

Technology, Literacy, and the Evolution of Society

Implications of the Work of Jack Goody



Edited by
David R. Olson • Michael Cole



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Contents

Preface: Technology and Social Change	ix
Acknowledgments	xix
Contributors	xxi
I. INTRODUCTION	
1 An Introduction to Jack Goody's Historical Anthropology <i>Rosaire Langlois</i>	3
II. HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: KINSHIP, INHERITANCE, AND THE STATE	
2 Agrarian Civilization and Modern World Society <i>Keith Hart</i>	29
3 Succession to High Office: The Chinese Case <i>Patricia Ebrey</i>	49

4 Between East and West: Greek Catholic Icons and Cultural Boundaries <i>Chris Hann</i>	73
5 Culture and Gender in European Bourgeois Society 1870–1914 <i>Eric Hobsbawm</i>	101
6 Kinship and Evolved Psychological Dispositions: The Mother's Brother Controversy Reconsidered <i>Maurice Bloch and Dan Sperber</i>	115
7 The Use and Abuse of Classification <i>G.E.R. Lloyd</i>	141
8 Images in Flowers <i>Jean-Claude Schmitt</i>	165

III. ORALITY, LITERACY, AND WRITTEN CULTURE

9 Orality in Politics <i>Geoffrey Hawthorn</i>	177
10 Writing and Kinship in Northern Ghana: From Cowry Payments to Paper Documents <i>Sean Hawkins</i>	189
11 The Writing of Social Organization and the Literate Situating of Cognition: Extending Goody's Social Implications of Writing <i>Charles Bazerman</i>	215
12 Dynamics of the Emergence of Sociocultural Institutional Practices <i>Esther N. Goody</i>	241
13 Not by Words Alone: Reclothing the "Oral" <i>Ruth Finnegan</i>	265

14	The Documentary Tradition in Mind and Society <i>David R. Olson</i>	289
15	Rethinking the Goody Myth <i>Michael Cole and Jennifer Cole</i>	305
Bibliography of Jack Goody's Work		325
Author Index		343
Subject Index		351

Preface: Technology and Social Change

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At a time when there is an increasing recognition of the importance of cultural differences between East and West, between Christian and Muslim, between developing and developed countries, there is an equally growing awareness of the impact of universalized social arrangements in human rights, world courts, international trade, and scientific knowledge. Assigning the appropriate weight to local cultural traditions as opposed to universalized social systems in understanding human action is never straightforward. Conflict may arise not only from the pursuit of contrary goals and conflicts over limited resources but equally from misunderstanding, suspicion, and prejudice. An understanding of these sources of conflict can come only from the kind of detailed interdisciplinary studies of social structure, modes of communication, and social change that have occupied Jack Goody for a half century, earning him a place as one of the leading interdisciplinary social scientists of his generation (Pallares-Burke, 2002).

In important ways Jack Goody is more like a 19th-century anthropologist than a 20th century one. Anthropology had its roots in such Enlightenment writers as Vico, Condorcet, and Rousseau, all of whom claimed to have discovered the major historical stages of mankind from savage to modern. But in the 19th-century, Edward Tylor, one of the founders of modern anthropology, revived this theme. In his enormously influential book, *Primitive Culture* (1871/1958), Tylor began by asserting that "the condition of culture among various societies . . . is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action" (p. 1), a statement that Goody has elaborated on to great effect. Tylor also used the comparative method in his attempt to show that cultures

evolved in the same orderly and progressive way that Darwin had recently shown species to have evolved. The 19th-century view that all nonmodern cultures are to be viewed as partial successes or else as failed attempts to achieve the forms and standards of modernity is now broadly rejected by all anthropologists, including Goody. Yet the classification of societies into types such as traditional and modern with corresponding culturally defined mentalities became, and remains, a staple of both social and psychological theorizing.

Aside from the cultural smugness that assured 19th-century anthropologists of the inherent superiority of Western forms of social organization and modes of thinking, Goody shares much of that comparative tradition with its broad theories and causal explanatory principles to explain diversity and change. He looked for contrasts between Eurasia and Africa, between hoe and plow cultures, between those with writing and those without, those with flowers and those without, and those with high cuisine and those without. He formulated theories to account for the differences and similarities and for "some of the mechanisms behind sociocultural change" (Goody, 1991, p. 18).

Goody explained social structure and social change primarily in terms of three major factors. The first was the development of intensive forms of agriculture that allowed for the accumulation of surplus—surplus explained many aspects of cultural practice from marriage to funerals as well as the great divide between African and Eurasian societies. Second, he explained social change in terms of urbanization and the growth of bureaucratic institutions that modified or overrode more traditional forms of social organization, such as family or tribe, identifying civilization as "the culture of cities." And third, he attached great weight to the technologies of communication as instruments of psychological and social change. He associated the beginnings of writing with the task of managing surplus and, in an important paper with Ian Watt (Goody & Watt, 1963), he advanced the argument that the rise of science and philosophy in classical Greece depended importantly on their invention of an efficient writing system, the alphabet. Because these factors could be applied either to any contemporary social system or to systematic changes over time, his work is equally relevant to many disciplines.

Goody (1991) suggested that his work was influenced by two of the major theorists of the early 20th-century, Freud and Marx, whose ideas spanned from laws of history to laws of human psychology—Freud, in that cognition has a first-person meaning based on personal experience in the context of primary social relations with parents and others, and Marx, in that personal cognition is a cultural or institutional product formed in large part by economic and technological factors. In his long research career, Goody looked for universals in the family and in society more generally that reflected each of these sets of constraints. Yet he never lost his interest in what social ac-

tions meant to the actors involved nor did he lose interest in how property, ownership, and inheritance affected the action as well as the beliefs, feeling, and cognitive processes of those involved.

Goody wrote a good deal about the social arrangements surrounding death, but it would be wrong to say that Goody was preoccupied with death. Rather, through a fortuitous experience with funerals in Ghana where he did most of his fieldwork, he came to see that death and funerary celebrations reflected the social distribution of power and accumulated wealth as much or more than they reflected genetic relatedness or humane concern. This, in turn, led to a broad interest in issues of wealth accumulation and the invention of high culture ranging from cuisine to flower arranging and to the invention of formal adoption of an heir by the heirless.

The accumulation of wealth, Goody argued, was a product of the first agricultural revolution, a revolution that distinguished Eurasia from Africa—only the former accumulated wealth and developed the institutions necessary for the management of the resulting accumulated wealth. Literacy was an important by-product of this need for management. Further, the increasing reliance on hierarchical forms of control and documentary practices were responsible for the specialization of language and cognition that are definitive of modernity.

Although cultures without writing, so-called traditional societies, had long been a primary interest of anthropologists, the role of writing in explaining these differences and similarities has come in and out of fashion. In the 18th-century, Vico (1744/1984) had identified stages of civilization with forms of writing. The age of gods was indicated by a divine mental language expressed through ritual and ceremony and a hieroglyphic, image-based form of writing that expressed this mute language. The age of heroes was indicated by the use of symbols and poetic language and nonalphabetic writing systems. The third and modern age of men breaks the aristocratic and priestly monopoly over knowledge by means of an alphabetic writing system, which makes access to knowledge the democratic "right of the people" (Vico, 1744/1984, p. 145). As Chartier (1995, p. 8) notes, writing was seen as emancipating knowledge from political and religious authority.

Rousseau (1966), in his *Essay on the Origin of Language*, offered a similar view of the relation between forms of writing and the organization of society: "These three ways of writing correspond almost exactly to three different stages according to which one can consider men gathered into a nation. The depicting of objects is appropriate to a savage people; signs of words and of propositions, to a barbaric people, and the alphabet to civilized peoples" (p. 17). By ordering these social changes in terms of forms of writing and discourse "Vico, Condorcet, and Malesherbes inaugurated in the eighteenth century a set of reflections that continue today in the works of Walter Ong,

Jack Goody, and Henri-Jean Martin" (Chartier, 1995, p. 13). But the receptivity of readers to such broad theory had changed.

With the beginning of modern linguistic theory early in the 20th-century, writing had fallen into a mere recording of language. Saussure (1916/1983) bemoaned the tyranny of the alphabet, which diverted attention from spoken language, its true object, to the mere display of that language by means of writing. And in anthropology the comparative method and the assumption about progress came to be seen as hopelessly Eurocentric. Rather than seeing other societies as failed attempts to be like us, attention turned to the program of recovering the perspective of others, to understanding other societies and individuals in their own right. It is in this context that Goody's historical anthropology (Langlois, this volume) is important. He honors both the beliefs and intentions of those he describes as well as the resources and technologies that he believed to be at the root of important historical change. His synthesizing efforts, as the following chapters reveal, has been enormously productive. Not only does it illuminate social systems such as the family and inheritance in terms of intentional beliefs and actions, but also it enables many cultural activities such as literacy to escape the almost total monopoly held by public policy and pedagogical discourse, to become an object of historical, anthropological, psychological, and linguistic theory.

The editors of this volume, not unlike the other contributors to this volume, have been deeply influenced by the work of Jack Goody, especially on the implications of literacy. One of us, Cole, devoted much of his research to showing how the cultural contexts are constituted by and help to inform the cultural practices in which literacy finds a place, the other of us, Olson, to understanding the linguistic and cognitive relations between spoken and written language, between utterance and text. We undertake the editing of this volume to bring together some of the strands of work spurred by the work and writings of Goody in such a way as to illuminate relations between the mental lives of persons, the social and institutional relations in which they occur, and the factors at play in social and historical change.

The sheer breadth of Goody's work is indicated by the introductory essay by Rosaire Langlois, whereas the other contributions to the volume have been assigned to two categories, the first devoted to social structure and social change, thereby linking anthropology and history, the second to the implications of writing and literacy, thereby linking anthropology and psychology. Together, the collection shows how the relations between individuals and society have changed historically, changes brought about in part, as Goody had argued, by changes in technology and in modes of production and communication. A brief introduction to the chapters in the volume follows.

Rosaire Langlois provides an overview of the central issues in Jack Goody's work from his ethnographic study of ancestor cults to his broader

historical sociology of kinship, the state, and literacy in Africa and Eurasia. He devotes particular attention to the debate and controversy that Goody's work has generated and to his persisting achievements.

Keith Hart opens the first section of the volume on historical anthropology, by examining the broadest of Goody's theories, that tracing the basis of a modern world society to the invention of intensive agricultural practices. He shows how Goody's tripartite comparison between Africa, Europe, and Asia has been a commentary on the kind of world society formed in his lifetime. Goody's insistence that Eurasian cultures share an institutional foundation in the urban revolution of 5,000 years ago reminds us of the continuing power of agrarian civilization to shape world society along the lines of the old regime, despite the uneven impact of a machine revolution. Africa's exclusion from that revolution and its insecure embrace of agrarian civilization (cities and states built on a basis of intensive agriculture) is the most striking manifestation of the unequal society generated by globalization.

In his later work, Goody frequently brought the Chinese case into his analyses, but he did not in one of his earlier studies, *Succession to High Office* (1966). Pat Ebrey fills in that gap by analyzing the major features of the historical practices governing succession to high office in China. The Chinese system of succession worked well: The states presided over by Chinese emperors were exceptionally large, and many dynasties lasted for 250 or 300 years. By contrasting the Chinese royal houses with non-Chinese royal houses it becomes possible to distinguish features that arise from the nature of the Chinese state and those that arise from the nature of the family system and ethical values of the rulers. Goody's original model is thereby refined in light of the Chinese case.

Chris Hann's examination of the widely heralded geopolitical and cultural boundary between East and West derives its inspiration from several linked themes in the work of Goody, primarily his criticism of Western bias in classical social theory (e.g., Weber) and his insistence on the basic unity of Eurasia. Hann argues that the Greek Catholic Church in central Europe can reasonably be approached in terms of the East in the West, a theme advanced in Goody's (1996) book of the same name. The Greek Church is commonly viewed as perched between two civilizations, or straddling a cultural fault line. By examining the iconic art (another of Goody's abiding interests) in this church Hann is able both to explain aspects of cultural reproduction and to question the contemporary political distortions of the concept of culture.

Eric Hobsbawm takes up the Goody theme relating industrialization and the decline of paternalism by offering an nuanced analysis of the social factors involved in the emancipation of women in Europe before the First World War. Toward the end of the 19th-century there was, in Europe and North America, a distinct tendency to recognize women as actors and

achievers in the hitherto overwhelmingly masculine public sphere of life. Cultural activity and the new consumer market for (largely female) income spenders provided great scope for such achievement. However, it was the structural change in the bourgeoisie and the new value of formal education and culture as indicators of class membership, Hobsbawm argues, that account for the emergence of women into the public sphere rather than women's supposedly traditional role as carriers of culture.

Dan Sperber and Maurice Bloch advance a psychological as opposed to a biological account of kinship in the effort to resolve the long-standing but unresolved question of the significance of the special relationship between mother's brother and sister's son in patrilineal societies. By discussing the controversy surrounding this issue and Goody's role in it, they hope to advance an understanding of some of the fundamental epistemological problems of the discipline including how and when problems draw attention and how they are resolved, or more commonly, dropped.

Geoffrey Lloyd argues that classification not only organizes human behavior but also provides things to think with, an issue central to Goody's (1997) work on representations. Lloyd questions whether natural kinds are cross-cultural universals and then suggests criticisms both of the universalist and of the cultural relativist answers to that question. By discussing ancient Greek and Chinese texts, he examines the similarities and differences in the types of classifications attempted, in the notions of class and category, and in the modes of self-conscious reflection on classification that occur. Thus modern explorations of the so-called species problem converge with ancient concerns over the nature and limits of classifications in particular domains and serve to emphasize and elaborate points that Goody introduced in his work on the use and ambivalence of the construction of lists.

Jean-Claude Schmitt offers an account of the impact of Goody's analysis of cultural representations, especially of the representational value of flowers, on his own work on the history of Christian image making in the Middle Ages. The Church forbade the worship of images, yet through blurring the distinction between the image and the reality, a blurring achieved through the use of Christian relics, the Church came to make use of a rich range of sculpture and painting not as objects of veneration but as memorials to the saints.

Far from the relentlessly progressive and evolutionary assumptions about social change that encouraged 19th-century writers to see imperialism, the imposition of the institutions of one society onto another, as both legitimate and in any case inevitable, these chapters in Part I show the complexity of the factors involved in social stability and social change whether great or small.

Geoffrey Hawthorn begins Part II by examining the relation between orality and politics. He notes that Jack Goody's explorations in *The Interface*

Between the Written and the Oral (1987) have been historical and comparative. Another such interface, he notes, has been present since the start of writing and is present wherever writing is found. This is politics. Thucydides was the first in our tradition to contrast what we might now think of as the historian's truth with that of the politician's. But he also showed their connection: how the practical reasoning of the politicians, expressed orally in the conventions of rhetoric, and in a broad sense dramatic, themselves expressed the more general truths of the historian and how the historian's truths themselves derived from what politicians said. Then as now, the historian's truth was taken to stand more generally as a certain kind of knowledge, but for obvious reasons—the accumulation of political texts and commentaries, the intervention of more elaborate administrations, and the increasing number of ways in which information is stored and communicated—these forms of knowledge interact in more complex ways. Is this complexity, he asks, a difference of kind, or merely degree?

Sean Hawkins brings together two themes from Goody's work, writing and inheritance. The relation between writing and what Derrida referred to as genealogical anxiety is examined in terms of the effects of British colonialism on the social practice of kinship, marriage, and inheritance among the LoDagaa of northern Ghana.

Charles Bazerman advances the notion of situated literacies to complement Goody's *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (1986). He points out that Goody extended the discussion of the consequences of literacy from the cognitive to the social by indicating how domains of human activity were enlisted through literate practices into extensive and enduring social institutions, which reordered human social life. Bazerman suggests that the history and forms of literate participation are closely tied to the history and forms of social life in recent millennia, and increasingly so in recent centuries. The constantly evolving literacy-mediated forms of social organization and activity are sites for individual agency as well as interpolation into social orders. They are also sites of publicly shared cognition and individual attention. Bazerman draws examples from the four institutional areas considered by Goody: religion, economics, law, and government.

Esther Goody formulates an account of how local social practices pertaining to child rearing can turn into explicit and regulated institutional forms such as schooling. Although local social practices of daily life show great variability, some of these patterns become coded as routines, which are then adopted more widely, eventually ending up as uniform nationwide institutional practices. She shows this development in relation to the delegation of child rearing from family, to kin, to experts and eventually to national schools in Ghana.

Ruth Finnegan, a well-known critic of the so-called great divide theory, acknowledges Jack Goody's valuable but controversial ideas about the role of

writing and literacy on mind and society noting that it has sponsored a rich scholarly literature. She reexamines the concept of oral, arguing that communication processes labeled oral in fact turn out to be multimodal—visual, kinesthetic, proxemic, material, tactile, and at times olfactory—rather than merely tied to the sounds of words and utterances. She cites recent work in anthropology, sociolinguistics, and cultural studies to show that the very multiplicity of communication tends to challenge models of development that attribute cognitive and social change to the essentially word-based concepts of orality and literacy, and she offers a broader and more multiplex concept of the oral.

David Olson credits Jack Goody with explicating the role that literacy plays in the development of a modern bureaucratic society and more generally in what has come to be called written culture. Yet critics in psychology and anthropology have argued that the medium of communication in itself cannot be an instrument of transformation. Olson argues that written culture may be better described as document culture, a form of social organization characterized a reliance on written documents that spell out the formal roles and rules, charters and contracts that organize social life in modern society. A document culture is similar to what the sociologist Tönnies a century ago described as *gesellschaft* in contrast to the more habitual and less formal social structures he described as *gemeinschaft*. The relation between these documentary practices, the social systems they regulate, and the cognitive systems that subserve these practices are examined in some detail.

Michael Cole and Jennifer Cole, who sympathize with Goody's efforts to add a more social dimension to the more common psychologically based theories of literacy, note that Goody's writings on literacy have drawn an unprecedented degree of interest in a number of the social sciences from anthropology to psychology to sociology to history and to education. However, they note that Goody has been assimilated to these fields of study in quite different ways, with differing fidelity to Goody's own writing. They adopt the view that Goody has, from the beginning, been attempting to develop an account of literacy's role in historical change and human consciousness that does justice to both the peculiarities of the medium of communication and the sociohistorical context. They show how Goody's texts sometimes invite misunderstandings and they propose a way to reconcile Goody's claims with contemporary cultural-psychological research.

Taken together, the chapters in this volume not only serve as a tribute to the work and influence of Jack Goody but also advance the long-standing debates about processes of change at the social, cultural, and individual levels. It is our hope that the chapters will make visible the extraordinary scholarly reach and significance of his ideas and help to propagate them into succeeding generations of scholars and students in the fields of anthropology, history, sociology, psychology, and educational studies.

Jack was knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, published on 11 June 2005. The citation reads "Goody, Professor John Rankine, Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology, St John's College, University of Cambridge. For services to Social Anthropology, St John's College, University of Cambridge. For services to Social Anthropology." His correct form of address would now be "Professor Sir John [or Jack if he prefers it] Goody."

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Acknowledgments

The project of organizing a collection of essays around the work and influence of Jack Goody was initiated by Cesare Poppi and Juliet Mitchell who did some of the preliminary work in proposing authors and soliciting chapters. Their suggestions were almost exclusively anthropological, and, though the proposed authors captured well Goody's work on historical and cultural contrasts between traditional and modern, East and West, it left relatively unexplored that aspect of Goody's work that has had the most profound effect on the social and psychological sciences, namely, his work on writing and written culture. We attempted to solicit papers that, though reflecting the sheer breadth of Goody's work and influence, were focused more clearly on two themes, historical change and written culture.

Even a glance at the extensive Goody bibliography appearing at the end of this volume makes it clear that the distinguished scholars represented here, although drawn from fields ranging from history to classics to anthropology to sociology and psychology, only begin to indicate the breadth of his work and the influence it has had and the respect and admiration felt for Jack Goody. We were delighted to hear that Jack Goody was on the 2005 Queen's honor list to become Sir Jack.

D.R.O. and M. C.

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I

INTRODUCTION

An Introduction to Jack Goody's Historical Anthropology

Rosaire Langlois

For 50 years, Jack Goody has been producing a body of work that is, arguably, the most important contribution to historical sociology and anthropology since the time of Max Weber. Rejecting the East-West divide propounded by both Marx and Weber, Goody is attempting to alter the focus and to extend the range of comparison, suggesting that a North-South contrast of the hoe cultures of sub-Saharan Africa with the plough cultures of Eurasia will provide a new outlook on some old controversies.

Demonstrating how ecological and technological factors in Africa differed so fundamentally from those in Eurasia, he clarifies the corresponding variations in the political and class structures, kinship and marriage practices, and oral and written cognitive styles. Our concern with the uniqueness of the West is based, he observes, on Eurocentric misperceptions of Asian development. The upshot is a rigorous rejection of some century-old sociological and anthropological dogmas bequeathed to us by Marx, Weber, and Levy-Bruhl.

Goody's lifelong work has not (as yet) spawned a growth industry of the kind that surrounds Parisian and Frankfurt philosophers, no doubt partly because of its vast scope, partly because research tainted by materialism is often looked upon askance, and perhaps even partly because of the relative clarity of his writing, for, as Karl Popper once commented, "the cult of high sounding language" of "incomprehensibility" is often so alluring in intellectual circles (Popper, 1976, p. 294).

Although his generally materialist approach has so much in common with what is now known as classical Marxism, Goody has not aligned himself to

any form of Marxist or cultural materialist intellectual currents. Although he has done more than his share of deconstructing Western bias, he owes nothing to postmodernism and, *horribile dictu*, openly admits to the lasting influence of logical empiricism on his work.

What follows can hardly be more than a sketch—so much cruder than the original—of some central issues in what has by now become a large and controversial body of work as well as the debate it has generated, an overview of both the claims and the counterclaims.

PROPERTY AND ANCESTORS

At the time Goody began his fieldwork in Ghana in 1950, colonialism had imposed many changes, including a system of chiefs, and had attempted to banish some funeral customs, which provoked witch hunts, such as "carrying the corpse" (Goody, 1957). The global economy's impact was visible: 9% of the tribal LoDagaa studied by Goody were seasonal migrants to coffee plantations elsewhere in Ghana. However, much remained as before, and some changes were more apparent than real. Goody thought it possible to "disentangle" local culture from colonial impositions (Goody, 1967, p. iv).

He had come to study the social organization of two neighboring settlements—which he named the LoDagaa—in particular their religion, funeral practices, and ancestor cults. Among these hoe agriculturalists, as among many peoples including the ancient Greeks (Burkert, 1992, p. 65ff), the dead lived on as ancestors. If illness, misfortune, or even death occurred, it was seen as the work of ancestors or witchcraft. Goody developed the theory that one principally fears the person from whom one inherits. While the heir anticipated an inheritance and the increased independence that it would mean, the wish, nonetheless, induced guilt, because it was something of an irreverence to the deceased kin. What was perhaps even worse, the ancestors had the power of retaliation. Goody called this the Prince Hal complex, based on Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and thought it to be a prominent motif in ancestor relations (Goody, 1991, pp. 8–10). Goody's conclusions collided with those of the great 19th-century legal thinker Henry Maine: It was the system of inheritance that determined the ancestral cult, and not the other way around as Maine had proposed. Goody further surmised that because economic productivity and technology were "roughly the same in all societies in the area," these inheritance practices were not the product of variations in what Marxists would call "the means of production" (Goody, 1962, pp. 434–435).

Two very valuable papers were soon published objecting to some of Goody's approaches and conclusions (Keesing, 1970; McKnight, 1967), but

from our vantage point 40 years later, one rather obscure comment perhaps takes on greater significance. Robert Wade (1975), using figures available in another of Goody's publications, calculated that one of the settlements he had studied, the Lo Dagaba, had 70% to 100% higher production levels than the other tribe, the LoWilli. Wade challenged Goody's assertion about the priority of the inheritance system over economic factors, and Wade's interpretation is consistent with Goody's (1976) later findings in *Production and Reproduction*, where systems of inheritance were seen to be dependent in turn on the different agricultural systems in Africa and Eurasia.

Subsequent research pointed to the continuing salience of Goody's inheritance-guilt-fear hypothesis, as Ahern (1973) called it. She tried to test Goody's theory in China, and although claiming only limited support for it, suggested that "the less one inherits from the ancestors, the less elaborated the ancestral cults" (p. 261).¹ Along similar lines, James Woodburn's (1982) fascinating study of immediate-return hunter-gatherers has shown that ancestral cults and ancestral vengeance had little and usually no place among hunters, in sharp contrast to "any pastoral or agricultural African group" (p. 205). Hunters "are not fearful of the capacity of the dead whom they have not dispossessed" (Woodburn, 1982, p. 207). Indeed they have little interest in questions about any afterlife and are skeptical of the existence of ancestors or ghosts. From this wider perspective, it seems that the origin of inheritable property is a critical turning point in attitudes toward both life and the afterlife: Property figures somewhat as the apple of discord. These later findings provide some general corroboration for Goody's (1962) earlier linkage of property, inheritance, and ancestor cults in *Death, Property and the Ancestors*, a major work and a valuable heuristic tool.

Commenting almost 20 years later, Goody (1980) noted how new technology in agriculture (the green revolution), as well as the use of written documents, was enabling a rising elite in Ghana to privatize communally held lands, instigating the kinds of class struggle long familiar in European history. Even in the area of kinship, "the effects of a written culture make themselves felt" (Goody, 1980, p. 145). More recently, some of these issues were examined afresh in a history of the LoDagaa, which will be invaluable for future students of Goody's work (Hawkins, 2002).

¹Without wishing to crudely overemphasize the material aspects of funeral practices, it may be worth noting that in China the length of mourning is normally 7 days. However, wealthier families withdraw for a mourning period of 21 days, and the richest of the urban elite mourn during 49 days (Watson, 1982, p. 165). In ancient Greece there was "a close connection between the right to mourn and the right to inherit" (Hopkins, 1983, p. 221). See also the enthralling account of inheritance and ancestors among the Chagga (Moore, 1981).

THE ECO-TECHNOLOGICAL BASIS OF STATE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA AND EURASIA

In the 1960s, Goody extended his observations to a wider terrain, with an ecohistorical contrast of the hoe cultures of Black Africa with the plough cultures of Eurasia. The building block on which so much of his subsequent work is built is *Technology, Tradition and the State* (Goody, 1971). In looking at the development of the state in Africa, he emphasized how the means of production—poor soils, disease, low population amid plentiful land—tended to restrict the development of a landlord class, as in Eurasia (Goody, 1971, pp. 25, 32). Tropical soils in Africa are not very rich, and a heavy downpour of rain or even the use of a plough leaches out the minerals in the soil. Sleeping sickness, spread by the tsetse fly, kills animals primarily and humans secondarily. This and other diseases have made difficult the use of draft animals, such as cattle, oxen, or horses, in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The absence of draft animals limited, in turn, the use of wheels and carts. Under these conditions, population density remained low and land was plentiful, but the population was condemned to a perpetual purgatory of shifting (slash and burn) cultivation and stagnation (Goody, 1971; see also Bloom & Sachs, 1998; Harris, 1982; Iliffe, 1989; Law, 1980). Furthermore, the free-land frontier beckoned to any dissatisfied individual or group who wished to avoid the disciplined demands of either family or state and of either capitalism or socialism (Goody, 1998, p. 277). One man's holdings were much like another's, and "no man need bend his knee to a lord simply to get a living" (Goody, 1976, p. 108).² Class stratification was much less marked than in Eurasia (Goody, 1971, p. 32). In Eurasia, however, the suitability of the environment made it possible to make advantageous use of the plough, allowing vaster acreages to be farmed, producing a surplus allowing for the gradual development of craft specialists, urban life, and the creation of larger political units. The situation was also marked by an accentuation of class divisions between rich and poor and the rise of salvation religions that justified these inequities (Goody, 1997, p. 14).

African states arose, but their economic foundations were weak. Horses and guns, imported from European traders in precolonial times, formed the basis of state power, but even "the largest states of pre-colonial Africa tended to have the fragility of card-houses" (Oliver, 1993, p. 158). This conclu-

²James Watson (1980a), while observing that precolonial African slavery did occur and could be as brutal as any, has proposed a distinction between open slavery that predominated in Africa and closed slavery in Asia. Accepting Goody's logic in *Technology, Tradition and the State*, he claims that people, not land, were the source of wealth in Africa, where slaves might be absorbed into lineage and the community. In Asia, land was the source of wealth, and slaves were excluded from eventual membership in kin groups (pp. 11–12).

sion—akin to Goody's—came many years after he reviewed *Technology, Tradition and the State*, in which he expressed both praise and doubts about Goody's book: To Oliver, feudal arrangements "were by no means so exceptional a feature of pre-colonial Africa as Goody suggests" (Oliver, 1971, p. 495).

Goody's geopolitical approach, comparable perhaps to Braudel's *longue durée*, has stood up rather well: Robin Law's (1976) fine article examining Goody's thesis of cavalry states and firearm states supports Goody's analysis and really amounts to fine-tuning. He pointed out, however, that Goody's concept of means of destruction, aimed as a corrective to the alleged Marxist neglect of military factors in history, was "misconceived since . . . an analysis stressing the role of military technology is not only compatible with, but is anticipated in the writing of Marx and Engels" (Law, 1976, pp. 125–126).

