‘Scottish Shi`i Voices’

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The present project, of which the accompanying interviews form the key component, is an outgrowth of a larger, joint research undertaking by Dr Lloyd Ridgeon of the University of Glasgow and myself entitled ‘The Unthought in Islam’. The funds for this project were awarded in late 2015 by the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) under its then ‘Arts and Humanities Research Network’ scheme.

The Edinburgh side of the project was intended to explore both the manner in which, in the midst of worldwide anti-Shi`i feeling, Scotland’s own Shi`i population perceives itself within the wider context of the country’s larger, mainly Sunni Muslim population and also the meaning and relevance of that experience for intra-Muslim sectarian relations in the UK, Europe and further afield.

It initially comprised a workshop held at the University of Edinburgh in May 2017, entitled ‘The Unthought in Islam: The Shi`a and Shi`ism in the Western Diaspora’. The workshop included presentations from academics then based at Birkbeck College London, the Islamic College, London, the University of Chester, and McMaster University (Canada) and discussion of these with these academics and representatives from various UK-based Twelver Shi`i community groups.[1]

In the aftermath of this gathering, the RSE kindly agreed to a broadening of the Edinburgh-based project. This entailed, first, the organisation of a second gathering, ‘Keeping Faith in the 21st Century’, in January 2018, also at Edinburgh University. This was attended by representatives of various faith communities drawn from Scotland and the greater UK and also enjoyed support from the Edinburgh University-based Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World (www.alwal5eed.ed.ac.uk).

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[1] The overall project is described at:
https://www.Shi`i-news.imes.ed.ac.uk/projects/the-unthought-in-islam/
The Edinburgh portion is discussed at:
http://www.Shi`i-news.imes.ed.ac.uk/projects/the-unthought-in-islam/the-unthought-in-islam-the-Shi`a-and-Shi`ism-in-the-western-diaspora/
The latter site includes abstracts and videos of the academic papers.
An earlier version of this paper was presented in 2018 in Qom as ‘Scottish Shi`i Voices: A Minority in a Minority in a Minority’, at *Islam in Europe: Prospect and Challenges*, a conference organised by Alhikmah Institute of Almustafa international.

Herein, ‘Shi`a’ refers to the people while ‘Shi`i’ is the adjectival form. Note that while ‘sectarian’ and ‘sectarianism’ appear herein, ‘sect’ in reference to the Shi`a does not. For a thoughtful discussion of the latter as ‘discriminatory and disparaging’ toward the Shi`a, see N. A. Jiwa, ‘Shīʿīsm, Sects, and Subject Headings’, *MELA (Middle East Librarians’ Association) Notes*, 2022 (95), 1-32.

A second part of this broadened agenda, 'Scottish Shi`i Voices', envisioned an effort to capture and to share the lived experiences of Scottish Shi`a through a series of filmed personal interviews. It was hoped that interviewees would span generations, genders and ethnic backgrounds resulting in a rich body of material. The aim of this undertaking was to promote a better understanding of the lived experiences of Scottish Shi`a. The Alwaleed Centre committed additional support to ensure that the Scottish Shi`i Voices project could be completed. The Centre's then Outreach and Projects Manager, Tom Lea, took the lead on the logistics of the project.

The interviews were recorded in early 2018. Their final 'publication' has been delayed by various technical and non-technical issues (the latter including COVID) for which the present author takes full responsibility.

The Academic Context

In the years preceding this project, academic discussions of the Shi`a in the UK were both limited in scope and depth and frequently adopted a top-down approach. These discussions often also favoured focus on institutions.

Prior to the events of September 11, 2001, in particular, literature on Muslims in the UK focussed on 'integration' into English, if not British, society. In the process, the authors of these offerings generally pay little attention to the Shi`a.

