Islam was spreading and developing in Japan through communities in Central Asia who sought refuge there. The behavior of these immigrants left a positive impression on many Japanese people, leading to their conversion to Islam.¹² In addition, there were groups who emigrated from Russia following the Bolshevik revolution led by the communist and atheist leader, Stalin, to Japan.¹³ The Muslim community in Kobe has continued to grow over time, leading to the successful construction of the first mosque in Kobe in 1935. This paved the way for the establishment of other mosques in various areas. In 1938, the Tokyo mosque was built. At that time, several Muslim associations gathered communities in cities such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Naruta, Tokushima, Sendai, Nagayo, and Kamizawa.¹⁴

During the 19th century AD, Kyoto also had relations with Ottoman Turkey, as two Asian countries that were independent from Western colonialism. Sultan Abdul Hamid II ruled Ottoman Turkey from 1876 to 1909. Despite their close political relations aimed at defending themselves from attacks by the West, the Ottoman Turks did not make significant missionary efforts to reach Japanese soil. Instead, the Islamization process was carried out by many traders who later settled in Japan, including the Indian and Arab trader communities that spread across Tokyo, Kobe, and Yokohama. Instead, the Islamization process was carried out by many traders who later settled in Japan, including the Indian and Arab trader communities that spread across Tokyo, Kobe, and Yokohama. As a result, Islam grew and developed in Japan primarily in these areas. Close relations between the Ottoman Turks and Japan continued to exist. In 1902, Sultan Hamid II's envoy, Muhammad Ali, visited Yokohama, providing evidence of this ongoing relationship.¹⁵ In 1902 AD, Sultan Abdul Hamid sent Muhammad Ali to Japan to build a mosque in Yokohama. Additionally, the Sultan sent a Turkish general named Pertav Pasha to monitor the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) for two years.¹⁶

The outbreak of the war caused many Russian residents to flee to Japan, including a Russian Islamic scientist named Abdul Rasyid Ibrahim, who was a close friend of the Japanese General at that time, General Akashi. The commander and his colleagues successfully converted several individuals to Islam, who received guidance. Some even completed the Hajj and resumed preaching upon their return to Japan.¹⁷ Following the war, there was significant news coverage of Japan's growing interest in Islam and the Muslim world. According to Abbas Mahmoud Al-Aqqad, a prominent Egyptian scientist, several Egyptian officers were so impressed by Japan's victory that they married Japanese citizens, settled down, and had children.¹⁸ After the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Japan became a destination for refugees, predominantly Muslims, from countries such as Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. These refugees settled in Japan and formed Muslim communities where they preached.¹⁹ Kobe,

⁹ Syahraeni (2017), "Islam di Jepang," p. 86.

¹⁰ Putri Ayudia Nasution (2017), "Perkembangan Islam di Jepang," Tugas Akhir, Program Studi D-III Studi Bahasa Jepang Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Sumatera Utara.

¹¹ Nasution (2017), "Perkembangan Islam di Jepang."

¹² M. Ali Kettani (2005), *Minoritas Muslim di Dunia Dewasa Ini*, Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, p. 226.

¹³ Nasution (2017), "Perkembangan Islam di Jepang."

¹⁴ Kettani (2005), *Minoritas Muslim*, p. 226.

¹⁵ Salih Mahdi Samarra'i (2003), *Islam di Jepang: Sejarah & Perkembangannya*. 1. Translated by Zenal Satiawan. Japan Islamic Center; Agung Sasongko (2018), *Jasa Ottoman dalam Syiar Islam di Jepang*, Retrieved January 30, 2024, from Republika: <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/dunia/18/02/20/p4fyxb313-jasa-ottoman-dalam-syiar-islam-di-jepang>.

¹⁶ Suryohdiprojo (1987), *Belajar Dari Jepang*, p. 32.

¹⁷ A. Waid Sy (2007), *Mamahami Pendidikan Agama Islam*, Bandung: CV ARMICO, p. 138.

¹⁸ Izzur Rozabi (2014), *Cahaya Allah di Negeri Sakura*, Yogyakarta: Diva Press, p. 33.

