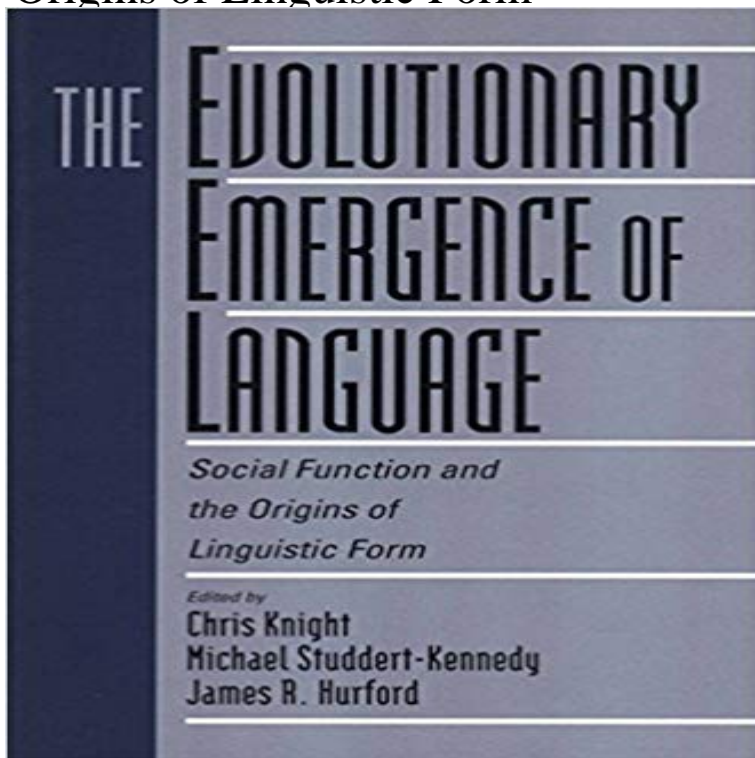


The Evolutionary Emergence of Language: Social Function and the Origins of Linguistic Form



Language has no counterpart in the animal world. Unique to Homo sapiens, it appears inseparable from human nature. But how, when and why did it emerge? The contributors to this volume - linguists, anthropologists, cognitive scientists, and others - adopt a modern Darwinian perspective which offers a bold synthesis of the human and natural sciences. As a feature of human social intelligence, language evolution is driven by biologically anomalous levels of social cooperation. Phonetic competence correspondingly reflects social pressures for vocal imitation, learning, and other forms of social transmission. Distinctively human social and cultural strategies gave rise to the complex syntactical structure of speech. This book, presenting language as a remarkable social adaptation, testifies to the growing influence of evolutionary thinking in contemporary linguistics. It will be welcomed by all those interested in human evolution, evolutionary psychology, linguistic anthropology, and general linguistics.

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