

## **Preface**

**Nilüfer Göle**

Since the Iranian revolution of 1979 and especially the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the relations between Islam and the Western world have usually been examined at the macro level of political regimes, terrorism, or cultural-religious differences. This book, however, privileges the analysis of the micro processes by focusing upon emerging Muslim profiles and practices in public life. Different trajectories of Muslim actors who refer to religion in shaping their personal identities and public behavior are studied in three different publics, namely, secularist Turkey, post-Islamic Iran, and Europe, the latter being the site of a pluralist diaspora of Muslim migrants.

The three publics that the case studies focus upon represent social contexts in which Muslims are in minority and majority positions in European and non-European contexts respectively, thereby allowing for a comparison between secular and Islamic definitions of the public sphere as well as the interactions between the two that transform both sides.

In this book, we pay particular attention to the ways through which Muslim actors become personally and collectively active participants in public life, thereby problematizing, challenging, and redrawing the conventional boundaries between private and public. We contend that the participation of Muslim actors in public life does not represent a linear, conflict-free evolution towards modern conceptions of self and public; rather, it calls for a closer examination of the new political and cultural issues raised by the public claims of Muslim actors that in turn challenge the Eurocentric definitions of private-public spheres and religious-secular oppositions.

This book is the outcome of an international project directed by Nilüfer Göle (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris) for the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut in Essen (1999-2002). The working ideas and hypotheses of this book were developed in a series of workshops and conferences held at KWI Essen and Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. The core group of this research team was comprised of Nilüfer Göle, a sociologist, Ludwig Ammann, a historian of Islam, and Christian Geulen, a historian of Western public spheres. This combination of researchers provided for an interdisciplinary frame of thought, while the empirical case studies from Turkey and Iran as Muslim-majority countries and from France and Germany as Muslim-minority countries provided the comparative perspective. Bringing researchers of Islam together with others from outside this particular field has allowed us to formulate the questions presented in this book regarding definitions of self, religion, difference, and public in such a manner that it should appeal not only to specialists of Islam, but to those interested in social scientific analysis in general as well.