¹⁹ Fauziah Fathil and Fathiah Fathil (2011), "Islam in minority Muslim countries: A case study on Japan and Korea," *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 130-141.

the center of traders' associations, became the starting point for Islamic preaching. This is unique because Kobe itself means God's gate in Japanese.²⁰ In 1920, the Muslim community in Japan began to grow, especially in Kobe, which served as a gathering center for traders. In 1928, Muslims in Kobe formed a mosque construction committee led by Ferozudin, a wealthy Indian textile entrepreneur. Muslim entrepreneurs attempt to raise funds by requesting donations from wealthy Muslims in any country they visit, including those with a Muslim majority. The fundraising campaign lasted for approximately 5-6 years. Once the funds were collected, the Kobe Mosque Committee promptly purchased a plot of land. The construction of the mosque was carried out by the Takaneke Construction Company, which took two years to complete.²¹

During this period, notable Japanese figures included Mustafa Komura, who converted to Islam. He played an active role in da'wah activities and worked closely with the Muslims of East Turkestan and Yunnan, a province in China. Komura sent dozens of students to Pakistan, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia and was instrumental in translating the meaning of the Quran into Japanese. In Mecca, he also wrote an encyclopedia about Islamic history. Between 1930 and 1940, several Japanese Muslims performed the Hajj, including Salih Suzuki, who had the valuable opportunity to meet King Abdul Azis Al-Saud in person.²² In 1935, the Kobe Mosque was built in the Kobe area, which is one of the oldest and most historic mosques in Japan. The mosque was founded by the Muslim community of Turkey, India, Egypt and the Turk Tatar tribe in Kobe City. Kobe Mosque is the first mosque to be established in Japan. The former mayor of Kobe, Ginjiro Katsuda, congratulated the Muslim community in Kobe and expressed his hope that the mosque would promote friendship between nations. He also expressed his desire for Muslims in other Japanese cities to build places of worship, thereby strengthening the bond between Muslims in Japan. The Kobe Mosque has often served as a place of solace for Japanese society during times of second world war.²³ This historic mosque survived Allied bombing on Japanese soil, demonstrating God's power even amidst the destruction of the surrounding land and buildings in Kobe during the war.²⁴

In 1938, Turkish immigrants in Japan built a beautiful and magnificent mosque in the Camii area of Tokyo, which was named Tokyo Camii (Camii is Turkish for mosque). The Majsid has undergone several renovations due to earthquakes, post-war damage, and other causes. Despite these renovations, the mosque still retains the characteristics of Turkish Umsani architecture. In 1937, the Nagoya Mosque was founded by Turkish Tatar immigrants who had been living in Nagoya since the 1920s. The mosque in Nagoya City was destroyed during the United States attack on May 14, 1945, and was subsequently rebuilt in 1998.²⁵ During World War II, the Japanese military exploited their relations with Muslim communities in their colonies, such as China and Southeast Asia, to establish several research centers and organizations on Islam in Japan. Over 100 journals and books about Islam in Japan have been published. However, it is important to note that these organizations are not controlled or run by Muslims in Japan.

In 1952, prominent Japanese Muslim figures such as Umar Yamaoka, Umar Mita, Abdul Muneer Watanabe, Sadiq Imaizumi, Umar Yukiba, and Mustafa Komura founded The Japan Muslim Association (JMA) with the main activities of preaching and translating the Quran into Japanese. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the organisation has undertaken several initiatives, including publishing a booklet about Islam authored by Umar Mita, releasing the Voice of Islam newspaper every two weeks with the assistance of Farooq Nagase, sending Japanese Muslim youth to Al Azhar University, and purchasing the first Muslim burial ground in Enzan in Yamanashi prefecture with financial assistance from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The burial ground is registered under the Japan Muslim Association. Professor Abdul Kareem Saito was introduced to the Muslim world, visiting Iraq, Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and many other Muslim countries. He inaugurated the first Islamic Center in the city of Tokushima, southwest Japan, on Shikoku Island in 1965, but it only lasted a year. With the help and support of Al-Sanie, the first Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan, he inaugurated the first Islamic Center in Tokyo in 1965. The center operated for a year before closing due to lack of support following the departure of the Kuwaiti Ambassador.²⁶

²⁰ Nasution (2017), "Perkembangan Islam di Jepang."