Another researcher found that "the main thrust of Goody's argument remains valid for East Africa" (Ocaya-Lakidi, 1977, p. 146). Although not necessarily inspired by Goody, similar thinking about low population densities over large inhospitable terrains underlies Goran Hyden's (1985) brilliant theory of an uncaptured peasantry and the problems this has meant for the creation of either capitalism or socialism in Africa, and he has used Goody's study as part of his own reply to critics. This vantage point illuminates other dilemmas of contemporary African economies over matters as basic as road building and the creation of viable currencies (Herbst, 2000). Goody's pivotal analysis reminds us that African states have been doubly disadvantaged, that however monumentally Africa and Africans have been pillaged by imperialism and the slave trade, Africa suffered in addition due to its poor ecological endowments.

The publication of *The East in the West* (Goody, 1996) and *Capitalism and Modernity* (Goody, 2004) provide a more detailed account of Eurasian development. Goody is both pioneer and product of a very thorough revisionism rejecting the old East-West dichotomies. This older view that contrasted Western freedoms with an oriental despotism of harems and female seclusion, of political eunuchs and so on, was supported, in whole or in part, by classical Western thinkers from Montesquieu to John Stuart Mill, Marx, Weber, and Wittfogel (whose work was a cornerstone of Joseph Needham's Chinese science project).³

The revisionists include W. H. McNeill (1996), Eric Wolf, James Lee (1999), Ken Pomeranz (2000), and Goody, who see themselves as driving

³In one of Gellner's later essays, he wrote of the Frankfurt school, "I do not find that they have greatly enriched our knowledge of social alternatives, with perhaps one exception. Karl Wittfogel's work on *Oriental Despotism* constitutes a major contribution to our stock of ideas" (Gellner, 1994, p. 4; see also Coser, 1974; Sidky, 1997). For a stimulating defense of Needham's (1954) *Science and Civilization in China* against postmodern criticism, see Gare (1995).

the final nails into the coffin of Orientalism and the Asiatic mode of production found in Marx, Weber, and others. Goody points out how the East has been judged either to be lacking in rationality or of having it but not using it. The most influential version of this viewpoint is Max Weber's, and "most of the major sociological commentators have accepted his views" (Goody, 1996, p. 45). Briefly put, Weber alleged that Judeo-Christian hostility to magic formed the seedbed of rationalization and modernization in the West, whereas the East remained "a magical garden" infested by magic, mysticism, and mystagogues (Weber, 1961, pp. 238–265). Weber's antimagical animus reads oddly in light of the ample evidence amassed by Lynn Thorndike and Francis Yates, which should have, long ago, disabused us of the notion that magic was so inimical to science while radically undermining Weber's grand theory. For his part, Goody disputes both Weber's notion of a unique world-transforming Western rationality as well as the related conceit that only the West gave birth to a tradition of "disenchantment of the world" (Goody, 1998, p. 215). Goody finds abundant evidence of Asian agnosticism and critical rationalism, challenging Weber's view of a magic garden, all the while providing a novel and alternative theory of the rationalization process across Eurasia via literacy. Goody's sustained riposte is one of the most persuasive yet made.

A second, widely held claim of Weber's has to do with the alleged handicap extended families of the East had on the development of capitalism, a notion that Goody reverses, claiming that extended kinship links have, in fact, been beneficial to capitalist development in the West. For example, Goody points out how the Robinson Crusoe myth overlooks the extent of familial involvement in European business history, such as the Rothschilds and the Frescobaldi, links that were even more necessary in earlier phases of capital accumulation (Goody, 1990, p. 150). Goody suggests that post-Bronze Age Eurasian development had very much in common in business practice, family structure, formal rationality, and literacy, so attempts to locate the structural foundations of Asian backwardness are a Eurocentric illusion (Goody, 1990, p. 494). He agrees wholeheartedly with Pomeranz's recent and controversial attempt to present a picture of European advance as nothing much more than the rapid succession of two accidents: the windfall profits from New World slavery and gold and the geographical accident of large coal and iron deposits in Europe (Goody, 2000d).⁴

A further foray of Goody's challenges an old, but once again fashionable, notion: civil society. Espoused by his late colleague Ernest Gellner, the theory views Euro-American societies as the creators and beneficiaries of a unique political culture of competing interest groups giving rise, by some

⁴See the debate on Pomeranz's book in *Journal of Asian Studies* (2002, Vol. 61, pp. 501–662) and some important objections in Duchesne (2003).

thing of an invisible hand, to successful democracy. This discussion, Goody writes, is "yet another way to denigrate the other" (Goody, 1998, p. 261), and he shows how many of the features of civil society are present even in African tribal societies. To put it somewhat more starkly than Goody does, civil society is shown to be an egregiously ethnocentric notion, one blind to plutocracy at home and pluralism abroad and a distortion of each.

Much of Goody's account will undoubtedly stand, and his startling critique of Weber on rationality and the family has won deservedly high praise (Hall, 1997). On one issue though, there will be more dissent. Saberwal (1998), for instance, claims that Goody is "virtually completely silent on the dimension of power and the state" (p. 144) in Eurasia, a concern only partially rectified by his "Civil Society" essay. Goody makes a brief but informed criticism of standard views of despotism in the great Asiatic empires—shared by both Marx and Weber—although considers its extent and impact to be exaggerated (Goody, 1998, pp. 266–274). Goody is aware of the more centralized state in Chinese history, for example, but doesn't believe it to have had an overpowering impact on mercantile freedom: "a centralized regime imposed some limited restrictions of its inhabitants, but left freedom of choice in most competitive market situations" (Goody, 1996, p. 230). He lends his support to those, notably Eric Wolf, who championed the concept of a tributarian mode of production across Eurasia, one that alludes to differences in centralization in East and West, and leaves the issue of "why" unexplored and unexplained. However, the tributarian mode may be another example of what Byres (1985) once noted: that most attempts to minimize political and economic variations in Eurasia have usually ended up by "the Asiatic mode of production being sneaked in by the back door" (p. 14; see also Lebaron, 2002). Other scholars, no less sympathetic to the new revisionism and also wishing to distance themselves from older notions of oriental despotism would still insist on the reintroduction of the classic ecological contrasts that Goody perhaps downplays (Goody, 1998, p. 16ff). Hydrological instability, soil salination, irrigation, and rice agriculture tended toward the creation and consolidation of greater state power in parts of Asia and to "lost cities" and "lost civilizations" in some other parts (Wink, 2002, p. 439), setting Asia on different political and economic trajectories than Europe. These findings are quite compatible with most other aspects of Goody's research, as will become evident (Bray, 1999; Jones, 1987; Keddie, 1984; Lenski & Nolan, 1984; Needham & Huang, 1974; Wink, 2002; Wong, 1999).

KINSHIP, FAMILY, AND PROPERTY

The ecological and technological factors that shaped the course of states in Africa and Eurasia also largely determined—in the last instance—some

broad differences in kinship⁵ (Goody, 1976, pp. 64, 118). In Africa, exogamy prevailed, plural marriage was permitted, there was less concern with premarital sexuality, and bridewealth was the norm.⁶ All of these patterns contrasted with Eurasia, where intensive agriculture was based on the plough and irrigation and where concern for the transmission of sometimes substantial inheritances led to different strategies of social reproduction: monogamy,⁷ cousin marriage, premarital chastity, dowry,⁸ adoption,⁹ concubinage,¹⁰ and diverging devolution of inheritance. Although Goody certainly built on the advances that others had made, the detail and sophistication of this new map of kinship was a dramatic development.

One central feature that Goody (1990) wished to highlight in *The Oriental, the Ancient and the Primitive* was the trend from exogamy to endogamy in Eurasia. Tylor's famous observation that the alternative facing primitives was "marrying out or being killed out" apparently became less obvious once substantial property became available as inheritance. Although the concern with alliance was always present, attempts were made to keep property within the family. Within preindustrial Eurasia, endogamy prevailed usually between members of the same class, but patterns of close-kin marriage are also common, not only by cousin marriage but also by more extreme measures if necessary: brother-sister marriage or fraternal polyandry (brothers sharing the same wife) (Goody, 1990, pp. 140, 301, 321, 342, 347, 380, 391).

⁵While some theoretical discussions of Marxism have gone so far as to deny that the economic base can be distinguished from the political and ideological superstructure, Goody's work demonstrates not only the possibility but the results (Goody, 1976, pp. 64-65, 118; Lukes, 1983).

⁶Polygyny in Africa was related to its low population, abundant land, and high rate of barrenness due to endemic disease. Where labor was scarce, maximum fertility was achieved by a plurality of wives (Goody, 1973a, p. 188). Because property was less valuable than in Eurasia, adoption and dowry were rare, and premarital sexuality was more easily tolerated (Goody, 1976, pp. 66, 82).

⁷Goody (1976, p. 7) reasons that where substantial productive property was accumulated as in Eurasia, monogamy would be the prevailing tendency, with children of both sexes inheriting, though the daughter's portion would usually take the form of dowry. Polygyny, in these circumstances, would have an "impoverishing effect" on the heirs and threaten their status (p. 17). See also Vogel (1991).

⁸Where property was transmitted to daughters via dowry, there was usually a concern with premarital chastity, which "limits the possibility of conflicting claims on the estate" (Goody, 1976, pp. 14-15).

⁹In cases where an heir was not produced and there was concern for the continuity of the ancestral cult, as well as a need for help on the estate and security in old age, adoption was possible. The adoptee would be enticed by the prospect of the inheritance (Goody, 1976, pp. 68, 74-75).

¹⁰Another means of procuring an heir was by acquiring a concubine, whose children could inherit (though the concubine did not; Goody, 1976, pp. 42, 47).

While Goody points out that, in theory, Mosaic law was formulated in opposition to the incestuous "abominations of the Egyptians," in practice he stresses there was not much difference and that close marriage was dictated in the Old Testament:

And every daughter that posseseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man of the inheritance of his fathers. Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe. (Num. 36: 8–9 King James Version, cited in Hoebel, 1966, p. 340)

Another pattern across Eurasia that Goody wishes to emphasize is a pattern of diverging inheritance to both sons and daughters. He rejects the exaggerated claims of some feminist scholars, sparked by Engels, that present women's history in an overly negative light (Goody, 1990, pp. 17, 467). He regards the women's property complex in Eurasia as an indication that women were rights-bearing persons, as did Weber earlier (Weber, 1961, p. 53).

Goody's views on kinship have generated much discussion. Dismissed as "too gross for comfort" by one scholar (Comaroff, 1980), the research of others broadly supports and supplements his work on dowry (Harrell & Dickey, 1985; Schlegel, 1991; Tambiah, 1989), premarital chastity (Schlegel, 1991; Tillion, 1966, 1983), and concubinage in China and Anglo-Saxon England (Ebrey, 1986; Ross, 1985). Richard Breen (1984), researching dowry in Ireland, amends Goody's findings and considers that the transactions were even more cold and money oriented than Goody thinks. Some general support comes from others who developed their own positions independently of Goody's (Tillion, 1983; Winch, 1977).

The most consistent criticism has come from Asian specialists, who have challenged Goody's presentation on the grounds that states have tried to usurp women's property rights from the 13th-century in China and a little earlier in Japan (Bernhardt, 1999, pp. 11, 118ff; Birge, 2002, p. 200; McCreery, 1976; Tonomura, 1990). Others go still further, claiming that Goody greatly exaggerated women's rights in China and that women are in fact treated as common commodities (Gates, 1989; Watson, 1980b, p. 231). Ebrey (1986) presented data supporting Goody's work on women's property rights in China but recently asked, "Is a women's possession of a dowry containing gold jewelry more fundamental than her perception that her parents sold her?" (1991, pp. 184–186).

The one major exception to the Eurasian pattern Goody (1983) claims, and the point of departure of *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, lies in the recognition that, from the later Roman Empire onward, Europe began to diverge from the more general patterns prevailing in Eur-

asia. Cousin-marriage, concubinage, adoption, and the levirate were strategies of heirship used by the people of Eurasia to help ensure an heir and to avoid dispersing the patrimony outside the family. All these practices came to be forbidden in Europe, he claims, not because of either biblical injunction or Roman customs but due instead to changing doctrines of the Catholic Church. As the Church evolved from a sect to an established religion of power, it needed money to maintain its clergy, churches, and services to the poor. By banning the mentioned practices, by extending the range of marriage prohibitions to include godparents as well, and by requiring (eventually) a celibate priesthood, it, in effect, increased both the probability of heirlessness and the likelihood that much of this wealth would flow toward the Church instead. Indeed it did: The Church at one time owned one third of the land in Europe. Others, of course, have written of the conflicts between Christianity and the family, including A. H. Huth (1887)—whose forgotten work Goody has disinterred—and Nisbet (1982, pp. 71–84), but none have mounted such an original, rigorous account as what Goody delivered.

Georges Duby (1983), the eminent French medievalist, wrote that historians were “flabbergasted at seeing an intruder survey their territory with new eyes and revealing to them configurations which they themselves had missed” (p. 1107). Several historians recoiled from what they perceived to be Goody’s excessive economism, a charge both unwarranted and unsurprising (Davis, 1985; Lynch, 1986; Verdery, 1988). A later analysis, *Sacred Trust* (Ekelund et al., 1996, pp. 95–96), by a group of economists, was more sympathetic to his approach, pointing out how exemption fees alone were lucrative for the Church.

More detailed examination of Goody’s thesis followed. Some came to praise Goody and others to bury him. Shaw and Saller (1984; O’Roark, 1996) produced evidence that close-kin marriage was rare in Roman times, making later Christian marriage bans ineffectual. Corbier (1991) replied to this objection using a wider range of sources and produced a strong general defense of Goody’s thesis. Medievalist David Herlihy (1985), in commenting on this work, claimed it was not clear that the “Church’s leaders [were] unified enough, conscious enough and shrewd enough to devise and implement this rather devious strategy of aggrandizement” (p. 13). But such a scheme didn’t have to be hatched all at once but only over a long period of time, and surely the Church leaders were conscious enough about one issue: The loss of Church lands that would result from the priests passing on inheritances to their sons. Lea (1932, pp. 95, 116) recounts several examples, before priestly celibacy became the norm: From Pope Pelogius I in 557 to the Council of Tours in 925 cases exist of abuses in the passing on of Church property to sons, and elaborate precautions, including detailed inventory of Church property, were taken to prevent it. It seems unlikely that the Church was oblivious to the implications of marriage restrictions.

A canon law specialist denied that the Church had ever banned adoption (Sheehan, 1991). A further commentary pointed to another complication for Goody's theory: that marriage bans restricting close marriage were not restricted to Christians but that a similar development occurred within Judaism at that time (Mitterauer, 1991, p. 307).

Goody (2000b) recently restated his views, but another problem arises. It is not one that challenges his thesis, but one that concerns state power: Why did the Church have such power and room to maneuver? A parallel situation might have arisen in China, but there a strong bureaucratic state continually checked Buddhism's advances by confiscating its properties, time and again, for 800 years (Goodrich, 1963; Langlois, 1999, pp. 314–318).

Furthermore, the Chinese state manipulated kinship for its own advantage, not only by attempting to usurp women's property rights (as noted earlier) but also by mandating "portable" inheritance to prevent the rise of independent power blocs (Gates, 1989, pp. 805–806). This stands in contrast to Europe, where primogeniture came to predominate, driving an aristocratic diaspora of younger sons into Crusades and new worlds and even influencing the rise of capitalism, as many have argued, from Samuel Johnson to Trevelyan and from Henry Maine to Allan MacFarlane, a Cambridge colleague of Goody's (Duby, 1980, pp. 59–80; MacFarlane, 1998; Moore, 2000, pp. 66–75, 193–198; for Goody's doubts on the issue see Goody, 1990, pp. 136, 456–458).

These rather dramatic differences in the regulation of kinship in Europe and China—not emphasized by Goody—may still be profitably approached in the context of the old but currently unfashionable notion of an overpowering and avaricious "hydraulic state" (Harris, 1999, pp. 163–174; Needham & Huang, 1974). It provides a theory not only of Chinese centralization but also of Western decentralized institutional pluralism.

Somewhat paradoxically, Goody's (1983) theory in *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* provides a striking illustration of the "uniqueness" of the West that he is concerned to challenge throughout *The East in the West* (Goody, 1996). Scholars will be indebted to both innovative interpretations.

LITERACY

The Historical Anthropology of Literacy

"The Consequences of Literacy" (Goody & Watt, 1968) was the product of a fruitful collaboration between Goody and Ian Watt, whom Goody now credits for providing "most of the material and indeed the thinking of that paper"

(Goody, 2000c, p. 225).¹¹ Although most discussion of Goody's literacy thesis focuses on the issue of writing's effect on cognition, less attention has been paid to his and Watt's brief history of literacy, on the social origins of writing and writing systems (scripts), and further links between these and the ecotechnical factors that are so prominent in Goody's other studies on kinship or the state. Admittedly, its presentation has been less systematically laid out than his other work.

Literacy doesn't happen everywhere. In Africa, outside the Muslim sphere, "only a few embryonic scripts occurred," and there literacy appears with outside influence (Goody, 1973b, p. 344). In Goody's view, literacy's emergence seems to be dependent on significant economic activity, as in Eurasia, where there was advanced agriculture and the possibility of a surplus for trade and for the support of specialists in cities. With advanced agriculture came trade, cities, stratification, complex government, science, and social problems, all of which occupied the philosophers who rose to think systematically about them.

The scripts that developed across Eurasia were quite different and reflected their economic and political bases. Inspired by Diringer's distinction between democratic scripts (the Greek alphabet) and the theocratic scripts of the Near and Far East, Goody and Watt distinguished between mass and restricted literacy (Goody & Watt, 1968, p. 39).

The adoption of the Greek alphabet was materially assisted, they wrote, "by an increase in trade" and "the wider use of iron," and a political system that was "not strongly centralized" (Goody & Watt, 1968, p. 41). In this social context mass literacy might arise.¹² It did in Athens but failed to do so in Sparta. They contrasted the more complex scripts of the Egyptians and the Chinese, which they felt restricted literacy, saying only that "other features of the social system were responsible for the way writing systems developed as they did" (Goody & Watt, 1968, p. 36). Goody and Watt added that Brahmin and mandarin interests restricted literacy (p. 45). (See also Goody, 1977, pp. 151–153.)¹³ Kathleen Gough (1968) pushed Goody's analyses a step further by noting that the power of these bureaucratic elites in China and India was based on their "agrarian irrigation economies" (p. 80).

Subsequent investigation has borne out her opinion. In ancient Egypt, writing "was a centrally-controlled activity" and "one suspects that an at-

¹¹Watt's (1996) last work, published posthumously, was a remarkable study of how late Medieval myths denigrating individualism were later reworked to celebrate it as the market economy came to predominate.

¹²Bowersock (1990) defends the notion of mass literacy in Greek and Roman times against criticisms raised by later researchers.

¹³While expressing doubts about Goody's theory, Parry (1985) provides a fascinating case study of how Brahmin beliefs inhibited literacy, science, and "cognitive modernism" in the Indian subcontinent.

tempt was made to stem the proliferation of a much improved system" (Baines, 1981, p. 577). In Mesopotamia, the script was deliberately simplified, then, in a "great reversal" it was made more complex, restricted to a class of trained professionals (Larsen, 1987, pp. 219–220). Similarly in Korea, a gifted King Sejong personally developed an excellent simplified system, but an entrenched literati "vehemently opposed the script" and "for five-hundred years effectively blocked the extension of its use" (de Francis, 1989, p. 198; Kim-Cho, 2002). In China, Buddhist reformers linked with the poorer classes worked for centuries to "democratize" the writing system but to no avail (Mair, 1994, pp. 717–722). The underlying common denominator of all of these cases was opposition from bureaucratic literati in centralized irrigation states.

Of course, there are other forms of restricted literacy (Niezen, 1991), and Harold Innis (1951)—whose *Empire and Communications* was one influence on Goody and Watt—wrote:

Monopolies of knowledge were not limited to complex Egyptian and Sumero-Appadian scripts. Cheap paper and printing have produced a monopoly of superficiality in North America with implications perhaps more tragic than those of antiquity. (p. 239; see also Goody, 1980)

However, the point here is merely to highlight the continued value of Goody and Watt's brief history of literacy and to note the oddity of some claims that Goody's is an autonomous theory that neglects questions of power and social structure (Street, 1984).¹⁴

A further example of Goody's sociology of literacy is the study of the interface where literacy comes to intrude on an oral culture. Goody considers that both Homeric verse and the Hindu Vedas are products of a culture in transition to literacy, displaying an organization that is atypical for oral cultures that he has been familiar with in Africa. His view on Homer is consistent with recent research in that field (Lloyd-Jones, 1992; Murray, 1989). His claims about the Vedas, however, have prompted strong criticism (Falk, 1990; Lopez, 1995; Staal, 1989). However, it should be noted that the transmission of the Vedas as witnessed by one recent ethnographer, it appears that Goody is "partly right about the importance of literate culture, at least for *contemporary India*" (Fuller, 2001, p. 2; emphasis added). Furthermore, given the relatively recent research that Mahayana Buddhism buttressed oral transmission with written texts ever since the discrimination of writing in the second or first century B.C., perhaps we should not

¹⁴Bloch (1998) perpetuates this misinterpretation in a recently republished criticism, claiming that "literacy of itself does not free knowledge from . . . political and economic constraints" (p. 154), as though Goody's position had ever been so crude.

entirely dismiss the plausibility of Goody's arguments on the issue of the Hindu Vedas (Gombrich, 1990; Schopen, 1975).

Literacy and Cognition

Goody and Watt had a second purpose in their 1968 essay: to suggest that literacy led to cognitive growth. They considered literacy to be the mechanism that might resolve the old debate about a primitive or prelogical mentality posited by Levy-Bruhl (1923), and the competing claim of a universal similarity of thought processes in all types of cultures made by Tylor and his intellectual descendants.

Goody and Watt (1968) rejected Levy-Bruhl's grand dichotomy but did it in so qualified a fashion that it was perhaps not surprising that they were accused of replacing it with another grand dichotomy of their own making. They wrote, for example, that they not only rejected Levy-Bruhl's dichotomy but also the overreaction to it as well and described their own viewpoint as "somewhat along the same lines suggested by Levy-Bruhl" (Goody & Watt, 1968, p. 44).¹⁵

As a test case, Goody and Watt (1968) used the intellectual efflorescence of ancient Athens, the Greek miracle. Within the context (as noted earlier) of a politically decentralized and economically expansive city-state, they saw alphabetic literacy as making possible the shift from mythopoeic to scientific thought. Mythopoeic thought, it should be noted (though rarely is) was intended by Levy-Bruhl to describe the thought processes of not only savage tribes but also those of ancient Hebrew and Christian thought as well, which he also considered to be prelogical, mystical, and superstitious (Wiebe, 1991, p. 63, note 43).¹⁶

Human thought comprises—to put a Gellnerian (1979, pp. 86–89) gloss on the issue—both mythopoeic and rational ways of understanding, coexisting, mutually incompatible and in conflict, a dilemma not only of primitive peoples but also of our own. Over long epochs of historical time, the scientific mode claims more of the territory. It is not that the primitive is irrational or illogical—because he can be a scientist as well—but his experience is more limited and is hampered (as Goody says) by a lack of tools—writing—and the limits this places on the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. These tools are only gradually developed to deal with complex problems initiated by advanced agriculture, urbanism, trade, and social conflict. This is something like Goody's view not only in the 1968 essay

¹⁵See also Wiebe, (1991, p. 76, note 88).

¹⁶For a most illuminating account of scholarly reaction to Levy-Bruhl's work (its rejection in theory but acceptance in practice) in several disciplines, see Wiebe (1991, pp. 46–129).

with Watt but also in later works, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Goody, 1977) and *The Interface Between the Oral and the Written* (Goody, 1987). It does not appear to be all that different from Hallpike, for whom primitive thought is "based on incomplete logic rather than on a different logic from that which we know" (cited in Wiebe, 1991, p. 74), except, of course, that for Goody literacy is seen as the mechanism of change allowing an expansion of rationality.

Furthermore, these developments are not achieved instantly or overnight, and the battle is not won once for all time. Progress entails slips, regressions, and Dark Ages, a development that remains very far from complete in our own time, as Levy-Bruhl, Goody, and most others would agree. The expansion of rationality is not an instant literacy effect but a very long-term development dependent on a written tradition that enables us to build on, archive, and sharpen our skills (Brockmeier & Olson, 2002).

By now, extensive psychological tests have been carried out to try to measure precisely what, if any, cognitive consequences flow from literacy. In a widely acclaimed study, Scribner and Cole were unable to find any "general cognitive consequences of literacy" (cited in Goody, 1987, p. 214). Goody addresses their study in detail, and it is possible to deal with only a few issues here. Because they did find a relationship between schooling and cognitive growth, it is possible to question their finding, because schooling, after all, consists, in no small part, precisely of reading, writing, and arithmetic (Goody, 1987, p. 235). Goody also makes a number of other criticisms of their testing procedures, but more significantly he finds a basic flaw in the very expectation of immediate results from literacy. The ideas originally put forward by Watt and himself never implied, he claims, that there would be an instant literacy effect. Instead, the cognitive consequences of literacy result largely from a "written tradition," and are only visible over the longer terms of a single lifetime or even the span of a culture's entire history (Goody, 1987, pp. 216–218, 222), a point of view supported and further developed in parallel investigations by David Olson and others (Brockmeier & Olson, 2002; Olson, 1994).

What is one to make of this defense of the literacy thesis? The seemingly contradictory results achieved by Scribner and Cole regarding the positive association of schooling with cognitive growth suggest that the whole issue of the instant effects of literacy has not been exhausted. However, the view that the cognitive effects of literacy are a long-term phenomenon related to a written tradition appears to border on truism. Nonetheless, some historical research has begun to document these developments and regressions (Le Pan, 1989; Olson, 1994; Stock, 1983).

Goody's theory of literacy and its effects on cognition have come under strong attack during the last decade, and he provided a brief reply to critics in a recent work (Goody, 2000a, pp. 1–25). Three recent articles contain

valuable comments throughout, but it is odd that they all make obviously false assertions. Rosalind Thomas (1992) recently wrote, "[W]e tend to have evidence only for what got written down; how can we know, for example, that there was no logical thought before writing?" (p. 20). The simple answer is that Goody never claimed "there was no logical thought before writing." According to Staal (1989) as well, Goody maintains "that not just logic, but the capacity for reason depends on writing" (p. 309). In a similar refrain, according to Halverston (1992), Goody claims "that logic derives from writing" (p. 314). But Halverston earlier cited Goody's claim precisely and correctly that "oral man lacked not logical reasoning but certain tools of intellectual operation" (p. 311). Goody has asserted, and reasserted, that literacy only permits the amplification of logic but does not cause it. It is obvious that preliterate humans had the capacity to reason and even to be scientists: How else would they have managed to domesticate animals and plants or to create viable ways of reproducing themselves in varied environments? Goody has not and, one can safely predict, never will make the claim that logic and reason are entirely dependent on writing.

The Downsizing of the Greek Miracle and the Alphabetic Revolution?

Yet another issue arising from the Goody and Watt formulation emphasized the specific importance of the alphabet and its efficiency, using as an example the ancient Greek miracle (Goody & Watt, 1968, pp. 40–49). However, some scholars doubt that the alphabet is more efficient than other scripts, whereas others suspect, in any case, that Goody overvalues efficiency.

In the years following the Goody and Watt paper, research by classical scholars demonstrated a greater degree of Near Eastern influence on Greek thought than had been previously supposed. Jean-Pierre Vernant (1975), the noted French classical scholar, stated in an interview, "Pas de 'miracle grec' en effet, pas plus que de miracle chinois, égyptien ou babylonien" ("No Greek miracle in effect, no more than [there was] a Chinese, Egyptian, or Babylonian miracle"; p. 22). Some years later, in Zurich in 1984, Burkert (1992) summed up recent research on the Homeric epoch as an "orientalizing revolution": "The 'miracle of Greece' is not merely the result of a unique talent. It also owes its existence to the simple phenomenon that the Greeks are the most easterly of the Westerners" (p. 129).

It is, perhaps, with this background in view, that Goody (1987), in *The Interface Between the Oral and the Written*, appeared to retract and revise his earlier views, writing that other scripts of ancient high cultures had produced "remarkable" achievements in literature, learning and science (p. 64), that "it is a gross ethnocentric error of Europe to attribute too much to the alphabet and too much to the West" (p. 56), and that "even the earlier types of

writing may have had some of the liberating effects that certain authors (including Watt and myself) attributed to alphabetic literacy" (p. 64). "Equally much was achieved by societies in East Asia that retained their logographic scripts" (Goody, 2000a, p. 140).