In his 1994 *Islamic Britain*, based on study of Bradford, in the North of England, Lewis focuses on sectarianism as an issue between Muslims and the West, not intra-Islamic divisions. There is much discussion of Muslims' involvement in the political life of Bradford. The main traditions of Islam mentioned are all firmly Sunni, and all were said to maintain strong links with their 'home' institutions in South Asia, with the ulama noted as being drawn from there as well. Lewis mentions the Shi`a only twice, in the background discussion on Islam and South Asia.[2]

Joly's 1995 *Britannia's Crescent* is based on fieldwork in Birmingham in 1983 and 1989 on Pakistani and Muslim groups in the city. Joly discusses ethnicity and civic society but also city politics and cultural matters, especially issues relating to education. The Shi`a are formally mentioned but a handful of times. At one point they are said to have two of the 50 mosques in the city – or, elsewhere, 55 mosques – one being Punjabi, founded in 1970, and the other, dating to 1981, East African.[3]

In the years immediately following 9/11 and '7/7' - the July 2005 bombings in London -[4] through to and including the early years of the present project, discussions of British Muslims as related to both security and integration take centre stage. Notice of and attention to British Shi`a expanded very little, however. Thus Lewis' 2007 *Young, British and*

[2] Phillip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: religion, politics and identity among British Muslims, Bradford in the 1990s*, London: I B Tauris, 1994, 204. On the Shi`a, see 30, 33.
[3] Daniele Joly, *Britannia's Crescent: Making a Place for Muslims in British Society*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1995, 9, 26, 29, 60-61, 70.
[4] On these, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7_July_2005_London_bombings (acc 21.7.22).

Muslim includes many case studies focussing on specific individuals none of whose sectarian affiliation is identified. References to the Deobandis, Wahabis, and Hizb al-Tahrir, for example, reflected security/integration concerns. On the issue of ulama training, for example, and how this might help foster better integration, the references are all Sunni. London, Bradford, Leicester, and Leeds are the foci of attention. There are no references to Shi`a at all.[5]

The 12 papers in Hopkins and Gale's 2009 *Muslims in Britain, Place and Identities* offer only passing references to the Shi`a. Ismailis are referred to in the introduction and an Iraqi Shi`i woman is cited addressing her 'ecumenism'. The chapter by Anjoom Mukadam and Sharmina Mawani concentrates on the Gujerati Nizari Ismailis who, they suggest, have 'successfully integrated'.[6]

Gilliat-Ray's few references to the Shi`a in her 2010 *Muslims in Britain*, exemplify the top-down, institutional focus. In a text of over 250 pages, Gilliat-Ray, in a two-and-a-half page section on 'The Shī`a in Britain', notes ethnic diversity among the Shi`a and suggests that 'the extent of Shi`a activity overall…is going to be an important area for future research'. Citing three, named, but otherwise unidentified, academics, and absent reference to any sources, she estimates the UK Shi`i population at 320,000 and mentions their numbers as comprising Ismailis, Zaydis, and Twelvers, the latter being 'the largest grouping within the Shī`ā world.' She offers brief identifications of the general doctrinal beliefs of each and their places of embarkation to the UK. She then notes various institutions, but only gives any further information for one, the Majlis Ulama-e Shi`a Europe which, absent any footnote, she says has 30 centres in the UK with the largest in Birmingham. In passing she mentions such institutions as the al-Khoei Foundation, founded in 1989; Birmingham's al-Mahdi Institute, dating to 1993, and London's ICAS (now the Islamic college); all these are Twelver institutions. Gilliat-Ray estimates there are 70 Shi`i mosques in the UK which, she says, are mainly organised along ethnic lines.[7]

Both the cover and the title of Innes Bowen's 2014 *Medina in Birmingham and Najaf in Brent* - with its reference to the Shi`i shrine city of Najaf in Iraq - would seem to have marked a turning point is the coverage of British Muslims. Certainly, there are more pages

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[5] Philip Lewis *Young, British and Muslim*, London: Continuum, 2007, e.g., 89f.

