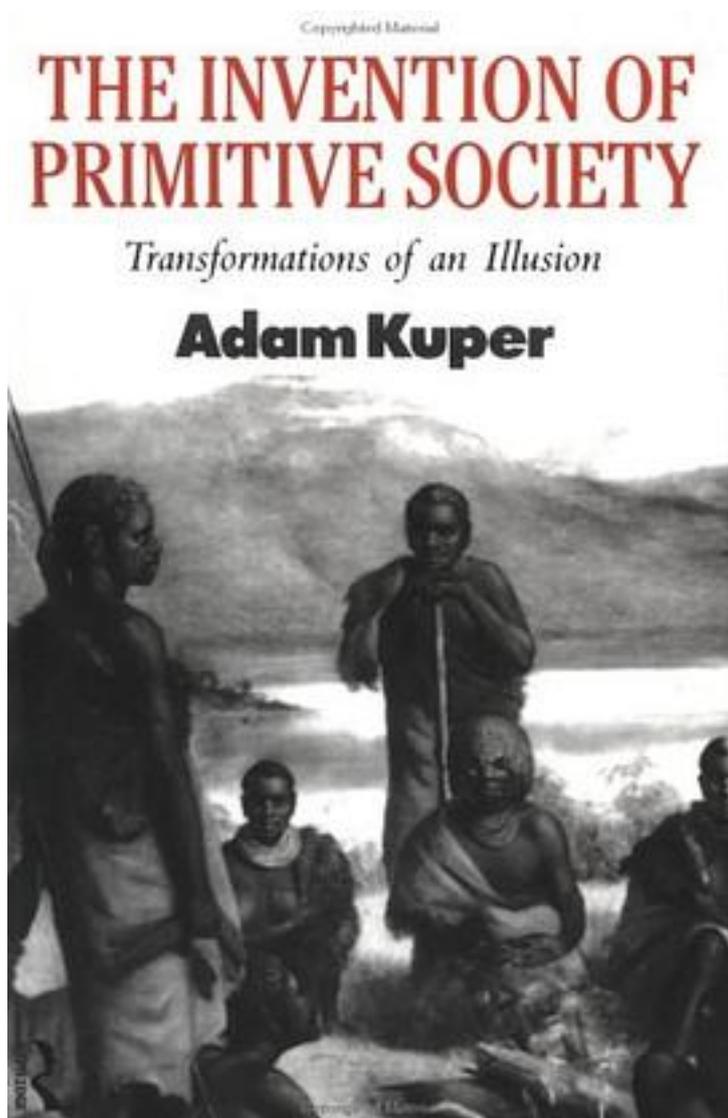


The Invention of Primitive Society



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Both a critical history of anthropological theory and methods and a challenging essay in the sociology of science, *The Invention of Primitive Society* shows how, since Darwin, anthropologists have tried to define the original form of human society. The first generation - from Henry Maine to Lewis Henry Morgan - initiated the search. By the end of the century, the theory of 'totemism', developed by McLennan, Robertson Smith and Frazer, claimed to describe the initial state of religion and society. These Victorian models were refined and developed by great theorists, including Engels, Durkheim and Freud, and became the basis of academic anthropology. But, as Adam Kuper points out, there was no original 'primitive society': the search and its goal were illusory, and when we study constructions of the primitive we study mirror-images of ourselves.

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