Since in the 1968 introduction, Goody wrote of "the great range of literate accomplishment in China" (p. 22), in spite of the restrictions a nonalphabetic script imposed, it is not clear that this new emphasis was needed or that it signaled a fundamental reorientation (as many commentators have presumed; i.e., Murray, 1989). One also wonders whether this *mea culpa* was an overreaction, a form of sentimental egalitarianism that he and Watt had cautioned against: Did Asia, for example, really achieve as much in science as the West? And did writing systems have anything to do with it? The West's long-term scientific superiority is not in doubt, and although most would agree that economic and political factors are more important in explaining those developments rather than differences in writing systems (Lloyd, 1990, pp. 111, 124, 132; Needham & Huang, 1974), some consider the Chinese script as a further impediment (Bodde, 1991, pp. 88–96). John de Francis (1984), for example, once observed that, in China, it was probably a gross underestimation to claim that "five billion man-years in each generation" were wasted due to the difficulties of mastering and using the script (p. 219). De Francis (1989), all the while, also emphasized that "the difficulty of a script cannot inhibit innovative thought" and that, "*Leaving aside simplicity and efficiency*, all writing systems are on an equal footing as far as their ability to convey any and all thought is concerned" (pp. 268–269, emphasis added). However, efficiency, he says, is of crucial significance: "Adaptability to computer technology gives alphabetic scripts edge over even the simplest of syllabic scripts; complex syllabic scripts like Chinese are completely out of the running" (p. 268).¹⁷

Recently—still striving for a better assessment—in "An Apology to the East," a Berlin lecture in 1992, and in *The Power of the Written Tradition*, Goody continues to celebrate the achievements of the East but also to combat "sentimental relativism" (Goody, 2000a, p. 137), as he and Watt did earlier

¹⁷Research into these issues is difficult and deceptive. One study comparing reading acquisition skills with different writing systems found that, on average, American first graders did less well than their Chinese and Japanese counterparts. However, "American first-graders who were able to read beyond their grade level were able to read at a higher level than their Chinese and Japanese counterparts" (Lee, Uttal, & Chen, 1995). Another study indicated that American students only spent half as much time as Chinese students in academic activity and more time engaging in inappropriate or irrelevant behaviors (Stevenson et al., 1987, pp. 188–189). While the first study might appear to support the view that writing systems have little impact, when considered along with the results of the second study, one might conclude that the American writing system allows the best students to advance to a higher level in half the time.

(1968, p. 67). He reiterates the importance of the efficiency of the alphabet—its ease of use—and contrasts it to East Asia where “a knowledge of perhaps six thousand characters is required for entrance to a university, a quantity that is sufficient to daunt many a potential scholar, leaving less learning time for substantive subjects or drastically lengthening the student’s working day” (Goody, 2000a, pp. 138–139; see also Goody & Watt, 1968, p. 36).

Goody has been reproached for this emphasis on the efficiency of the alphabet in comparison with other scripts and neglecting existing folk preferences, including aesthetic ones, of some other cultures (Bloch, 1998, pp. 152–170). However, for many Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, and Turks, who for centuries have struggled for script reform because of its potential impact on both efficiency and social equality, Bloch’s suggestion would represent a perverse defense of elitist/old regime attitudes (Cheng, 2001; Mair, 1994). On the other hand, Goody’s concern with efficiency would not appear to them as Eurocentric prejudice but would mesh with their own felt practical needs (see also Goody, 2000a, p. 140).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Jack Goody’s pioneering anthropological incursions into the territory of historians, sociologists, and psychologists open a whole range of new questions and comparisons on core issues in these disciplines, and must surely comprise one of the great achievements of 20th-century social science. Although critics, cynics and naysayers are plentiful, his rigorous contributions to both sociocultural evolution and the mental processes of individuals will serve as classic contributions and stimulate further advances long after the charms of the latest “isms” have faded.¹⁸

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¹⁸See the cogent critical remarks contained in McLennan’s (1996) “Four Sins of Post-Marxism.”

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II

HISTORICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: KINSHIP, INHERITANCE, AND THE STATE

Agrarian Civilization and Modern World Society

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To my mind, the most revealing summary of Jack Goody's intellectual motives is to be found in the preface to *Production and Reproduction* (1976), the book that launched the series of large-scale comparative investigations for which he is now best known. I take as the text for this article the opening paragraphs and closing sentence of that preface:

When I first took a berth on a boat to West Africa, I did not do so with the sole purpose of getting to know something about an African society or, more generally, the "savage mind." I was certainly very involved with the problems of getting to know *another culture*, another way of looking at the world. But other concerns were present too. What I knew about the medieval literature and history of Europe whetted my appetite to learn more about *pre-industrial societies*, their beliefs as well as their economic and productive systems. A period in the eastern Mediterranean had extended these interests in time and in space.

Secondly, there was the immediate situation in which I found myself in West Africa. *Events were moving fast* in Ghana during the period I was first there and the Convention People's Party, to the Birifur branch of which I was inscribed, were well on their way to power. However it was not only the links between local "tribe" and national politics that concerned me, but the earlier links, with long-distance trade, with Islam, with neighbouring states. It was on these *historical subjects* that I wrote when I first returned, and it was these subjects, in a wider context, that I pursued when trying to ask what it was that writers meant when they used terms like feudal to describe African states.

How did the states and local communities in Ghana resemble and differ from those of Europe, Asia and the Middle East with which they were so often compared and contrasted? How could we best understand the differences between a village in the Italian Abruzzi and a settlement in Northern Ghana? What made people think the adjectives "tribal," "primitive," "savage" appropriate to one set of cultures and not to the other? Were there no better ways of assessing similarity and difference than by means of a pair of crude *binary oppositions*?

Thirdly, my interest in the Third World, in "other cultures," had been stimulated by *personal, political and social encounters* in Africa and Europe during and after the Second World War. How could one bring a wider range of knowledge about these other societies to bear on an understanding of our own situation? How could we provide historical, sociological and humanistic studies generally with a *more universalistic* base, with a *less European-centred* framework?

To such very general questions, this book provides little by way of answers. What could? I introduce this personal note only by way of explaining an undertaking that may be thought to fall between a number of stools, those representing different *academic fields* of enquiry, different techniques of investigation and different ways of understanding.

[. . .]

It is time we tried to fit together the numerous detailed investigations of social life in different parts of the world with the larger speculations on *the development of human culture*. (pp. ix-x; italics added)

Here Goody tells us that ethnography, the aspiration to write about a people considered as a natural unit and studied intensively through fieldwork, never defined his intellectual horizons. His subject is historical comparison and beyond that the development of human culture. He deliberately sets himself at odds with his greatest contemporary, Claude Lévi-Strauss, as being uninterested in binary opposition between the modern and the primitive, "the savage mind." Rather, he writes as an actor in a historical period, coming of age in the Second World War, encountering the eastern Mediterranean, escaping from a prison camp into the mountains of the Abruzzi, entering Africa at the decisive moment of its anticolonial revolution and in its epicenter, Ghana. With European empires collapsing everywhere ("events were moving fast"), he rejects the Eurocentric idea that the West is somehow special, looking instead for forms of knowledge that are more truly universal, better suited to the new world society launched by the war.

As a former student of English literature, he knows something about medieval European society and culture. He wants to connect a newly independent West Africa to the Islamic civilization he encountered briefly during the war. His subject will therefore be the comparison of preindustrial societies, both past and present, an ethnographically informed juxtaposition of Africa,

Europe, and the Middle East, perhaps Asia more generally. Above all, this enquiry is an extension of his own personal experience, fueled by social interactions and political engagement. The ultimate historical question is whether human civilization, but the key to that lies in the similarities and divergence of regions that have shared an agrarian past. Only a series of books could begin to address this question, and the present volume is the first of them. It is worth recalling its title, *Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain*. The focus is on how human beings produce their livelihood within families and how this influences their attempts to project themselves into the future.

Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa (Goody, 1971) could be said to have been the trailer for this enterprise, just as the publication of *The East in the West* (Goody, 1996), 20 years and almost a dozen books later, represents its partial culmination. The autobiographical memoir that Jack Goody wrote for *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1991) is a more elaborate document, specifically tying together his achievements as an ethnographer and as a comparative historian through *Death, Property and the Ancestors* (Goody, 1962), which remains the key volume of his oeuvre. The three themes of the title—how we seek to transcend death materially and spiritually—come together in Goody's main preoccupation, with writing itself, the form of production in which he has himself engaged so persistently.

The time from the Second World War to the millennium was an extraordinary one, being the period when humanity formed a society, a single interactive network, for the first time. This was the cosmopolitan society that Kant (1970) envisaged two centuries earlier but did not witness. It was massively unequal and riddled with conflict, but now at last there was a universe of communications to give concrete expression to universal ideas. In the next century anthropologists will want to study this emerging human society, and they will look to us for antecedents. They will mostly be disappointed by the fragmented narrowness of our anthropological vision, because we have been slow to emancipate ourselves from the ethnographic project of studying exotic cultures conceived of in isolation. In this essay, I argue that Jack Goody, alone among his contemporaries, devised and carried out an anthropological project on a scale adequate to the world society being formed in his day. The preface reproduced earlier indicates why this should have been so. Here I take the project further than his modesty has allowed him to pursue in print. I ask, how does Goody's project of historical comparison, especially the principal books of 1976–1998, illuminate the world society emerging in our time? What is his anthropological vision of the development of human culture, past, present, and future? This will inevitably be a product as much of my imagination as his, but reproduction was always so.

THE FORMATION OF WORLD SOCIETY 1945–2000

As late as 1950, some New Guinea Highlanders thought that they were the only people in the world. Mutual ignorance is still commonplace, but social isolation of this kind has ended. The period 1914–1945 has been described as a second Thirty Years War: two world wars separated by economic catastrophe and inhuman politics. Economy and society were still more national than international at this time. The space between nations was filled by war. The European empires were fatally undermined by the war, as Asia moved toward independence immediately afterward, with Africa following a decade later. Having granted Stalin the European territory he wanted in return for destroying Hitler's armies, Roosevelt's vision of an integrated world economy led by America through the United Nations was soon put into practice. At home, the leading industrial nations installed more effective welfare states, and this coordinated public investment fueled the long economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time the rivalry between America and Russia led to the nuclear nightmare of the Cold War interspersed with not-so-little hot wars in Korea, Vietnam, and almost in Cuba.

The Vietnam War broke up the international currency system, forcing the United States off the gold standard and ushering in wild exchange rate fluctuations that triggered the invention of money futures and with them the global money markets we know today. The OPEC oil price rise deflated the Western economies and set in train a spiral of Third World debt. Ever since the 1970s, the world economy has been at the same time more integrated as a circuit of capital, increasingly polarized between rich and poor countries and in broad terms stagnant. But human society and demography were irreversibly transformed in the half century following the war.

World population doubled between 1960 and 2000 (from 3 billion to 6 billion). Countries like France, Japan, and Italy were still half peasant in 1945, but by the millennium agriculture accounted for less than 10% of the workforce in most of the industrial countries. The proportion of the global population living in cities rose from 1 in 40 in 1800 to around 50% in 2000, most of the increase after 1945 taking place in the poor countries. Food production was fully mechanized for the first time, and most of the world now ate the produce of a few heavily subsidized Western farmers. By the end of the century half of the 100 largest economic units on the planet were business corporations, 35 of whom had an annual turnover (\$30–50 billion) greater than the GNP of all but 8 countries. If the world became a single interactive network in this period, it was mainly as a network of markets on which everyone's livelihood now depended in some degree.

There were more international migrants before the First World War than at the end of the 20th-century. But the gross discrepancy between economic op-

portunities in the rich and poor countries has led to a new, more cosmopolitan mixture of peoples in the main cities of the West. A transport revolution built on the car and the airplane gave people everywhere a restless mobility. Even more striking was a communications revolution culminating during the 1990s in the digital convergence of three technologies—telephones, television, and computers. This revolution's great symbol is the rise of the Internet, the network of networks, but equally important for the development of a shared human consciousness is the size of global TV audiences, 2–3 billion for some major sporting events (more people watching the same thing than were alive in 1945!). Above all, this was the time that we saw the earth from the outside for the first time, having discovered space travel.

At the same time as we all participate in these developments, disparities of life experience on the planet remain vast. The rich countries, the OECD club that includes North America, Western Europe, and Japan, accounts for about 15% of the world's population. The rest must reconcile their relative poverty with an unfinished history of racism, a hangover from 19th-century imperialism when Westerners used their new machines to take over the globe. Over one third of humanity still works in the fields with their hands; a similar number have never made a phone call in their life. Africa stands out as both the symbol and reality of this contrast. When the Europeans divided it between themselves not much more than a century ago, Africa had very few people compared with any region of similar size; a minute proportion of its inhabitants lived in cities. The products of its agriculture and mines were then indispensable to Western manufactures. Today over half of its people live in cities and African migrants overcome routine obstacles to move freely around the globe, but production there is only lightly mechanized, and the continent is less securely integrated into the world economy than in 1900.

At the same time, identification of modern capitalism with the West, specifically with the economic leadership of first Britain and then Germany and the United States, has been undermined by the rise of Asian economies in the second half of the 20th-century. In the 1980s and since, American and European dominance has been challenged by Japan, followed by the Southeast Asian tigers (newly industrialized countries), with China and India lumbering into high gear behind. Asia has long been where the majority of human beings live, and now much of manufacturing production is being relocated there. Here, only two centuries after the first stirrings of machine revolution, is a profound test for the assumption that the world's future lies with capitalism's pioneers, even as Africa's exclusion from mainstream development seems more profound than ever.

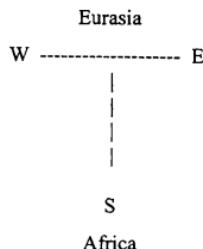
It is possible to minimize the epoch-making significance of these changes, to claim that globalization is centuries old, nothing new. It is largely a question of quantity being transformed into quality, and perhaps judgment is inevitably subjective in these matters. I do not claim that the formation of

world society has been completed in our time nor that it lacked antecedents, but I would ask readers to think of what the human condition was like before the Second World War and what it is now. Something tremendous has happened in between. Humanity has been brought closer together in dramatic ways and, if anything, has become more unequal. We have difficulty imagining the processes involved, not least because of the grip of a national consciousness fed by our own country's news every day, leaving the rest a blur. Anthropologists, too, in sticking with their ethnographic method, have not risen to the challenge of documenting this huge shift in civilization. Instead we have continued to parrot the nationalist ideology of Versailles—that all cultures are entitled to their differences, however barbaric.

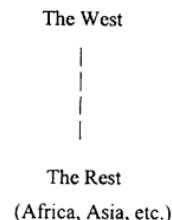
Jack Goody could not settle for just getting to know another culture. In reaching for a more universal conception of human history, he knew that he was doing so as an active participant in the making of a new world. But, even as he inserted himself into contemporary society, he chose to step back from the modern age. By focusing on preindustrial societies in Europe, Asia, and Africa, he left out any direct consideration of two centuries of machine revolution, the capitalist world economy, the New World in its entirety. But his topic is nevertheless the development of human culture and, as I show, his inquiries do reflect a consistent position on the social priorities of his own time.

AFRICA AND EURASIA COMPARED

Jack Goody left England to spend much of the Second World War in the Mediterranean basin, in North Africa and Italy. A few years later, he carried out research in West Africa, a region connected to the Mediterranean by Islamic civilization long before it was colonized by Europeans. He was impressed by the similarities and the differences between all these places. He did after all join a political party in Ghana, even as he was struck by the distinctive way of life there. It took him three decades to formalize the terms of comparison, but, when he did, it turned out like this T-bar:



In other words, Europe may be opposed to Asia as West to East, but the two come to be seen as a single entity, Eurasia, when they are opposed to Africa south of the Sahara. This model is itself contrasted to the dominant imperialist stereotype:



Moreover, Goody was anxious to avoid implicit hierarchy in his scheme, above all any hint of racial hierarchy. Yet he was forced to conclude that African societies were fundamentally different from the others in important ways, and he wanted to explain why.

As a British social anthropologist of a certain time and place, he started with kinship and marriage, the domestic relations through which people manage their own reproduction and participate in the wider society. His own fieldwork among the LoDagaa of Northwestern Ghana revealed major differences in kinship organization within a narrowly circumscribed area. These were the subject of his great synthesis of ethnography and comparative sociology, *Death, Property and the Ancestors* (1962). In this work, he concluded that the key to variations in kinship organization lay in the transmission of property, the material link between generations constituted by patterns of inheritance, manifested also in such religious observances as the ancestor cult. The book drew extensively on the classic sources of British comparative jurisprudence, such as Maine and Maitland, but Goody balked for now at making a systematic comparison of Africa and Europe. He first approached this directly in *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa* (1971) and particularly in the essay "Feudalism in Africa?"

There he questioned the appropriateness of transferring categories from European history to the study of precolonial states in Africa. Once again his focus was on property forms, and this time he speculated about the material reasons for divergence between the two regions. European feudalism was based on private property in land and this form was absent from traditional West Africa. Why? Because land was scarce in Western Europe, but not in sub-Saharan Africa, where the scarce factor was people, and control over them was exercised through monopolies of the means of destruction (horses, guns, etc.), not the means of production. The region's peoples were divided

along a continuum from centralized to decentralized polities, the former carrying out slave raids on the latter for the purpose of acquiring manpower by force. Shifting agriculture employing a hoe technology was the norm, with the bulk of this manual labor being performed by women. In both types of society they were hoarded as wives by polygamous older men and their children recruited to exclusive descent groups. The key to major differences in social organization, as revealed by property forms, thus lay in the conditions of production and specifically in demography, in the ratio of people to the land.

Production and Reproduction (Goody, 1976) takes off from this initial speculation into a global survey of the incidence of different types of kinship, marriage, and property transmission, using the data compiled by "The Ethnographic Atlas" (Murdock, 1967). Goody was aware of the limitations of this material, but he wanted to generalize his working hypotheses. As always in his later work, getting the framework for the questions right mattered more than the empirical sources. His basic observation was this: Kin groups in the major societies of Eurasia frequently pass on property through both sexes, a process of diverging devolution (including bilateral inheritance and women's dowry at marriage) that is virtually unknown in sub-Saharan Africa, where inheritance follows the line of one sex only, either men or women. Diverging devolution was found in 52% of the societies of Eurasia and the circum-Mediterranean, in only 6% of African societies. It was also present in a significant minority (27%) of American and Pacific societies. "Under 'diverging devolution', the property that an individual disposes is not retained within the unilineal descent group of which he is a member but is distributed to children of both sexes and hence diffused outside the clan or lineage" (Goody, 1976, p. 7).

Particularly when women's property includes the means of production, land in agricultural societies, attempts will be made to control these heiresses, banning premarital sex and making arranged marriages for them, often within the same group and with a strong preference for monogamy. Direct inheritance by women is also associated with the isolation of the nuclear family in kinship terminology. All of this reflects a class society. "Diverging devolution (especially dowry) [is] the main mechanism by which familial status was maintained in an economically differentiated society" (Goody, 1976, p. 19). But now for the big question:

Why should the African and Eurasian patterns be so different? I suggest that the scarcer productive resources become and the more intensively they are used, then the greater the tendency for the retention of these resources within the basic productive and reproductive unit, which in the large majority of cases is the nuclear family. . . . Advanced agriculture, whether by plough or irrigation, permits an individual to produce much more than he can consume. . . . [T]he greater volume of production can maintain an elaborate division of labour and a stratification based upon different "styles of life." An important

means of maintaining one's style of life, and that of one's progeny, is by marriage with persons of the same or higher qualifications. . . . Direct vertical transmission (i.e. from parents to children) tends to make provision for women as well as men. The position of women in the world has to be maintained by means of property, either in dowry or in inheritance—otherwise the honour of the family suffers a setback in the eyes of itself and others. . . .

The other aspect of advanced agriculture bearing upon the conditions for the emergence of diverging devolution is the expansion of population it allows, another factor making for scarcity of land. Where such agriculture is dependent upon the plough, the increase in production is partly a result of the greater area a man can cultivate; once again land becomes more valuable. (Goody, 1976, p. 20)

All the major Eurasian civilizations practiced diverging devolution of property and conformed to the family patterns Goody highlights here. Their agrarian economies were organized of course through large states run by literate elites whose lifestyle embraced both the city and the countryside. In other words, what we have here is Gordon Childe's (1954) urban revolution in Mesopotamia 5,000 years ago, where "an elaborate bureaucracy, a complex division of labour, a stratified society based on ecclesiastical landlordism . . . [were] made possible by intensive agriculture where title to landed property was of supreme importance" (Goody, 1976, p. 24).

The leading societies of Europe, the circum-Mediterranean, and Asia all grew out of this invention of agrarian civilization and took its original form. This, for example, is where the nuclear family came from. It had nothing to do with the uniqueness of the West or its industrial revolution. Africa south of the Sahara apparently missed out on these developments, even though the continent's northern fringe was one of the first areas to adopt the new institutional package. Jack Goody would never countenance the standard racist explanation for this, the cultural backwardness of Black people. He had already posited low population density as an explanation. Here he adds the possibility that tropical soils were an inferior basis for intensive agriculture. Whatever the explanation, he demonstrates in this first of his grand historical comparisons the broad material foundation for strikingly different institutional patterns in the two main regions. Starting from the relationship between types of property transmission and forms of kinship and marriage, he arrives at a new synthesis of the agricultural roots of civilization.

I propose now to summarize the main works of the next two decades or so, to indicate briefly how Jack Goody elaborated this vision. In *Bridewealth and Dowry* (Goody & Tambiah, 1972), he had already focused on the marriage payments typical of Africa and Eurasia, the one securing progeny for the descent group, the other keeping property within the nuclear family. *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Goody, 1983) takes the battle into the Western heartlands, showing that the European nuclear family form

was shared with other civilizations of the Mediterranean basin and that any distinctive features, such as a low rate of adoption, were the result of the early Church's strategy to accumulate landed property in its own right. Next, Goody deconstructed the binary oppositions supporting the great divide between the West and the rest in *The Oriental, the Ancient and the Primitive: Systems of Marriage and the Family in the Pre-Industrial Societies of Eurasia* (1990), this time leaving out Africa. The racial premises of 19th-century imperialism required the conceptual separation of Western Europe from its neighbors, and this was achieved largely by detaching the achievements of Greek civilization from its obvious links to Egypt and the Middle East. Here Jack Goody, echoing Martin Bernal's project in *Black Athena* (1987), shows how little historical foundation there is for any such enterprise.

In three more books Goody argued that what are often taken to be cultural questions are best understood in terms of class systems that are in turn an expression of forms of production and property. Thus *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Goody, 1982) explored the contrast between the elaboration of a high cuisine and low cooking in stratified societies and the homogeneous food regime found in African societies, whereas *The Culture of Flowers* (Goody, 1993) took off from the absence of flowers in Africa into a compendious historical analysis of their uses in Eurasian societies up to the present. It is of course possible to approach such topics exclusively within the framework of a cultural analysis, as ideas detached from any logic of material development. And this is indeed the academic fashion, not least within contemporary anthropology. Although he clearly enjoyed writing about food and flowers for their own sake, Jack Goody's message is that culturology is at best superficial and at worst a mystification of class rule, nor is he finished with these themes, as the recent publication of *Food and Love: A Cultural History of East and West* (Goody, 1998) shows.

When the Victorians took over the world, they needed an explanation for how easy it was to dominate other peoples. We might say that they were aided by the selective incidence of a recent revolution in machine technology, but they wanted a more inclusive rationale for subordination. They concluded that human beings were biologically plural, forming separate branches of the species that belonged to different regions and were identifiable by physical markers, such as skin color and head size or shape. This racial typology was given a rank order with northwestern Europeans and their American offshoots at the top and Africans at the bottom. It accounted for grades of culture or civilization, for why the mind of the White male was superior to that of women, savages, and the darker races in general. All of this served to justify why "we" were in charge of "them." By the time Jack Goody began his work as an anthropologist, colonial empire was rapidly being replaced by an American-dominated United Nations, and societies explicitly based on racial discrimination, like apartheid South Africa, were considered

to be exceptional. Yet he knew that the intellectual legacy of imperialism still underpinned the anthropology of his day. So he chose to attack the lingering opposition of modern and primitive cultures by studying the chief activity of literate elites, of which he was himself a leading example—writing.

Jack Goody believed, on an analogy with his approach to kinship and property institutions, that much of what has been taken as evidence for different mentalities should rather be seen as an effect of different means of communication. Of these the most important are speech and writing, orality and literacy. Once again, most African cultures are predominantly oral, whereas the ruling classes of Eurasian civilization have relied from the beginning on literate records. Goody approached this topic originally in a famous paper written with Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy" (1963), where they placed heavy emphasis on the discovery of alphabetic writing, and he followed it up with the edited volume *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Goody, 1968). His great contribution to the study of African oral traditions is *The Myth of the Bagre* (Goody, 1972), documenting the spontaneous flexibility of ritual storytelling in the absence of writing (even as it now took on the form of a book).

The year after *Production and Reproduction*, he published his most general assault on the habit of opposing "us" and "them," *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (1977). This was a pointed repudiation of *La Pensée Sauvage* of Lévi-Strauss (1962), suggesting that the latter's penchant for lists linking hot and cold societies to other pairs, such as history and myth, science and magic, far from being an instance of universal reason was itself a parochial product of mental habits induced by the specific practice of writing. This polemic led to a double expansion of the general approach in *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Goody, 1986) and *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Goody, 1987). Writing emerged in a specific time and place and became essential to the reproduction of Eurasian civilization, reducing to subordinate status those oral means of communication that still inform African cultures and the works of art they have given to the rest of the world. Literacy is one more element in the institutional complex of the urban revolution.

In *The East in the West* (1996), Jack Goody sought to refute the claim, derived from the founders of modern social theory, Marx, Weber, and others, that the West's economic ascendancy, driven by capitalism and its machine revolution, could be attributed to a unique type of rationality missing from the less fortunate societies of Asia. He repudiates his own previous flirtation with Western exceptionalism, the superiority of the Greek alphabet, and tackles such hoary topics of economic history as double entry bookkeeping and examines the forms of family and labor, particularly in relation to Indian commerce. Goody shows first that Europe's distinctiveness is in most cases either nonexistent or has been exaggerated, and, second, in response to the

line that "we initiate and they imitate," he argues that the rate of adoption of Western industrial techniques by India and Japan was faster than it took for the innovations of the Italian renaissance to diffuse to northwestern Europe. He concludes that Eurocentrism obscures Asia's current economic performance and potential, while misrepresenting Western history. It makes more sense to see Eurasia as a single entity in which the temporary advantage of particular regions is highly unstable. This volume, bringing the cycle up to the present, could be said to be a conclusion of sorts to the project begun two decades earlier. Africa, whose exceptional character has remained unchallenged throughout the series, is largely missing from here.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF UNEQUAL SOCIETY

By any standards, the more than a dozen books reviewed in this chapter constitute an intellectual undertaking of unusual scope. There seems little doubt that Jack Goody was trying to lift his profession out of a myopic ethnography into a concern with the movement of world history that went out of fashion with the passing of the Victorian founders of anthropology. In Britain, this shift is conventionally represented as Malinowski's ousting of Frazer from national leadership. And Goody has left his own idiosyncratic memoir of that transition: *The Expansive Moment: The Rise of Social Anthropology in Britain and Africa, 1918–70* (1995). He started out as Meyer Fortes's protégé at Cambridge, working as an ethnographer in the same region of northern Ghana and Cambridge, specifically his college, St. John's, has provided him with a base to this day. He kept up an active research interest in Ghana for a number of decades, much of that time in partnership with Esther Goody. But from the 1960s he sought to integrate anthropology into history and the social sciences more generally. Whereas Fortes, his predecessor as head of the Cambridge department, had been keen to establish the disciplinary limits of anthropology, Goody reveled in its potential as an antidiscipline. He cared less about the boundaries between academic fields of enquiry than about the freedom to pursue important questions wherever they took the investigator.

In this process, he developed a unique personal style that has more than an echo of the great Victorians in it. We know that he read and enjoyed Frazer's (1951) *The Golden Bough* as an Italian prisoner of war, and "the development of human culture" is reminiscent of E. B. Tylor (1871) who made the concept the centerpiece of his anthropology. Both men wrote compendious books of some literary merit using documentary sources drawn from all over the world. And why not? Their subject was after all the history of world society, but their approach was idealist. Goody's was drawn from Childe's (1954) materialist synthesis of the two great revolutions—the neolithic 10,000 years ago and the urban 5,000 years ago—which, with the industrial

revolution, marked definitive stages in the history of human production and society. Childe got the basic framework from L. H. Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1964), which some have seen as the origin of modern anthropology; this was made more widely accessible by Engels as *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884). But they got it in turn from Jean-Jacques Rousseau whose *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Men* (1984) could be said to be the source for an anthropology of unequal society whose leading protagonist for half a century has been Jack Goody.

The Second Discourse (as it is often called) deserves to be seen as the first great work of modern anthropology. Rousseau was concerned, not with individual variations in natural endowments but with the artificial inequalities of wealth, honor, and the capacity to command obedience, which he derived from social convention. To construct a model of human equality, he imagined a presocial state of nature, a sort of hominid phase of human evolution in which men were solitary but healthy, happy, and above all free. This freedom was metaphysical, anarchic, and personal: Original human beings had free will; they were not subject to rules of any kind, and they had no superiors. At some point humanity made the transition to what Rousseau calls nascent society, a prolonged period whose economic base can best be summarized as hunter-gathering with huts. Why leave the state of nature at all? He speculates that disasters and economic shortage must have been involved. In any case, this second phase represents his ideal of life in society close to nature.

The rot set in with the invention of agriculture or, as Rousseau (1984) puts it, of wheat and iron. Cultivation of the land led to incipient property institutions whose culmination awaited the development of political society. "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of land, thought of saying 'This is mine' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society" (p. 109). The formation of a civil order (the state) was preceded by a Hobbesian condition, a war of all against all marked by the absence of law. The key difference from Hobbes, of course, lay in Rousseau's insistence that such conflict was the result of social development, not an original state of nature. He believed that this new social contract to abide by the law was probably arrived at by consensus, but it was a fraudulent one in that the rich thereby gained legal sanction for transmitting unequal property rights in perpetuity. From this inauspicious beginning, political society then usually moved, via a series of revolutions, through three stages:

The establishment of law and the right of property was the first stage, the institution of magistrates the second, and the transformation of legitimate into arbitrary power the third and last stage. Thus the status of rich and poor was authorized by the first epoch, that of strong and weak by the second and by the third that of master and slave, which is the last degree of inequality and the

stage to which all the others finally lead, until new revolutions dissolve the government altogether and bring it back to legitimacy. (Rousseau, 1984, p. 131)

One-man-rule closes the circle: "It is here that all individuals become equal again because they are nothing, here where subjects have no longer any law but the will of the master" (Rousseau, 1984, p. 134). For Rousseau, the growth of inequality was just one aspect of human alienation in civil society. We need to return from division of labor and dependence on the opinion of others to subjective self-sufficiency. This subversive parable ends with a ringing indictment of economic inequality, which could well serve as a warning to our world. "It is manifestly contrary to the law of nature, however defined . . . that a handful of people should gorge themselves with superfluities while the hungry multitude goes in want of necessities" (Rousseau, 1984, p. 137). Surely the stale odor of corruption that so revolted Rousseau is just as pervasive today. Dictatorship in one form or another has been normal for too long in many parts of the world, and we are all compromised by intolerable inequalities of wealth and power. Something has got to give, but our intellectual task today is to envisage a revolution that is universal, not just limited to individual states.

