

Institution: Liverpool Hope University
Unit of Assessment: Theology and Religious Studies
Title of case study: Islam in Victorian Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam and his Contemporary Cultural Significance
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The research, undertaken by Professor Ron Geaves, provides a biography of a Victorian convert to Islam, Abdullah Quilliam, who established the first registered mosque in Liverpool. The study challenges and illuminates cultural values and social assumptions concerning the origins of Islam in Britain and provides an historical narrative that can be seen to enrich and expand the cultural life of British Muslims. It also offers deeper insight into a figure who can act as an iconic exemplar of what it means to be British and Muslim. The reception of the book shows its impact upon the psychological and social well-being of British Muslims, as it provides positive self-images of their presence in Britain. The research has contributed to the quality of evidence, argument and expression in public and British Muslim understandings of integration, identity and belonging.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Inside number 8 Brougham Terrace, Liverpool, lies the fascinating story of England's first mosque and the unlikely Victorian gentleman who founded it. William Henry Quilliam, a local Liverpool solicitor, converted to Islam in 1887 after returning from a visit to Morocco, taking on the name Abdullah. Abdullah Quilliam established the mosque at No. 8 Brougham Terrace and later bought the remainder of the terrace, to include a school, printing press and science laboratory. The activities in this house stirred mixed feeling within the local community but quickly became the first centre of Islam in Britain.</p> <p>Building upon twenty-five years of research that has explored the various Islamic movements in Britain and their influence on the Muslim presence in Britain throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (see below), I was aware that there was a Muslim community in Liverpool in the nineteenth century. I was also aware that young second/third generation British Muslims were becoming aware of the founder of that community, William Abdullah Quilliam, and drawing upon his life to discover an iconic exemplar of being British and Muslim. In addition, the community in Liverpool provided a narrative of belonging and identity that extended further back in time than the post-WW2 South Asian migrations. I was appointed to Liverpool Hope University in 2007 and, prior to commencing this research, I had been drawn into public policy debates after the 2007 London bombings. I had been invited to attend meetings with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in the aftermath of the bombings as part of the Government's PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) strategy. I was part of the team of 'Theologians and Community Leaders' chosen to focus on the training of Muslim faith leaders and remained an advisor on PREVENT between 2008-2010.. I was appointed an advisor to the DCLG's report 'The training and development of Muslim Faith Leaders: Current practice and future possibilities' published in 2010. These initiatives resulted in invitations to the Foreign Office and 10 Downing Street between 2008-2010. My initial drive for the research on Abdullah Quilliam was to explore an example of a 'model' Muslim faith leader. The research explored primary and secondary historical sources to discover and analyse the depth, breadth and significance of the Liverpool Muslim Institute and its charismatic founder Sheikh Abdullah Quilliam (1888-1908) and the further period (1908-1933) when Abdullah Quilliam operated under the pseudonym of Henri de Leon with the World Muslim Mission in Woking. The research was undertaken between 2007 and 2009, seeking for primary and secondary sources to uncover the life and significance of Abdullah Quilliam and the Muslim presence in Britain from 1888-1908, in particular. The sources consisted of <i>The Crescent</i>, published weekly between 1893 and 1908 from Liverpool and distributed to over eighty Muslim nations, and <i>the Islamic World</i>, a journal publication. These two separate resources were sufficient to uncover Quilliam's activities, his writings, the lives of the converts, the daily activities of the Islamic centre in Liverpool, Quilliam's lecture tours, his contacts in the Muslim world, his dealings</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

with politicians in Britain, his relations with Christian churches, the extent of his multi-culturalism, relations with the Ottoman empire, and his fatwa issued in protest against various conflicts between the British and Muslim nations, for example, North West Frontier, Sudan, the Balkans. In 2010 the monograph *Islam in Victorian Britain* was published by Kube Press. Due to Muslim public demand a second work is underway that will present a volume of Abdullah Quilliam's selected writings due to be published in 2014. In 2013 the first book will reprint as the second edition. Although respected in academic circles, the book's greatest demand has been with second generation British Muslims, many of whom are community activists.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Geaves R.A (2010) *Abdullah Quilliam: The Life and Times of a Victorian Muslim*. Leicester: Kube Press.

