

Preface

This book is more of a conjunction than a collaboration of its two authors. The several studies on kingship and kingly politics assembled here were originally conceived and written separately by one or the other—for conferences or on other occasions—and were then elaborated with these common purposes in mind. Accordingly, the effect is a set of complementary observations on kingship rather than a cumulative and sustained argument. The closest thing to the latter is the Introduction, where we gather the observations on various aspects of kingship featured in the several individual studies. It almost goes without saying that the overall result is a work “on kings,” but not all about kings: it does not pretend to deal with kingship in all its structural dimensions and historical manifestations. Except where otherwise indicated, our observations on kingship concern its so-called “traditional,” premodern, or archaic forms—which are, however, its most common, indeed archetypal, forms.

Of the seven essays comprising the book, all but two are published here for the first time. The exceptions are Marshall Sahlins’ “The original political society” (chapter 1, published simultaneously with this book in *HAV: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7 [2], 2017: 91–128) and David Graeber’s “The divine kingship of the Shilluk: On violence, utopia, and the human condition” (chapter 2, original: *HAV: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 1 [1], 2011: 1–62). “The original political society” is based on the Inaugural Arthur M. Hocart Lecture at SOAS, University of London, April 29, 2016). Chapter 3 by Sahlins, “The atemporal dimensions of history: In the old Kongo kingdom, for example,” was developed from

a paper in the conference on *The varieties of historical experience* at the University of Chicago (April 2014); chapter 4 by Sahlins, “The stranger-kingship of the Mexica,” was a plenary lecture at the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration of the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico (October 2014); chapter 5 by Graeber, “People as nursemaids of the king: notes on monarchs as children, women’s uprisings, and the return of the ancestral dead in central Madagascar,” was written for this volume but appeared in abbreviated form as “Le peuple, nurse du roi: notes sur les monarques enfants dans le centre de Madagascar,” in *Madagascar, d’une crise l’autre: ruptures et continuité*, edited by Mireille Razafindrakoto, François Roubaud, and Jean-Michel Wachsberger (Paris: ORSTOM, 2017, pp. 120–44); chapter 6 by Sahlins, “Cultural politics of core–periphery relations,” was developed from the keynote lecture of a conference on Cultural imperialism and soft power at the University of Chicago Center, Beijing (December 2016); and chapter 7 by Graeber, “Notes on the politics of divine kingship: Or, elements for an archaeology of sovereignty,” was written for this volume and has not been published elsewhere in any form.

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