Preface

This volume is the result of an interdisciplinary symposium organized by the research center “The Role of Culture in Early Expansions of Humans” (ROCEEH) of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities held at Hohentübingen Castle at Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen from June 15–18, 2011. Our goal for the conference was to produce a unified model of cultural evolution integrating ethological accounts of culture in great apes, sea mammals, and birds, as well as to debate the nature of culture as viewed from the perspective of the humanities and social sciences. The resulting model of the expansion of cultural capacities consists of two parts: a theoretical framework tracing the developmental dimensions of cultural performances and a model of the expansion of cultural capacities drawn from ethological and archeological data on information transmission. This volume presents many of the ideas that the participants at the meeting presented and reflects an up-to-date assessment of the state of international research on the evolution of cultural behavior.

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Finally, we hope that the lively discussions, debate, and good cheer that accompanied the meeting in Tübingen will be captured in these papers.

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