²¹ Rayhan Maulana (2013), *Masjid-Masjid Bersejarah Di Lima Benua*, Yogyakarta: Diva Press, pp.54-64.

²² Emi and Indun (2021), "Perkembangan Islam Di Jepang."

²³ Maulana (2013), *Masjid-Masjid Bersejarah*, pp.54-64.

²⁴ Saifullah, Interview, the resource person shared his experiences while in Japan and presented documentation in the form of photos of himself while in Muslim community areas in Japan in 2018.

²⁵ Saifullah, Interview, September 24, 2018.

²⁶ Waid Sy (2007), *Memahami Pendidikan*, p. 138; Emi and Indun (2021), "Perkembangan Islam Di Jepang."

King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia highly appreciated the establishment of the Islamic Center and the translation of the Al-Qur'an by Umar Mita. In 1970, King Faisal contributed to the revision stage of the translation of the Al-Qur'an carried out in Riyadh through the Saudi Arabian embassy in Japan. Additionally, in 1973, King Faisal supported Islamic propagation activities in Japan with the help of several foreign and local Japanese scholars. King Faisal hopes for the optimisation of the Islamic Center for the Muslim community in Japan. The Japanese Islamic Center was established during the 1973 oil crisis, which increased the Japanese people's interest in Islam. The establishment of the Islamic Center is a long-awaited achievement for those who have dedicated themselves to preaching and spreading Islamic teachings in Japan for centuries.²⁷

After the 1973 Oil Crisis, Islam as a Promising Partner

Following the 1973 Oil Crisis, the Japanese mass media extensively covered the Muslim world, particularly the Arab World, and emphasised the importance of collaboration between these countries and the Japanese economy. This publication raised awareness and interest in Islamic teachings and civilization among many Japanese people who previously had no knowledge of Islam. The success of oil trade in Middle Eastern countries in 1973 sparked Japan's interest in collaborating with Middle Eastern countries, leading to increased interaction between Japanese society and Islam.²⁸ Dr. Syauki Futaki, an important figure in Japan, founded the largest Islamic hospital in the country.²⁹ He also established the Japanese Islamic Congress, which was based at the Royal Clinic in Shinjuku, Tokyo City. Futaki and his colleagues were successful in gradually converting Japanese individuals and groups to Islam. In addition to their da'wah and Islamization efforts, the organization also translated the Quran into Japanese. Some individuals converted to Islam through marriage to Muslim immigrants.³⁰

The initially secular Japanese government later allowed religious freedom. Since the 1980s, the government has intervened in the development of facilities for Muslim minority communities.³¹ This active participation in developing Japanese Muslim facilities is a reflection of Japan's desire to maintain strong bilateral relations with Middle Eastern countries, which became their partners after the 1973 oil crisis. The Japanese government is committed to ensuring its citizens' freedom to practice religion, as stated in Article 20 of the Japanese Constitution. Discrimination and persecution for religious reasons are strictly prohibited.³² According to Abu Bakr Morimoto (1980), Japan has the most extensive recognition of religious freedom of any country in the world, both constitutionally and legally.³³

Japan has constructed facilities to support Muslim activities through Islamic congresses held in collaboration with other Islamic countries. For instance, the Japan Islamic Institute building was inaugurated during the Japanese Islamic Congress on June 27, 1980. Additionally, the Tokyo Grand Mosque was established on July 7, 1980, with the cooperation of the Iraqi Government. In addition to the construction of the Tokyo Grand Mosque, other facilities were built, including a hospital, Islamic Center, and library.³⁴ During this period, thousands of Muslim workers from various Muslim-majority countries, such as Bangladesh, Iran, Indonesia, and Malaysia, came to Japan to work in the industrial sector. In the 1990s, there was also an influx of Muslim entrepreneurs and students who pursued their studies in Japan and formed a Muslim community in the country.³⁵ Islam began to develop in Japan in the 20th century AD. During this time, several Islamic organizations emerged, including the Japan Muslim Association, the first Muslim organization for native Japanese people. Subsequently, the International Islamic Center, Islamic Center Japan, Islamic Culture Society-Japan, and Japan Islamic Congress were established. These organizations played a significant role in the development of Islamic da'wah in Japan.³⁶

Following the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States, Japanese society's perception of the Muslim community remained largely unchanged. No Muslims were arrested on suspicion of terrorism. Despite its close ties with the United States since World War II, Japan's regulations regarding religious

²⁷ Erni and Indun (2021), "Perkembangan Islam Di Jepang."

