Contents

List of figures viii
Acknowledgments xi
List of abbreviations xiv

1 Performing politics 1
Politics and ritual in the past and present 3
The 2,500-year celebration at Persepolis 4
The French Revolution 8
Royal processions in Majapahit 11
The Fiesta de Santa Fe 14
Maya ancestors and patron deities 18
Ritual, religion, and practice 25
Performative traces 32
Movement, history, and tradition 35

2 Movement 40
An event that models: the Ebla coronation ritual 40
Movement and perception 42
Kingdoms, cities, artisans, and officials 47
Borders, city walls, and open spaces 54
Limiting access 54
Inclusive spaces 61
Beyond the city 66
Collective representations: pilgrimages and political power 67
Pilgrimages and sacred journeys at Ebla 68
The archaeology of pilgrimage at Ebla 69
The Syrian ritual 71
Materialized symbols: cult centers in the countryside 74
Gre Virike 74
Hazna 76
Jebel al-Beda 77
Tell Banat 79
Contents

3 Memory

An event that presents: the Feast of Ištar and the kispum ritual 92
Memory, mourning, and legitimacy 94
Political instability 99
Old Babylonian kingdoms 99
Tribal politics 101
The dynamics of resettlement 104
History and the politics of emplacement 108
Middle Bronze Age economics 110
Collective representations: the past in the past 112
Literature, history, and the ancestors 112
Divine will and divination 117
Materialized symbols: death, ritual, and the authority of the past in daily life 120
The archaeology of death and ritual 120
Ancestors, monuments, and politics 128
The past, heirlooms, and legitimacy 135
Actors, audience, and mise-en-scène: ancestors, tribes, and politics 142
Kings and the politics of commemoration 142
Tribes, towns, councils, and ancestors 146
Conclusion: mourning and memory 149

4 Tradition

An event that re-presents: the Akitu festival 153
Invented traditions 155
Hellenistic Babylonia 158
The city and countryside 159
Settlement, irrigation, and trade 160
Seleucid urbanism 163
Domestic practices 168
Consuming empire? Pottery and foodways 168
Figurines and domestic life 174
Coins, debt, and payment 179
Collective representations: scholarly texts, history, and the transmission of knowledge 181
Preserving scholarly knowledge 182
Astrology, astronomy, and history 185
Materialized symbols: temples and tradition 194
Rebuilding the temple 194
The temple, the assembly, and civil authority 201
Archives, administration, and community 203

Actors, audience, and mise-en-scène: pilgrimage centers 81
Constructing kingdoms 82
Death, ancestors, and power 87
Conclusion: urban spaces, pilgrimage networks, and the rise of political complexity 89

3 Memory

An event that presents: the Feast of Ištar and the kispum ritual 92
Memory, mourning, and legitimacy 94
Political instability 99
Old Babylonian kingdoms 99
Tribal politics 101
The dynamics of resettlement 104
History and the politics of emplacement 108
Middle Bronze Age economics 110
Collective representations: the past in the past 112
Literature, history, and the ancestors 112
Divine will and divination 117
Materialized symbols: death, ritual, and the authority of the past in daily life 120
The archaeology of death and ritual 120
Ancestors, monuments, and politics 128
The past, heirlooms, and legitimacy 135
Actors, audience, and mise-en-scène: ancestors, tribes, and politics 142
Kings and the politics of commemoration 142
Tribes, towns, councils, and ancestors 146
Conclusion: mourning and memory 149

4 Tradition

An event that re-presents: the Akitu festival 153
Invented traditions 155
Hellenistic Babylonia 158
The city and countryside 159
Settlement, irrigation, and trade 160
Seleucid urbanism 163
Domestic practices 168
Consuming empire? Pottery and foodways 168
Figurines and domestic life 174
Coins, debt, and payment 179
Collective representations: scholarly texts, history, and the transmission of knowledge 181
Preserving scholarly knowledge 182
Astrology, astronomy, and history 185
Materialized symbols: temples and tradition 194
Rebuilding the temple 194
The temple, the assembly, and civil authority 201
Archives, administration, and community 203
### Contents

Actors, audience, and mise-en-scène: kings, priests, and festivals  205  
Conclusion: performing tradition  209  

5 Community  211  
Performance and public events in the ancient Near East  211  
Performing community  213  
States and instability  217  
Political strategies  224  
Continuity  227  

Notes  229  
Works cited  245  
Index  307