[6] Peter Hopkins and Richard Gale, eds., *Muslims in Britain, Race, Place and Identities*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 15, 106, 150, 152, 162, 166, 180, 184. The Twelvers are the only other Shi`a mentioned by Mukadam and Mawani (152) but absent any discussion of their differentiation from the Ismailis. On the integration of Ismailis, see also n8.

On the 2001 UK census data utilised herein, see further below.

[7] Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain, An Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 61-63. See also 170-171. On 60 she offers a brief discussion of the 'difference (sic)' between Sunni and Shi`i. 62n3 offers the names of further institutions.

On the Shi`a in Ireland in these years, see Oliver Scharbrodt's 'Shaping the Public Image of Islam: The Shi`is of Ireland as "Moderate" Muslims', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 31/4 (2011), 518-33.

devoted to Shi`ism here than in the previous works. But herein, also, references to institutions predominate, and those based in London at that.

Chapter seven (of a total of eight), the chapter on the Shi`a, is entitled 'The Shi`a Twelvers, Najaf in Brent'. This is mainly London-centric, focusing on the Willesden Green area especially. After a very brief discussion of the origins of the Twelver faith, the chapter discusses 'temporary marriage', then marjas – the faith's 'leading religious scholars' -, and Ayatollahs Ali al-Sistani (b. 1930) and Ali Khamanei (b. 1939). Bowan then addresses the various Twelver foundations/institutions. These are Al-Khoei Foundation, the Imam Ali Foundation, the Alulbayt Foundation, and then ICAS which is the Islamic Republic of Iran in London, Birmingham's Al-Mahdi Institute, the Islamic Centre in Maida Vale, near Willesden, Iran's Press TV, and then the Tooting Idara Jaafariya, drawing on those of Indian and Pakistani heritage, and the Clapham Ahl al Bayt centre. Bowen also notes the influence of the Khoja Twelvers, whose roots also are traced to India and thereafter to Tanzania and East Africa. She also mentions the Middlesex Shi`a, known also as Mahfil-e Ali, and refers to the Arabs of the Cricklewood Dar al Islam who draws mainly from Najaf, Basra and Baghdad, and the connections with the Iraqi Dawa party, and the Abrar Islamic Foundation in Edgeware Road in central London. The chapter ends with a discussion of the impact of the Iraq war on the British Shi`a and a discussion of relations with British Sunnis.[8]

The twelve chapters in Peace's 2015 edited volume *Muslims and Political Participation in Britain*, a title hinting at the preoccupation of the field at the time, do not appear to mention the Shi`a at all.[9]

The title of John Bowen's 2016 *On British Islam, Religion law and Everyday Practice in Sharia Councils* also echoes western – UK and US – concerns, but now with Islamisation by stealth. This volume also contains few references to the Shi`a. Mentioned herein is the 1970s' arrival in the UK of Ismailis from Uganda; the UK Shi`a as comprising those from Iran, Lebanon, South Asia and East Africa; the presence of Shi`a, not mentioning any subgroups – where they are called 'Jafari', a term undefined herein, but in South Asia usually referring to the Twelvers - in Bradford; divorce in Lebanon; the Saudi-funded Muslim World League's exclusion of the Shi`a; Shi`a being members of the Muslim Law Council in West London; and the Shi`a, again not referenced by subgroup, having some London-based, but unnamed, centres.[10]

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[8] Innes Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent, Inside British Islam*, London: Hurst and Co, 2014, 135-63. The twenty pages of the following, and last, chapter cover the Ismailis, whose numbers, at 2% of the UK Muslim population, are said to be disproportionate to their 'resources and influence (165).' Here too, the approach is mainly top-down and institutional. Bowen concludes this chapter, and – there is no separate, formal conclusion -, in fact, the book, by stating 'If true faith and true integration for British Muslims are about feeling a love for Britain and its people, then the Ismailis have led the way (185).'

