



Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects

By Rodney Barker

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Rulers of all kinds, from feudal monarchs to democratic presidents and prime ministers, justify themselves to themselves through a variety of rituals, rhetoric, and dramatisations, using everything from architecture and coinage to etiquette and portraiture. This kind of legitimization - self-legitimation - has been overlooked in an age which is concerned principally with how government can be justified in the eyes of its citizens. In this 2001 book, Rodney Barker argues that at least as much time is spent by rulers legitimizing themselves in their own eyes, and cultivating their own sense of identity, as is spent in trying to convince ordinary subjects. Once this dimension of ruling is taken into account, a far fuller understanding can be gained of what rulers are doing when they rule. It can also open the way to a more complete grasp of what subjects are doing, both when they obey and when they rebel.

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