Marx and Engels made fertile use of this precedent in their own critique of the state and capitalism, whereas Morgan's legacy as Rousseau's principal successor in modern anthropology has not been absent from American anthropology in the 20th-century. In the postwar period, Leslie White at Michigan and Julian Steward at Columbia led teams, including Wolf, Sahlins, Service, and Harris, who took the economic and political basis for the development of class society as their chief focus. But one man tried to redo Morgan in a single book, and that was Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1969). We have seen how Jack Goody takes potshots at Lévi-Strauss for his somewhat atavistic version of variations in mentality, but perhaps he should rather be seen as a predecessor whose heroic attempt at synthesis failed, even as he revived the project that Goody would take further. It is worth recalling that, in *Tristes Tropiques* (1973), Lévi-Strauss acknowledged Rousseau as his master.

The aim of *Elementary Structures* is to revisit Morgan's three-stage theory of social evolution, drawing on a new and impressive canvas, "the Siberia-Assam axis" and all points southeast as far as the Australian desert. Lévi-Strauss took as his motor of development the forms of marriage exchange and the logic of exogamy. The restricted reciprocity of egalitarian bands gave way to the unstable hierarchies of generalized reciprocity typical of the Highland Burma tribes. The stratified states of the region turned inward to a logic of endogamy, to the reproduction of class differences and the negation of social reciprocity. Lévi-Strauss makes extensive comments on African patterns

of lineage exogamy that do not fit into this evolutionary scheme. The argument is bold, but its scope is regional, not global. Evidently, the author was not encouraged to universalize the model because he subsequently abandoned any pretension to embrace human reproduction in a dialectical account of social development, preferring to analyze the structures of the human mind as revealed in stories and similar cultural fabrications.

Ernest Gellner, Goody's successor as William Wyse Professor at Cambridge and perhaps stimulated by his example, produced his own synthesis of agrarian civilization as part of another trinitarian model of development with the great divisions provided by the invention of agriculture and the rise of industrial capitalism. The title, *Plough, Sword and Book* (Gellner, 1988), identifies the economic, political, and cultural symbols of what made preindustrial civilization distinctive, and Gellner takes their modern counterparts in capitalist or liberal society to be the market, democracy, and science. Jack Goody's students, for obvious reasons, have been reluctant to take up his project as their own. But Chris Hann, with the edited volume *Property Relations: Renewing the Anthropological Tradition* (1998), made sure that property remains firmly on anthropology's agenda. I attempted to update the picture of regional development in *The Political Economy of West African Agriculture* (Hart, 1982) and with *Money in an Unequal World* (2001) began to address the dynamics of contemporary world society by linking the new communications technologies to the changing character of money.

It is fair to say that Jack Goody, if not uniquely among his contemporaries then with more persistence and range than other anthropologists, pursued one tradition of investigating the movement of world history that largely fell into abeyance in the 20th-century and has precious few adherents today. I have suggested that he did so largely as an outcome of his personal engagement with the formation of a new world society during and after the Second World War. His contribution lies mainly in using the regions of the Old World to show that inequality was global in scope. In the concluding section, I ask whether his studies of kinship, production, and communication in preindustrial Africa and Eurasia point to some of the salient features of contemporary world society, even if, with the exception of *The East in the West*, he never made such an issue the explicit object of his inquiries.

BETWEEN AGRARIAN CIVILIZATION AND THE MACHINE REVOLUTION

In the last 200 years, the human population has increased six times, and the rate of growth of energy production has been double that of the population. Many human beings work less hard, eat better, and live longer today as a result. Whereas about 97% of the world's people lived in rural settings in 1800

and no region could sustain more than a tenth of its people in towns, half of humanity lives in cities today. This hectic disengagement from the soil as the chief object of work and source of life was made possible by harnessing inanimate energy sources to machines used as converters. Before 1800 almost all the energy at our disposal came from animals, plants, and human beings themselves. The benefits of this process have been unequally distributed, and, as we have seen, the prime beneficiaries included the pioneers of Western imperialism in the 19th-century. Because uneven development has been continuous during this period we need markers to support any claim that globalization in the second half of the 20th-century was of a distinct order again from what preceded it.

The 1860s saw a transport and communications revolution (steamships, continental railways, and the telegraph) that decisively opened up the world economy. At the same time a series of political revolutions gave the leading powers of the coming century the institutional means of organizing industrial capitalism. These were the American civil war, Italy's *Risorgimento*, the abolition of serfdom in Russia, Britain's democratic reforms, Japan's Meiji Restoration, German unification, and the French Third Republic. Karl Marx published *Capital* (1970), and the First International was formed. The concentration of so many epochal events in such a short time would indicate a degree of integration of world society. But in the 1870s, the share of GNP attributable to international trade was estimated as not more than 1% for most countries (Lewis, 1978), and the most reliable indicator of Britain's annual economic performance was still the weather at harvest time. The Great Depression of 1873–96 turned out likewise to be an effect of American and German competition on the rate of return of British capital, while the rest of the world's regions were booming. A century later in 1973, so great was the dependence of all national economies on world trade that the OPEC oil price rise set in train a universal economic depression from which we have still not recovered. Shortly afterward, money futures markets were invented, and by 2000, international trade accounted for only a small fraction of the money exchanged globally, and national governments were mostly adrift in a rising tide of money, known simply as the markets, conveyed at the speed of light over telephone wires as so many electronic bits (Hart, 2001).

Capitalism has always rested on an unequal contract between owners of large amounts of money and those who make or buy their products. This contract depends on an effective threat of punishment if workers withhold their labor or buyers fail to pay up. The owners cannot make that threat alone: They need the support of governments, laws, prisons, police, even armies. Perhaps Karl Marx's most vivid contribution to our understanding of the modern world was his observation that capitalism was actually feudalism in drag, with the owners of the means of production still extracting surplus labor from workers under threat of coercion. By the mid-19th-century it be-

came clear that the machine revolution was pulling unprecedented numbers of people into the cities, where they added a wholly new dimension to traditional problems of crowd control. The revolutions of the 1860s were based on a new and explicit alliance between capitalists and the military landlord class to form states capable of managing industrial workforces, that is, to keep the new urban masses to an unequal labor contract. Germany and Japan provided the clearest examples of such an alliance. I call this phase national capitalism, the attempt to manage markets and accumulation by means of central bureaucracies. It became general as a result of the First World War, and it may or may not be decaying in our day.

Despite a consistent barrage of propaganda telling us that we now live in a modern age of science and democracy, our dominant institutions are still those of agrarian civilization—territorial states, embattled cities, landed property, warfare, racism, bureaucratic administration, literacy, impersonal money, long-distance trade, work as a virtue, world religion, and the family. This is because the rebellion of the Western middle classes against the old regime that gave us the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment, as well as the English, American, and French democratic revolutions, has been co-opted by national capitalism, and, as a result, humanity's progressive emancipation from unequal society has been reversed in the last century and a half. Nowhere is this more obvious than when we contemplate the shape of world society as a whole today. A remote elite of White, middle-aged, middle-class men, "the men in suits," rules masses who are predominantly poor, dark, female, and young. The rich countries, who can no longer reproduce themselves, frantically erect barriers to stem the inflow of migrants forced to seek economic improvement in their midst. In most respects our world resembles nothing so much as the old regime in France before the revolution, when Rousseau wrote his Second Discourse, in fact (Hart, 2002).

Africa is the most poignant symbol of this unequal world. Having entered the 20th-century with an extremely sparse population and next to no cities, Africans leave it having undergone a population explosion and an urban revolution of unprecedented speed and size. In 1950 Greater Europe (including Soviet Central Asia) had twice the numbers of Africa. Today Africa has a population 120 million larger than Europe and Central Asia and is projected to be well on the way to double their size by 2010. Although the conventional image of Africa is of starving peasants ravaged by war and AIDS, the new social reality is burgeoning cities full of young people looking for something to do. It is the case that Africa largely missed out on the first and second stages of the machine revolution and is far behind in the present one associated with digitalization. Today development there as likely as not consists of irrigation and ox-plough agriculture. In other words, Africa, especially in the last half century, has been going through Childe's urban revolution, erecting state bureaucracies and class society on the basis of surpluses

extracted from the countryside. This is not without contradiction, given the pretensions of modern governments, the rapidly expanding population, and the widespread failure to mechanize production (Hart, 1982).

This brief sketch throws a new light on Jack Goody's oeuvre. Simply as an exercise in the comparative history of preindustrial civilization, his contribution would be enormous, but we should also consider whether he has also been telling us something about the world society that was formed in his lifetime. First, like Bruno Latour (1993), he has been telling us that we have never been modern. The modern project of democracy has as its antithesis the unequal society that ruled the planet for 5,000 years. Goody's contrast between Eurasia and Africa reminds us of the durable inequalities of our world and suggests that the reasons for them may be less tractable than we like to think. At the same time the rise of China and India emphasizes his warning against European complacency. The world is now simultaneously more connected than ever and highly unequal. A recent popular scientific text (Barabasi, 2002) helps us to understand why this may be so. Left to their own devices, scale-free networks exhibit a power rule distribution in which a few hubs are highly connected and most nodes are only weakly connected. That is, the proliferation of networks, as in world markets today, would normally produce a highly skewed distribution of participants. The reduction of national political controls over global markets in the last two decades seems to have accelerated the gap between the haves and the have-nots everywhere, generating huge regional disparities in the process (Hart, 2001). The task of devising institutions capable of redressing this situation seems further away today than it did in 1945, when Jack Goody set out on his postwar journey.

We would do well to take to heart the analytical focus that lends unity to Goody's compendious work. The key to understanding social forms lies in production, and for us that means the uneven spread of machine production. Civilization or human culture is significantly a consequence of the means of communication—once writing, now an array of mechanized forms but always interacting with oral and written media. The site of social struggles is property. Are nation-states still an effective instrument for enforcing global contracts made by capitalists? Should intellectual property rights be established in numerous fields such as software, music, film and TV, drugs, GMOs, education, the law and so on? And his central issue of reproduction has never been more salient than at a time when the aging citizens of rich countries may have to revise their attitude to the proliferating mass of young people out there. Kinship needs to be reinvented too.

One last thought. As I write, the United States and Britain are making war against Iraq, for the second time in just over a decade. Iraq is of course another name for Mesopotamia, the heartland of Childe's urban revolution. It doesn't seem likely that agrarian civilization's grip over human minds will

be erased by bombing Baghdad. Indeed national capitalism, as practiced by undemocratic rulers everywhere, still poses a deadly threat to our embryonic world society. If human culture is to be rescued from the unequal society of an agrarian civilization strengthened by machines, one indispensable means toward that end would be an anthropological vision of the sort pioneered by Jack Goody.

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Succession to High Office: The Chinese Case

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In his lengthy introduction to *Succession to High Office*, Jack Goody (1966) analyzes different societies' modes of transferring the highest office, generally the kingship. Many of his examples come from African societies, but he also cites ancient Rome and the Ottomans as well as a wide range of examples from European history and literature, including the cases of King Lear and Prince Hal. On the surface these succession systems differ radically. During the early centuries of the Ottoman sultanate, to prevent succession struggles, once one son succeeded to the throne, all of his brothers were killed, assuring that the sultan's family would never grow. At the other extreme, among the Zaria Hausa of Northern Nigeria, the kingship was passed from one segment of the royal dynasty to another. By citing examples from societies that differed so greatly in size, level of complexity, family systems, and religions, Goody underlines his contention that the issues that have complicated succession to chieftainships in relatively small preliterate societies are structurally similar to succession problems in late traditional and modern societies.

The main variables among succession systems that Goody examines are timing, the locus of authority to choose the successor, and the relationship between the officeholder and his successor. Does the king turn over all or part of his powers to his successor in his lifetime, or does transmission of his office wait until after his death? Who is authorized to select the king's successor? If the king himself, what happens if he dies before designating an heir? Does the kingship pass from father to son, elder to younger brother, or circulate among different segments of the royal clan? How do kinship connections between successive officeholders impinge on their relationships with

each other? Goody looks for systematic differences between different sorts of systems. He shows, for instance, that in systems that favor fraternal succession, the rulers are more likely to be grown men, but their reigns will on average be shorter than when sons succeed to their fathers. Goody also shows how each system solves certain problems and produces its own characteristic dilemmas. Premortem succession solves the problem of kings past their prime, but ex-kings are rarely comfortable in their positions, leading to instability. "When Henry II (1154–1189) made a partial transfer of the realm to his sons, the result was rebellion against himself and war between the successors" (Goody, 1966, p. 3). Royal polygyny reduces the chances that the king will have no heirs but "complicates the process of selection, because the larger the number of eligibles, the more difficult they are to handle" (Goody, 1966, p. 30). As a result, in most societies there is some form of "dynastic shedding." Goody stresses that the modern European system of a fixed order of succession is a relatively rare form of succession and that most monarchies used some degree of choice, at least selection among all of the king's sons. The corporate solidarity of the royal clan or dynasty is better maintained when there is some indeterminacy in succession because then the office can be thought of as belonging to the dynasty, not the king. On the other hand, the greater the indeterminacy, the greater the chance of an unstable interregnum and wars of succession.

In this essay, I add to the societies considered by Goody the case of China. Goody's analysis treats all societies as equally significant cases. Another way to approach the subject would be to recognize that systems of succession varied in their degree of success and that the more successful systems have special interest. I would posit that systems that allow dynasties to survive longer, that keep interregnums shorter, and that minimize the likelihood of wars of succession are more successful systems of succession. On all of these grounds the Chinese case deserves close examination. For 74% of the 2,113 years between 202 BCE to 1911 CE, China was ruled by just five dynasties, each of which lasted over 250 years (see Fig. 3.1).¹ Because the China case is so well documented over so many centuries, it also adds a time dimension not considered by Goody. Do older dynasties handle succession differently than younger ones? Can dynasties learn from the mistakes of their predecessors to improve the succession system? In many of his later writings, such as *The Oriental, the Ancient, and the Primitive* (1990) and *The Culture of Flowers*

¹Interspersed among the five main dynasties were a dozen or more lesser dynasties that either lasted less long or held less than the bulk of China proper. For instance, from 220 to 265 China was divided into three states, and from 317 to 581 south China was in the hands of six successive dynasties and north China in the hands of nearly as many. Quite a few of the lesser dynasties in the north had alien ruling houses (i.e., they were not ethnically Han Chinese). These included the Northern Wei (Xianbi), who held north China from 399 to 534; the Liao (Khitan), who held Manchuria and parts of north China from 916 to 1122;

Han 202 BCE–CE 220
Tang 618–906
Song 960–1276
Ming 1368–1644
Qing 1644–1911

FIG. 3.1. The five main Chinese imperial dynasties.

(1993), Jack Goody makes good use of Chinese examples. Here I try to show how the China case can contribute to our understanding of succession systems as well.

Succession to the Chinese throne, to use Goody's categories, was primarily postmortem succession from father to son, with some selection possible among sons but a preference for the oldest son of the empress. Sisters and daughters never succeeded, even in the absence of sons, and the realm was never divided when there was more than one son. Premortem succession (thought of as abdication, voluntary or forced) was possible but not common. Each emperor had full authority to select his heir and was encouraged to do so at an early date by publicly appointing an heir apparent. If he had no sons, he could adopt a clansman of the son generation and designate him as his heir. If the emperor died before any sons were born or adopted, the senior widow would become the king maker and select the successor. This woman would also serve as regent when the succeeding emperor was a child. Younger brothers were sometimes chosen as successors, especially when the previous emperor was a child himself. Emperors were rarely deposed; the usual solution to ill or incompetent emperors was to call on others (mother, wife, grand councilor) to take over much of the administrative responsibility.

The major dynasties lasted as long as they did not because there were never major threats to dynastic continuity but because threats were overcome or contained. All of these dynasties survived interference in the selection of heirs by powerful groups with access to the throne, such as palace eunuchs, families of consorts, and grand councilors. These illegitimate king makers picked candidates they could manipulate but generally limited themselves to eligible members of the imperial clan, preserving dynastic

the Jin (Jurchen), who held north China and Manchuria from 1126 to 1234; and the Yuan (Mongol), who held north China from 1215 and all of China from 1276 to 1368. Of the major dynasties, only the last, the Qing, had a non-Han ruling house (in their case, Manchu). Most of the non-Han dynasties adopted elements of Chinese succession practice but adapted them to fit their own traditions. These adaptations are interesting in their own right and have attracted several scholars' attention. See Eisenberg (1991, 1995), Fletcher (1986), Holmgren (1986, 1987, 1991), and Rawski (1998).

continuity.² Twice affinal relatives made themselves emperors, but neither succeeded in passing the throne to a second generation; instead, the original dynasty was restored.³ War could also endanger dynastic continuity. In both the Song and Ming dynasties, an emperor was taken captive by an invading force from the north, but both times officials and imperial relatives rallied to install another member of the imperial family and the dynasty continued.⁴

Because the significance of the Chinese case lies in the success of its succession system, it is worth looking more closely at the dynasty with the best record of orderly succession, the Song dynasty (960–1276).⁵ Although the Song had its share of sonless emperors, emperors whose basic competency was called into question, and doubts about who had actually selected an heir, in no case did rivalry for the throne lead to war between members of the imperial family. The Song, thus, provides a particularly good case for exploring the durability of Chinese dynasties.

The basic facts about the 16 Song emperors are as follows:⁶

1. Taizu (927–976), r. 960–976, dynasty's founder
2. Taizong (939–997), Taizu's younger brother, r. 976–997
3. Zhenzong (968–1022), Taizong's second surviving son, heir apparent 995, r. 997–1022
4. Renzong (1010–1063), Zhenzong's only surviving son, heir apparent 1018, r. 1022–1063
5. Yingzong (1032–1067), adopted from a descendant of Taizong's third son, r. 1063–1067

²Two blatant cases of princes seizing the throne are Tang Taizong, who killed his older brother and forced his father to abdicate to him, and Ming Chengzu, who took up arms to take the throne away from his nephew, the founders' grandchild, still a child. The best source in English for political history of this sort is the many-volumed *Cambridge History of China*. For these two incidents, see Wechsler (1979) and Chan (1988). For basic facts on Chinese successions during the five major dynasties and several other ones, see the tables in Poe (1970).

³After two centuries of the Han dynasty, a male relative of the empress dowager, Wang Mang, usurped the throne from a child emperor, and only after several years of war was the Han dynasty reestablished (see Bielenstein, 1986). In the Tang dynasty, in the late 7th-century, an empress dowager, Empress Wu, was not satisfied with ruling through her son the emperor and declared herself emperor of a new dynasty. Not until she was ill and over 80 years old was the Tang dynasty reestablished with her son and then grandson taking the throne (see Guisso, 1979).

⁴The Song case is described later. For the Ming, see Twitchett and Grimm (1988).

⁵For an equally full account of the successions of the Tang dynasty, see Twitchett (1994).

⁶Chinese emperors were known by a series of names over time. The best-known of these names is their posthumous temple names, which is used here even before they ascended the throne to keep the narrative as simple as possible. Another simplification concerns Chinese ages, which have been converted to approximate Western ages by adding one.

6. Shenzong (1048–1085), Yingzong's eldest son, heir apparent 1066, r. 1067–1085
7. Zhezong (1077–1100), Shenzong's eldest son, heir apparent 1085, r. 1085–1100
8. Huizong (1082–1135), Zhezong's second younger brother, r. 1100–1125
9. Qinzong (1100–1161), Huizong's eldest son, heir apparent 1115, r. 1125–1127
10. Gaozong (1107–1187), Qinzong's sixth surviving younger brother, 1127–1162
11. Xiaozong (1127–1194), adopted from a descendant of Taizu, heir apparent 1162, r. 1127–1162
12. Guangzong (1147–1200), second surviving son of Xiaozong, heir apparent 1171, r. 1189–1194
13. Ningzong (1168–1224), second son of Guangzong, r. 1192–1224
14. Lizong (1205–1264), adopted from a descendant of Taizu, r. 1224–1264
15. Duzong (1240–1274), adopted from a descendant of Ningzong, heir apparent 1260, r. 1264–1274
16. Gongzong (1271–1323), eldest son of Duzong, r. 1274–1276

Like all other Chinese dynasties, the Song was founded by a general who won the realm on horseback. His brothers and his sons were active in the military campaigns that led to the founding and consolidation of the dynasty. When Taizu died suddenly in 976, his empress summoned her eldest son to assume the throne, but the eunuch sent to get him instead went to Taizu's younger brother Taizong, whom he said Taizu had planned to have succeed him. Once Taizong was on the throne, neither Taizu's widow nor his sons put up any resistance. The official explanation for this anomalous succession was that the mother of Taizu and Taizong on her deathbed in 961 had made Taizu promise to pass the throne to his brothers. From that time on, however, many suspected that Taizong had taken matters into his own hands.

Aware that the irregularity of his succession made him vulnerable, Taizong was quick to neutralize potential rivals, such as Taizu's sons and his own younger brother, who might have expected to succeed him by the new precedent set by Taizong. On a campaign against the Khitans in 979, Taizong left the camp secretly when it seemed possible that the enemy might surround them. Disgruntled troops, after discovering he was missing, talked of making Taizu's eldest son emperor. Later, after the army returned to the capital, this prince asked when the troops would be given their rewards, and Taizong angrily told him he could do it his way once he was on the throne himself. Seeing that his uncle suspected him of harboring ambitions for the

throne, the prince did not try to garner allies or raise troops but went to his quarters and slit his throat (Chang, 1968).

Less than 2 years later Taizu's younger son died suddenly at age 22, arousing further suspicions. Then in 982, Taizong's younger brother was accused of plotting rebellion with a group of military officers and sent into exile in the far south, where northerners were known to often succumb to disease. Sure enough, the prince fell ill and died in 984 (Chang, 1968). As these examples illustrate, it was not the case that friction never developed between potential claimants for the throne, nor that all such conflicts were resolved amicably. Taizong made sure that disgruntled officials or generals did not gather around potential claimants to the throne.

Taizong himself waited a long time before making it explicit that he would be succeeded not by a descendant of Taizu but by one of his own sons. His eldest son was subject to fits of insanity and was once demoted to commoner for setting a fire. His second son died in 992. Still, not until 995, when Taizong was 57 years old and suffering from an old wound in his leg, did he choose Zhenzong, his third son, as his heir. Even then, announcing his heir made him uneasy, especially when he heard that the people were pleased with the appointment. Moreover, after he died the existence of an heir apparent did not prevent a struggle between his widow and his grand councilor. His widow and her allies tried to put their candidate, the oldest son, on the throne, but the grand councilor Lü Duan forced adherence to Taizong's wishes, which naturally put him in a good position with the new emperor Zhenzong (Chang, 1968).

Zhenzong in turn did not establish an heir until 1018, when he was 51 years old and had been on the throne 20 years. At that date only one of his six sons was still living. For reasons we will probably never be able to figure out, the Song imperial line was plagued with mental and physical health problems, and the survival rate of sons born in the palace was remarkably low. But it probably was not just the sickliness of his sons that led Zhenzong to delay so long naming an heir. He apparently feared being pressured to abdicate. In fact, when he became ill in 1020, his grand councilor and top eunuch asked him to retire and pass the throne to his heir. Not only did he refuse, but he had the bold eunuch executed and the grand councilor demoted (Ji, 1998, p. 118).

Why were both Taizong and Zhenzong reluctant to name their heirs? Time and again the leading court officials would urge them to designate an heir, thinking that that step would make for an orderly succession. Although the two emperors may have been uncomfortable facing the fact that they would someday die, their reluctance cannot be simply put down to superstitious fears of any mention of death. Rather they knew that the appointment of an heir apparent would change the political dynamics of their court.

Those unhappy with the distribution of power could gather around the heir, planning for the day when they would come into power.⁷

Zhenzong's successor Renzong came to the throne as a child and reigned long enough to be survived by adult children, but not one of his three sons survived (and only 4 of his 13 daughters). In 1056, when he was 47 years old and had been on the throne for 35 years, he became seriously ill. For 10 days he could not even recognize people and had bouts of insanity; even his empress became afraid of him (Ji, 1998, pp. 108–110). After Renzong recovered, the censor Fan Zhen submitted a series of 17 memorials urging Renzong to choose an heir, and other officials joined in. Finally Renzong settled on the son of a first cousin as the heir (Yingzong), well known to both Renzong and his empress because he had spent several years in the palace in his childhood (Ji, 1998, pp. 119–128).

This adoption did not turn out to be trouble-free. As Carney Fisher (1987) has shown in detail, Yingzong wanted to honor his own deceased father at a level many of his officials considered improper because he was now Renzong's heir. Emperors were expected to exemplify the hallowed Confucian virtue of filial piety, but if they were adopted, the filial relationship that counted was the one with the preceding emperor. To the officials, Yingzong should be able to set aside his basically private feelings toward his already deceased father to strengthen the dynastic link with his predecessor in office, but Yingzong would not be swayed.⁸

When Yingzong came to the throne he had three sons, ranging from 9 to 17 years of age, all born to his wife. He soon developed both mental and physical illnesses and died after only 4 years on the throne. On his death, his eldest son, Shenzong, then 19, was made emperor. Although this succession was the logical one, the grand councilor Han Qi felt it made things smoother to have Yingzong write out Shenzong's name in a moment of lucidity (Ji, 1998, pp. 196–204).

Although vigorous as a young adult, Shenzong also succumbed to illness and died in early middle age. His eldest son, Zhezong, was not named heir apparent until Shenzong was mortally ill (Tuo, 1977, p. 16.313).

Zhezong was only 9 years old when he took the throne and for the next 9 years was under the domination of his grandmother, who served as regent. In 1099, when he was 23, a son was born to him, but the baby lived only a couple of months. Thus when a lingering cough proved fatal to Zhezong the next year, the Song faced its first unsettled succession, its first need to call on a king maker. Not only had no heir apparent been appointed, but the just deceased emperor had no sons or nephews to select among. Succession

⁷Tang emperors also often did not name heirs (see Twitchett, 1994).

⁸For a similar case in the Ming period, see Fisher (1990).

would have to go either to a posthumously adopted clansman or to one of Zhezong's five younger brothers.

The steps taken to get someone on the throne as quickly as possible are recorded most fully in the diary of one of the members of the Council of State, Zeng Bu (1035–1107). The story is worth retelling in some detail.

At the time the Council of State had four members, Zeng Bu, Zhang Dun, Cai Bian, and Xu Jiang. On the morning of 1100/1/12, Zeng and the other councilors went to the Inner Eastern Gate to wait to be summoned. They were aware that Zhezong was gravely ill and were expecting to spend part of that day organizing prayer ceremonies in the palace and at Buddhist and Daoist temples in the capital (Zeng Bu, 1998, pp. 8.1a, 2a, 9.5a–b). When they reached the gate, however, the eunuch manager, Liang Congzheng, told them they could not enter there. They then went to Blessed Tranquility Hall, Zhezong's primary residence, where they found that a screen of state had been erected so that Empress Xiang, the senior empress, could receive the councilors. (She was Shenzong's widowed empress and Zhezong's legal mother; Zhezong's natural mother, Consort Zhu, did not participate.) Empress Xiang informed the councilors that Zhezong had died and because he had no sons, a decision needed to be made about what to do. According to Zeng Bu (1998):

Before the others could answer Zhang Dun in a harsh voice said, "According to the rites and the statutes, Prince Jian should be installed, since as a brother with the same mother, he is the closest relative."

I was surprised and had not yet responded when the empress dowager said, "All of the brothers from Prince Shen on down are all Shenzong's sons. It is difficult to distinguish among them. Prince Shen has sick eyes. The next is Prince Duan [Huizong], so he should be established." (p. 9.3a)

Zeng Bu interjected that Zhang Dun had not talked the matter over with the rest of them and expressed his approval of Empress Xiang's choice. Cai and Xu concurred and stressed that the decision was hers to make. Zhang Dun, finding no support, said no more. Thus, the empress felt it was necessary to consult the highest officials, but three out of four of them were satisfied with letting her make the decision. The one dissenter had to yield when outnumbered.

