

MBRN & the Islam-UK Centre
Cardiff University
9 January 2025

Preliminary
conference programme

Muslim Converts in Britain and Beyond: Transitions and Transformations

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UNIVERSITY

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Centre for the
Study of Islam in the UK

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MBRN
Muslims in Britain
Research Network

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1 Welcome

The Islam-UK Centre (Cardiff University) and MBRN (Muslims in Britain Research Network) are delighted to welcome all presenters and delegates to this one-day conference, filled with exciting contributions about Muslim converts in Europe and the transformations they undergo.

This interdisciplinary conference is open to academic scholars, non-academic professionals and practitioners, and members of religious communities.

Through a keynote lecture, parallel sessions and a practitioner panel, this conference showcases contemporary research and practice in relation to Muslim converts in Britain, and identifies topics for future research and practice by addressing the following questions:

- What impact have British Muslim converts had on Muslim communities and wider British society?
- What resources do British Muslim converts use to create progress and change in their own lives, and more widely?
- What are the challenges and needs faced by British Muslim converts in the contemporary context, and how can research help to identify and address these?

We hope you enjoy the conference and your day trip to the capital of Wales.

Best wishes and salaam from the conference committee:

Islam-UK Centre: Sophie-Gilliat Ray, Asma Khan

MBRN: Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor, Laura Mora and Qudra Goodall

2 Useful information

Presentation duration

This conference hosts 4 panels (2 x 2 parallel sessions).

A parallel panel lasts 1.5 hours and consists of 4 papers.

Each presentation lasts 15 min., followed by 5 min. Q&A (=20 min. total per speaker).

At the very end of the panel, there is 10 min. for general discussion.

The plenary practitioner panel lasts 1 hour and consists of 4 presentations of 10 min. each. It concludes with a 20 min. interactive Q&A session at the end.

Submitting presentations

If you use powerpoint slides in your presentation, please design it as [accessible](#) as possible, in terms of font, colours and amount of text.

Kindly submit it before 8 January 2025 at 17.00 to a Google Drive folder that you will be granted access to after registration.

Location

The conference takes place at the [Glamorgan Building](#), Cardiff University, UK.

The keynote lecture, practitioner panel and parallel panels take place in Committee rooms 1 and 2.

Seminar rooms 0.86 and 0.81 will be used as prayer rooms.

Food & Drink

Fresh tea/coffee and a (cold) lunch package will be provided.

Any dietary needs, as well as accessibility needs, can be communicated to us through the registration form.

Questions

Send your questions to MuslimsinBritainRN@gmail.com

3 Timetable

Morning schedule

09.30–09.50	Tea/coffee and informal networking	
09.50–10.00	Welcome speech Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Batool Al-Toma and Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor	
10.00–11.00	Keynote lecture Sophie Gilliat-Ray and Asma Khan Transformational: Converts in British Muslim Life	
11.00–11.15	Short break	
11.15–12.45	Parallel Session 1	
	A Past and present	B Family affairs
	Sameeya Maqbool Travel, Islam, and literature: British Muslim women converts and Anglophone modernism	Fatima Barkatulla Changes of heart: Shifts in the impact of wife-first conversion on marriage validity in Islamic law
	Gavin Murray-Miller Performing Islam in France: Philippe Grenier, musulmanité, and French identity in the late nineteenth century	Qudra Goodall Intergenerational narratives on belonging, ideology and British Islam.
	Samuel Bartlett Renegades in an Imperial Age	Fatou Sambe Becoming Muslim and raising the next generation
	Luke Wilkinson The balance of modernity and tradition in Muslim converts	Aliaa Dawoud American female converts' experience with Islamophobia
12.45–13.30	Lunch	