²⁸ Syahraeni (2017), "Islam di Jepang," p. 81.

²⁹ Waid Sy (2007), *Memahami Pendidikan*, p. 138.

³⁰ Syahraeni (2017), "Islam di Jepang," p. 81.

³¹ Abu Bakr Morimoto (1980), *Islam in Japan: It's Past, Present and Future*, Translated by Iskandar Chowdury. Tokyo: Islamic Center Japan, p. 99.

³² e-Gov, 法令検索. 日本国憲法, accessed February 1, 2024, <https://elaws.e-gov.go.jp/document?lawid=321CONSTITUTION>.

³³ Morimoto (1980), *Islam in Japan*, p. 93.

³⁴ Morimoto (1980), *Islam in Japan*, p. 93.

³⁵ Fathil and Fathil (2011), "Islam in minority Muslim countries."

³⁶ Syahraeni (2017), "Islam di Jepang," p. 82.

communities, including Muslims, remain unaffected by the state of relations between the United States and Muslim groups. Japan is selective in the information it receives about Islam to maintain its long-standing good relations with Middle Eastern countries. However, the Japanese government remains vigilant in checking Middle Eastern immigrants heading to Japan. Japan and the Middle East continue to establish political and economic cooperation, particularly in the petrochemical and oil industries, and provide financial assistance to each other in the event of a disaster. Since the Gulf crisis, Japan has provided various forms of assistance to Middle Eastern countries that were badly affected. In 1995, Japan became the largest donor country for Middle Eastern countries after the United States and France. Additionally, Japan is the largest donor for Palestinian peace after the United States and the United Arab Emirates.³⁷

The effort to spread Islamic teachings continues to this day, even after the events of September 2001 in the United States. In addition to marriage, Japanese youth also pursue education in Arab countries to deepen their religious knowledge. After completing their studies, they return to Japan to preach. Japan also supports the Islamic Development Center, which facilitates preaching through seminars, dialogues, conferences, and other means. Students who have a strong understanding of Islam often form Islamic missionary communities and preach in major Japanese cities such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, and Hiroshima. Mosques in these cities also serve as information centers for those interested in learning about Islam. Additionally, there are worship services and Q&A sessions on religious matters conducted in both Japanese and English. Several mosques in Japan offer accommodation for weekend visitors. The number of mosques in Japan has increased due to the government's extension of work visas for Iranians, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis. This has aided in the development of da'wah in Japan.³⁸

Examining data on the number of Muslims in Japan year to year is difficult due to the private nature of religion and lack of government interference. Japan does not conduct a population census with exact religious percentage values. However, research suggests that there are between 70,000 to 200,000 Muslims in Japan, with no distinction made between Japanese Muslims and immigrant Muslims.³⁹ According to a 2019 report by Erni Puspitasari and the Dharma Persada University Team, it is estimated that there are 200,000 Muslims in Japan, of which 43,000 are Japanese nationals.⁴⁰

According to Professor Emeritus Tanada Hirofumi from Waseda University, an expert on the Muslim community, there are currently 230,000 Muslims in Japan, of which 47,000 are local. This represents a significant increase from 2016 when there were only 120,000 Japanese Muslims, including 10,000 local residents. However, Muslims still make up only 4% of the combined religious minority groups in Japan, which include Islam, Baha'i, Hindu and Jewish. Japanese Muslims are a diverse group, comprising individuals from various races and religious sects. However, detailed data on the percentage of Muslims by race and sect is not readily available.⁴¹

Although there are differences in the schools of thought adhered to, such as Pakistani immigrants who follow the Hanafi sect and may have a more assertive character, and Malaysian-Indonesian immigrants and students who follow the Shafi'i sect and may have a more gentle character, this teaches them to naturally strengthen their sense of solidarity and tolerance among Muslims.⁴² According to Syahraeni's (2017) research, Pakistani Muslims are the immigrant group that marries the most Japanese natives due to their superior business management skills compared to other immigrant Muslim groups. Additionally, Pakistani immigrants have established various organizations and mosques. The Islamic Circle of Japan organisation, established in 1992, has played a key role in constructing and managing the Asuka, Gyotoku, and Tatebayashi mosques, as well as acquiring land for the construction of other mosques in the Ibaraki region. In 1994, Pakistani immigrants founded the Japan Islamic Organisation, which established the Otsuka mosque in Tokyo and planned to build additional mosques.⁴³

³⁷ Erni and Indun (2021), "Perkembangan Islam di Jepang."

