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Motoo Kimura, as founder of the neutral theory, is uniquely placed to write this book. He first proposed the theory in 1968 to explain the unexpectedly high rate of evolutionary change and very large amount of intraspecific variability at the molecular level that had been uncovered by new techniques in molecular biology. The theory - which asserts that the great majority of evolutionary changes at the molecular level are caused not by Darwinian selection but by random drift of selectively neutral mutants - has caused controversy ever since. This book is the first comprehensive treatment of this subject and the author synthesises a wealth of material - ranging from a historical perspective, through recent molecular discoveries, to sophisticated mathematical arguments - all presented in a most lucid manner.