

Preface and Acknowledgments

Mathieu Charbonneau

To be culturally successful, techniques must be both effective in achieving their practical goals and efficiently transmittable from one generation to the next. To secure practical efficiency, techniques should be used flexibly, whereas, to secure cultural stability, they should, it seems, be transmitted rigidly. How are these two conflicting demands reconciled? The contributions to this volume, coming from different disciplines, address the causal factors and impacts of both flexibility and rigidity in the ways techniques are used, transformed, reconstructed, modified, and diffused through time and at varying social and timescales.

To address these issues, we invited contributors from different disciplines, including anthropology, cognitive psychology, primatology, archaeology, philosophy, and history to participate in an online five-month webinar that took place from September 2020 to January 2021. There, they presented early drafts of their contributions to be discussed online by all contributors, allowing each to gain a substantial understanding of the other contributions, to get feedback on their own ideas, and to engage in critical discussions aimed at a better overall integration of the collective project. We intended as a second step to have an in-person workshop at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, where all contributors would present a prefinal draft of their chapter and directly interact with one another. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this event had to be canceled. Instead, completed drafts were submitted in the summer and fall of 2021, following which philosopher Kim Sterelny wrote his final discussion chapter.

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from promise to reality. Last but not least, special thanks to Dan Sperber, who offered invaluable support and mentorship throughout the making of the volume.

References

Brintzer, Cameron Marcus. 2022. "Culturing Evolution: A History and Anthropology of a Cognitive Science of Culture in Illiberal Hungary." PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania.

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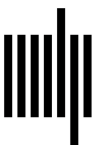
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