³⁸ Syahraeni (2017), "Islam di Jepang," pp. 93-96.

³⁹ Andi Muhammad Akmal (2019), "Islam Di Negeri Matahari Terbit (Suatu Kajian Histori dan Akselerasi)," *Ash-Shahabah: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Studi Islam*, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 199.

⁴⁰ Erni and Indun (2021), "Perkembangan Islam di Jepang."

⁴¹ Hirofumi Tanada (2017), *Ever growing Muslim community in the world and Japan*, accessed February 4, 2023, https://www.waseda-jp.translate.goog/top/en/news/53405?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=id&_x_tr_hl=id&_x_tr_pto=tc; U.S. Department of State (2023), *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Japan*, accessed February 4, 2024, https://www.state.gov.translate.goog/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/japan?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=id&_x_tr_hl=id&_x_tr_pto=tc.

⁴² Hendy Santosa, Interview, Doctoral Student in The University of Electro-Communications Tokyo, Agustus 13, 2024.

⁴³ Syahraeni (2017), "Islam di Jepang," pp. 97-98.

In 2012, the Toyohashi Muslim Community purchased a workshop building for 20 million Yen and renovated it for the purpose of creating a mosque. The renovation included the addition of a kitchen on the 3rd floor and a place for ablutions on the 1st floor. The mosque can accommodate up to 35 congregants, and also includes an imam's room, an office, a futon warehouse, a rest room, and parking for up to 6 cars. Halal food is also available. The operation of the mosque was hindered by the Toyohashi Muslim community, who discriminated against Pakistani Muslims that had married and converted their Japanese wives. The Toyohashi Muslim community is mainly composed of foreign immigrants from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan, as well as some native Japanese and immigrants from the Middle East, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Africa, and Germany.⁴⁴

In March 2023, the Istiqlal Osaka Mosque (MIO) was inaugurated by Indonesian Vice President KH Ma'ruf Amin. The mosque, built by the Indonesian Muslim community in Osaka, Japan, can accommodate 1,500 worshippers and is intended for worship, education, and sharia-compliant economic activities.⁴⁵ The Istiqlal Osaka Mosque also carries out Da'wah Safari activities and offers Al-Qur'an Education Park (TPA) learning, which currently has two classes. The lessons studied include Tauhid (Oneness of God), Al-Quran Learning using the tilawati method, Fiqh and Hadith, Aqidah and Akhlak, Shirah Islam (History), Rihlah Islamic Creativity and Tadabur Alam.⁴⁶ In term of the obstacles to da'wah in Japan, the main concern is the shortage of preachers who are fluent in Japanese. Additionally, there is a lack of imams to fill the position of high priest of mosques. Currently, Japan offers a range of job opportunities for Muslims outside of Japan, such as preachers and mosque managers. However, there are some issues that need to be addressed, such as the high cost of burial plots in big cities due to expensive land and cemetery rentals. This problem is less severe in agricultural areas of Japan.⁴⁷

For the past seven years, there have been refusals to provide Muslim burial grounds in Japan. This is evident from various factors. Although Japan's Graves and Burial Law does not impose any restrictions on burials, several cities in Japan prohibit the construction of cemeteries. In addition to land designated for development and agriculture, cremation is generally performed for the bodies of the deceased in Japanese society. Burying bodies in the ground remains unfamiliar to many Muslims. Some, particularly immigrants, opt to bury their loved ones in their countries of origin. In cases where this is not possible, they may choose to cremate the remains. The Yamanashi cemetery is the only available burial ground for followers of Islam, Christianity, and other minority religions in Japan, which collectively represent only 1% of the population. The Japanese people's refusal to bury bodies in the ground stems from the belief that it would contaminate groundwater and agricultural irrigation. In 2023, construction will begin on 13 new burial sites in Hiroshima. The burial issue remains a challenge for the Muslim community, and local communities hold the power to decide on policies as the central government delegates this responsibility to them.⁴⁸ In the next few years, it is important to find preventive solutions for the problem of burial plots for Muslims living in urban areas.