In Zeng Bu's view it was important that there were witnesses to these deliberations. He mentioned that "At this time more than a hundred palace eunuchs from the director, manager, and imperial pharmacist on down were standing in line outside the screen, and they all could hear the conversation." Zeng Bu also recognized the importance of assembling both guards and all of the potential claimants to the throne:

I called to [the eunuch Liang] Congzheng and ordered him to summon those in charge of the guards as well as the five princes. Congzheng said, "Before the five princes are brought in, we should summon Prince Duan to take the throne. After he has taken the throne, we can bring the other princes in." (p. 9.3a-b)

From Zeng Bu's testimony, Empress Dowager Xiang was quite definite that she wanted Huizong to succeed Zhezong. In other quoted conversations she repeatedly mentions how intelligent he is, and in one she explicitly says that none of the other princes can compare with him.⁹ In all likelihood, she both liked Huizong and considered him the most capable of Shenzong's surviving sons. Moreover, he was only 3 months younger than Prince Shen, so the age difference had little more than symbolic significance. If the eldest had an eye disease or even just poor eyesight, he would have made a poor candidate for emperor because emperors had to read through piles of memorials and other documents. When Zeng Bu discussed Huizong's selection with Xu Jiang and Cai Bian, they concurred that Huizong was the obvious choice and that Zhang Dun was pursuing a private agenda in proposing Prince Jian. It is also possible that other people in the palace, such as leading eunuchs, had talked up Huizong to the empress. Zeng Bu (1998, p. 9.40b) reports a later conversation with Empress Xiang in which she said that when she asked the eunuch Liang Congzheng what to do about the succession, he told her to listen to Zhang Dun, probably knowing that Zhang Dun favored Prince Jian.¹⁰ It is not inconceivable that another eunuch made similar arguments in favor of Huizong.¹¹

It is significant that no one at court proposed setting aside Zhezong's brothers and looking for a clansman of the right generation to be Zhezong's heir. No grandsons of Shenzong had yet been born, and perhaps no great-grandsons of Yingzong. However, there were definitely descendants of Taizong of the right generation (including great-great-grandsons of Yingzong's natural father¹²), and there were also many descendants of Taizu of the right generation.¹³ Thus, if the empress dowager had insisted on selecting someone

⁹Zeng Bu, 1998, pp. 9.10a, 20b. On another occasion she described him as compassionate by nature, reportedly because he had cried when he heard that a palace woman had died during the investigation into allegations about Empress Meng (Zeng Bu, 1998, p. 9.10a).

¹⁰Another source (Chen, 1936, p. 25.11a) asserts that Liang Congzheng tried to secure the succession for Prince Jian just before including this information.

¹¹Zhang Bangwei (2002) proposes the eunuch He Sui as a likely candidate.

¹²One example is Buwu (1074–1119) (see Chang, 1977, p. 4:3402–3).

¹³Several, in fact, were talented enough to have passed the jinshi exams. See, for instance, Zichou (1089–1142), Zisong (j.s. 1106), and Zili (j.s. 1091, d. 1137) (Chang, 1977, pp. 4:3381, 3386).

of the ritually appropriate generation, she could have had her pick of adults of varying ages or a child she could have dominated. However, the course she did take was probably the most human. Placing one of Shenzong's sons on the throne meant that the succession would go to a descendant of her husband, someone she had herself helped rear. Moreover, Taizong's succession to Taizu provided a precedent legitimating fraternal succession.

To return to the 1100 succession, while the councilors were waiting for Huizong to arrive, Zeng Bu told the eunuchs that the councilors needed to see Zhezong's body. The empress dowager gave permission and Liang Congzheng led them in. They saw the body covered in a shroud, which they had opened so that they could confirm that it was Zhezong. Zeng Bu also instructed the head eunuch that when Huizong arrived he should immediately be taken to the throne and therefore that the imperial hat and robe had to be ready for him. Liang told him that that step had already been taken care of.

While waiting for Huizong's arrival, the councilors worked on the text of Zhezong's final testament. None of them seem to have had the slightest compunction about creating the fiction that Zhezong himself on his deathbed had selected Huizong. Finally Huizong arrived and the councilors followed him into the hall:

When we got to the chamber with the screen, the empress dowager sitting behind the curtain screen said to the prince [on the other side], "The emperor has abandoned the world and has no son. Prince Duan should be established." The prince, shaking, strongly declined, saying, "Prince Shen is the oldest. I don't dare accept." The empress dowager said, "Prince Shen has sick eyes. The next should be established. You should not decline." We chimed in that for the sake of the dynasty he should not decline. The manager and other eunuchs rolled up the screen curtain and took Prince Duan behind the screen. He was still protesting vehemently. The empress dowager told him to stop. We also parted the curtains and told him for the sake of the country not to decline. We heard from behind the screen the eunuch managers and the others transmitting the message to get the hat. Then we left and stood below in the courtyard for a while. When the curtain was rolled up, he had the hat on his head and was wearing a yellow jacket. Once he sat on the throne, the councilors and the eunuchs from the manager on down all lined up. (Zeng Bu, 1998, pp. 9.3b-4a)

The councilors retreated to work on the final testament to be issued in Zhezong's name. Before the final testament could be proclaimed, Huizong summoned them:

Huizong was sitting on the throne and our names were announced. We said "ten thousand blessings," then ascended the hall. Huizong said something confidentially to Zhang Dun in a low voice, so the others in line could not hear. I said, "We could not hear the emperor's words." Dun said, "He asks that the empress dowager temporarily govern with him." Huizong also turned to look at

us and said, "Just now I begged Mom to govern with me." I said, "Your Majesty is virtuous and humble and thus wishes to proceed in this way. However, there is no precedent for doing this when the ruler is full grown. I don't know what the empress dowager thinks about this." The emperor said, "The empress dowager has already agreed. I just thanked her. That is why I presumed to order you here. Since the final testament has not yet been issued, this provision can be added to it." (Zeng Bu, 1998, pp. 9.4a-b)

The councilors were puzzled by Huizong's wish to have his legal mother rule with him because at 18 years old he was an adult in Chinese eyes. It was not until months later that Zeng Bu realized that Huizong had made a politically astute move. The passed-over brothers could not object to decisions formally approved by their legal mother without opening themselves to charges of unfilial behavior; this would limit their opportunities to consciously or unconsciously obstruct the new administration.

A key element in the formal rituals of succession was reading the putative final testament of Zhezong to the assembled court officials (Wechsler, 1985, pp. 78–106). Zeng Bu sets the scene:

When summoned, the officials entered and wailed. In Blessed Tranquility Hall, the equipment was set up for the ceremony. When the ranks of officials had lined up, the grand councilors were led up into the hall to receive the final testament. They faced west and read it, then went down the stairs and bowed twice. Next the councilors burnt incense and made an offering of tea and wine, then bowed twice more. The person reading the final testament at times would stop to weep. Everyone, high and low, inner and outer, wailed; it was impossible to restrain them. The ranks then went to the eastern side chamber to congratulate the emperor on taking the throne, after which condolences were again offered. Then the councilors and the first and second generation princes all ascended the hall and wailed. The emperor also covered his face and wept. (p. 9.4b)

Did the fact that the senior widow was the king maker make any difference to the outcome? In this case it did. If the councilors had this responsibility, or if it was invested in the highest official in charge of the imperial clan, it would have been much more likely that a clansman of the correct generation would have been selected. Moreover, it made a difference which woman ranked highest at the time Zhezong died. For instance, if Empress Xiang had died in 1099 (instead of 1101, as she in fact did), Zhezong would have promoted his natural mother Consort Zhu to empress and she would have been the king maker in 1100. She, in all likelihood, would have placed her younger son on the throne. And if both the empress dowager and the consort dowager had already passed away, Zhezong's empress would have been the senior empress. She might have wanted to adopt a clansman a generation younger than Zhezong whom she could rear, giving her both the op-

portunity to rule as regent if she desired and also the future prospect of an emperor loyal and filial toward her.

Hui宗 ended up reigning for nearly 25 years. His first son, Qinzong, was born just a few months after he took the throne, and by the end of his reign he had had 29 sons by about a dozen women. In 1115 he appointed Qinzong as heir apparent and a couple of years later Qinzong had a son, making Hui宗 the first Song emperor to have a grandson born to him while on the throne. Thus, the last thing anyone would have anticipated in 1120 was another succession crisis.

What turned out to complicate the next two successions was war. The Jurchen attacked the Song in 1125, and when their forces were approaching the capital, Hui宗 realized desperate measures were called for. On the advice of a few of his officials, he first took the blame on himself for everything that went wrong, then abdicated in favor of his heir, hoping that this would placate the Jurchen (who claimed they were invading because of a Song violation of earlier agreements). Before setting the transition in motion, Hui宗 and a couple of officials decided such matters as where he would live after abdicating and what title would be used to refer to him. Against his officials' advice, Hui宗 decided to feign a stroke to give himself an excuse for abdicating. When they put the plan into effect, Qinzong proved very reluctant to play his part:

Qinzong wouldn't accept the mandate. Tong Guan and Li Bangyan put the imperial robes on him, but the heir apparent rose and pushed them off, not daring to accept them. Hui宗 [since he was pretending to be unable to speak or use his right side] with his left hand wrote, "If you do not accept, you are unfilial."

Qinzong said, "If I accept, then I am unfilial."

Hui宗 then wrote summoning the empress. When she arrived, she told Qinzong, "The emperor is old. He and I wish to entrust our lives to you." He still strongly declined. Hui宗 then ordered the eunuchs to forcibly carry him to Blessed Tranquility Hall and put him on the throne. Qinzong was definitely unwilling to walk, so the eunuchs forcibly carried him. He struggled with them and passed out from holding his breath. After he recovered they resumed carrying him to the western chamber of Blessed Tranquility Hall, where the grand councilors met and congratulated him. He was then carried into Blessed Tranquility Hall, where he still resisted ascending the throne. At that time, the hundred officials had been summoned to assemble in Hanging Hem Hall, but once he were there, because the sun was fading and the hour late, the general view was not to delay, and the new emperor took the throne. (Yang, 1967, p. 146.9a)

A story circulated that a group of eunuchs, knowing Qinzong disapproved of their behavior, tried to have Prince Kai, perhaps Hui宗's favorite son, placed on the throne instead of Qinzong. The night of the abdication, sev-

eral dozen of them took Prince Kai to the palace. When they got there, General He Guan, then in command of the palace guard, refused entry (Wang, 1961, p. yuhua 1.281).

Huizong made up his mind to abdicate rather suddenly and probably had not thought through all of the consequences for himself or those associated with him. He chose to be addressed by a Daoist title and to live in a palace that had been converted to a Daoist temple, signaling that he was entering a phase of his life where his religious devotions would be more central to his identity and occupy more of his time. Probably he assumed once others had taken care of the crisis, he would lead a quiet but comfortable life in an elegant temple-garden, with plenty of books, priests, and other company to make life enjoyable.

He had no such luck. About 2 weeks after abdicating, Huizong and a small entourage fled from the capital, going south, past the Yangtze River. The Jurchen did not in the end set siege to the city; instead, they extorted a huge sum of gold and silver from the Song to go away. After the Song finally raised enough money to get them to leave, Qinzong's officials began pressing him to make his father return to the capital, fearing that Huizong might try to set up a rival court in the south, confusing lines of authority. Huizong finally consented, but after his return to Kaifeng, he became a captive of his son's court. Officials were assigned to his palace and required to make daily reports on his activities. At one point they were given orders to question everyone who visited Huizong and confiscate any gifts he made to them (*Jingkang yaolu*, p. 93; Xu, 1939, p. jia 445). One by one Huizong's highest officials were executed, blamed for the catastrophe. Qinzong's visits to Huizong were rare, and Huizong was apparently invited to the palace only once (Xu, 1939, p. jia 470). Qinzong could not avoid visiting Huizong on his birthday in the 10th month, but the occasion did not go well. Shortly before, Huizong had said that the Jurchen were sure to return and proposed that he go to Luoyang to organize an army there, but an official had convinced Qinzong to reject this idea. At the birthday party, someone stepped on Qinzong's toes, and Qinzong refused the glass of wine Huizong offered him. Moreover, after this meeting, Qinzong had placards posted outside Huizong's palace offering rewards to anyone who turned in people passing rumors about the two palaces. From this point on, we are told, there was no real communication between Huizong and Qinzong (Xu, 1939, p. jia 564).

Less than 2 months later, late in 1126, the Jurchen returned, and this time the Song decided to fight. After a few weeks of frantic fighting, the Jurchen gained control of the city walls. At this point they offered to negotiate, and Song now was eager to appease them. One of the first demands the Jurchen made was that Qinzong turn over his father as a hostage. Qinzong refused on the grounds of filial piety, sending instead a younger brother and an uncle. Eventually Qinzong was persuaded to leave the walled city and en-

ter the Jurchen's camp, where he was put in the difficult position of having to deceive Huizong to get him to leave the relative safety of the palace to join him in the Jurchen's camp. Neither ever regained his freedom. Along with over 14,000 palace residents, imperial clansmen, and city residents, they were transported north. Both Huizong and Qinzong died in captivity, Huizong 8 years later, Qinzong 34.

One might have expected the Song dynasty to end at this point because more than half the members of the imperial family had been taken captive, including almost all of those closely related to the last three emperors. Moreover, before the Jurchen took their captives and booty north, they demanded that Qinzong's high officials pick a new emperor from another family, and he was duly installed as emperor of a new dynasty. Once the Jurchen withdrew with their human and material booty, however, this new dynasty quickly unraveled. Both the Song army and the populace rallied instead around the one brother of Qinzong who escaped captivity, Gaozong.

The officials left behind in Kaifeng could have urged Gaozong to serve as regent until Qinzong was rescued or ransomed. Instead, knowing that China in its vulnerable position needed as strong a ruler as possible, they pushed for him to be installed as emperor. Still, even in this emergency, they felt the need for someone to play the role of king-making senior widow. They found a satisfactory candidate in the woman Zhezong had deposed as empress 27 years earlier. She had been sent to a Daoist convent, and the Jurchens, not knowing of her connection to the imperial line, had left her behind. The ranking officials gave her back her old honors and asked her to both accept the puppet's renouncement of the emperorship and to confer the throne on Gaozong. All told, the interregnum lasted less than a month, despite the chaotic situation and the distance between the capital and Gaozong's camp (Xu, 1939, ch. 92–95).

Gaozong thus began his reign with his father and mother captives of the enemy and his predecessor still alive, never having abdicated. Gaozong was eventually able to ransom his mother, but by then his father had died. He apparently never even attempted to ransom his older brother Qinzong (Tao, 1989).

Gaozong's one son died in infancy, when Gaozong was only 22 years old, and he decided to adopt a son rather than put his hopes in begetting more sons. He publicly declared that he would select someone from the line of Taizu, to reestablish Taizu's martial spirit. Ten boys 7 years and younger were taken into the palace, where they were raised by palace women and gradually narrowed down. One, for instance, was eliminated when Gaozong saw him kick a cat (Chaffee, 1999, pp. 179–180). For a long time, just two adoptees remained, then in 1153 Xiaozong was named heir apparent.

In 1162, after 36 years on the throne, Gaozong abdicated in favor of Xiaozong. Gaozong did not suffer the fate of Huizong after abdication. To

the contrary, he was treated with great honor and able to get his way on most matters because Xiaozong was a model of the filial son toward him. Gaozong thrived as retired emperor, living to be 80 years old. For Xiaozong this meant that for 25 of his 27 years as emperor, he reigned in the shadow of his adoptive father (Lau, 1986).

Xiaozong had barely finished mourning Gaozong when he abdicated himself, at age 62. Perhaps he had envied Gaozong's years as doted-on retired emperor. He may also have thought he should give a chance to his heir apparent, Guangzong, who was himself nearly 40 and had been crown prince since 1180.

Guangzong did not turn out to be the attentive son that his father had been, and when Xiaozong fell ill in 1194, Guangzong would not even visit him. His officials gathered outside his palace where they entreated him to perform his filial duties. When Xiaozong died a few months later, it was evident that Guangzong was not in full command of his mental faculties because he would not or could not perform the funeral ceremonies, central to Confucian ritual (Chaffee, 1999, p. 191).

This crisis led to the sole case of deposing an emperor during the Song dynasty. At first two of the councilors, one of whom was an imperial clansman, approached the senior empress (Gaozong's widow, Guangzong's legal grandmother) and asked her to serve as regent, ruling from "behind the screen." After she refused, they began planning a forced abdication, but first they needed an heir apparent. They did not select the eldest son but the one Guangzong was thought to have favored (Ningzong). Next, all those close to the emperor or in a position to shape matters had to be convinced to cooperate—including the senior empress, the head of the palace guard, the chief eunuch, and so on. This accomplished, the councilors issued in Guangzong's name an edict expressing a desire to abdicate. The just-appointed heir apparent took over the mourning responsibilities but protested that taking the throne would be unfilial. One of the councilors countered: "To settle the state is filial. Currently people within and without worry about chaos. If such a state comes to pass, how will you provide for the Senior Emperor?" (Chaffee, 1999, pp. 192–193).

Ningzong, during his long reign, had nine sons, but every one of them died in infancy. Following the death of his eldest son in 1197, he had a 5-year-old clansmen adopted, again from one of the lines of Taizu's descendants. This boy was made heir apparent, given the title Prince of Yi, and trained for his future role as emperor, even receiving daily visits from the grand councilor who explained current political issues to him. Prince Yi, however, died in 1220 when he was 29, and Ningzong had to begin again. This time he asked for a boy at least 14 years old since he was by then over 60 himself. The young man chosen had already been reared in the palace as potential heir to Prince Yi. The powerful grand councilor Shi Miyuan did

not approve of this selection, reportedly because the young man had told others that he would exile Shi to the far south once he became emperor. Shi Miyuan then began grooming another clansman as a potential heir. In the 8th month of 1224 Ningzong fell ill. Six days later Shi's candidate was named the new heir without informing the previous heir. Many naturally suspected that Ningzong was too ill to be expressing his intentions and that this change reflected Shi Miyuan's desires, not Ningzong's. Five days later Ningzong died.

To see to it that the succession went the way he wanted it to, Shi had his candidate brought into the throne room first and seated him on the throne, much the way Taizong and Huizong had been placed there to forestall objections. The previous heir was then brought in without his bodyguard or attendants. He was told to take his customary position to hear the testamentary edict read. When a distant relative was named instead of him, he tried to protest but was forced to kneel like the others in recognition of the newly enthroned emperor (Chaffee, 1999, pp. 202–203). According to John Chaffee (1999), "the indisputable fact in this story is that [Shi Miyuan] and his supporters installed as emperor an individual who was not the crown prince and whose legitimacy rested upon an edict that may or may not have represented the will of Ningzong" (p. 203).

After Lizong's accession, the former heir apparent, Prince Yi, was sent to a nearby prefecture, where he could live in idle luxury. About 6 months later a group of commoners rose in revolt and said they would make the prince the emperor. Although he at first resisted, the prince was persuaded to don imperial robes and accept the obeisance of the local officials. The rebels, however, had little support and when they were easily put down by imperial troops, the prince was executed for his largely involuntary part in the affair. Thus, even after a highly irregular imperial succession, which resulted in a child on the throne, discontented forces did not rally around the just-deposed crown prince (Chaffee, 1999, pp. 204–205).

Lizong, as it turned out, was no more successful than his predecessors in producing a male heir. A son was not born to him until he was 38 years old, and that child died within 2 months. Another son also died soon thereafter. Thus Lizong was under pressure to adopt one or more imperial clansman in preparation for selection of one to be his heir. Yet like many of his predecessors, he kept procrastinating. Finally in 1253 he adopted a son of his brother as heir, a boy born in 1240 who would eventually succeed as Duzong.

Duzong, like many of the Song emperors before him, died relatively young, in his case at 34. His oldest son was still a toddler (Gongzong, born in 1271), and two empress dowagers (Lizong's widow and Duzong's widow) served as regents. This was a period of military emergency because the Mongols' armies had already penetrated deep into Song territory. Gongzong and the two empresses were taken captive after they surrendered to the

Mongols, but Song loyalists tried for 3 more years to preserve the Song, using Gongzong's younger brothers as symbols of Song continuity (Chaffee, 1999, pp. 244–246).

As these succession cases reveal, the presumably normal succession—in which the emperor, well before he is likely to die, selects one of his sons, most commonly the eldest, to be his heir apparent, this prince is then carefully prepared for his future role, and in fact succeeds to the throne on his father's death—turns out to be less common than the exceptions. Of the 15 Song successions, only 4 (Zhenzong, Renzong, Qinzong, Guangzong) fully fit this model (in addition two others, Shenzong and Zhezong, were appointed their father's heir when it became apparent he was seriously ill). The most common exception was the failure of the emperor to have a son, which was remedied by adopting a clansman, sometimes a close relative but often enough someone distantly related. But all sorts of other exceptions also occurred, ranging from abdication to succession by a younger brother to deposing an emperor. In two cases there were doubts whether the deceased emperor had in fact selected the person who succeeded to the throne, but in the overwhelming percentage of the cases, the succession was accepted as legitimate, based on the understood rules and procedures.

Many of the features of the Chinese case are in line with Goody's analysis. For instance, in China there was enough indeterminacy in succession to allow some selection of successors, but not so much that lengthy interregnums resulted. Premortem succession in China could result in much the same sort of tensions between father ex-kings and son current-kings that Goody described for other societies. The way Chinese deposed emperors confirms Goody's observation that those empowered to select the king are the only ones who could dethrone him (see also Wallacker, 1987). The Chinese practice of appointing an heir apparent fits Goody's idea of preemptive succession as a strategy to smooth the transition. At the same time, the reluctance of Chinese emperors to appoint an heir apparent is consistent with Goody's observation that "vagueness in the incumbent-successor relationship is likely to lead to a decrease in the tension between parent and child, although not between the brothers themselves" (Goody, 1966, p. 28).

More interesting, in many ways, are the discrepancies between Goody's analysis and the Chinese case. First, Goody makes no mention of women as king makers, whereas Chinese saw the surviving widow as the natural arbiter in such cases. Women played a similar role in ordinary families. When a family head died without an heir, the senior woman in the family, usually his widow but sometimes his widowed mother, would have the authority to select an heir, and the man's brothers and uncles were not permitted to interfere. Although no one would deny that the Chinese family system was patrilineal and patriarchal, and that in-marrying women were looked on as outsiders, a woman who bore sons and outlived her husband had the greatest

stake in seeing his line continued. In other words, she was much more likely than his brother to do what he would have wanted done, and the law recognized her prerogatives in this regard. Goody (1966, pp. 1–2) downplays similarities between succession to high office and succession in the family, but in the Chinese case they are too pervasive to be dismissed. In China succession in the family involved not merely inheritance of (divisible) property but also succession in the ancestral cult, and every man who lived long enough to marry was supposed to be succeeded by a son who would make offerings to him and have sons of his own to continue the sacrifices after his death. The strong preference for succession by a son rather than a younger brother was understood in terms of this ritual imperative.

Second, unlike the societies Goody studied, in Song China no effort was made to pare down the pool of eligible candidates for the throne. Rather than, say, eliminating all those more than two generations from the throne, as some of Goody's examples did, in Song China the pool was allowed to expand exponentially, which had the effect of diluting the claims of everyone not the son of the preceding ruler.¹⁴ In China polygyny was occasionally a source of strain because it could pit the ruler's consorts against each other as they struggled to assure succession for their sons, in the way that Goody describes.¹⁵ However, it was also responsible for one of the major sources of stability in the major Chinese dynasties, the huge size of the imperial clan. In the case of the Song, by the third generation, there were over 200 boys born to the clan, and by the fourth, over 1,000 (Chaffee, 1999, p. 31). The fiscal burden of maintaining the imperial clan, it is true, was heavy. In 1067 the clan cost nearly twice as much as the entire capital bureaucracy and nearly two thirds as much as the capital army (Chaffee, 1999, p. 68). But it did assure that the dynasty would not fail for lack of male issue.

Third, in China cultural expectations seem to have played a larger role in stabilizing the succession system than Goody allowed for. This is not to say that the ideology of birthright was strong in China. Much to the contrary. Although China did not experiment with forms of government other than hereditary monarchies, birth itself was never glorified as the best of all possible ways to recruit people to positions of importance. The ancient concept of the Mandate of Heaven posited that Heaven would see to it that an evil or incompetent ruler would be overthrown and would ensure that a better,

¹⁴Before the Song, a line was drawn at the limit of mourning obligations to define those who received the material benefits of clan membership (i.e., it was cut off at four generations from the throne). The kinship connection was still recognized, however. Recourse to adoption was much less common for Tang successions (Twitchett, 1994), so it is impossible to say whether clansmen outside the mourning grades would have been viewed as suitable adoptees in Tang times, as they were during the Song period.

¹⁵This was particularly true in the preimperial period and is a theme running through early historical chronicles. There are plenty of cases in the Han and Tang periods as well.

more virtuous ruler would found a new dynasty. Sons of rulers were always said to be selected to succeed because of their talents and virtues rather than their birth order. The only justification for succession going to the eldest son of the principal wife was that the classics had stressed the importance of this son continuing ancestral rites (Tao, 1978).

Yet by Song times at least, China had a political culture in which those who were not chosen to succeed accepted the outcome. In mature democracies, those who lose an election do not stage coups to seize power, but in immature democracies coups are all too common. By analogy, many of the societies that Goody studied could be viewed as immature monarchies, in which those passed over for the throne might well contest the decision by force, and the Chinese case as a mature one where the procedures for selecting the next ruler were accepted as appropriate and natural.

It should of course also be recognized that part of what made later China a mature, stable political system was that the office of emperor came with such a large range of resources that it was extremely difficult to unseat anyone once he was on the throne. In the Song case, once Taizong arrived in the palace before Taizu's son and was dressed in the imperial robes, there was little the son could do. The eunuchs, the palace guards, and the palace ladies were all trained to do the bidding of the occupant of the throne, making it very difficult for anyone without those resources to compete.

Important as these resources were, it was just as important, I think, that rival claimants accepted the legitimacy of the procedures for selecting successors. One element here is the congruence between the way decisions were made in the imperial family and the way similar decisions were made in ordinary families. Chinese officials were not uncomfortable with letting the senior empress have the final say in succession cases because much the same procedures were used in ordinary families in which a married man died without a son. Another element is certainly the accumulated written record, which provided people with categories, rules, and stories about succession in the past. In later writings, Goody (1986, 1987) emphasized the pervasive differences in social and political processes that accompany writing. China had been literate for at least 1,000 years before the first of the imperial dynasties, and the interpretation of textual traditions was central both to understandings of the rules of succession as well as analyses of likely outcomes of specific courses of action. The Confucian classics and the commentarial traditions surrounding them made the ruler's ritual duties, both to Heaven and to his royal ancestors, central to his role. At the same time, the histories provided a sourcebook of stories of dynastic misfortune, intrigue, and conflict. Those familiar with these stories could not act in pure self-interest: Their understanding of their self-interest was mediated through these stories. After Huizong abdicated and Qinzong's officials put pressure on him to rein in his father, they kept having to assure him that people would not class him with the

Tang emperor Suzong who more than three centuries earlier had taken over during a military crisis without his father actually abdicating.

Fourth, the Chinese case suggests the need for more complex consideration of the time dimension. Goody mentions changes in technology, such as the introduction of the gun, but well before guns were in use the passage of time had an impact on succession practices. In China, the dynamics of succession almost always changed over the course of a dynasty. In the early stages of the dynasty, the prime threat to succession came from an emperor's closest male relatives. A military leader trying to gain supremacy over his rivals would employ his brothers, sons, and nephews in any useful capacity, including having them lead armies. This would give the throne a corporate character for a generation or two because these individuals would rightly feel that they had all contributed to winning the throne. Even after the family head acceded as emperor, it would be difficult to send these close relatives away or strip them of all power, leaving them with the resources to contest a succession. A generation or two later princes and other imperial kin would grow up in great affluence and could more easily be isolated from political power. One way to do this was to send nonsucceeding sons out of the capital; another was just the opposite, to confine them to the capital to keep them under watch. Other difficulties could arise later in the dynasty, certainly the chance ones of emperors dying young or heirless, but it would be less likely that brothers, uncles, or sons would use force to seize the throne.

In addition to the developmental cycle of each dynasty, in the Chinese case later dynasties often learned from the predicaments of earlier ones. Thus, the consort families that interfered with succession in the Han dynasty were kept in better check by most of the later dynasties, and it becomes rare to have a succession of child emperors installed to maintain a regency. The Song dynasty was aware of the ways palace eunuchs interfered with succession in both the Han and the late Tang and took measures to limit their influence.

In sum, the Chinese case suggests several ways to enlarge Jack Goody's analysis of succession to high office. To accommodate the China case, a distinction should be drawn between mature systems of succession in which all of the principal players agree on the rules and procedures governing succession, and less mature systems, in which the ground rules are not yet firmly established. China shows that monarchies can be stable not only in places like modern Europe where the office of monarch has lost most of its powers but also in countries where the office brought great powers and resources. The cultural processes through which the ground rules for succession come to be accepted need not be the same everywhere. However, the Chinese case suggests that familiarity with the written records of earlier dynasties' successions and the habit of analogizing the family and the state can be significant. The China example also suggests that expanding the pool of eligible heirs can be

as good a way to control or contain rivalry for the throne as narrowing the pool. In stark contrast to the Ottoman practice of killing all of the new ruler's brothers, China in Song and Ming times allowed the imperial clan to multiply rapidly, diluting each clansman's claims. The China case also suggests the usefulness of distinguishing between cyclical change and long-term secular change. China is unlikely to have been the only place where the political dynamics of succession changed over the course of the dynasty or where reforms sometimes successfully remedied past pitfalls in the succession system. Finally, the China case should provoke reconsideration of the role of women in succession. Although female agnates (sisters and daughters) never succeeded to the throne, women of other families who married in as empresses could if widowed play crucial roles as king makers and regents. Those familiar with China have long recognized that women could hold significant power once widowed. As mothers of family members, they were no longer viewed as outsiders. Their asexual status lessened some of the limits placed on women's social interactions. The demands of filial piety assured them considerable say even when their sons were grown. But shouldn't much of this have been true in other patrilineal societies? Could it be that widows' roles have been underestimated?

