“Civilization, Custom, Culture: Three Concepts of Freedom in Colonial Bengal”

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Abstract: The global dissemination of fundamental concepts of social and political thought indexes the generalization of certain kinds of historical problematics. Civilization, custom and culture were all concepts that could be used to frame discourses of emancipation; but they also named quite different visions of emancipation. I shall outline the sequential elaboration of discourses of civilization, custom and culture in nineteenth century Bengal, with a primary focus on their role in articulating competing conceptions of freedom.

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