



Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance (Cornell Studies in Comparative History)

Michael Adas

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Over the past five centuries, advances in Western understanding of and control over the material world have strongly influenced European responses to non-Western peoples and cultures. In *Machines as the Measure of Men*, Michael Adas explores the ways in which European perceptions of their scientific and technological superiority shaped their interactions with people overseas. Adopting a broad, comparative perspective, he analyzes European responses to the cultures of sub-Saharan Africa, India, and China, cultures that they judged to represent lower levels of material mastery and social organization.

Beginning with the early decades of overseas expansion in the sixteenth century, Adas traces the impact of scientific and technological advances on European attitudes toward Asians and Africans and on their policies for dealing with colonized societies. He concentrates on British and French thinking in the nineteenth century, when, he maintains, scientific and technological measures of human worth played a critical role in shaping arguments for the notion of racial supremacy and the "civilizing mission" ideology which were used to justify Europe's domination of the globe. Finally, he examines the reasons why many Europeans grew dissatisfied with and even rejected this gauge of human worth after World War I, and explains why it has remained important to Americans.

Showing how the scientific and industrial revolutions contributed to the development of European imperialist ideologies, *Machines as the Measure of Men* highlights the cultural factors that have nurtured disdain for non-Western accomplishments and value systems. It also indicates how these attitudes, in shaping policies that restricted the diffusion of scientific knowledge, have perpetuated themselves, and contributed significantly to chronic underdevelopment throughout the developing world. Adas's far-reaching and provocative book will be compelling reading for all who are concerned about the history of Western imperialism and its legacies.

First published to wide acclaim in 1989, *Machines as the Measure of Men* is now available in a new edition that features a preface by the author that discusses how subsequent developments in gender and race studies, as well as global technology and politics, enter into conversation with his original arguments.

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