[9] Tim Peace, ed., *Muslims and Political Participation in Britain*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015

[10] John Bowen, *On British Islam, Religion law and Everyday Practice in Sharia Councils*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, 11, 12, 34, 52, 55, 62-63. See also 119, which,

Fergusson wrote his 2017 *Al Britannia* to counter suspicions about 'Islamic terrorists' in the context of the rise of ISIS, the British who left to support them, the refugees fleeing to Europe, and the rise of Trump. He wants to offer his own assessment of the 'Islamist threat'. In the process he finds among British Muslims much anxiety about being blamed for the very tiny number of extremists among them. The author notes that he intends to pay little attention to the Shi`a who, he says, absent any citation, number half a million. He refers to Iranian Shi`a in Glasgow, to some Shi`a attending *iftar* at a mosque in Inverness, the most northerly such mosque in the UK, Shi`i clerics dressing in 'Iranian style turbans and brown robes' in London al-Quds day demonstration, and a bombing in a Shi`i district in Baghdad.[11]

Other books on British Muslims which appeared in these same years also failed to address the British Shi`a in any meaningful way. These included the two works by Sadek Hamid: his 2016 *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists* whose full title reflected the concerns of the day;[12] and his 2017 edited volume *Young British Muslims*.[13] In her 2018 *Muslim Identity Politics* Khadija Elshayyal explicitly refrains from covering the Shi`a.[14]

Across these years, research into England-based Shi`a not cited in the above works includes 2012 and 2018 articles by Spellman-Poots. The former investigates Muharram commemorations in London and the associated Imam Hussein Blood Donation Campaign.[15] The latter examines how younger generations of Shi`a were interacting with coreligionists in ethnic groupings outside their own.[16]

Recently also there has been a growing body of research focussing on the Shi`a as comprised of various diasporic communities which, as such, and especially, possess links to

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absent any substantiating evidence, refers to Sunnis and Shi`a accepting certain legal maxims.

[11] James Fergusson, *Al-Britannia, My Country, A Journey Through Muslim Britain*, London: Bantam Press, 2017, 1, 2, 10, 255, 310, 336, 339.

[12] Sadek Hamid, *Sufis, Salafis and Islamists: the contested ground of British Islamic activism*, London : I.B. Tauris; 2016, 13 (where the Shi`a are mentioned but the author says he will focus on Sunnis); 55 (where the Shi`a are said to have been condemned by Salafis); 161n17 (a passing reference to 'a growing Shi`ite minority' which references the Ismailis, Bohras and Khojas but not Twelvers.

[13] Sadek Hamid, ed., *Young British Muslims: Between Rhetoric and Realities*, London: Routledge, 2016. This volume contains no apparent references to any Shi`a at all.

[14] Khadijah Elshayyal, *Muslim Identity Politics: Islam, Activism and Equality in Britain,* London: I. B. Tauris, 2018. In the epilogue (207) she notes she is devoting minimal attention to the Shi`a; although she there refers to the Al-Khoei Foundation, on 154-55, the Foundation is not, in fact, identified as Shi`i.

[15] Kathryn Spellman-Poots, 'Manifestations of Ashura among Young British Shi`is', in *Ethnographies of Islam*, Baudoin Dupret, et al., eds., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012, 40-49.

[16] Kathryn Spellman-Poots, 'Second-generation Muslims and the making of British Shi`ism' In *Growing Up Muslim in Europe and the United States*, Mehdi Bozorgmehr, et al., eds., Milton Park: Routledge, 2018, 192-208.

transnational networks and institutions. This research, which arose against the background of a growing interest in, and concern with, Shi`i transnationalism more generally,[17] has focused on communities in England, mainly London. Publications in this genre included studies of London-based Iranian,[18] Iraqi,[19] and South Asian Shi`a.[20] Muharram commemorations also have often been a key point of these discussions.[21]