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Between East and West: Greek Catholic Icons and Cultural Boundaries

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The cultural, in other words, is the social viewed from another perspective, not a distinct analytic entity.

—Goody (1992, p. 30)

Questions of comparison and contrast have always been central to Jack Goody's work. His meticulous early analyses of the social organization of adjacent communities in Northern Ghana (e.g., 1956) were criticized by his colleague Edmund Leach (1961), who associated this level of microcomparison with the methods that he denigrated as "butterfly collecting" (p. 3). This was hardly a fair comment on Goody, but perhaps it had some influence on the direction his work would take from the 1960s onward—not toward the "inspired guesswork" favored by Leach but toward comparative historical anthropology on a global scale. In the course of documenting macrolevel contrasts between Africa and Eurasia, Goody (1982, 1993, 1997) has shown increasing interest in questions of culture. How have these later interests been reconciled with earlier microcomparisons of social structures?

The basic answer is that, whatever the level of comparison, Goody never loses sight of the political, economic, and communicational factors that condition and shape differences in culture and social practices. When he generalizes about Africa, it is sub-Saharan Africa that he has in mind, nonliterate and possessing a technological base quite different from that of Ethiopia and the Mediterranean world. For some purposes, it is of course legitimate to make comparisons at lower levels, but Goody has consistently questioned the

standard anthropological reliance on individual societies or cultures. For example, in his work on Europe, he (Goody, 1998) criticized the oversimplification of a boundary by John Hajnal (1965) in his paper on marriage patterns but himself acknowledged the significance of macroregional differences in the structure of the family. Comparative work requires careful specification of levels and the boundaries of the units to be compared. In this chapter, I argue against those who emphasize a more or less vertical line in western Eurasia, maintaining that some integrated entity to the west of this line was endowed with special cultural or civilizational qualities that made it uniquely qualified to usher in the modern world. My argument combines Goody's own strictures against Eurocentrism (1996) with two further threads in his recent work: his interest in visual representations (1997) and his discussion of "the boundary of culture" (1992).

Belief in the existence of a cultural boundary between Eastern and Western Europe is widespread on both sides of the postulated divide. Yet there is vagueness about where exactly this line should be drawn, just as there is concerning the further vertical boundary widely imagined to separate Europe from Asia. Special claims are sometimes made for smaller components: northwestern Europe or even just England.¹ There is wide agreement that religion is an important cultural factor but disagreement as to whether the emergence of capitalism is linked to specific forms of Protestantism, to Protestantism in general, or to all variants of Western Christianity. Eastern Christianity, when not altogether elided, is taken to be more radically different.² This, then, with its origins in the late Roman Empire, is the most obvious cultural fault line within Europe.

Although the salience of this boundary has come to be taken for granted, it turns out to be of fairly recent creation. The vertical axis that dominates our present symbolic geography of Europe was put in place by 18th-century intellectuals, displacing the earlier primacy of a horizontal axis (Wolff, 1994). For Rousseau and Voltaire, Eastern Europe was an inherently ambivalent zone between barbarism and the civilization of the West. In the second half of the 20th-century this longstanding religious boundary was reinforced (though the fit was imperfect) by an iron curtain, which demarcated the allegedly totalitarian societies of the East from the free world of the West. Resistance to totalitarian rule was visibly strongest in those countries that had the desirable Western cultural traditions. This recent period strengthened

¹See Jones (1981) and Landes (1998) for characteristic works; on England, see Macfarlane (1978, 1997, 2002).

²This applies particularly to Weber. Following Werner Sombart, Kaufmann (1997) argues that Weber neglected the importance of the structural differentiation that began in Western Europe following the Great Schism and that his notion of rationalization is foreshadowed in scholasticism. For further discussion of the origins of the differences between the Eastern and Western Churches and the "fault line," see Pelikan (1989, 1990).

the older assumptions that only in the West was it possible to develop a plurality, a balance of powers, initially between church and state, on which the later democratization of the state and the building of civil societies depended, a path blocked off by the monolithic institutions of the "caesaro-papist" East.³ Even among those sympathetic to socialist objectives, few Western scholars who lived through these decades were able to challenge such ways of thinking.

This powerful East-West contrast retains its force in the postcommunist period in debates over the widening of the European Union. The boundaries of this Union have recently shifted eastward to the point where they have become largely congruent with Christianity's internal frontier.⁴ This expanded construction of Europe is attractive to many, who see in it the prospect of transcending earlier nationalisms. Others, however, have pointed to the danger that "Fortress Europe" will merely reproduce the illusions of nationalism on a larger scale (Shore, 1993). Underpinning these constructions is a very dubious concept of culture, by no means restricted to Brussels bureaucrats. For example, culture is the key concept of the American political scientist Samuel Huntington (1996), who sees the boundary between Western and Eastern traditions as a civilizational divide, where "a civilization is a culture writ large" (p. 41). For Huntington, "Europe ends where Western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begin" (p. 158).

I try to show that Goody's perspective offers a convincing alternative to Huntington's clash of civilizations. The chapter is divided into two parts. First I look at the concept of culture, which remains the most influential foundational concept in the discipline of anthropology. Many have acknowledged problems but have continued to use it for the want of anything better; this state of affairs is deeply unsatisfactory. In the remainder of the chapter I illustrate these concerns with reference to a region of Central Europe where the two principal branches of Christianity have interacted over a long time in complex patterns of attraction and repulsion. The Greek Catholic Churches pose a special challenge to a theorist such as Huntington: They are Catholic and so are linked to Rome and to the West, but they have retained the popular religion (rites) of the Orthodox tradition. On which side of the civilizational divide are the millions who belong to these churches to be classified? Emphasizing social and historical determination, I explore borrowing and syncretism in the visual arts. On the one hand, there was increasing hybridity in the forms of popular icons, but on the other, an East-West boundary always retained some force. Is it helpful to describe this persisting boundary as a cul-

³For an extreme example see Wittfogel (1957). West-East dichotomies have been particularly fashionable among scholars of nationalism: see Kohn (1944) and Gellner (1997). The term "caesaro-papist" derives from Weber.

⁴Greece has been a member since 1979, but she has always been a special case.

tural boundary? It is explicitly presented as such not only by external analysts such as Huntington but also by local activists who are busy (re)constructing and emphasizing it in Southeast Poland today; the work of Goody suggests an alternative approach, which avoids the pitfalls of nationalism.

CULTURE

Goody (1992) draws attention to the most important distinction in the way anthropologists have used the term "culture." The first sense is universalistic: Culture refers to all learned behavior. Following research into other primates, and possibly a wider spectrum of animals, it is nowadays necessary to qualify earlier assumptions that culture in this sense was the unique property of human beings (Boesch, 1996). But the qualifications are still rather minor, and the resonances of Tylor's (1871) famous definition are still acceptable and even attractive to most social anthropologists: "Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (p. 1).

But long before Tylor wrote these words an alternative, relativizing concept of culture had been taking shape in Germany.⁵ In their reaction against the universalism of the Enlightenment, scholars in the Herderian tradition argued that each nation or Volk had its own *Volksgeist* or *Nationalcharakter*. They pleaded for a cosmopolitan celebration of diversity. Culture was an emancipatory term for Franz Boas, who was educated in Germany and adapted the *Volksgeist* principle in his North American fieldwork.⁶ Malinowski did much the same in his Trobriand work. Curiously, although he took "the culture" as his basic unit of enquiry, the tradition he helped to establish in Britain maintained a strong sociological element. In contrast, the tradition established by Boas, the most powerful tradition in 20th-century anthropology, became rather more idealist; in the work of students such as Alfred Kroeber and Ruth Benedict, cultures were increasingly presented as patterned and integrated systems.⁷ As Goody (1992) comments, this usage of culture "can be deceptive in a number of ways, especially in the hands of those anthropologists who see the cultural in opposition to the social as designating a particular field or aspect of human behaviour concerned with symbols and beliefs" (p. 10).

⁵On Herder's importance for anthropology, see Zammito (2002).

⁶For discussion of the German intellectual background of Boas and the American tradition he helped to establish, see Stocking (1996).

⁷For a survey of the evolution of the culture concept down to midcentury, see Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952). For recent developments in North America, see Kuper (1999).

The most influential American anthropologist of the last quarter of the century is probably Clifford Geertz (1973), who defines culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means which men communicate" (p. 89). In his recent engaging reminiscences, Geertz describes the years spent at Harvard in Talcott Parsons's Social Relations Department, which Goody also visited in this period. For Geertz (1995) the experience of "social science in full cry; headier and more confident than before or since . . . was all a bit much" (pp. 100–101). It seems he found his own path by reacting against these ambitions and returning to the literary elegance of Benedict's *Patterns of Cultures*. Geertz attended the 1963 ASA meetings in Cambridge, which he describes as "a sort of summit conference, designed to reduce what was felt to be a marked difference in approach between what the British called 'Social Anthropology' and the Americans called 'Cultural Anthropology'" (p. 116). He comments that "The nature of this Anglo-American mis-meeting of minds, having to do at base with a stress on concrete, 'real as a seashell' social relationships and institutions on the empiricist Anglo side as against 'shreds and patches' agglomerations of customs and thought-ways on the historicist American one, is no longer of any particular relevance, now that these matters are (in most places) less simplistically conceived" (p. 116). The nature of our present, more sophisticated conceptions is not made clear. Elsewhere in his memoirs Geertz alludes to changes in the way anthropologists approach culture, but he does not explain how one selects the forms of life and webs of meaning one wishes to study. This and a great deal more is apparently better entrusted to serendipity than to social science. His position, asserted rather than argued, is that "Whatever the infirmities of the concept of 'culture' ('cultures', 'cultural forms . . .') there is nothing for it but to persist in spite of them" (p. 43). This is also the position of the mature Marshall Sahlins (1976).

Other anthropologists have been less sanguine about the relativist, idealist, integrating, and homogenizing concept of culture. In an article anticipating later concerns with globalization, Roger Keesing (1974) counseled anthropologists to investigate "the cultural" while abandoning the assumptions of clearly differentiated cultural worlds. Similar advice has been proffered by Robert Borofsky (1994) and many others. In practice, however, many anthropologists continue to use the term "culture" in the sense popularized by Benedict and Malinowski. Their works consist of detailed analyses and generalization about what goes on "in the culture of the X." This view of the world has much in common with that of the nationalist. In this way, anthropologists have been complicit in new forms of social exclusion in Europe and elsewhere (though some have spoken out against the new "cultural fundamentalism"—see Stolcke, 1995). Huntington recently collaborated with Lawrence Harrison (2000) in an effort to demonstrate that some cultures are

basically incompatible with development. The term "culture" is used outside the academy, often in alliance with the term "ethnicity," or a variant thereof, to refer to an imagined bounded whole. It is used in this essentialist way on both sides of that alleged civilizational frontier in Europe by people who have never heard of Huntington or Geertz but who blend elements of universalism and relativism to form a disturbing compound. Thus, there is a large measure of agreement in Southeast Poland that culture is more highly developed in France and England than it is among Poles and other Slavic peoples. But this universalistic scale for measuring culture in the singular (where it is, at least ideally, closely associated with a notion of being European) exists alongside a plural discourse in which each people is seen as possessing its own national culture. In this sense, the national culture of Poles may be less developed than that of the English and the French, but it is certainly superior to that of their Eastern neighbors, Ukrainians and Belarusians, whose status as Europeans is to say the least uncertain.

In short, the concept of culture has a long-term duality. Together with civilization, it has been deployed for the most pernicious causes as well as the most progressive. As the literary scholar Geoffrey Hartman (1997) commented in the context of the Holocaust, "That so humane an ideal was co-opted by the perverse Nazi concept of *Kultur*, compels us to scrutinize it even in its benign and universalistic form" (p. 127). To many, the concept has lost its benign, emancipatory valency, but, like the anthropological critics, Hartman is not able to find a better concept to describe "the notion of a harmonious and organic existence" (p. 127). Jack Goody (1992) himself came close to suggesting that the concept should be discarded. In the end he stepped back: he needs the term, not to compare bounded units, nor to explain why some people were able to modernize faster than others or why some may be fated not to develop at all, but to designate a realm of social phenomena to which some of his most innovative work has been devoted, from cooking and flowers to myth and icons. I return to the last of these subjects later. First, let us look more closely at the Greek Catholic Church and the problem it poses for Manichean theories of cultural opposition in Central Europe.

GREEK CATHOLICS: THE EAST IN THE WEST OR THE WEST IN THE EAST?

If one defines Europe as bounded by the Atlantic, the Urals, the Mediterranean, and the Polar zone of Scandinavia, then the crossroads of this entity lies in a zone of the Carpathians with a network of small villages dating back many centuries. Let us imagine that Malinowski came here in the early 20th-century instead of sailing to the exotic Trobriand Islands—the train journey

would have been easily manageable in a day from his native Cracow. As he explored these Carpathian villages, the young anthropologist would have been struck by the distinctive architecture of their religious buildings, compared to neighboring villages to the south, the north, and the west. Entering these buildings, he would have further been struck by the distinctive images displayed therein. His informants would soon have told him that these icons were *swoje*, "ours," and quite different from the images to be found in neighboring Roman Catholic churches. But the villagers would have been less certain in distinguishing their churches and icons from similar cultural works in villages to the north and east, outside the mountains, on the plains of Galicia and beyond into the Russian Empire.

Much has changed in this region of the Carpathians since this imaginary first sighting. At the end of the 19th-century these villagers began to emigrate in large numbers to North America, where they developed new ideas about their identities, both secular and religious, some of which they imported back to the homeland. At about the same time, native ethnographers, near contemporaries of Malinowski, set out from Cracow and Lwów (Lviv, Lemberg) to carry out the task of cultural documentation. They found that, as late as the 1930s, ideas about national identity were still weakly developed and often confused. In the central section of the Carpathians which concerns us, some villagers were committed Ukrainian nationalists, others had assimilated into Hungarian society, and yet others, in the most westerly districts north of the mountain ridge, were embracing a new regional identity, Lemko.⁸ When political boundaries were redrawn yet again at the end of the Second World War, it became definitively clear that these people, with their distinctive churches and icons, would be scattered across several states, in each of which they would form a small minority (see Fig. 4.1, where it is to be noted that the sharp contour line conceals a complex ethnic borderland). Each of the countries in which they are found has a standardized national language and national churches. Western Christianity is dominant in Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, whereas Eastern traditions are dominant in Ukraine and Romania.

If we restrict our attention to the northern side of the mountains, cultural difference is self-evident in Poland, where the religious boundary has historically coincided with a linguistic boundary. The boundaries are much less sharp in Ukraine, though many inhabitants of the region of Transcarpathia are still attracted to a distinct Carpatho-Rusyn identity. Today's ethnographer can profit from a large literature on the region, but much of this work has been heavily influenced by the local political context. Thus, although Polish art historians have tended to argue for the cultural distinctiveness of the icons of the central Carpathian region (Ktosińska, 1966), their Ukrainian

⁸For an introduction to all these complexities, see Magocsi (1999).



FIG. 4.1. The crossroads of Europe.

counterparts prefer to identify a Galician region and emphasize the continuities with the earlier iconic traditions of Kiev (Hordynskyj, 1973).

The fact is that people of different origins have been mixing and transmitting cultural traits in this region for more than a millennium. A closer examination of the ecclesiastical history of this European crossroads shows how social and institutional factors influenced this transmission. The millennium of the conversion of the East Slavs or *Rus'* was celebrated in 1988 in this region by not one but two Christian churches. Less well known than the Orthodox Church, though they recently celebrated their 400th anniversary, making their church almost as old as the Anglican Church, is the Greek Catholic Church, formerly the dominant church of this central Carpathian region. From their inception when the Union of Brest was ratified in 1596 (hence the alternative name *Uniates*), they brought millions of Eastern Christians

into communion with Rome and the universal Catholic Church, without requiring them to abandon their Eastern practices. Thus the clergy could continue to marry, the services followed the Byzantine rite, and every church retained its iconostasis. However, over several centuries, during which power relations were unfavorable to the east, many forms of Latinization entered into Greek Catholic practices. By the 20th-century some bishops were requiring their clergy to shave their beards and to remain celibate, like their Roman Catholic counterparts. Organs and pews made their appearance in churches, and even the structure and content of rituals underwent changes. Anthropologists have described such processes in terms of acculturation, syncretism, and hybridization, to name but a few of the concepts most commonly used (Stewart & Shaw, 1994).

These processes are well illustrated in the modern history of Przemyśl in Southeast Poland, diocesan center for the most westerly Greek Catholics on the northern side of the Carpathians.⁹ This city, with a contemporary population of 70,000, has a large rural hinterland, much of which has fallen within the Ukraine since 1945. Following the recent enlargement, Przemyśl is a border city of the European Union. Formerly multicultural, with roughly equal numbers of Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics and Jews, the culmination of nationalist violence in the 1940s eliminated all of the Jews and almost all of the Greek Catholics, most of whom by this time had acquired a national identity as Ukrainians. In postsocialist conditions a Ukrainian minority has been struggling to assert itself against the Polish majority, which feels itself to be somehow threatened by any expression of "Ukrainian culture." The minority in Przemyśl sees itself an outpost of the East in the West. Most of its members identify themselves strongly with the main national symbols of Ukraine, even though few have much knowledge of that country; the specific traditions of their families and their regions are far removed from what they now celebrate as their national culture. In religion, too, the main trend is to emphasize a sharp boundary, to turn away from the syncretic tendencies of the past, yet the rival congregations are affiliated to one universal Catholic Church.

Just across the border in western Ukraine, the position of the Greek Catholics is quite different. Many of the faithful here, whose church was driven underground in the Soviet period and has only recently reemerged from the "catacombs," are proud of a history that links them to the Austrian province of Galicia, rather than the Russian Empire. For at least some people, members and nonmembers, the Greek Catholic Church here carries a pro-Western identification, opposed to all the various branches of Orthodoxy. This, rather than the local model of the minority in Przemyśl, is the boundary endorsed by Samuel Huntington (1996), who categorizes Greek Catho-

⁹For more background on this city, see Hann (1996, 1998).

lics as Western on the grounds that for several centuries they were politically affiliated to the West. He refers to "the civilizational fault line that divides Orthodox eastern Ukraine from Uniate western Ukraine, a central historical fact of long standing" (p. 37). Yet for an even longer period before this the region was an integral part of the East. Moreover, allocating Greek Catholics to the West would seem inconsistent with his own stress on culture and civilization because, despite all the elements of syncretism with the Latin church, it would have seemed obvious to a Boas or a Malinowski that Greek Catholic practices had remained closer to those of the Orthodox than to Roman Catholics. I now examine these issues more closely in the context of sacred art.

ICONS

Jack Goody (1997) opened his sparkling essay on icons and iconoclasm by noting variation in the presence and forms of figurative art in northern Ghana and adjacent regions. In the wide-ranging discussion that follows, he pays surprisingly little attention to the Orthodox world. His discussion of iconoclasm barely mentions the most famous of all the iconoclastic movements, that which tore Byzantium apart in the 8th and 9th centuries and contributed to the Great Schism with Rome. Goody's analysis proceeds rather in terms of a universal human cognitive ambivalence, which tends to be made explicit in religions of "the book" but which is also present among nonliterate peoples such as the Lodagaa. This ambivalence cannot, of course, explain the detailed distribution of icons in West Africa. Goody hints only briefly at more proximate causes, such as Moslem invasion, the demands of the colonial art market under the British, and exposure to new ideas through geographical proximity. He cautiously suggests that regions or "culture areas" are the appropriate unit for comparative purposes, not individual societies or cultures.¹⁰

What is an icon? Goody's use is extremely broad, but in the original, more restricted sense of the word in the Byzantine tradition an icon is a window to the supernatural and more central to devotion and liturgy than the corresponding Western religious images. Artists work within a highly restricted canon, and their creative activity is itself considered to be a religious act. Icons are the product of a high culture, a literate culture. Many include in-

¹⁰I have deliberately used the term 'regions' since the broad differences are not so much between societies as between groups of societies. They do not lie at the level of a single 'culture' but of a 'culture area', the boundaries of which change over time" (Goody, 1997, p. 66). For an outline of how such concepts have been deployed in the African context by generations of German anthropologists, see Zwerneemann (1983).

scriptions that summarize or encapsulate a religious message. The human and divine figures represented are usually stiff, austere, anything but naturalistic. As Irina Kyzlasova (1988) puts it in a popular introduction, "The artist of Old Russia did not attempt to represent real phenomena; instead he aimed to depict their essence and highlight their irrational qualities . . . The aesthetics of icon-painting proposed a representation that was detached from earthly time and space" (p. 5). The Eastern Orthodox iconic tradition contrasts most starkly to Protestant condemnation of all "graven images" and insistence on direct, nonvisual communication with God.

The earliest surviving icons from the central Carpathian region date from the 15th-century.¹¹ Settlement intensified in the 16th-century, and religious art shows the influence of multiple strands within the Eastern tradition. From Novgorod to the North East and Mount Athos to the South, all styles were appropriated, though the Russian patterns were most common. The type known as the Mandylion (Plates I and II) was popular here in the 16th and 17th centuries. It is of particular interest for the solution it offers to the intellectual problem identified by Goody at the core of iconoclasm and the perils of representation. This icon represents the face of Jesus as imprinted on a towel he sent to King Abgar of Edessa, which miraculously cured the ailing king. By dispensing with the mediation of any artist, the Mandylion avoids the "cognitive contradiction" involved in human representation of divinity: a subtle alternative to iconoclasm.¹²

Borrowing from Western, Latin models was not yet common in the Middle Ages, but it intensified following the Reformation, Counterreformation, and the establishment of the Greek Catholic Churches in 1596. The angels that flank the 17th-century Mandylion shown in Plate II are characteristic of the folk influences of this region. Later on this type disappeared, and representations of God the Father became acceptable. The influence of the West led to modification of the old iconography and the introduction of new scenes not previously represented in the Eastern tradition, such as the Pieta shown in Plate III. Little more than a century separates the Christ Pantocrator of Plate IV (late 15th-century) from the altogether more realistic human representation of Plate V (first half of 17th-century); the type is evidently constant, but the style has changed considerably. The change is even more radical in the case of the two icons of Saint Nicholas (one of the most popular saints in the Eastern tradition, perhaps because of his special responsibility for the poor) shown in Plates VI and VII. Latinization is at its most blatant in the icon of Saint Matthew accompanied by the Archangel Michael

¹¹My discussion in this section draws mainly on Ktosińska (1966) and Biskupski (1991b).

¹²For rich analyses of this paradox or riddle and of the origins and social functions of this particular image, see Kessler and Wolf (1998).



Plate I. Mandylion (15th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)



Plate II. Mandylion (1664, Sanok Historical Museum)



Plate III. Pieta (second half of 17th century, Sanok Historical Museum)

(Plate VIII), which also dates from the first half of the 18th-century. The text of the gospel in Matthew's hands is in Polish and Latin script, in contrast to the usual Cyrillic script of Church Slavonic. Plate IX is a commemorative card showing the recently beatified 20th-century bishop of Przemyśl, Józef Kocyłowsky. The work of a contemporary Ukrainian artist, here the traditional iconic features give way to more realistic, almost photographic intent.

These changes in religious art must be contextualized socially, politically, and economically. Some of the changes in the iconography of the 17th-century can be related to turbulent political circumstances following the Un-



Plate IV. Christ Pantocrator (second half of 15th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)

ion of Brest, which was not finally ratified in the diocese of Przemyśl until almost a century later. Increasing demand for icons led to new forms of production, and monks were increasingly supplemented and displaced by lay artists. Workshops such as that of Rybotycze, close to Przemyśl, were mass producing icons in the 18th century. The church authorities might disapprove, but they could do little to prevent the use and circulation of the new, more popular styles (Molnár, 1995, p. 66). Latinization tendencies were strongest in the decades after the Synod of Zamość (1720). Many wooden churches and iconstases were destroyed and replaced by stone buildings, Western altars, and images painted in more realistic styles that retained little of the icon's "supernatural" qualities. In 1772, however, this part of Poland became the Galician province of the Austrian Empire. In the new political constellation, Austrian rulers generally encouraged Greek Catholics to reas-



Plate V. Christ Pantocrator (first half of 17th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)

sert their distinctiveness vis-à-vis the dominant Roman Catholics. This was not sufficient to reverse Latinization trends in iconography. In the 19th-century, the traditional representation of the Pantocrator was commonly replaced in the center of the iconostasis by a Latin type: Christ as Lord of the world, holding a globe in the palm of his hand. The idea of intercession was modified by an increasing emphasis on power and the last judgment, a change that, according to one Polish scholar, reflects the absolutist tendencies of Austrian rule (Szanter, 1987, p. 79). Images of the sacred hearts of both Mary and Jesus became extremely popular in Greek Catholic churches, though these cults had no place in the Eastern tradition. Biskupski (1991b, p. 17) concludes that, at least for the art historian, by the end of the 19th-century the Eastern iconographic tradition was dead.



Plate VI. Saint Nicholas (15th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)

In short, despite countervailing thrusts under the Habsburgs and more recently, there has been a strong tendency to Latinization in the sacred art of the Greek Catholics. It is inadequate to attribute this solely to the political domination of the West. The commissioning and production of icons was a complex process, and many elements of Western popular religiosity spread through popular demand. At the same time, Eastern icons, above all those featuring Mary and the child Jesus, continued to find their way into Western churches. The Virgin Mary of *Nieustajacy Pomocy* (Perpetual Help) (Plate X) is well known throughout Poland and indeed other Roman Catholic countries. In Przemyśl this Virgin seems to be popular among Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics alike; she is a patron to both churches in the region and



Plate VII. Saint Nicholas (first half of 18th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)

indeed to Orthodox communities. The most famous icon in Poland is that of Our Lady of Częstochowa, a national symbol for Roman Catholic Poles to the present day. In other words, although the iconographic styles were becoming more Western, the icon itself was moving from East to West. The plates also illustrate widening differences between high culture and popular culture during these centuries (see also Goody, 1992). The Byzantine tradition was always variegated, and as it spread among the Slavic peoples the styles were inevitably modified by preexisting artistic traditions. The emergence of explicitly folkloric or peasant styles is well documented in 15th-century Russia, and these elements became prominent in the art of the central Carpathian region in the 17th-century.



Plate VIII. Saint Matthew (first half of 18th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)

Neither Latinization nor folklorization implied the disappearance of the East–West boundary. Conversion was rare outside the ranks of the gentry and noble elites. The Eastern Church held on to its calendar and to all its major rituals (notably the Epiphany and Easter), which they conducted using a language and ritual forms (including much kissing of icons) that remained quite different from those of their Roman Catholic neighbors. From the 19th-century onward there were concerted attempts to reform the Church, to eject organs from churches, and to purge the liturgy of its Latin accretions. The reemergence of the Greek Catholics after socialist repression has given a new boost to efforts to promote the rediscovery of purer Eastern traditions. The impressive Pantocrator shown in Plate XI adorns the wall behind the altar of the new Cathedral in Przemyśl. It was painted in the late 1990s, when the former Jesuit church was converted to Greek Catholic use. The Greek Catholics have installed a large iconostasis, rescued from a museum. Centuries of hybridization are now being consciously repudiated by some, whereas other Greek Catholics plead for the retention of Latin features¹⁰

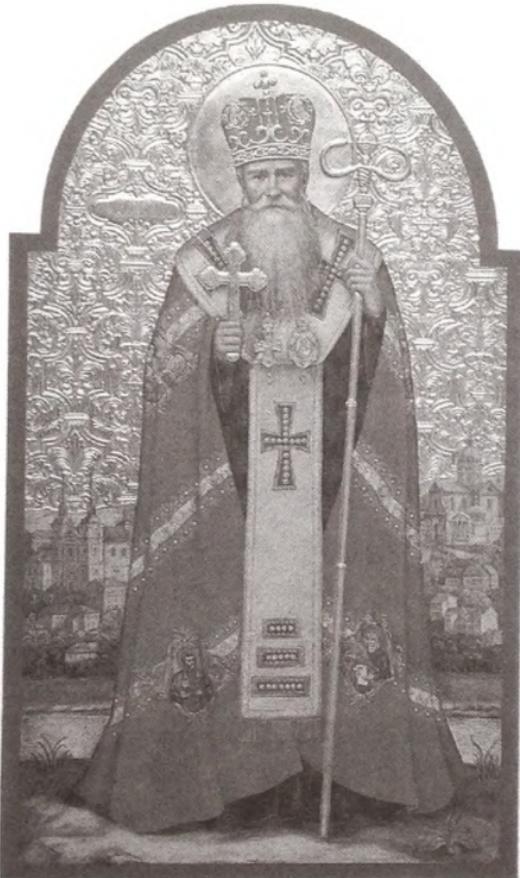


Plate IX. Bishop Josef Kocylovsky (commemorative card "Stepan," Greek Catholic Cathedral, Przemyśl, 2002)

which they feel deeply attached. Old and new icons may coexist: a stern Pantocrator robed in the Eastern style alongside a more human suffering Christ, almost naked as he carries the cross. Accessible local saints can be found in the same iconostasis as aloof prophets and patriarchs. It is hard to credit that the Western forms can attract the same degree of mystical reverence and contemplation as the heavily stylized representations of earlier cen-



Plate X. Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Roman Catholic Church of the Franciscans-Reformati, Przemysl)

turies. Yet how can we be sure? How do we investigate and measure the impact of a picture—any picture?¹³

DICHOTOMOUS MODELS: LOCAL AND EXTERNAL

In the city of Przemysl, both the majority Poles and the minority Ukrainians tend today to see themselves as homogenized nations, straddled across a fault line between east and west. This local view is shared in its essentials by many

¹³Around the main seminar room in the Cambridge Department of Social Anthropology hang photographs of the more important ancestors of the department, including an icon of Jack Goody. What impact does this have on the academic proceedings that take place in this shrine? Would it make any difference if the faces in the photos were stern, rather than benign, smiling?