Halal Tourism in Japan: New Opportunities for Japan Seeing the Rapid Development of Global Islam

Based on Professor Tanada's analysis from Waseda University, it is evident that their specialization lies in Asian and Egyptian Studies. The population of Muslims in Asia is growing, which presents a significant opportunity for Japan's consumer market. Prof. Tanada examined the economic strength and consumption patterns of Muslim countries. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, a measure commonly used to determine individual purchasing power, is significantly higher in Muslim-majority countries such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia than in Japan. This suggests that the increasing growth of the Muslim population in the future will likely have a major impact on the global community and economy, particularly in Asia, which is home to 70% of the world's Muslims. According to the '2022 Report on International Religious Freedom', the number of Muslim tourists visiting Japan is expected to reach 110 million people, accounting for 12% of total visitors in 2022.

⁴⁴ Saifullah, Interview, September 24, 2018.

⁴⁵ Rangga Pandu Asmara Jingga (2023), *Wapres ajak Muslim Jepang makmurkan Masjid Istiqlal Osaka*. Edited by Triono Subagyo, accessed February 4, 2024, <https://lampung.antarane.ws.com/berita/676647/wapres-ajak-muslim-di-jepang-makmurkan-masjid-istiqlal-osaka>.

⁴⁶ Masjid Istiqlal Osaka (2023). *TPA MIO*, accessed February 4, 2024, https://masjidistiqlalosaka.com/tpa_mio/.

⁴⁷ Andi (2019), "Islam Di Negeri Matahari Terbit," pp. 295-203.

⁴⁸ U.S Department of State (2021), *2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Japan*, accessed February 4, 2024, https://www.state.gov.translate.google.com/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/japan/?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=id&_x_tr_hl=id&_x_tr_pto=tc; Swaminathan Natarajan (2024), *Perjuangan umat Islam di Jepang mencari lahan pemakaman - 'Kami membawa jenazah lebih dari 1.000 kilometer'*, accessed February 4, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c2vy26622v2o>.

The surge in Muslim tourists from the Middle East, especially in Southeast Asia, has been significant since the beginning of the 21st century.⁴⁹ Consequently, the Japanese government is considering the halal tourism sector as a new source of income. According to the '2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Japan' by the United States Office of International Religious Freedom, the Japanese immigration center stated that the food provided is in accordance with Muslim dietary restrictions.⁵⁰ As explained by Wahidati & Sarinastiti (2018) on halal tourism businesses in Japan, the country has made significant efforts to enhance halal tourism services,⁵¹ including the availability of halal restaurants, access to halal food, and places of worship. Prayer facilities have been established at toll road service areas along popular routes to cater to Muslim visitors in preparation for the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. For example, at the Hamanako service area, the outbound side of the Ashigara service area along the Tomei Expressway in Shizuoka Prefecture, and the exit of the Suwako service area on the Chuo Expressway in Nagano Prefecture. Restaurants and commercial complexes on the toll road now offer 6 to 15 square meter facilities equipped with mats and signs pointing towards Mecca. However, washing stations are not available in Ashigara. Halal food is also available at the restaurants and food courts in the Hamanako and Suwako service areas. It is important to note that this information is only applicable to these specific service areas.⁵² Japan is actively promoting halal tourism programs to cater to the increasing number of Muslim tourists visiting the country.

Currently, Japan is focused on enhancing the quality of its Muslim-friendly infrastructure. The Japanese government collaborates with local and foreign Islamic institutions to obtain halal certificates for its products. Information on halal food is available on the website www.halalgourmet.jp which provides details on the number and location of halal restaurants in Japan. Japan maintains strict selection criteria for halal food as it is a basic necessity. The travel diary of UIN Professor Imam Bonjol Padang includes a visit by Prof. Saifullah to Japan to address the issue of places of worship. Several mosques have been built in areas frequently visited by tourists, such as the Kyoto Mosque, which is located in a tourist-dense area and is at the center of Japanese culture. It is important to note that mosques in Japan are only open during prayer times. The Tokyo Camii area not only serves as a mosque but also offers halal food with Turkish characteristics and complete prayer equipment, including mukenas for women. The sanitation and ablution facilities are also maintained to a high standard.⁵³ Similarly, Kyoto, a popular tourist destination in Japan, is making efforts to accommodate the needs of the Muslim community.

