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Review of Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure, edited by Tahir Abbas

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Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure. Edited by Tahir Abbas. London: Zed Books, 2005. ISBN: 1-84277-449-2 (pbk). Review doi: 10.1558/CIS.v2i2.192

Tahir Abbas is to be commended for his edited collection of essays about Muslim life in Britain post 9/11. With the recent terrorist attacks in London on July 7, 2005, the book is, sadly, even more relevant today than when it was published. It is required reading for those of us interested in Islam and Muslim communities in modern Britain.

This volume consists of 15 chapters, as well as a Foreword by Tariq Modood and an Afterword by John Rex. It is divided into four sections: "From Islam to British Muslims...", "Islamophobia, Identity Politics and Multiculturalism," "Media Representation, Gender and Radical Islam," and "Temporal and Spatial Ethnic and Religious Identities." The chapters are uniformly excellent, each of them contributing to our understanding. The volume is multi-disciplinary, bringing in contributors from various fields, with a good mix of established scholars as well as newer scholarly voices.

While it is difficult to single out particular authors for specific praise, one is thankful for Ceri Peach's chapter, "Britain's Muslim Population: An Overview." This gives us wonderful quantitative information. On the other end, Stephen Lyon's delightful chapter, "In the Shadow of September 11: Multiculturalism and Identity," gives a qualitative description of two particular British Muslim lives. Both the qualitative and the quantitative are important in understanding Muslim experiences in Britain, and it is important that both sorts of studies are included in this book. Jonathan Birt's chapter, "Lobbying and Marching: British Muslims and the State," is also important as it points out the ways in which British Muslim organizations were used (and allowed themselves to be used) by the British government.

As with any work, there are minor issues that one wishes had been addressed. There is no mention, for example, of Nabil Matar's magisterial book, *Islam in Britain, 1558–1685*, which would have provided a helpful historical context in the first section. One also looks in vain in the bibliography for references to the anti-racist work that Salman Rushdie did in Britain in the 1980s (collected, for example, in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*). Unfortunately, there are a small number of niggling errors which annoy serious scholars. These should have been caught at some point in the editorial process. So for example we have "Alizhar" for "Al-Azhar," "Ilma" for what surely must be "ijma'," and "Malise, R." for "Ruthven, M." in the bibliography. Also, some of the chapter titles in the table of contents do not match the titles of the individual chapters. So, for example, we have "British South Asian Muslims: State and Multicultural Society" as a title in the table of contents, but "British South Asian Muslims: before and after September 11" as the chapter title, or "Muslims in the UK" replaced with "Britain's Muslim Population: an Overview." These errors aside, one hopes that this book is read by a wide audience, which it so richly deserves. This book is required reading for those of us interested in the broader question of what it means to be human in the modern world.

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