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[17] Both in the wake of the Iranian Revolution and, especially, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, whose toppling of Saddam Hussein resulted in the rise of the dominance of Iraqi politics by Iraqi Shi`i groups, Arab Sunni governments voiced concerns about Shi`i/Iranian expansion across the region; some of these states, such as Saudi Arabia, were well-known for their active intolerance of their own Shi`i minorities. This sectarian discourse, further fuelled by the 2011 'Arab Spring', was widely echoed in the West, also concerned with Iranian expansionism. In this context emerged the study of modern Shi`ism as a 'transnational' faith. On the rise of this discourse, see Laurence Louër, *Transnational Shi`a Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, 4, 7; Frederic Wehrey, ed., *Beyond Sunni and Shi`a: The Roots of Sectarianism in a Changing Middle East*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, 'Introduction (1f)'. In his 'A minority within a minority? the complexity and multilocality of transnational Twelver Shi`a networks in Britain, *Contemporary Islam* 13 (2019), 287-305, Scharbrodt discusses the appearance of literature on Shi`i 'transnationalism'. See, especially, 288.

The 2018 Spellman-Poots' article cited above also refers to diasporic communities and transnational connections (196-98). See, also, her earlier *Religion and nation: Iranian local and transnational networks in Britain*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2004; Spellman-Poots and Reza Gholami, 'Integration, Cultural Production, and Challenges of Identity Construction: Iranians in Great Britain', in *The Iranian diaspora: challenges, negotiations, and transformations*, Mohsen Mostafavi Mobasher, ed., Austin: University of Texas Press; 2018, 93-124; Scharbrodt, 'Creating a Diasporic Public Sphere in Britain: Twelver Shi`a Networks in London', *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, 31/1 (2020), 23-40.

In reality, of course, from its earliest years, the Twelver faith has always been 'transnational'. See our *Twelver Shi`ism: Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam, 632 to 1722*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.

[18] In addition to the works of Spellman-Poots cited above, of the works of Gholami see, for example, '"Is This Islamic Enough?" Intra-Diasporic Secularism and Religious Experience in the Shi'a Iranian Diaspora in London', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40/1 (2014), 60-78; idem, *Secularism and Identity: Non-Islamiosity in the Iranian Diaspora*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2015.

[19] Among the works of Emmanuella Degli Esposti, see 'The aesthetics of ritual – contested identities and conflicting performances in the Iraqi Shi'a diaspora: Ritual, performance and identity change', *Politics*, 38/1 (2018), 68-83.

[20] Sufyan A. Dogra, 'Karbala in London: Battle of Expressions of Ashura Ritual Commemorations among Twelver Shi`a Muslims of South Asian Background', *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 6/2 (2017), 158-78. In the process, Dogra also discussed the influence of 'transnational networks'.

[21] See nn15, 19, 24. See also Yafa Shanneik, 'Shi`a marriage practices: Karbala as lieux de mémoire in London', *Social Sciences*, 6/3 (2017), 100-114.

As to studies of Muslims in Scotland, Fergusson's 2017 passing references to Shi`a in Glasgow and Inverness have been mentioned. Hopkins' 2017 edited volume on Scottish Muslims makes no references to the Shi`a.[22] A 2019 study of Muslims in Inverness likewise did not differentiate among the Muslim faithful discussed therein.[23] Seemingly the only dedicated study of Scotland's Shi`i Muslims across these years is a 2019 article on Muharram commemorations in Edinburgh, complementing the study thereof in English settings.[24]

UK Census Data

It might be argued that research into the UK's Shi`i communities has been hindered by the lack of reliable data on these communities.

It is true that recent UK census exercises have not differentiated among/between different Muslim groups.

The key source of data on the British Muslim population across these years were UK censuses of 2001 and 2011 – in both years there was a single census for England and Wales and separate exercises for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

As highlighted in the 2015 Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) study on the 2011 census for England and Wales, changes between these two census exercises included, for example, that the Muslim population in England and Wales increased from 1.55 million in 2001 to 2.71 million in 2011.