The Kyoto area already offers halal menus with Arabic, Turkish, Indian, and Malay influences, as well as authentic Japanese dishes that have been adapted to halal guidelines. These options can be found in the Kyoto Islamic Center area and the Kyoto University campus area. The Kyoto Muslim Association (KMA) and Kyoto Islamic Cultural Society (KICS) work together to meet the worship and daily life needs of the Muslim community in Kyoto. The Nagoya area is home to the Nagoya Minna Mosque, which was rebuilt in 1998. It is conveniently located near the Higashiyama subway line, just a 4-minute walk from the Nagiyahonsen railroad station exit and a 5-minute walk from Nagoya station. The mosque offers regular science meetings with clerics, Arabic language classes, and Quranic studies on Saturdays. Osaka City has two large mosques: one located at Owada-Nishi Yodogawa Ku and the other at Tokoyawa-Ibaraki Shi. Both mosques are managed by Pakistani Muslims and are surrounded by halal food shops. The Kobe Mosque, one of Japan's oldest mosques, conducts religious teaching activities around Kobe and Osaka on weekends, as well as congregational prayers led by a permanent imam. The mosque is located just a few hundred meters from the train station.⁵⁴

Regarding Islamic fashion, UNIQLO has collaborated with renowned Japanese fashion designer Hana Tajima to create clothing for Muslim women since July 2017. Watashi Japan LLC produces hijabs and cardigans with Japanese motifs using kimono material. In addition, Japan produces halal cosmetics such as Melati and Blanc Elena, which obtained halal certificates from the Japan Islamic Trust (JIT) in 2017. In the culinary sector, Japan produces instant Japanese cooking seasoning products, including miso and sukiyaki

⁴⁹ Tanada (2017), *Ever growing Muslim community in the world and Japan*; Ni Nyoman Wira Widyanti (2023), *Jumlah Kedatangan Wisatawan Muslim Diprediksi Capai 230 Juta pada 2028*, accessed February 4, 2024, <https://travel.kompas.com/read/2023/06/06/100556027/jumlah-kedatangan-wisatawan-muslim-diprediksi-capai-230-juta-pada-2028>.

⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State (2023), *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Japan*.

⁵¹ Lufi Wahidati and Eska Nia Sarinastiti (2018), "Perkembangan Wisata Halal di Jepang," *Jurnal Gama Societa*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 9-19.

⁵² Hideaki Sato (2019), *Muslim prayer facilities debut in expressway service areas*, accessed February 4, 2024, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13067663>. See also Zuhdi, Muhammad Luthfi, Shobichatul Aminah, and Zulifan Rasam (2024), "Fiqh aqalliyah as a legal alternative to Halal standardization in Japan as a non-majority Muslim country." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* Vol. 14, No. 1, 177-202.

⁵³ M Zahir, Interview, Indonesian Migrant Workers in Japan, (April 12, 2020).

⁵⁴ Firdaus, Interview, Indonesian Workforce in Mkc Kogyou Kabushiki Kaisya, (April 15, 2020).

sauce, which have been certified halal by JIT. The motivation for this halal certification effort is closely linked to the growing number of Muslim tourists visiting Japan, particularly from Malaysia and Indonesia.⁵⁵ In 2023, a specialized trading company in Japan sold tatami mats that Muslims can use for daily prayers amidst declining demand for tatami (Japanese carpets) in Japan.