Plate XI. Christ Pantocrator (wall of the Greek Catholic Cathedral in Przemyśl, 1998–1999)

outsiders, including those in Brussels responsible for monitoring the eastern fortifications of the expanded European Union. According to these views, cultural boundaries provide the ultimate justification for the political boundaries.

Other external experts work from the same premise but beg to differ concerning the details. As noted earlier, for Samuel Huntington the line that separates two civilizations is not the present Polish–Ukrainian border but a line that leaves the Greek Catholics in the West. From a quite different perspective, Father Michal Janocha (2000) recently argued that the artistic osmosis facilitated by Greek Catholicism should be seen as an ecumenical process that led to a genuine fusion between two cultures. Western, naturalistic images were readily accepted in place of the heavily stylized forms of Byzantine icons because both of these traditions shared the same convictions about the possibility and propriety of representing the divine through images.

Janocha highlights the different view taken by many Protestants, suspicious of and sometimes consciously rejecting and even destroying such images, yet for him, this is a divergence within the boundaries of an encompassing Western, Latin culture.

The line is drawn differently again by Max Weber (1958), who never treated Orthodoxy in any detail but for whom all Slavs, including the Roman Catholic Poles, basically belonged to the East. The Weberian tradition proposes an affinity between religion and social change through the notion of an economic ethic, *Wirtschaftsethik*. From this perspective, the theological veneration of icons in the Eastern Church and the experience of transcendence through sacred images make the Eastern religion less adapted to the modern world, allegedly built on foundations of rationality and this-worldly ascetism. The requirement that the icon painter work within the canon had far-reaching implications not only for artistic innovation but also for individualism and creativity more generally. For example, Alfred Müller-Armack (1959) argued that the preeminence of icons in Byzantine art signifies a failure to engage with worldly affairs that was directly relevant to the failure of the Eastern tradition to promote *Rationalismus* and economic development:

[I]n the ecstasy of religious experience the model of a marvellous secular art, passed down from Antiquity, was rejected, and after a century of intense feuding over whether transcendence admits of any visual representation at all, it became transformed into an iconography inspired by metaphysics, of wonderfully profound feeling, which should not blind us to the fact that it eliminated a huge class of this-worldly artistic creation. (p. 348)

The evidence from the Carpathian region suggests that attempts to draw far-reaching social and political conclusions from differences in a sphere of culture are misguided. Far from being frozen and stultified, the artists of the Byzantine iconic traditions could and did constantly innovate.¹⁴ Far from being a state art, dominated by representations of power, this was a tradition in which local adaptations flourished, and neither the religious nor the secular authorities could control the production and circulation of icons. The resemblances to the visual culture of the West seem much more impressive than the differences, a point that receives indirect confirmation in the speed with which syncretic processes developed. One of the most famous of all the Greek Catholic churches is the exquisitely Rococo cathedral of Saint George in L'viv, where the icons show many Italianate influences, though the motifs

¹⁴As Kyzlasova (1988) puts it, "The canon set limits but in no way bound the artist's creative freedom. Without transgressing the canon, icon-painters achieved an amazing perfection of form by elaborating lapidary compositions, exquisite colouring and linear rhythm. Exact copies of certain famous specimens were rare exceptions rather than the general rule" (p. 6).

remain within the Byzantine canon. The icon of the Virgin Mary in the monastery at Częstochowa is, thanks to modern reproduction technologies, a brooding presence on the walls of millions of Polish Roman Catholic homes. The fact is that borrowing has taken place on a vast scale in all directions. We might as well argue that the entire Polish and Ukrainian populations fall between East and West—but what is gained in such a formulation? Where does this leave the notion of culture and of cultural boundaries?

CONCLUSION: FROM CULTURE TO COGNITION

Noting some ethnographic variation in the sacral art traditions of central Europe, this chapter examined some of the contingent factors, notably power relations within the Catholic Church and the rise of nationalism, that lay behind the adoption and transmission of particular forms of representation. This region defies simplistic classification: In some respects ties to the West were more significant, in other respects ties to the East (and let us remember that the origins of both the religious traditions in question lie unambiguously far to the south). The central Carpathian region shows a basic measure of unity in its religious art and other cultural domains, but in terms of language as well as economic and political history, the differences between Roman Catholics and Greek Catholics are marked. For most of the last four centuries the main institutional and political links of the latter have pointed westward. Their iconic art has undergone Western influence over an even longer period. Yet it also shows continuity with an Eastern tradition. Although an East–West contrast may be useful for some purposes, closer analysis shows that neither is monolithic and there was a great deal of interpenetration. In what is now Southeast Poland, a strong current of Latinization has persisted down to the present day, but it has been countered by Greek Catholic attempts to preserve a distinct Eastern identity, which became more effective as that church became increasingly associated with Ukrainian nationalism.

A brief outline of this region's history shows that the currently dominant local model of separate cultures is a distortion produced by contemporary nationalism. Goody's suggestion to move the comparisons to a higher level is apposite here. He hesitantly offers the term "culture area" as a way forward, while making it plain that the boundaries of such areas are always liable to change and that diffusionist approaches have little to offer. But it is not obvious how a culture area approach might be applied in this region of central Europe, where Western and Eastern traditions of sacred art interacted over many centuries. It seems to me that this concept does not solve the problem of implicit boundaries, which scholars such as Weber and Huntington in their different ways have rendered explicit. According to these traditions of

scholarship, Protestantism and liberal individualism played a crucial role in “the European miracle” (Jones, 1981). Jack Goody, skeptical of such miracles, has performed a vital service in drawing attention to the limitations and Eurocentric bias of much of Weber’s most celebrated work (Goody, 1996). Religion does not provide a basis for cultural areas. In many districts of Central Europe, Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, and Orthodox people overlapped and interacted regularly with each other. It makes more sense to view this region as a single culture area, rather than as long-term battlefield between two—but then how does one do justice to the Jewish element, which was also vital in cities such as Przemyśl?

A better solution than the notion of the culture area is to shift the focus to another level altogether. Goody is still perceived by some critics as a scholar wedded to his own great divide theories: between literate and preliterate societies and between Eurasia and Africa. Such critics have failed to note a substantial body of work in the last two decades, which has qualified dichotomies drawn earlier by pointing to cognitive universals. From this perspective, the variation found in the presence and forms of sacred art in adjacent regions of Europe, as in West Africa, has an ultimate base in dialectical processes generated by a logical impossibility for the human mind. This cognitive level of analysis must then be supplemented with careful accounts of how and in what circumstances ideas are transmitted, how the dialectic is moved along, and how changes in one domain (such as art) may connect to changes elsewhere (such as the economy). In the light of the materials discussed here, it seems unwarranted to invoke Byzantine-inspired icons, Western-influenced Polish sacred images, or Protestant aversion to images to support diagnoses of a sharp line within Europe between cultures, culture areas, or civilizations. It is unhelpful to speak of any general cultural boundary here, either following Huntington’s line, with Greek Catholics included in the west, or following the alternative that would leave them with the Orthodox in the east, or the Weberian alternative, which would place all Slavs in the east. The Greek Catholic case illustrates the futility of such line-drawing exercises. The persistence of a basic boundary between Western and Eastern Christianity, a boundary that the limited syntheses of Greek Catholicism did not overcome, provides no foundation for essentialist projections into the political realm.

The crystallization of the East–West boundary as people experience it in contemporary Przemyśl is therefore to be understood as a modern phenomenon, historically specific and contingent on the contexts of nationalist politics. This is Goody’s (1992) point when he argues against culturalist explanations and urges approaching the cultural as “the social from another perspective” (p. 30). This contrasts with the view implicitly taken by Geertz and many other contemporaries, who view culture as an autonomous realm. Despite their disavowals, these scholars tend to exaggerate the homogeneity

and integration of social groups, generating affinities with the proprietorial claims of nationalists. The alternative must be to place more emphasis on social relations and on historicity, rather than on the idealist notion of culture. This is not so much a return to the goals of Harvard Social Science in the 1950s, but rather a call for transcending the disciplinary division of labor which became institutionalized in those years.

The Goody perspective has a further important political element. If Brussels continues to promote cultural campaigns and European Union citizens come to feel and declare themselves to be Europeans on the basis of a shared culture and "European values," then that is their local model, that is what they have or what they are. From one point of view this is unexceptionable, and current contests over the discourses and symbolic meanings of Europe are certainly interesting subjects for anthropological research. But such approaches have their limitations. A social scientist must also be able to question the justifications of cultural boundaries wherever these are asserted. In the particular case I considered, differences in religious tradition have persisted over time, but the history of the Greek Catholics points to flexibility and the continual potential for hybridity, rather than a fault line that must forever divide a continent. There are thus compelling political as well as scholarly reasons for heeding Goody's warnings concerning the concept of culture, for paying more attention to the unity of Eurasia than to its divisions, and, ultimately, for recalling our cognitive universals.

LIST OF PLATES

- I Mandylion (15th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)
- II Mandylion (1664, Sanok Historical Museum)
- III Pieta (second half of 17th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)
- IV Christ Pantocrator (second half of 15th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)
- V Christ Pantocrator (first half of 17th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)
- VI Saint Nicholas (15th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)
- VII Saint Nicholas (first half of 18th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)
- VIII Saint Matthew (first half of 18th-century, Sanok Historical Museum)
- IX Bishop Josef Kocylovsky (commemorative card "Stepan," Greek Catholic Cathedral, Przemysł, 2002)
- X Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Roman Catholic Church of the Franciscans-Reformati, Przemysł)
- XI Christ Pantocrator (wall of the Greek Catholic Cathedral in Przemysł, 1998–1999)

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Culture and Gender in European Bourgeois Society 1870–1914*

E. J. Hobsbawm

Regular compendia about people in public life, or otherwise in the public domain, began to be published in Britain in the middle of the 19th-century. The best-known of them, and the direct ancestor of the present *Who's Who*, which is in turn the ancestor of most other such biographical reference books, was *Men of the Time*. I begin this survey of the problem of public and private relations between the sexes in bourgeois culture between 1870 and 1914 with this small but not insignificant editorial change.

I hope it has some relevance to the wider problems, both of family and marriage in general and property and inheritance, to which Jack Goody devoted so much profitable thought in his long career. More specifically Goody's discussion of how women came to be creators and consumers of the arts (*Food and Love*, 1998, p. 138) and the effects of industrialization of women's independence (*The Family in European History*, 2000, pp. 134–136) provide a general background for my discussion of how women entered the public sphere toward the end of the 19th-century.

The editorial change mentioned above was significant not because of a reference book hitherto confined to males decided to include females. In fact, *Men of the Time* had long contained a small proportion of women, and the percentage regularly listed in such compendia, including from 1897 *Who's Who*, did not rise significantly. Attempts to increase it were to be made, but the percentage remained of the order of 3–5%.¹ Not until the sec-

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¹In this chapter, the word "culture" is used in the sense usually given to it in 19th century bourgeois discourse, namely, the body of achievements in the various creative arts assumed to have moral and aesthetic value (as distinct from mere "entertainment"), their proper appreciation, and the body of knowledge necessary for their proper appreciation.

ond great feminist wave of the 1960s and 1970s did a much larger percentage of women break into gender-neutral reference books: the *Dictionary of National Biography Supplement* for 1970–1980 contains 15% of female entries. The novelty lay in the formal recognition that women as a sex had a place in the public sphere, from which they had previously been excluded except, as it were, as individual anomalies. That the most bourgeois of countries had actually been ruled by a woman for over 50 years before her sex became entitled to an official place among the recognized body of public personages emphasizes the significance of the change.

Let me give a second example of this recognition of women as having a public dimension. The Anglo-French Exposition of 1908 in London was, like all earlier international exhibitions of the 19th-century, a collection of symbols including current attitudes. This one was significant for being the first time such an occasion was combined with the Olympic Games held in a stadium specially built for the purpose, but also for including a special Palace of Women's Work. We need not trouble ourselves with the content of this building, though it is worth noting that, according to contemporary reports, the women artists preferred to send their work to the general and non-gendered Palace of the Arts, rather than showing it under the heading of women's work, and also that the Women's Industrial Council protested that the females actually employed and working at the exhibition were being grossly overworked and underpaid (Park, 1987). The point is that the Palace of Women's Work celebrated women not as beings but as doers, not as functional cogs in the machinery of family and society but as individual achievers.

This change is also evident if we compare the criteria for including women in earlier reference books and in the new era. A very high proportion of those listed in a typical work of earlier years (*Men of the Reign*, published to celebrate 50 years of Queen Victoria's reign; see Knight, 1978) are there not in their own right but through family connections (i.e., as sisters, daughters, wives, widows, mistresses), or other connections of celebrated men or (what amounts to the same thing) as members of royal or aristocratic kinship networks. The later reference books were by no means sure how such cases should be treated—they were typically represented by royal and noble ladies—but in general they were increasingly inclined to omit them.

A third piece of evidence for this new public recognition of women is the evident effort that was made to find women who could reasonably be displayed in the showcase reserved for women's achievement in the public sphere. The early volumes of *Men and Women of the Time* included young ladies whose only distinction was to have passed university examinations with high marks, and the volumes also padded the numbers temporarily with a few more noble ladies. Both practices were later dropped (Park, 1987). More strikingly, perhaps, is the

rather prominent representation of women in the first years of the new Nobel Prizes. Between 1901, when the prizes were first awarded, and 1914, it was given to women four times (to Selma Lagerlöf for literature, Bertha von Suttner for peace, and Marie Curie twice for science). I doubt whether any subsequent period of equal length has seen a comparable number of Nobel awards to females.

In short, toward the end of the 19th-century, we find a distinct tendency in Europe and North America to treat women as persons in the same sense of bourgeois society, analogous to males, and therefore analogous also as potential achievers. This applied very much to such a significantly symbolic field as sport, which was just then developing. In tennis, the ladies' singles championship was instituted within a few years of the men's singles in Britain, France, and the United States. It may not seem revolutionary to us to permit women, even married women, to compete as individuals in a championship, but I suggest that in the 1880s and 1890s it was a more radical change than we are inclined to recognize today. Of course, in one sense the growing recognition of the second sex as a body of potential individual achievers runs parallel with the growing pressure to recognize women as possessing the classical rights of the bourgeois individual. Formally or institutionally, the recognition of women as citizens was delayed in most countries until after 1917, but the strength of the tendency is indicated by the rapidity of progress during and after World War I. In 1914 hardly any states had given votes to women, but 10 years later the right of women to vote was part of the constitution in most states of Europe and North America. More directly relevant to the question of women in the public sphere, in 1917 the British monarchy for the first time instituted a system of honors for merit open equally to men and women, namely the Order of the British Empire.

Although this penetration of women into the public sphere was not, in theory, confined to any particular class, in practice we are naturally concerned overwhelmingly with women of the upper and middle classes, the one significant exception being, as always, in the field of entertainment. Virtually all other forms of activity, professional or not, which were likely to make women publicly known, depended on leisure, material resources, and schooling, alone or in combination. These were simply not available to most women of the laboring classes. And even the mere fact of acquiring a paid occupation or entering the labor market had a public significance for middle and upper class women that it did not have for women of the laboring classes, all of whom worked by definition, and most of whom, at some stage of their lives were obliged, if only by financial necessity, to undertake paid occupations. On the other hand, work, and especially paid work, was believed to be incompatible with the status of a lady to which females from the bourgeois strata aspired. Hence, a middle-class woman earning money was

ipso facto anomalous, either as an unfortunate victim or as a rebel. In both cases she raised public problems of social identity. Moreover, the educational institutions and the organized professions into which middle-class women wished to penetrate—they were beyond the reach or horizon of others—resisted their penetration. Hence, the very fact of penetrating them was of public interest. Nobody in 1891 would have dreamed of including young men in a *Who's Who* simply because they had got a first-class university degree, but young women were included on this ground. In practice this chapter is therefore concerned almost exclusively with females belonging to the bourgeoisie or those who aspired to belong to it, as well as, of course, women of higher social status.

For our present purposes I need not enquire too deeply into the reasons for the developments noted above. Evidently there was considerable pressure by middle-class women to enter the public sphere. It is beyond doubt that they entered it to an extent that would have previously been unthinkable (except by a few revolutionaries). It is also beyond doubt that they could not have done so unless important sectors of males had supported them in this endeavor, namely, in the first instance, the males in a position of family authority over their women, and in the second instance, and much more reluctantly and slowly, the males who ran the institutions into which women wished to penetrate. To this extent the private and public spheres of the sexes are inseparable. For obvious reasons we usually tend to stress the opposition to women's emancipation, which was indeed so stubborn, irrational, and even hysterical that it is the first thing to strike any unprejudiced modern observer of the 19th-century scene. Thus, the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society in 1907 debated an article on women medical students, which argued that these girls only wanted to study because they were too ugly to get husbands and that they demoralized the medical males by their loose sexual behavior, not to mention that studying was not fit for women. The psychoanalysts who discussed this hysterical farrago politely were surely among the less traditionalist or reactionary male members of the Viennese bourgeoisie. However, while they did not approve of the shrillness of the author's denunciation, Freud's (1976) own opinion was that "it is true that woman gains nothing by studying and that on the whole woman's lot will not improve thereby. Moreover, women cannot equal man's achievement in the sublimation of sexuality" (p. 186).

On the other hand, we must never forget that behind every bourgeois girl who was given her chance there stood, at the very least, a father who gave her permission and, almost certainly, who paid the costs because it is clear that no young woman whose family claimed her to be a young lady would have found it easy to take a paid job without the approval of parents or other family authorities. But in fact there was a great deal of such parental support. One has merely to consider the extraordinary growth in the academic sec-

ondary education for girls in the last 40 years before the First World War. Whereas the number of boys' lycées in France remained stable at about 330–340, the number of girls' establishments of the same kind rose from 0 in 1880 to 138 in 1913, educating one girl for every three boys. In Britain the number of girls' secondary schools in 1913–1914 was comparable to that of boys' schools: 350 as against 400. Thirty, or even 10 years earlier, this would not have been the case. The inequalities in this process are equally interesting: I cannot pretend to explain them. Thus, while girls' secondary education was utterly negligible in Italy with 7,500 pupils, and growth was feeble enough in the low countries and Switzerland, by 1900 there were a quarter of a million girls in Russian secondary schools. Russia also led the field in university education for women, if we leave aside the college population of the United States as not comparable. The 9,000 women students there (1910) were about double the numbers in Germany, France, and Italy and about four times those in Austria (Charnier, 1937). It is hardly necessary to recall that the first universities that provided room for women on any significant scale were those of Switzerland in the 1880s, and what they provided for was primarily a supply of potential women students from Eastern Europe.

There may or may not be material reasons for this growth of women's education, but it can hardly be doubted that there was also a positive correlation between the ideology of parents and the prospects of emancipation for their daughters. In many parts of Europe—perhaps least in the Roman Catholic countries—what we clearly find is a body of bourgeois fathers, one would guess mostly of a liberal and progressive persuasion, who both inspired progressive views and emancipatory intentions in their daughters and, at some time in the late 19th-century or the early 20th-century, accepted that they ought to get a higher education and even play a part in professional and public life.

This does not mean that such fathers treated their daughters just like their sons. Probably the fact that women found it easier to break open the gates of medicine than the other professions is not unrelated to the fact that healing fitted into the conventional picture of women as particularly suited to caring activities. Even in the 1930s the father of the crystallographer Rosalind Franklin, part of a typical bourgeois kinship network of prosperous liberal Jews accustomed to more radical or even socialist children, advised her against the choice of natural science as a profession. He would have preferred to see her in some kind of social work (Sayre, 1975). Nevertheless, I suggest that members of such progressive bourgeois groups at some time before 1914 came to accept the new and wider social role for their daughters, perhaps even for their wives. The change seems to have come rather rapidly. In Russia the number of women students grew from fewer than 2,000 in 1905 to 9,300 in 1911. In 1897 there were only about 800 women university students in the United Kingdom (Vicinus, 1985). By 1921 there were about

11,000 full-time university women students, or rather less than one third of the total number. What is more, the number of women students and their percentage of the relevant age group remained virtually unchanged until World War II, and the percentage of women in the total of university students fell quite markedly (Marsh, 1965). We can only infer that the reservoir of the kind of parents who encouraged their daughters to study was already fully tapped by the end of World War I. In Britain no additional social or cultural source of women university students was to be tapped until the university expansion of the 1950s and 1960s. And I note, incidentally, that even in 1951 women students came from upper and middle-class backgrounds to a significantly greater extent than did male students.

We can only speculate about the speed of this change. In Britain it seems to be connected with the rise of the feminist movement, which, rallying round the call "votes for women," became a mass force in the early 1900s. (I refrain from venturing into guesses about other countries.) Certainly the suffragism of the 1990s represented an entirely acceptable option for quite conventional women of the middle and upper classes. Indeed, in 1905 a quarter of all the duchesses in Britain were listed in the Directory appended to the feminist *Englishwoman's Yearbook* (1905), and 3 of them, together with 3 marchionesses and 16 countesses were actually vice-presidents of the Conservative and Unionist Suffrage Association. The *Suffrage Annual and Woman's Who's Who of 1913*, a compendium of almost 700 active militants of the movement for votes, shows that they belonged overwhelmingly not just to the middle classes but to the established upper middle strata of British society (Park, 1988). Of the identifiable fathers of these women, more than 70% were officers in the armed services, clergymen, doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects or artists, professors and public school headmasters, higher civil servants, and politicians; 13% were aristocrats or landowners not otherwise described; and 12% were businessmen. Officers and clergy were particularly overrepresented and so were fathers with colonial experience. Among the identifiable husbands of these activists—and 44% of them were married—the traditional professions were less prominent businessmen, and such new professions as journalism were considerably more numerous, but manifestly the majority of the activists belonged to the upper and upper middle classes. It is to be noted that almost one third of the entrants in the *Woman's Who's Who* had telephones, a rather exceptional piece of domestic equipment in 1913. To complete the picture we need only add that no less than 20% of these suffrage activists had a university degree.

Their relation to culture may be briefly indicated by the professions, insofar as they are listed: 28% were teachers, 34% were writers and journalists, 9% described themselves as artists, and 4% were actresses or musicians. Thus 75% of the 229 persons reporting were employed in activities directly relevant to the creation or dissemination or reproduction of culture.

We may therefore accept that sometime in the last 20 or 30 years before World War I the role and behavior of women, as conceived in 19th-century bourgeois society, changed rapidly and substantially in several countries. I am not arguing that the new emancipated middle-class woman formed more than a modest minority even among her age group but, as suggested at the outset of this chapter, the speed with which she was publicly recognized suggests that, from the outset, this minority was seen as the avant-garde of a much larger army that was about to follow.

Not that the emergence of the emancipated woman was particularly welcome to bourgeois men. It is during the 1890s and 1900s that one encounters misogynist—or at any rate ultra-sexist—reactions among intellectuals and not least emancipated intellectuals of liberal origins, which seem to express uneasiness and fear. The most typical reaction, which one finds in various versions and varying degrees of hysteria in Weininger, Karl Kraus, Möbius, Lombroso, Strindberg, and the then current reading of Nietzsche, stressed that the eternal and essential feminine excluded the intellect so that it followed that women's competition in fields hitherto regarded as essentially male was at best pointless and at worst a disaster for both sexes. The 1907 debate among the Viennese psychoanalysts, quoted earlier, is a typical example. Perhaps the intensified and consciously homosexual culture of British male intellectual youth such as the Cambridge "Apostles" reflects a similar uneasiness (Levy, 1981; Skidelsky, 1983).² However, what needs to be stressed here is not the continued if concealed opposition of men to feminism but the recognition of how far the role of bourgeois women had already changed, as indeed the quotation from Freud indicates. For one element in the fin-de-siècle sex war, as seen by the male belligerents, was the recognition of the bourgeois woman's independent sexuality. The essence of woman—of any woman, including the bourgeois one, and this was new—was no longer decorousness, modesty, and morality but sensuality, not *Sittlichkeit* but *Sinnlichkeit*. Karl Kraus wrote numerous variations on this theme, and indeed Austrian literature from Schnitzler to Musil is full of it. And who will say, in the era of the Richthofen sisters, that this was unrealistic? Quite naturally sexual liberation was a part of female emancipation, at all events in theory. Especially, of course, for the unmarried bourgeois girl who had by convention to remain *virgo intacta*. Research, as always, finds it hard to break down bedroom doors and even harder to quantify what goes on behind them. But I see no reason to doubt that by 1914 it had become a great deal easier in the Protestant and Jewish milieu of Europe to sleep with middle-class girls than it had been 20 years earlier, especially in politically and culturally emancipated circles. The sexual career of H. G. Wells illustrates this. What

² Levy (1981) and Skidelsky (1983) are the best introductions to this much-publicized secret society.

happened in the unknown territory of adultery is much harder to discover, and I refrain from speculation about it.

What, then, was the role of gender in this period of bourgeois culture, and how was it situated between the public and the private spheres? It has been argued that the model of female sex roles in classical 19th-century bourgeois society made the woman into the primary bearer of culture, or rather of the spiritual and moral or "higher" values in life as distinct from the material and even animal "lower" values represented by males. This is the image of the prosperous businessman visibly bored at the symphony concert to which his wife has dragged him against his will. There is something in this stereotype, even if we assume that the wife's interest in attending cultural functions reflected the desire to share the high social status of those who went to concerts rather than a passion for music per se. Nevertheless, it is essential to bear in mind a crucial limitation on the bourgeois woman's cultural role. In practice it was inhibited both by the man's claim to a monopoly of intellect in the public sphere (to which culture undoubtedly belonged) and by the denial to women of the sort of education (*Bildung*) without which culture was inconceivable. Of course, bourgeois women read, but largely what other women wrote for a specifically feminine market, namely, novels, fashion news, social gossip, and letters. The great novels written from within this woman's world, such as those of Jane Austen, are about intelligent and lively young women isolated not only among men, who do not expect more than that caricature of culture called "accomplishment" from their brides—a little piano, a little sketching or watercolor, and so on—but also isolated among women whose minds are given to the strategy and tactics of marriage and who are idiots in every other respect, sometimes lacking even the domestic skills of management, like Mrs. Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*. For, since the essence of a good marriage was a husband with a good income, an ability to manage was not essential.

Paradoxically, it was at the lower end of the slopes of upward social mobility that the role of women as the bearers of culture (including *kultura* in the Soviet sense, i.e., personal cleanliness and the like) was most obvious. For it was among the laboring classes that women represented the only alternative values to those of physical prowess and barbarism that ruled among men. In the bourgeois world, the male distinguished himself from the dark masses below, and incidentally from the barbarian minority of nobles above, by building success on mental and not on physical qualifications and effort. In the biographies and autobiographies of the lower orders it is more often mothers than fathers who encourage the intellectual or cultural ambitions of sons: D. H. Lawrence is a good case in point. It is from the civilizing influence of frontier women that Huckleberry Finn has to escape, like so many ideal-typical macho males. And as soon as mass primary education was instituted, it was women who became the schoolteachers par excellence in the Anglo-

Saxon countries and in several others. Even in France as early as 1891 more women than men joined the profession (Zeldin, 1977).

I would suggest that it was only toward the end of the century that the bourgeois woman was, for the first time, in a position to become a bearer of culture in the literal sense. Incidentally, it is at this period that we find women emerging as independent patrons of culture: Isabella Stewart Gardner as an art collector and Miss Horniman, Emma Cons, Lilian Bayliss, and Lady Gregory as founders, backers, or managers of theaters. And, of course, we find them as active participants in commercial culture through arts and crafts businesses and the (largely feminine) new profession of the interior decorator (Elsie de Wolfe, Syrie Maugham, etc.). "Interior decorating and furnishing is a trade in which women have been very successful of late years" (*The Englishwoman's Handbook*, 1905). Manifestly, this could not have happened without a wide extension of women's secondary and higher education, including the multiplication of art schools in post-William Morris Britain and, in central Europe, of courses in art history. Both were probably attended by a majority of female students. However, I suggest that it was a change in the structure of the bourgeoisie itself that made culture a more central defining characteristic of this class and emphasized the role of women in it.

Three changes coincided. First, the problem of the established bourgeoisie—the families who no longer needed to rise because they had already arrived or more generally the second- or later-generation bourgeoisie—was no longer how to accumulate but how to spend. And, as any family history demonstrates, this bourgeoisie generated a leisure sector, including notably the unmarried or widowed female relatives who lived on unearned income. Cultural activities were and are an excellent way to spend an unearned income respectfully, not only because they are attractive to the educated but also because they cost less than the conspicuous consumption of a properly Veblenite leisure class. They could, of course, cost quite as much if need be, as Frick, Morgan, Mellon, and others showed. Second, during the same period, formal schooling became increasingly, and has since remained, the badge of membership of those who belonged to the established bourgeoisie, the best way to transform the children of nouveaux riches into established bourgeois, and indeed to join the bourgeoisie, as witness the case of the progress of the Keynes family in three generations from a provincial Baptist gardener to the economist John Maynard Keynes (Skidelsky, 1983). But Bildung and a *Bildungsbürgertum* inevitably had a strong cultural dimension. In short, while in mid-Victorian Britain Matthew Arnold could only discern barbarian aristocrats and philistine middle classes, a significant stratum of cultivated bourgeois now emerged even in philistine Britain.

