



Modern Islamic Studies in Great Britain

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Abstract: The purpose of the study will be the activity of these centres, their infrastructure and the role they play in framing the modern Islamic studies. This article also considers to familiarize the reader with the context of some of the research works carried recently. It is important to point out that most Islamic centres in Great Britain exist within the Universities that are not specifically oriented in Islamic studies, but tend to give a general religious higher education.

Keywords: Islam, Great Britain, research programmes, universities, scholarships, opportunities, relationships.

Islam is considered one of the most popular religions in Great Britain alongside with Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and etc. Muslim communities are growing fast compared to other religious minorities in the territory of the country. In fact, Islam is the religion which attracts the attention of academic society of Britain. In this article such topics as the circumstance of research programmes on Islam, projects of Islamic research centres will be covered to the extent of the possibility.

England is said to be home for a major Muslim community in Europe, that is because Islam is the second largest religion in the country as mentioned in the sources of Office for National Statistics, to be more specific it has 3,372,966 people following in Great Britain alone¹. This fact makes it impossible for Islam to be unnoticed by researchers. Obviously, a lot of work has been done on the topic and much more has to be finished when it comes to research programmes on Islam. The area of investigation is so wide as to include Islamic history, art, law, doctrine, music, language, social relations, medicine and so on. Further, several research centres for Islamic studies will be looked through more detail as well as the specific projects which involve Islam currently in Britain.

It is remarkable that the teaching of Maturidi is being a subject of interest in Britain recently, considering that the majority of Muslim population mainly follow the teachings of Ashari. Establishing of Maturidi Institute in London is the proof of this. Although it is providing only online courses, it has covered quite a wide area of Islamic teachings such as: Aqeedah, Hadith, Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Tasawwuf, comparative religion, contemporary and other sciences².

Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies may be shown as an example of above mentioned research centres. As it states in the main website of the university: "The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies was founded in 1985. It is a registered educational charity and its Patron is His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales. In 2012 it was granted a Royal Charter by Queen Elizabeth II. The governance of the Centre is managed by a Board of Trustees made up of scholars and statesmen from around the world, and representatives of the University of Oxford nominated by the Council. The Centre is dedicated to the study, from a multi-disciplinary perspective, of all aspects of Islamic culture and

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/muslimpopulationintheuk/>
(Accessed: 26.04.2022)

² <https://www.maturidi.co.uk/about> (Accessed: 20.05.2022)

civilization and of contemporary Muslim societies. Many Fellows of the Centre are active in different departments, faculties and colleges across the University. The Centre provides enhanced academic facilities, including a lecture theatre, seminar and teaching rooms, exhibition space, library, offices for Centre Fellows and staff, a dining hall and accommodation for students and visiting fellows, all set around quadrangles and gardens in the Oxford tradition. The complex also includes a mosque which is open to the public for daily prayers”³.

To mention detaily the Oxford centre has four broad research areas: classical Islamic studies; the social and intellectual history of the Muslim world; Islamic finance (related to the social and economic development of Muslim societies); Muslims in Britain and the West. The Centre`s current projects are given below:

The Atlas project. This is a major international research project concerned with the intellectual roots of Muslim civilisation and social movements in the Islamic world. It will provide a comprehensive multivolume “Historical Atlas of the Islamic World”.

“Muslims in Britain” project. The study of Muslims in Britain remains a major focus of the Centre`s academic interests. Priority is given to research which helps to understand the opportunities and challenges facing British Muslims. Seminars, workshops and roundtables are regularly organised by the Centre on a range of subjects such as: the housing needs of British Muslims, identity and political participation amongst British Muslims and the policy implications of Muslim citizens in Western Europe.

Islamic finance. Research into the theory and practice of Islamic finance is being carried out in conjunction with a number of international financial institutions, policymakers and regulatory bodies such as the Securities Commission Malaysia. Research seminars, workshops and conferences are regularly organised by the Centre on a range of topics. These include the annual Securities Commission Malaysia Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Roundtable on Islamic Finance, running since 2010. A SC–OCIS Visiting Fellowship in Islamic Finance programme also supports visiting scholars on an annual basis. Applicants must be specialists in Islamic Finance or a closely related discipline.

Project concerning public health, science and technology. The Centre is initiating an innovative project on public health, science and technology in Muslim societies. There remains an urgent need to study the relationship between science and society in Muslim countries and to facilitate a deeper understanding of their interdependence. Within the scope of this project the Centre is adopting a holistic approach and will bring together concepts from different academic disciplines, notably from the sciences and social sciences, in order to strengthen the scholarship around this topic. The aim will be to analyse the contribution of Muslim countries to global scientific progress and to identify opportunities for new approaches and mechanisms, including of international cooperation, which might enhance that contribution

Another important centre for Islamic studies is “Centre for the study of Islam in the UK” of the Cardiff university. As it is stated in the main page of the university, Cardiff has one of the oldest and most diverse Muslim populations in the UK. The earliest mosques in the city were founded in the early 20th century. Nowadays, there might be found around 45000 Muslims in Wales, nearly half of whom live in Cardiff itself.⁴ Cardiff centre for the study of Islam is famous for the partnership with the local Muslims who even formed the Centre`s Advisory Group. The Centre is not only a place for the researches, but at the same time it is a platform for learning about Islam, that is everyone is welcome to go there and learn about Islam. The Cardiff centre has some important resource collections that can be accessible beyond Cardiff including dissertations, works of PhD and

³ <https://www.oxcis.ac.uk/about-us> (Accessed: 13.05.2022)

⁴ 2011 Census: Religion, local authorities in England and Wales”. United Kingdom Census

recordings of many annual lectures. The university of Cardiff offers fully founded scholarship (Jameel scholarship) for the study of Islam.

SOAS (the School of Oriental and African Studies) University of London is the leading Higher Education institution in Europe specialising in the study of Asia, Africa and the Near and Middle East. Centre of Islamic Studies in the University of London SOAS was established in 1995, and aims to promote scholarship and research in all areas of Islamic Studies, past and present. The study of the Qur'an and Hadith from the Arabic texts, and the analysis and translation of Islamic texts from Arabic into English form the core activities of the Centre. The Centre also deals with Islamic thought in European, African and Asian languages and promotes the study of Islamic culture and relations between Muslims and the wider world. The Centre runs an MA Islamic Studies programme and encourages the study and understanding of Islam by means of lectures, seminars, conferences and publications. It also provides academic links and exchanges between institutions and scholars of Islam in Muslim countries, Europe and the rest of the world.

To sum up, there are many government supported and private organisations in the United Kingdom. Taking into the consideration the features of the Muslim population of the United Kingdom, it will be honest to say that there exist the fair number of Islamic centres to provide the community a reliable source on behalf of people's religious needs. Moreover, Islamic centres of Britain are making a notable contribution for developing the modern Islamic studies.

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