Geaves R.A (2011) 'Fatwa and Foreign Policy: New Models of Citizenship in an Emerging Age of Globalisation' in *Negotiating Identities: Constructed Selves and Others*, ed Helen Vella Bonavita. Amsterdam: Rodopi

Geaves, R.A (2011) 'The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam: British Foreign Policy, Muslim Loyalties and Contemporary Resonances' *Arches Quarterly*, Volume 4:8 Spring/Summer, pp.44-55.

Geaves, R.A (2012) 'Correcting English Translations of the Qur'an: The Throne ('*arsh*) and the Footstool (*kursi*) Controversy in 1902' Special Forum, 'Chapter and Verse', *Victorian Review*, 37:2, Fall 2011 pp.31-35

Geaves, R.A (2013) 'Steamships, Hospitals, and Funerals: Liminal Spaces in 19th C. Liverpool's Narratives of Transit', in *Tales of Transit*, eds Michael Boyden and Liselotte Vandebussche . New Debates in American Studies series, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Geaves (2011, 2012, 2013) were extensively peer-reviewed as part of the publication process by academics with expertise in the respective fields. The monograph (2010) submitted for the case study was sent for peer review by the editor to two noted experts on the history of Islam in Britain- Professor Humayun Ansari and Dr Sophie Gilliat-Ray. Their comments are as follows: 'Ron Geaves is to be congratulated for having produced a rigorous and fascinating biography (Ansari) and 'the book offers the first definitive account of the life and legacy of one of the most important figures in the history of Islam in Britain (Gilliat-Ray). The monograph was also rated highly in an external peer review process.

3. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact sought from the research was not with policy makers post 9/11 and 7/7, but rather the enrichment and expansion of the cultural life of British Muslims, and psychological and social impact on the communities of Muslims when provided with positive self-images of their historic presence in Britain. In 2007 I was becoming increasingly aware of community sensitivities and the need that scholars of religion should 'put something back' into these communities and offer some reciprocal benefit. I had recognised that Abdullah Quilliam and his Liverpool Muslim Institute were significant to the identity quests of British-born second and third generation Muslims because (i) they increasingly saw him as an iconic figure whose conversion to Islam marked him out as neither economic migrant nor a refugee fleeing persecution or war, but demonstrated a Muslim presence in the UK that predated the WWII migrations. (ii) Quilliam reflected upon the nature of being Muslim in Britain during a period of international conflict between Britain and Muslim territories and examined British Muslim identity, citizenship and conflicting loyalties. Quilliam was significant in attempts by Muslims to reclaim their history in the West and as a figure who cements Islam in Britain as a religious conviction.

Individual Muslims and some organisations, for example, the Quilliam Foundation, perceived him as an ideal of an integrated and moderate Muslim, able to provide an exemplary bulwark against extremism. Quilliam was also significant because he was a leader of British Muslims in an urban environment rapidly transforming into a multi-cultural city. I wanted to tell this story to British

Impact case study (REF3b)

Muslims in a milieu in which negative narratives were becoming the norm. Kube Press was chosen for publication, as it could access a wide Muslim readership. The book launch (16th April 2010) at Liverpool Hope University was announced at juma'a prayers in the central mosque Liverpool and attracted around 250 to attend, including a number of Muslim leaders from the city and beyond. Enquiries to provide community lectures to various Muslim audiences (religious and ethnic) concerning the impact of Abdullah Quilliam for 21st Century Muslims arrived from 2010. To date over 35 lectures have been delivered within a variety of Muslim audiences including summer camps (attendance 5000) to retreats (attendance 25). The invitations have crossed ethnic boundaries with lectures to Yemeni, Turkish, Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi societies in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Cambridge, and Preston (<https://info.hope.ac.uk/aps/user.php?id=geavesr>). There was also a lecture invitation to address the foreign office on contemporary resonances between British foreign policy in the 19th Century and the Gulf Wars (4th November 2010) .