Yusuke Hori, 37, an employee of exclusive tatami trading house Kambe Co., considers the limits of the domestic market. He contemplated expanding the use of mattresses outside Japan but realized that it would be challenging to do so in countries without tatami rooms. Hori observed Muslims performing worship rituals on prayer mats on television and was inspired to create tatami for prayer. He presented his product design to the Kyoto Halal Council and received a positive response. Muslim tourists enjoy the tatami due to the beautiful geometric patterns and lightweight material, with the product now measuring 1.15 meters based on feedback. In addition to Hori's innovation, Kambe also introduced Inori mats designed for prayer services. These mats were showcased in a dedicated room at the Japanese Da'wah Center in Osaka for the five daily prayers among Islamic visitors.⁵⁶ This highlights the potential positive economic impact of Muslim tourists on Japan's traditional crafts sector, which is gradually losing its domestic market. Several travel agents offer Muslim-friendly tours of Japan, including Miyako International Tourist Co. This travel agency, run by Japanese converts since 2014, is dedicated to meeting the needs of Muslim tourists, particularly in regards to halal food. The bureau employs both Japanese and non-Japanese staff who are all Muslim and speak five languages, including Arabic and Malay. The bureau also welcomes school and company visits to Osaka and other parts of Japan, providing hassle-free access to halal food and hotels.⁵⁷ Additionally, visitors from several Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Tunisia, are eligible for free visas to Japan.⁵⁸

Opportunities for the Japanese Muslim Community in the Future

Although the progress of embracing Islam is slow, the development of Islamic da'wah is successful due to the supportive factors from the government and the friendliness of the community towards differences.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, another opportunity for Muslims in Japan now is that Muslims are increasingly open to implementing Islamic teachings well. In several tourist areas, Muslims are free to pray and are used to spreading prayer prayers in parks. Not like in several other Muslim minority countries, explained Hendy.⁶⁰ The Islamic Center of Japan reports that the number of converts to Islam is increasing, albeit not significantly, due to the marriage of non-Japanese Muslims with Japanese citizens who convert to Islam. The increasing Muslim population in Japan will result in a higher demand for halal products. The Japanese government responded to the issue by promoting halal products and establishing a halal certification body, particularly during Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration. Abe's efforts have significantly boosted halal tourism in Japan. The Muslim community in Japan has greater opportunities compared to other East Asian countries, such as South Korea and China, which often face issues of racism based on religion, skin colour, ethnicity, and culture. Religious education, particularly Islamic education, is primarily conducted in the private sector, with the Islamic Center Japan (ICJ) playing a significant role. The ICJ has provided moral and material support for the establishment of mosques, prayer rooms, and Islamic organizations throughout Japan over the last four decades. The ICJ places more emphasis on Da'wah & Education projects, as evidenced by the establishment of the YUAI International School in Japan. Among the Islamic teaching and education activities that ICJ has implemented, a 6-month training course to learn the Basics of Islam for new Muslims in Japan has been held.⁶¹

Conclusion

Following the development of Islam in Japan, Islamic preaching has continued and the effort to expand halal facilities has intensified. Japan has become a good partner with Muslim countries since providing aid during the 1973 oil crisis. Additionally, the rapid growth of the global Muslim population and economy has led

⁵⁵ Wahidati and Sarinastiti (2018), "Perkembangan Wisata Halal di Jepang," pp. 13-18.

⁵⁶ Shinichi Kawarada (2023), *Tatami company looks to Muslims for sales of prayer mats*, accessed February 4, 2024, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/15022004>.

⁵⁷ M. Zahir, Interview.

⁵⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2023), *Exemption of Visa (Short-Term Stay)*, accessed February 1, 2024, https://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/visa/short/novisa.html.

⁵⁹ M Zahir, Interview.

⁶⁰ Hendy Santosa, Interview, Doctoral Student in The University of Electro-Communications Tokyo, Agustus 13, 2024.

⁶¹ Islamic Center of Japan (2021), *About the Islamic Center of Japan*, accessed Februari 4, 2024, <https://islamcenter.or.jp/about-us/>.

Japan to view Islam as a positive partner for cooperation. This has influenced the development of contemporary Islamic da'wah in Japan. Japan also provides facilities to the Islamic Development Center for preaching through seminars, dialogue, conferences, and even the establishment of halal tourism facilities. Students with religious knowledge will form an Islamic missionary community and preach Islam in major Japanese cities. It is possible that Japan will become a Muslim-friendly country in the future. However, the Japanese government does not want to interfere in the issue of religious education, as it is separate from formal school matters. Additionally, the availability of Muslim burial grounds is still constrained due to differences in Shinto and Islamic religious teachings, as well as the cultural beliefs of local residents.

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