



Situating Islam (Religion in Culture)

Aaron Hughes

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The formation of any scholarly discourse is contingent upon the creation of a vocabulary and a set of categories responsible for manufacturing the data that it deems "significant" or not. The discovery of raw data, the manufacture of theoretical or interpretive frameworks that make sense of such data, and subsequent scholarly conventions responsible for its dissemination are always mediated by particular social, ideological, and political contexts. This book documents these contexts in the creation of the discipline known as Islamic Studies and demonstrates how they have been instrumental in shaping how we think about Islam in both the academy and, especially post 9/11, in the media. This volume argues that knowledge of Islam has never been innocent or about the simple collection of facts, but that the interpretive lenses used to study Islam have always been and continue to be caught up with larger forces (e.g., the reform of Judaism, Orientalism, identity politics of the 1960s, 9/11, the fight against terrorism, the creation of a liberal Islam). Whereas previous work is content to show the nefarious influence of Orientalism in the creation of Islamic data and the formation of an essentialized Islam, *Situating Islam* argues that the opposite approach - the construction of an authentic Islam that coincides effortlessly with Western values - is equally problematic. The work concludes by examining how Islamic data has the potential to help us better understand how we construct and contest "religion."

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