



A reassessment of civilization

By George Gale, James C. Scott
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James C. Scott investigates a major question in human history: “How did urban civilization arise?” [...] As Scott notes, “the sequence of progress from hunting and gathering to nomadism to agriculture (and from band to village to town to city) was settled doctrine” (9). It was held by philosophers and thinkers from Thomas Hobbes to Locke to Vico to Spengler and the social Darwinists (9). Scott casts doubt on the received view, mobilizing recent discoveries and new methods that have provided striking evidence against this long-standing narrative:

The narrative of this process has typically been told as one of progress, of civilization and public order, and of increasing health and leisure. Given what we now know, much of this narrative is wrong or seriously misleading. The purpose of this book is to call that narrative into question on the basis of my reading of the advances in archaeological and historical research of the past two decades.

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