

Muslims

in the

Canadian Mosaic

*Socio-Cultural and
Economic Links
With Their
Countries of Origin*

ZOHRA HUSAINI



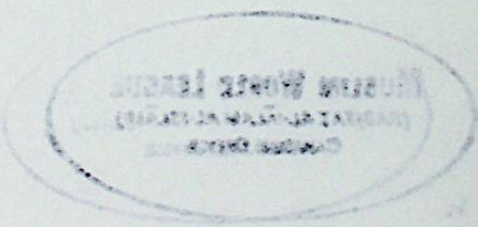
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FOREWORD

The social and political ferment in countries of the Muslim world has undoubtedly stimulated renewed interest in the study of Islam and Muslims on a global scale. Partly as an outgrowth of this, scholarly interest in resident Muslim communities in such countries as the United States, Canada, Britain and other Western European countries is on the increase, but it is still far below the desirable level. Hence, a more intensified intellectual effort to enhance our understanding of world Muslims is needed at this time.

With specific reference to Canada, when the thoughtful Canadian reflects on the social status of ethnic and religious minorities, and asks why it is that such minorities are often misunderstood and erroneously represented in the media, that person must inevitably conclude that the available knowledge base upon which to draw is indeed limited, sometimes misleading and often outdated. Nowhere is the knowledge base issue of greater importance than in the case of Canadian Muslims. Today it is estimated there are about 200,000 Muslims in Canada, the large majority of whom are immigrants or descendants of immigrants who arrived within the past twenty-five years. It is a fact that research on the Canadian Muslim community is still in its infancy, even though the community's social and demographic situation warrants greater scholarly attention. In light of this, Dr Zohra Husaini's book is a welcome addition to the existing literature on Muslims in Canada.

In this book Dr Husaini attempts to capture certain aspects of the Muslim experience in Canada which have not been studied previously. She correctly notes that Canadian Muslims occupy a unique position in the Canadian cultural Mosaic. My intent here is not to describe Dr Husaini's method or summarize her book, but I serve the reader by enumerating a few points of emphasis which, implicitly or explicitly, run through the analysis.

First, Muslims bring to Canada a universal religious tradition which has had a recognized impact on world civilization. Closer to home, Canadian Muslims have made significant contributions to the development of this country. Given these two facts, it seems that the commonly used phrase "Judeo-Christian civilization," which depicts current perceptions of the traditions on which Western civilization is founded, can more appropriately be amended to read "Judeo-Christian-Muslim civilization."

A second point of emphasis in this volume pertains to the diversity of Canadian Muslims, as they represent different national, linguistic and cultural origins. They are indeed a mosaic within the larger Canadian mosaic. While they share the same religious designation, Canadian Muslims face numerous challenges in the new environment, not the least of which is coherence as a multiethnic community. This is a matter which religious and lay community leaders need to address on an ongoing basis.

Another challenge facing Muslims in Canada — a challenge which reflects the third point of emphasis in this book — concerns the process by which Islamic norms and values are reconciled with the norms and values of a secular, predominantly Christian society that is Canada. The specific challenge for Muslims here is to participate fully in Canadian society and institutions, while maintaining loyalty and commitment to Muslim values and institutions on the one hand, and successfully transmitting the religious tradition to their children on the other.

The final point of emphasis to which I wish to refer, and to which considerable space is devoted in the book, concerns the links which Canadian Muslims have established at the international level. The reader can not help but be impressed with the array of social, cultural, religious, developmental and trade links which Canadian Muslims have established with their countries of origin as well as with other countries. The study underlines opportunities for Canada and for Muslim countries to strengthen the bonds of mutual friendship and understanding, with Canadian Muslims serving as a bridge between the two sides.

Cognizant of the need to promote greater understanding of Canadian Muslims, the Muslim Research Foundation, an Edmonton based nonprofit organization, is pleased to publish this important research monograph. It is the first in a series of publications projected

for the next few years. As well, the Foundation has sensed a pressing need for compiling a comprehensive source of information about Muslims in other parts of the world. Accordingly, it is in the process of developing appropriate plans for the publication of a three-volume Encyclopedia of World Muslims.

This book is a product of a collaborative effort between Dr Husaini and the Foundation's first president, the late Professor Syed M.A. Hameed. The research report was drafted prior to Professor Hameed's premature death, but then it was revised for publication.

Professor Hameed was an inspiring man, with a great vision and commitment to the enhancement of world understanding of the Muslim people, their way of life, their thoughts and their aspirations. He was the founder of the Muslim Research Foundation and the driving force behind this study of Canadian Muslims as well as the encyclopedia project. It is a fitting tribute to this outstanding man to dedicate this book to his memory.

The work on which this publication is based was supported by grants from the Alberta Cultural Heritage Foundation (now Alberta Multicultural Commission); Alberta Ministry of Economic Development and Trade; Department of the Secretary of State, Ottawa; Arab Student Aid International, USA; and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. We are grateful for this support, without which the publication of this book would not have been possible.

Special thanks are also due to all the respondents and resource persons who graciously welcomed Dr Husaini and gave generously of their time and ideas, and to Mr. Zahid Makhdoom for editorial assistance and desk-top publishing the manuscript. Finally, I wish to thank Dr Ibrahim Alladin, who chairs the Muslim Research Foundation's Publications Committee, for his editorial assistance and for looking after the many details involved in printing and publishing this book.

Baha Abu-Laban, Ph.D.
President
Muslim Research Foundation.

Edmonton, Alberta
November 8, 1990

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Muslims in the Canadian Mosaic

the book

This book examines certain aspects of Muslims' experiences in Canada which have not been studied previously. It provides a thorough analysis of the unique position of Muslims in Canadian society. In addition, the book highlights the importance of their economic and cultural links with countries of their origin, the Muslim world and other countries.

- *This book is an intellectual effort to enhance our understanding of world Muslims, -- Dr. Ibrahim Alladin*
- *A valuable addition to the existing literature on Muslims in Canada, -- Dr. M.K. Bacchus*

the author

Zohra Husaini received her M.Litt. from Cambridge, U.K. and Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Alberta. She has taught and researched extensively in India and Canada. Presently, she is an Adjunct Professor at the Centre for International Education and Development, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

the publisher

The Muslim Research Foundation was established in 1985. The Foundation seeks to:

- promote research and scholarship on world Muslims;
- enhance world understanding of Muslim people, their way of life, their thoughts and aspirations;
- assist in identifying the challenges and opportunities facing world Muslims in preparation for the twenty-first century.