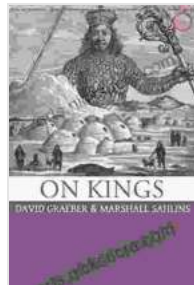


# On Kings: David Graeber's Radical Rethinking of Political Power

In his groundbreaking book, *On Kings*, David Graeber argues that the concept of kingship is not a natural or inevitable form of political organization. Rather, it is a relatively recent invention that has been used to justify and maintain systems of inequality and oppression.



## **On Kings** by David Graeber

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 2232 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 558 pages



Graeber traces the history of kingship from its origins in the ancient Near East to its modern manifestations in the West, and he shows how it has been used to justify everything from slavery to colonialism. He also argues that kingship is not the only way to organize society, and he offers a vision of a more egalitarian and democratic future that is free from the tyranny of kings.

## **The Origins of Kingship**

The earliest known kings emerged in the ancient Near East around 3500 BCE. These kings were typically military leaders who ruled over small city-

states. They were responsible for maintaining law and order, leading armies into battle, and performing religious rituals.

Over time, the power of kings grew. They began to accumulate wealth and land, and they established large bureaucracies to administer their kingdoms. They also began to claim divine authority for their rule, and they often used this authority to justify their own excesses.

## **Kingship in the West**

The concept of kingship was brought to the West by the Greeks and Romans. The Greeks developed a system of city-states, each of which was ruled by a king. The Romans developed a more centralized form of government, but they also had a king, who was known as the emperor.

In the Middle Ages, kingship became the dominant form of political organization in Europe. Kings ruled over large territories, and they had absolute power over their subjects. They often used this power to oppress their people, and they often led their countries into war.

## **The Decline of Kingship**

The power of kings began to decline in the late Middle Ages. The rise of the nation-state and the development of new technologies made it more difficult for kings to maintain their authority. In addition, the spread of Enlightenment ideas led to a growing demand for democracy and equality.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, most European countries abolished their monarchies. Today, only a few countries still have kings, and their power is largely symbolic.

## **Graeber's Critique of Kingship**

Graeber argues that kingship is not a natural or inevitable form of political organization. Rather, it is a relatively recent invention that has been used to justify and maintain systems of inequality and oppression.

Graeber points out that there are many other ways to organize society. He cites the example of the Iroquois Confederacy, which was a highly democratic and egalitarian society that existed in North America before the arrival of Europeans.

Graeber also argues that kingship is not necessary for social order. He points out that many societies have functioned perfectly well without kings. In fact, he argues that kingship often leads to social disorder, as kings often use their power to oppress their people.

## **A Vision of a Kingless Future**

Graeber offers a vision of a more egalitarian and democratic future that is free from the tyranny of kings. He argues that we need to move beyond the idea of a single leader who has absolute power over everyone else.

Instead, Graeber proposes a system of decentralized governance in which power is shared among many different people. He also proposes a system of economic democracy in which everyone has a say in how the economy is run.

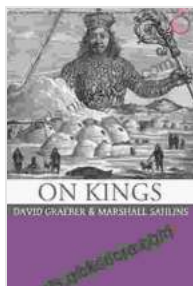
Graeber's vision of a kingless future is a radical one. However, it is a vision that is worth considering. If we want to create a more just and equitable world, we need to move beyond the old ways of doing things. We need to find

new ways to organize ourselves, and we need to find new ways to make decisions.

On Kings is a groundbreaking book that challenges our assumptions about political power. Graeber argues that kingship is not a natural or inevitable form of political organization, but rather a relatively recent invention that has been used to justify and maintain systems of inequality and oppression. He offers a vision of a more egalitarian and democratic future that is free from the tyranny of kings.

Graeber's book is a must-read for anyone who is interested in politics, history, or social theory. It is a challenging book, but it is also a rewarding one. Graeber's insights are sharp, and his writing is clear and engaging.

If you are ready to rethink your assumptions about political power, then I urge you to read On Kings.



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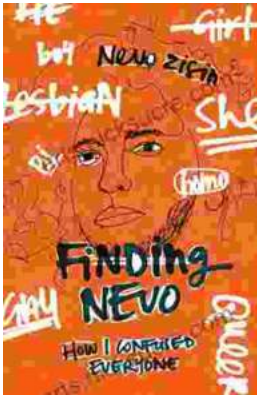
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