Afternoon schedule

13.30–14.30	Practitioner panel	
	<p>Dalia El Ariny “You do your Shahada and then what?” How converts’ needs can inspire change in Islamic institutions</p> <p>Nathan Musa Gubbins Three stages to a Muslim convert’s journey</p> <p>Shelly Pathak Convert British Muslims and the identity question: The need to belong</p> <p>Aadam Muhammad Sons of pioneers: How the children of Windrush migrants led the UK’s first ‘Revert revolution’</p>	
14.30–14.45	Short break	
14.45–16.15	Parallel Session 2	
	A Salafi and Sufi paths	B Identity construction
	<p>Iman Dawood Moving beyond conversion: Exploring the long-term trajectories of British converts to salafism</p> <p>Ulya Fuhaidah From Theresia to Aisyah (The spiritual journey to become Muslimah and Salafi)</p> <p>Georgina Cardo Liminality and long-term spiritual journeys of Muslim converts: A heuristic enquiry</p> <p>Barbara Cecile Denuelle Converts’ Long-Term Spiritual Journeys on the Sufi Path</p>	<p>Anna Grasso Exploring the online experiences of British Muslim converts: Insights from an ongoing research project</p> <p>Halima Rahman Embodying ambiguity and piety in the lives of convert Muslim women in Britain</p> <p>Federica Bucci Turning to Islam: Identity building and space construction by Italian women converted to Islam</p> <p>Ferhat Kafali Redefining British-Muslim identity: A case study of the Cambridge Muslim College</p>
16.15–16.30	Closing remarks Anita Nayyar, Qudra Goodall and Laura Mora	

4 Keynote speakers

Prof Sophie Gilliat-Ray

Professor in Religious and Theological Studies,
Head of Islam UK Centre



My research focuses on the social scientific study of religion in public life in Britain, and especially in public institutions. I have conducted extensive research on chaplaincy, especially in prisons and hospitals, since 1994. I am the Founding Director of the Islam-UK Centre, established in 2005, and am committed to research that promotes understanding of Islam and the life of Muslim communities in Britain. I am currently acting as Principal Investigator, or Co-Investigator, for a number of projects funded by the Jameel Educational Foundation.

Dr Asma Khan

Research Associate in British Muslim Studies



I am a Research Associate in British Muslim Studies at Cardiff University's Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK. I am a mixed methods (QUANT-QUAL) researcher. My research interests include labour market inequalities, migration, and mental health. I enjoy working on co-produced projects with third sector organisations to conduct research that helps people to live healthy, happy and productive lives.

Transformational: Converts in British Muslim Life

In collaboration with the Convert Muslim Foundation (Batool Al-Toma and Anita Nayyar), Sophie Gilliat-Ray and Asma Khan (Islam-UK Centre) are conducting a new study about experiences of Muslim converts in Britain. The aim of this three-year project is to explore if, and how, converts play a role in shaping, or transforming, Muslim communities in Britain by exercising leadership in public and religious life.

In this study, we aim to contribute to the field of research around Muslim converts in Western contexts that focuses on their lives post-conversion. We seek to explore, in detail, the ways in which converts have settled into, and progressed within, their complex and intersectional identities.

We will be considering if, and how, Muslim converts in leadership positions, from a range of professional and ethnic backgrounds, are transforming religious practices and norms in British Muslim communities, and perceptions of those communities in wider British society.

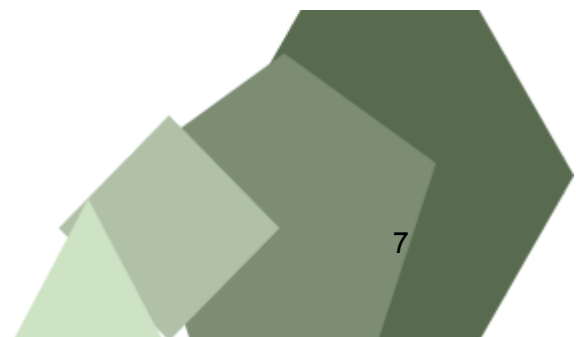
Findings from this project will be shared in a number of ways, with the aim of creating positive impacts for convert and non-convert Muslim communities, including:

- contributing to shifting academic interest in convert Muslims by moving beyond conversion narratives, to experiences of longstanding and established convert individuals and communities;
- shifting public narratives about Muslim converts (such as media representations) away from negative, suspicious, or 'curious' accounts to a more nuanced and detailed understanding of their experiences.

Please find more information on the [project website](#).

5 Abstracts

Abstracts will be published on the registration closing date (18 December 2024)





Roath Park, Cardiff
Photo by Laura Mora