The MCB study also noted that the Muslim population was larger than all other non-Christian faith groups put together, that 47% of Muslims were UK-born, and that the majority of Muslims (76%) lived in the inner-city conurbations of Greater London, the West Midlands, the Northwest, Yorkshire, and Humberside, and that Muslims formed 12.4% of London's population. The Muslim population was ethnically diverse – 68% Asian (1.83 million of 2.71 million) and 32% non-Asian. 1 in 12 was of White ethnicity (8% of the Muslim population). 73% of Muslims stated that their only national identity is British (or other UK identity only). The population growth was explained by such factors as: an age profile skewed to the younger age bands raising children, the proportion of females in the age band of higher fertility and more people being born than dying, immigration from Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan – mainly economic migrants or refugees, traditions of larger families in some ethnic groups, better response to the religion question and possibilities of undercounting in 2001, and adoption of the Muslim faith.[25]

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[22] Peter Hopkins, ed., *Scotland's Muslims: Society, Politics and Identity*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

[23] Marina Salnikova and Bruce D'Arcus, 'Spaces of Muslim Identity in Inverness, Scotland', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 39:1 (2019), 106-117.

[24] Fayaz Alibhai, 'Twelver Shi`a in Edinburgh: marking Muharram, mourning Husayn', *Contemporary Islam* 13 (2019), 325-348. See also nn15, 19, 20.

[25] Sundas Ali, et al., *British Muslims in Numbers*, London: Muslim Council of Britain, 2015. See, especially, for example, tables 3 and 4 on changing ethnicity, table 6 on Muslims in

As to Scotland, Elshayyal's 2016 study unpacked the 2011 Scottish census data. Therein the census showed that the Muslim population in Scotland had increased from 42,557 in 2001 to 76,737 in 2011, representing an 80% increase over 10 years and that Muslims in Scotland are an ethnically diverse population: a majority of Muslims are South Asian (65%), 9.8% are Arab, and 7.8% are White, while 7% are Black. Muslims make up just under 40% of the Scottish Asian population, 15% of the Black category and over 80% of the Arab population. The total Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population of Scotland was estimated at about 211,000. With 70,754 Muslims falling into these ethnic categories, Muslims make up 33.5% of the BME population. 75% of Muslims lived in Glasgow (43.6%), Lothian (19%) and Northeast Scotland (11.8%), mainly concentrated in the cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, and Aberdeen. While there are Muslims in all of Scotland's council areas, the city council with the highest concentration of Muslims was Glasgow (5%), and within Glasgow, Dundee, and East Renfrewshire, some wards had significant concentrations of Muslim population. Pollokshields and Southside Central (both in Glasgow) were the wards with the highest concentration of Muslim residents – 27.8% and 15.7% respectively. 30% of the Muslim population was aged 15 or under in 2011, compared to 17% of the total population. For the 65+ age band, the figure for Muslims is 3.3%, compared with 17% for the population as a whole. Other issues in the census addressed by Elshayyal include English language skills, employment, and perceptions of national identity.[26]

While these exercises did solicit information about these issues as well as about ethnicity and self-perceptions of national identity, for example, there is no sense from the data as to what any of these might mean for the English and Welsh, or Scottish, Sunni and Shi`i populations. Indeed, in the question on religious self-identification in the 2001 and 2011 census for England and Wales there was no way to record that self-identification with a possible religious 'sub-affiliation' or 'denomination' for Muslims or). For Christians, although there was also no space for to allow for such identification in any of these exercises, internal differentiation was recognised. In each, the tick box for 'Christian' was then followed by '(including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)'. The 2001 Welsh form did the same, but the 2011 and 2021 Welsh forms followed this box with '(all denominations)'.[27] The same applied in the cases of the 2021

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urban settings, and tables 7 and 8 on changing age profiles. The study can be downloaded at: https://mcb.org.uk/report/british-muslims-in-numbers/ (acc 5.8.23).

[26] Khadijah Elshayyal, *Scottish Muslims in Numbers, Understanding Scotland's Muslim population through the 2011 Census*, Edinburgh: The Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World [2016].
This survey can be downloaded at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/alwaleed/research/muslims-in-europe/scottish-muslims-in-numbers (acc 30.7.22)
On Northern Ireland see n29.