The impact of the book continues with such invitations in 2013 and was further disseminated by two BBC radio documentaries (Radio 4 and BBC World Service) in 2010 and 2011 on the subject of Abdullah Quilliam. In 2012, BBC 1 put out a documentary *Great British Islam* with me as one of the 'talking heads' to mark the first night of Ramadan. The programme focused on the significance of Abdullah Quilliam. The overall theme of the programme was the historic importance of Muslim communities in Britain prior to the post WWII migrations. The programme attracted 776,000 viewers even though it went out at 11pm. A further 106,000 have watched the programme on YouTube to the present. These programmes have been utilised by the Abdullah Quilliam Society in Liverpool to reclaim the historic mosque (the first in Britain) from the City Council, and the book forms a considerable presence on the Abdullah Quilliam Society website. The society exists to further Muslim heritage in Britain by promoting Quilliam's activities in Liverpool and to re-establish the building in which he promoted Islam as a mosque and heritage centre for British Muslims. The Society has drawn upon my status as the author of Quilliam's biography to assist in their campaigns to recover and restore the mosque. To mark the 80th anniversary of Quilliam's death in April 2012 the society invited me to give the first of a series of annual Memorial lectures and made an Honorary Award. This consisted of a Communication Award given to me as the biographer of Sheikh Abdullah Quilliam, and an Engagement Award to Bishop James Jones, a long time supporter of the Muslim community and the Abdullah Quilliam Society. The communication award is offered to an individual who has either communicated Islam or Muslim life and issues in a positive or creative way to a non-Muslim audience (<http://www.abdullahquilliam.com/wp/pdfs/AQ-Awards-2012-screen.pdf>). The Muslim book review site (kitaabun.com) states that the book is: 'A Must Read For All Muslims in Britain' (http://kitaabun.com/shopping3/product_info.php?products_id=3317).

In November 2012 I was invited to speak on Quilliam in Manchester and give away the 2013 awards to the winners, the journalist Victoria Brittain and the Liverpool City Councillor, Alan Dean. In addition I have been interviewed on Quilliam and his contemporary significance by the Muslim cable television networks (ATN Bangla UK, Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA) and Jordan Radio and TV). In 2013, I was interviewed by Malaysian State Television on Abdullah Quilliam and the subsequent programme *Syahadah* opened Ramadan in Malaysia on 9th July 2013, an extremely unusual honour for a non-Muslim. On 28th June 2013, I took part in Episode 4 of *Britain's Secret Homes*, where I was interviewed by Rageh Omar in the ruins of Quilliam's mosque as part of ITV and English Heritage series (9pm-10pm Friday nights) looking at houses across the British Isles that have had an impact on British social life. The Quilliam mosque reached the top 20 out of 100 houses explored by the series. Rageh Omar stated: "As a British Muslim I think Liverpool should also be famous for one more thing, for the pivotal role it played in bringing Islam to this country" (<http://www.itv.com/presscentre/ep4week26/britains-secret-homes#.Um-JDXA716g>).

Assessing the impact on 'the enrichment and expansion of the cultural life of British Muslims and the psychological and social impact on the communities of Muslims when provided with positive self-images of their historic presence in Britain' is not easy to assess empirically. The continued invitations, media attention and reinforcement from British Muslims by e-mail and various on-line sources provide some indications of the impact of the research within the British Muslim

Impact case study (REF3b)

communities and are appropriate 'proxies' for cultural impact.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Media

1. Wednesday 20th October 2010 11-11.30am *William Quilliam: The Sheikh of Liverpool* BBC Radio 4, presenter Mark Whitaker, Square Dog Radio
2. Wednesday 19th January 12.30-1pm; 4.30-5pm; Thursday 20th January 00.30-1am; Sunday 23rd January 2011 23.05-35 *William Quilliam - Britain's First Islamist*, Heart and Soul, BBC World Service.
3. 19th July 2012, *Great British Islam*, BBC1 Documentary.
4. <http://www.itv.com/presscentre/ep4week26/britains-secret-homes>
5. <http://www.abdullahquilliam.com/wp/pdfs/Newsletter-Screen.pdf>
6. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-17827016>
7. 28th June 2013. *Britain's Secret Homes. Episode 4* ITV 1
<http://www.itv.com/presscentre/ep4week26/britains-secret-homes#.Um-JDXA716g>
8. Selected community lectures (see (<https://info.hope.ac.uk/aps/user.php?id=geavesr>))
9. http://kitaabun.com/shopping3/product_info.php?products_id=3317
10. Letters of acknowledgement from Muslim community organisations