

Debates on civilization in the Muslim world: critical perspectives on Islam and modernity

Sunar, Lutfi, author

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Abstrak

Since its birth as a concept, civilization has been defined by an encounter with the other. Barbarism, the ever-ready counter concept, has provided civilization with its *raison detre*, that of exerting violence upon other societies to civilize them. Enlightenment thinkers defined civilization as an opponent of nature, while science and technology, tools with which nature was to be conquered, became one of the basic indicators of development. Thus was formed the unbroken tie between civilization and science. In the Muslim world, civilization became a synonym for modernization, a lifestyle imposed by the colonialists and their local counterparts. However, as this volume reveals, the resistance to and reception of Western modernity by non-Western societies is not homogenous, nor is the othering unidirectional. If the Orientalist discourse portrayed the Islamic East as an exotic, seductive, and untamed other, a corresponding Occidentalism also stereotyped the West as the soulless, mechanistic other to Islam. Challenging the embedded prejudices within social theory, *Debates on Civilization in the Muslim World* questions the Eurocentric understanding of civilization and also explores the themes of modernization, globalization, and the future of the civilization debate.