[27] As available via the links at:
https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/learning-hub/census/about-uk-censuses/census-forms/
(acc 30.7.22

This said, analyses of the data from the 2001 census was said to suggest – absent any firm evidence - that of the UK's 1520 mosques, 67 – 2% of the total number of mosques in

census for both England and Wales. In all of these exercises, the religion 'question' was marked as voluntary.[28]

Scotland's 2001 and 2011 census exercises allowed for self-identification within Christian, but not Muslim, groups.[29]

By contrast, Scotland's 2021 census, carried out in 2022 owing to the pandemic, allowed respondents identifying as 'Muslim' to 'write in denomination or school' in a separate box just as it allowed self-identification within Christian groups. In both the 2011 and the 2021/22 census the religion 'question' was voluntary.[30]

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the UK – were Shi`i, of which 20 were located in London; that 10% of British Muslims are Shi`i, though perhaps as many as 400k; that the key Shi`i population centres were London (of some 36 000), Birmingham, Manchester and the Midlands; and, as far as places of origin, these were mainly Iraq and Iran, with large numbers from Pakistan, India, Turkey, Lebanon and East Africa. See Mehmood Naqshbandi, 'Islam and Muslims in Britain – A Guide for Non-Muslims', London: City of London Police, 2004, 6; this source can be downloaded from http://guide.muslimsinbritain.org/guide1.html (acc 30.7.22). See also Esther Addley, 'A glad day for mourning', *The Guardian*, 28 June, 2003 (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/jun/28/religion.uk); 'Ramadan ding-dong', *The Economist*, 27 June, 2015 (https://www.economist.com/britain/2015/06/27/ramadan-ding-dong). Both of these were accessed 28.3.22.
The last of these, published in 2015, highlighted the influence of rising sectarianism abroad on the domestic scene; only Bradford was cited as an example, however. On Bradford, see n2.

[28] https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/questiondevelopment/census2021paperquestionnaires (acc 17.7.22)

[29] https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/learning-hub/census/about-uk-censuses/census-forms/ (acc 28.7.23).

As for Northern Ireland, question 8 in the 2001 census did not list Islam as a separate faith group nor did questions 17 and 18 in the 2011 census or questions 13 and 14 in the 2021 census. See the first two as downloadable from the site in n27. That for the 2021 census can be found at:
https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2021-census-questionnaires
Each of these questions did, however, have 'write-in' spaces.
In 2016 the BBC estimated there were some 5000 Muslims in NI. See
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-36301548 (acc 19.7.22).

[30] On the 2021 questions, see
https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/scotland-s-census-2022-question-set/
(acc 11.4.22). On the delay to 2022, see
https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/news-and-events/news-release-scotland-s-census-to-be-moved-to-march-2022/ (acc 11.4.22).

Scotland's 2001 census featured an additional question, also not marked as voluntary, about the 'religion, religious denomination or body' in which the respondent was 'brought up'. This question also allowed for self-identification within Christian, but not Muslim, groups.

Scottish Shi`i Voices
None of the scholarship above is any substitute for allowing people the opportunity to speak for themselves.

The turn that this RSE-funded project took to 'Scottish Shi`i Voices' was intended to offer such an opportunity. The added interest of Edinburgh University's Alwaleed Centre in this trajectory stemmed from their own involvement with the 'Colourful Heritage' project, now in its tenth year.[31]

The seven interviews here were conducted, unrehearsed, in the Spring of 2018. These were edited by our own team and returned back to each interviewee who then gave their final OK for them to be uploaded.

The interviewees were asked some questions along the way but were free to respond to these as they chose.

These interviews both tell individual stories in the interviewees' own words but, also reveal much about the diverse background and experiences of Scotland's Twelver Shi`i community.

We hope you will find these interesting and thought-provoking. We hope, also, to add to these over time.

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[31] https://www.colourfulheritage.com/ (acc 21.7.22).