



In the King's Shadow

Philip Manow

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It is commonly assumed that the rise of modern democracies put an end to the spectacular and ceremonial aspects of political rule that were so characteristic of monarchies and other earlier regimes. The medieval idea that the king had two bodies - a mortal physical body and an eternal political body - strikes us today as alien and remote from our understanding of politics: with the transition from monarchy to modern representative democracy, the idea of the body politic was abandoned. Or was it?

In this remarkable and highly original book Philip Manow shows that the body politic, though so often pronounced dead, remains alive in modern democracies. It is just one of the many ideas that we have inherited from our predecessors and that continue to shape our modern forms of political life. Why did the semi-circle become the main seating plan for modern parliaments? Why do we think that parliament should mirror the diversity of society? Why does the president's motorcade always have more than one identical-looking Cadillac? Why do we pay so much attention to the physical features and appearance - the body - of our political leaders today? In answering these and other questions Manow sheds fresh light on the pre-modern origins of our modern political institutions and practices and shows convincingly that all political power - including democracy - requires and produces its own political mythology.

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