Third, we also see simultaneously a marked tendency both to privatize and to civilize bourgeois lifestyles, once again pioneered in Britain, which created the first domestic style of bourgeois living, which was actually com-

fortable—the suburban or rural villa or cottage, built in the vernacular style and furnished along arts and crafts lines. While this is not the place to discuss the reasons for this development, the point to note is both that the new style was imbued with aesthetic and artistic values—think only of Morris wallpaper—and that women, as the mistresses of the domestic sphere by bourgeois definition, therefore, became centrally concerned with culture. Even Beatrice Webb had to take time off from social and political activity to look for William Morris furnishings (*The Diaries of Beatrice Webb*, 1983). And indeed in Britain at least three commercial firms then founded, and still in existence, built their fortunes on fabrics, furniture, and interior decorations in the aesthetic and arts-and-crafts manner, namely Heals (furniture); Sandersons, which still sells the wallpaper and curtains designed by Morris himself; and Liberty, which was to provide the Italians with a name for *Jugendstil*. And *Jugendstil* or *art nouveau* in all its regional variations is more than anything else the avant-garde style based on arts applied to domestic living.

In fact, all three developments were bound to bring women into the center of cultural life. After all, they formed the majority of the leisured bourgeois stratum living on unearned income or an income earned by someone else. As we have seen, in several countries they were rapidly catching up with men in secondary education and, what is more, in Britain and the United States they now tended to stay at school longer than the boys, though fewer of them went to universities. In the domestic division of bourgeois labor, they were unquestionably the spenders of income. (Even today the London *Financial Times* frankly heads its women's page "How To Spend It.") But even utilitarian spending on what was now often called the house beautiful had a distinct and conscious cultural dimension. Producers of culture were aware of it, even when, like William Morris himself, they were not happy to be taken up by leisured ladies with money to spend.

All this would have increased the cultural role of bourgeois women even without their autonomous drive for emancipation, which was inevitably also a drive to achieve equality in education and culture. Nor should we forget the specific links between the avant-garde of the arts and the avant-garde of social—including feminine emancipation—which were particularly strong in the 1880s and 1890s. And we should not overlook what now became a conventional attitude among bourgeois menfolk who certainly preferred that "into the room the women come and go, talking of Michaelangelo" (Eliot) to seeing them engaged in more controversial activities.

There can be no doubt that educated women in this period therefore became more cultured, felt obliged to undertake cultural activities, and became more important for the maintenance of cultural production, especially in the performing arts. The typical audience envisaged by writers of 19th-century boulevard plays was hardly one of females, but between the wars, as the Brit-

ish commercial playwright Terence Rattigan put it, they wrote for an ideal "Aunt Edna" coming to the London West End for the matinee. The original public for the American cinema was almost certainly poor, rough, and 75% male. America imported, and eventually produced, screen classics (i.e., prestige movies with a cultural reference), largely to mobilize the interest and money of the new middle-class woman and her children. I should be surprised if the Medici Society, which from 1908 produced reproductions of Italian old masters, or the publishers of the Insel Bücherei had not had a public of young women firmly in their sights.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to argue that during this period the striking transformation of bourgeois culture was essentially carried by women, or indeed that culture showed any specific skewing toward one gender. Even in a branch of literature as traditionally and markedly feminine as the writing of novels was (and still is) in the Anglo-Saxon world, one has the impression that "serious" women novelists temporarily became somewhat less prominent than they had been in the days of Jane Austen and George Eliot, or were again to be between the wars.³ And, of course, "writers," who had formed the great bulk of women entered in the biographical compendia (together with performing artists), formed a rapidly diminishing proportion of the female entries. What seems to have happened is that culture became more central to the bourgeoisie as a whole.

I would suggest that it did so largely through the emergence of the period after 1870 of a stratum of youth as a distinct and recognized entity in bourgeois public social life. Although this youth now undoubtedly included young women on far more equal terms than before, it also, obviously, comprised young men. The links between *Jugend* and culture, or more specifically between it and "die Moderne" are too obvious to require comment. The very terminology of the period (*Jugendstil*, "Die Jungen," "Jung-Wien," etc.) demonstrate it. Youth, or rather the period of secondary and higher education, was obviously the time when most bourgeois acquired cultural knowledge and tastes, and they did so increasingly from or through their peer group. The vogue for Nietzsche and Wagner, for instance, seems clearly to have been generational.

However, given that the number and proportion of young bourgeois men who underwent secondary and higher education was so very much larger than that of young bourgeois women, we would obviously expect the community of those seriously interested in culture to have been primarily masculine on purely statistical grounds.

³The period 1880–1914 is probably the only one in English literature since 1800 when the list of major novelists—say, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, Rudyard Kipling, E. M. Forster, and George Gissing—contains no obvious woman.

What is at least equally to the point, a much larger number of sons of the bourgeoisie than before now chose, and were in a position, to spend their lives in cultural pursuits, a much larger number of parents or relatives supported them in this choice, and the development of capitalist society made it increasingly possible. We can all think of figures of obvious cultural significance during this period who depended on subsidies from the family business or from relatives or other well wishers, at any rate until they became self-sufficient: Sir Thomas Beecham, the conductor; Frederick Delius, the composer; E. M. Forster ("in came the dividends, up with the lofty thoughts," to use this novelist's own phrase); Hoffmansthal; Karl Kraus; Stefan George; Thomas Mann; Rilke; Marcel Proust; and Lukacs. In what might be called the cultured regions of Europe, even businessmen can be found who retired from their affairs to devote themselves to culture: Reinhardt of Winterthur is an example. That was perhaps exceptional, but not that businessmen should wish their children to win the social status and recognition that came precisely from a life identified with something which was by definition not business. What is new in this period is that this status could now be derived not only from public service or politics or even the aristocratic and luxurious lifestyle financed from family fortunes but from a life devoted to the arts or, more rarely (one thinks of the British Rothschilds), the sciences. This indicates the new social acceptability of the arts, including those hitherto least acceptable to the puritan or pietist values of the classical bourgeoisie: the theater. Yet in the 1890s the sons and even the daughters of the British bourgeoisie were becoming professional actors and actresses, as eminent theatrical figures were given titles of nobility.

In summary, the late 19th and early 20th centuries were a period when culture became a much more important mark of class identification for those who belonged, or wished to belong, to the bourgeois strata in Europe. However, it was not a period when a clear cultural division of labor between the sexes could be said to operate, even as an ideal-typical model. In practice, of course, women's role in culture was favored, primarily for two reasons: first, because most adult bourgeois men expected to earn their living and therefore, presumably, had less time for daytime cultural activities than bourgeois married women, most of whom were not employed, and second, as already suggested, because the bourgeois home was increasingly "aestheticized" and the woman was and by tradition remained the primary homemaker and home furnisher, greatly abetted by the rapidly developing advertising industry. Nevertheless, it is evidently not possible to apply the caricature image of Hollywood films to the males of the educated bourgeoisie: the image of the roughneck millionaire, bored by his wife's social and cultural ambitions. This may appear plausible enough for first-generation accumulators or even for some of those tired businessmen returning home after a long day at the office and dreaming of the relaxations conventionally associated with tired busi-

nessmen. But it can hardly apply to the large stratum of the middle classes, which had passed through a secondary and higher education, which defined itself socially by this fact and by being "cultivated" (*gebildet*), and especially not to their children. At the very least we must now distinguish between the two different types of bourgeois who provide the theme for E. M. Forster's novel *Howard's End* (1910), the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes, the cultivated and the uncultivated. Nor should we forget that even the roughneck millionaires of this period soon learned that collecting pictures could be as good a form of conspicuous consumption as collecting racehorses, yachts, or mistresses.

This chapter therefore does not accept a cultural division of labor between men, whose involvement in the sphere of the market, exchange, and communications outside the domestic sphere simply gave them too little time to be culturally active, and women who were seen essentially as the bearers of culture and spiritual values. For the reasons suggested earlier, I do not believe that this was more than occasionally true in the earlier part of the 19th-century. Women's separate sphere was supposed to be neither clever nor educated nor cultured except in the most superficial sense—and superficial was precisely what culture in the bourgeois sense was not supposed to be.

During the early period of bourgeois women's emancipation, women did indeed capture the right to high culture as well as other rights hitherto confined de jure or de facto to the other sex. But they did so precisely by moving away from a specific woman's sphere with specific functions. And insofar as they remained within a specific female sphere, it was one that had not much cultural content in terms of bourgeois high culture. On the contrary, the major developments within the separate women's sphere during this period were systematically to exploit women as a market for goods and services, both for purchases in general and for literature in particular. On the one hand, advertising addressed specifically to women emerged, on the other, woman's journalism in the form of special women's periodicals and special women's pages in general journals and periodicals. Both of these quite consciously concentrated on what they felt to be the appeals which would most effectively move women to buy and on the subjects they considered to be of the most general interest to women as women: family, home, children, personal beautification, love, romance, and the like. High culture was not among them, except for a small minority of the extremely rich and snobbish, anxious to be socially up-to-date in every respect. No doubt many emancipated and cultured women also devoured fashion pages and read romance novels without thereby derogating from their status, but even today not many such women actually like to boast about their taste for romantic fiction.

None of this means that the women of 1880–1914 tried to imitate let alone be men. They knew quite well that men and women were not alike,

even when they did the same things, recognized each other as complete equals, or played the same public roles, as a glance at Rosa Luxemburg's letters and Beatrice Webb's diaries shows. What it means is that by this time the insistence on women's separate sphere, including the claim that they had a special responsibility for culture, was associated with political and social reaction. Both emancipated men and women aspired to live in a public sphere that did not discriminate against either sex. But in this public sphere, culture in the bourgeois sense was probably more central to the definition of *Bürgerlichkeit* than before, or perhaps even, since.

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6

Kinship and Evolved Psychological Dispositions: The Mother's Brother Controversy Reconsidered

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One of the most discussed topics in the history of anthropology has been the significance of the relationship between mother's brother and sister's son in patrilineal societies. However, the subject seems to have entirely faded from the hot topics of the discipline since the 1960s. We believe that, in reviewing this academic story of strange excitement and then total neglect, we can understand both some of the fundamental epistemological problems of anthropology and suggest some of the ways new approaches might throw light on questions that have been more often abandoned rather than resolved.

THE HISTORY OF THE MOTHER'S BROTHER CONTROVERSY

The behavior, which had so intrigued anthropologists, was involved with the rights, recognized in many unrelated patrilineal societies, of male members of the junior generation over the property and even the person and wives of senior male members of their mother's lineage, typically the mother's brother.¹ The example that came to be most discussed was that of the BaThonga of Southern Africa because of the particularly full and surprising description of

¹In a way that is typical of the time the focus was almost exclusively on male roles.

the customs involved given by Junod, an early missionary ethnographer, in a famous book published in 1912 (Junod, 1912). There the relation primarily concerned the right of mutual insult between the sister's son and the mother's brother as well as his wives and unclear claims to the property of the mother's brother by the sister's son. The tolerated violence of the behavior, as well as the sexual overtones, contributed to the fascination with the custom and probably titillated the various scholars who have discussed the subject. But it was not so much this one example that interested scholars but the conviction that they were dealing with a peculiar relationship that occurred repeatedly in many totally unrelated societies, something that was all the more unexpected because it contradicted patrilineal organizational principles—because mother's brother and sister's son usually must belong to different lineages—and the respect usually accorded to senior generations.

Examples of this peculiar relationship were thought to have been found among Australian aborigines and in Amazonia, southern Europe, Oceania, and India, not to mention other parts of Africa. Even today recent ethnographers are repeatedly struck by the prominence accorded to this relationship by the people they have studied in many different places, for example, Northern India (Jamous, 1991), Amazonia (Viveiros de Castro, 1992), and Melanesia (Gillison, 1993). But this apparent recurrence itself raises a problem, a problem that is central to the argument of this chapter. The various manifestations that so many anthropologists have recognized as different instances of the peculiar mother's brother–sister's son relationship are clearly cognate, and it is an interesting fact that, in many places in the world, people consider the relationship between mother's brother and sister's son as very special and very interesting, but these cases also turn out, on closer examination, to be very varied—sometimes involving symmetrical joking, sometimes asymmetrical joking, sometimes avoidance, sometimes significant economic privileges, sometimes sexual rights, and sometimes only ritual manifestations, and, furthermore, though in some cases it is actual mother's brothers and sister's sons who have the rights in question, sometimes the relation involves wide classificatory groups. The variation is in fact so great that it becomes very difficult to say exactly what thing it is that the various examples share, and this inevitably has made many wonder whether the many scholars who have turned their attention to the question have not been dealing with a nonexistent category.

At first, anthropologists assuming a universal history to humankind along a single evolutionary path, as well as, implicitly, a universal cognitive representation of filiation and marriage, saw in such practices as the aggressive rights of the sister's son over his mother's brother's property a survival of mother right and the proof of the existence of an earlier matrilineal state (Rivers, 1914). The explanation of the sister's son's privilege in terms of this alleged matrilineal stage was then famously dismissed by Radcliffe-Brown

(1924) who, using his refutation to demonstrate the character of structural-functional accounts, supplied a synchronic explanation for the practice. Thus the controversy over the mother's brother could not have been more central in the short history of social anthropological theory, and the success of Radcliffe-Brown's argument was a key element in the gradual marginalization of notions of evolution from the mainstreams of the subject.

Radcliffe-Brown's (1924) explanation was, at first, mainly in terms of the extension of sentiment hypothesis. More particularly he argued that the sentiments of a child toward his or her mother were extended to the mother's family, thus the mother's brother was a kind of male mother who acted accordingly in a maternal fashion and gave gifts to his sister's son. More important, however, was the argument that such customs could only be understood in terms of their function as part of the total social structure. Radcliffe-Brown's argument, therefore, not only went against evolutionism but also was to be a dramatic demonstration of the value of what has come to be known as structural functionalism. For Radcliffe-Brown, therefore, the idea of an identical and single history of humankind was abandoned, but a universalistic element remained in that he assumed a universal cognitive basis for the representation of kinship: Mothers were always mothers, and patriliney's attempt to underplay this caused problems that had to be resolved by strange customs. Furthermore, because of the commonality of the fundamental building blocks of kinship systems, large-scale comparisons could be made between societies, which were to be the foundations of the new natural science of society.

In turn, Radcliffe-Brown (1924) was criticized by Fortes (1953, 1969) and then by Goody (1959) who, while retaining the fundamental principle of a synchronic explanation in terms of a systematic social structure, criticized Radcliffe-Brown's explanation for being over general because it would predict a much greater degree of universality and uniformity than the evidence warranted. Goody's criticism takes the form of noting that, although the sentiments of children toward their mothers were everywhere the same, the specific practice in question was only found in certain societies with patrilineal descent groups without the counterbalance of matrilineal inheritance and that any explanation must be tied to the occurrence of this type of group. Furthermore, and here following the later Radcliffe-Brown, he specifies the character of the institution much more narrowly than the earlier evolutionist writers, insisting on the element of privileged aggression in the snatching of property by the sister's son in ritual contexts. This strange custom he, like Fortes, explains in terms of the contradiction between what he argues is a universally bilateral kinship system and the occasionally occurring unilineal descent system. Sister's sons are grandchildren of their mother's father in the kinship system and are therefore their heirs whereas, in the descent system, they are in no way their successors because descent only goes in the patri-

lineal line. This contradiction is resolved by the tolerated snatching of meat by the sister's son at the sacrifices of his mother's brother because, in this way, he recuperates some of his grandparental inheritance from the son of his maternal grandparents who has obtained (abusively in terms of the kinship system but legitimately in terms of the descent system) all the inheritance coming from his maternal grandfather. This argument is clinched by a comparison of two closely related groups who vary in their property system and where the degree of inheritance deprivation of the sister's son correlates with the degree of snatching.

This piece of work is a particularly fine example of the structural-functional analyses of its time. It assumes, with a characteristically confident tone, that the comparison of the social structure of different societies reveals recurring connections between different features, which, it could then be assumed, had a form of synchronic causal relationship between them. This sort of comparison also implied a belief that the basic institutions of societies were everywhere of much the same kind, that they were represented in much the same way, that we knew that there were men and women in all human societies, and that there was marriage and that there was filiation. According to this way of thinking, patriliney is a particular perspective put on the universally recognized facts of procreation. The belief in the universality of the basic representations of kinship of Radcliffe-Brown is thus modified but not abandoned because these representations, when they occur, are about natural, objective facts that exist independently of actors' representations. Furthermore, the emotional reaction to a certain state of affairs, in this case ambiguity over filiation, is assumed to be basically the same for all humans irrespective of culture and to produce, therefore, similar behaviors in similar circumstances. These different but related assumptions of a common ground is what made the use of comparison as a discovery procedure possible. Variations were significant because it could be assumed that they occurred within the same natural field consisting of identifiable elements, thus the general principles of Radcliffe-Brown's natural comparative science of society remained possible.

This identity of the basic building blocks of kinship systems is precisely what came under challenge in the subsequent developments of the subject. The first clearly expressed formulation of the coming epistemological shift is to be found in Leach's paper on marriage (Leach, 1955). This shift was emphatically repeated and expanded in the introduction by Needham to the ASA volume *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage* (Needham, 1971). The basis of their arguments was that marriage or kinship, as understood by social and cultural anthropologists, were not externally existing phenomena but were merely glosses for loosely similar notions found in different cultures. As Needham put it, there was no such thing as kinship. Subsequently, in a more empirical mood, Schneider attempted to demonstrate that Austronesian kin-

ship was a fundamentally different phenomenon to European notions of kinship and, aiming at understanding the former with the words appropriate for the latter, was a source of confusion (Schneider, 1984). Thus, generalizing comparisons of kinship systems were not possible because they did not involve, as was previously assumed, comparisons of like with like.

Similar in inspiration but even more startling, though to many less convincing in its extreme forms, was the point made by a number of feminists that there were no such things as women and men beyond a specific cultural context. Explicitly drawing on Schneider's critique of kinship, Collier and Yanagisako (1987) argued that the differentiation between female and male, that anthropologists had incorporated in their analyses, was a cultural construction and was of a quite different order than any sexual difference between organisms that might exist in nature. These antinative empiricist points had two consequences for the kind of argument Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes, and Goody had presented. First, as was noted, it could be argued that the grand comparisons of structural functionalism involved operations like adding apples and pears, and, second, the social units, such as lineages, for example, were not similar natural things occurring in different societies but different and unique historical/cultural representations constructed in different settings and therefore incommensurable (see Kuper, 1982). The only reason, according to these writers, why kinship had seemed so similar among different human groups across the globe was because of an ethnocentric tendency to see similarities and forget differences. Finally, the last universalistic element in the Goody argument, the similarity of behavioral response in all humans to similar situations, also came under attack by anthropologists who claimed that emotions too were culturally constructed (Rosaldo, 1980) and could therefore not be intuited from introspective sympathy.

The implication of all this for the type of comparative enterprise that Goody and others had been engaged in seemed clear: It made it impossible. It led, if not necessarily at least quite directly, to the deep relativism of much modern anthropology. The systematic comparison, which for the structural functionalists was to be a first step toward scientific generalizations, became clearly illegitimate if there could be no assurance that the units of analyses were commensurate. Those who studied kinship had deluded themselves that they had been dealing with biological facts, which it would be reasonable to assume would be severely constrained by nature and therefore comparable, whereas in reality they had been dealing with representations that, it was implicitly assumed, were the product of unique histories and therefore could take any and every form. In the case of the particular example of the mother's brother controversy, the recurrence of the institution that had intrigued the earlier writers was a mirage. Every case was different, and the very terms of the relationship, mother, brother, sister, and son, did not indicate the same kind of thing in different cultural contexts. Thus whereas

structural functionalism was successful in dealing the first blow against anthropology as a natural science, the culturalist attack on structural functionalism seemed to have destroyed any hope of attempts at generalization. We had been left with nothing but anecdotes about the infinity of specific situations in which human beings find themselves.

The theoretical history we have just told can be seen as unidirectional: it is the history of the gradual abandonment in the belief in the possibility of anthropology as a generalizing science. It assumes that because human beings have the ability of transmitting information between individuals through symbolic communication they are freed totally from any natural constraints and are essentially different from other animals, who can only transmit most, if not all, information genetically. Animals must wait for changes in their genomes for becoming different. Humans, on the other hand, change with their representations. The existence of these representations is made possible by the learning and computational potential of the human brain, but their contents, it is implicitly assumed, are not at all constrained or even influenced by genetically inherited brain hardware. These contents are determined, rather, by historicocultural processes. Human history is therefore liberated from biology, and people may represent the world and each other as they please. The belief in the need for cross-cultural regularities resisting historical specificity becomes simply wrong: the product of a category mistake. The extension of the aims of natural science to the study of culture and society would be like studying smells with rulers.

The aim of this chapter is not to deny the validity of, at least, some of the criticisms of earlier anthropological approaches that have just been touched on. Indeed, we recognize the relevance of their arguments, and there is no doubt that the whole enterprise of the Radcliffe-Brownian structural-functional analysis rested in part on the dubious foundations of misplaced naïve realism. We agree with Leach, Needham, and Schneider that phenomena, described by anthropologists under the label of kinship, are cultural and therefore historical constructions and that people's thoughts and actions are about these constructions rather than about unmediated facts of biological kinship. The implicit argument, which would see representations of kinship, marriage, and gender as merely the inevitable recognition of "how things are," will not do. We argue, however, that this does not mean that the attempt to invoke natural factors, or even biological factors, as explanations of such cultural representations must be abandoned as though these representations and the people who hold them have, somehow, floated free from the earth onto the immaterial clouds of history. Antirealism too can be utterly naïve.

We choose the example of the mother's brother-sister's son relationship in patrilineal societies to demonstrate our argument, simply because it has been so critical in the history of the subject, and we try to show that it is pos-

sible to envisage, in a case such as this, an approach that combines the particular with the general, even though we must recognize that the actual carrying out of such a study lies beyond what we can do and do here.

The abandonment of overpowerful theories in anthropology came, in the first place, from the realization that the implicit and explicit cultural universals of traditional anthropology were not as uniform as they had been assumed to be. But anthropologists who seem to argue for a radically relativistic constructivism often seem to lack confidence in their own arguments. Their reasoning has taken them to a point that negates what all those with a reasonable acquaintance of the ethnographic record know. This is that the regularities, which have fascinated the subject since its inception, are surprisingly evident. Thus, it is a common experience for younger anthropologists, reared on the diet of relativism, which the studies we mentioned exemplify, to be shocked by discovering the old chestnuts of traditional anthropology in their fieldwork, just when they had been convinced that these were merely antique illusions.²

The dilemma that this particular history reveals is, in fact, typical of the subject matter of anthropology as a whole. What happens is that, first, some cross-cultural regularities are recognized—the incest taboo, for example. These lead to quick explanations in terms of the evolution of culture, their functions, either for society as a whole or for individual well-being, or for reproductive success. These explanations are then shown to be based on a gross exaggeration of the unity of the phenomena to be explained. Then explanation is abandoned altogether and declared impossible, leaving anthropologists, and even more the wider public, with the feeling that the original question has been more evaded than faced. In this way is the very idea of the possibility of anthropology destroyed.

THE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO REPRESENTATIONS

The aim of this chapter is to shun such evasion and to sketch a theoretical model applied to a particular case, in other words to seek how a possible explanation might be framed in the case of a particular example of one of these "obvious" regularities, in this case the varied but similar peculiar relationships of the mother's brother and the sister's son in different societies. We

²Maurice Bloch remembers how, as a student, he was bored with the mother's brother controversy and was convinced that it was an insignificant aberration in the history of the subject. But subsequently during field work in Madagascar he had to listen all night to a drunk endlessly repeating, "I am your sister's son, and it is your duty to give me a drink." He then felt haunted by Radcliffe-Brown.

want to do this without either exaggerating the unity of the phenomenon or avoiding the problems discussed earlier concerning misplaced realism, which recent theoretical criticism has well illuminated.

What is involved in explaining a cultural phenomenon? Here is a way of framing the question. All members of a human community are linked to one another, across time and space, by a flow of information. The information is about themselves, their environment, their past, their beliefs, their desires and fears, their skills and practices. The flow is made up of rapid and slow currents, narrow rivulets and large streams, confluence and divisions. All information in this flow is subject to distortion and decay. Most information is about some here-and-now situation and does not flow much beyond it. Still, some information is more stable in content and more widely distributed. It is shared by many or even most of members of the community. When anthropologists talk of culture, they refer to this widely shared information.

What explains the existence and contents of culture in the social flow of information? An answer of a sort is provided by modern interpretive anthropology, which aims to show that the elements of a culture (or of a cultural subsystem) cohere together and constitute an integrated worldview (in particular, Geertz, 1973). This is not the approach we favor. Without denying the insightfulness of such interpretive scholarship and the relative systematicity of culture, we are among those who have argued that this systematicity is often much greater in the anthropologists' interpretation than in the culture itself (e.g., Bloch, 1977; Leach, 1954; Sperber, 1985a) and hence is exaggerated (as is acknowledged by Boon, 1982, pp. 3–26, who speaks approvingly of the "exaggeration of cultures"). More important, even if cultures were as systematic as claimed, this would fall quite short of explaining the spread and stability of these coherent wholes, unless one takes as given that there are factors and mechanisms in the flow of information that somehow promote systematicity. Rather than assuming their existence, we favor studying the factors and mechanisms actually at work in the spread and stabilization of cultural phenomena and leaving here as an open question the degree and manner in which they may indeed promote systematicity.

Our explanatory approach to this flow of information in society is that of the epidemiology of representations (Sperber, 1985b, 1996). It is naturalistic, that is, it aims at describing and explaining cultural phenomena in terms of processes and mechanisms the causal powers of which are wholly grounded in their natural (or material) properties. More specifically, the kind of naturalistic explanations of cultural phenomena we favor invokes two kinds of small scale processes: psychological processes within individuals and processes of physical, biological, and psychophysical interactions between individuals and their immediate environment (including interactions with other individuals) and that we call ecological processes. Typically, the scale of the

processes invoked is much smaller than that of the cultural phenomena described and explained in terms of these processes. It is the articulation of large numbers of these microprocesses that allows one to redescribe and explain cultural macrophenomena. This contrasts with more standard social science accounts that explain cultural macrophenomena in terms of other social and cultural macrophenomena.³

We view, then, the flow of information as a natural process occurring in the form of causal chains of microevents that take place both in individual mind/brains and in the shared environment of the individuals involved. Inside minds, we are dealing with processes of perception, inference, remembering, decision, and action planning and with the mental representations (memories, beliefs, desires, plans) that these processes deploy. In the environment, we are dealing with a variety of behaviors often involving artifacts and in particular with the production and reception of public representations that can take the form of behaviors such as gesture or utterances or of artifacts such as writings. We call these representations public because, unlike mental representations, they occur not within brains but in the shared environment of several people. Thus not just discourse addressed to a crowd, but also words whispered in someone's ear are public in the intended sense. Mental events cause public events, which in turn cause mental events, and these chains of alternating mind-internal and mind-external events carry information from individuals to individuals. A simple example is provided by a folktale, where the main mental events are those of comprehension, remembering, recall, and speech planning, and the main public events are tellings of the tale. What makes a particular story a folktale is that repeated sequences of these mental and public events succeed in distributing a stable story across a population over time.

All these events taking place inside and outside individual minds are material events: changes in brain states on the one hand, changes in the immediate environment of individuals on the other. As material events, they possess causal powers and can be invoked as causes and effects in naturalistic causal explanations. They differ in this respect from the abstract meanings invoked in interpretive explanation (see Sperber, 1985a, chap. 1). That meanings can be causes is contentious, and what kind of causal powers they might have, if any, is obscure (see Jacob, 1997). For instance, attributing to a folktale a meaning that coheres with, say, basic values of the culture in which it is told may, in a way, make sense of the tale, but it does not come near explaining its distribution and hence its existence as a folktale in that particular culture.

³Of course, explaining cultural phenomena in terms of microinteractions is not new in anthropology. See, for instance, the work of Fredrik Barth (e.g., Barth, 1975, 1987), which has been a source of inspiration to the epidemiological approach.

It could be argued that the microevents invoked in an epidemiological approach are at the level of individual minds and behaviors. How, then, can their study help explain cultural macrophenomena that exist not on an individual but on a societal scale? We have already suggested that these macrocultural phenomena are made up, at a microscopic level, of these causally linked microevents. To this, it is sometimes argued that the vast majority of these microevents cannot be observed: Anthropologists will never witness more than a very small sample of the public microevents involved, and mental events cannot be observed. Here, however, the comparison with medical epidemiology should help dispose of this objection.

Epidemiological phenomena such as epidemics are macrophenomena occurring at the level of populations, but they are made up of microphenomena of individual pathology and interindividual transmission. In most cases individual pathological processes are not directly observable and are known only through symptoms and tests, whereas the vast majority of microevents of disease transmission go unobserved. This, however, has been a challenge rather than an impediment to the development of medical epidemiology. In the epidemiology of representations, the situation is, if anything, better than in the epidemiology of diseases. Our communicative and interpretive abilities give us a great amount of fine-grained information about the representations we entertain and about the process they undergo, whereas pain and other perceptible symptoms generally provide much coarser and hard-to-interpret information about our pathologies. Also, most events of cultural transmission require the attention of the participants, whereas pathological contagion is typically stealthy. Hence, cultural transmission is much easier to spot and observe than disease transmission.

In spite of the limited evidence at its disposal, medical epidemiology has provided outstanding causal explanations of epidemiological phenomena. It has rarely done so by following actual causal chains of transmission and much more often does so by helping identify the causal factors and mechanisms at work both within and across individual organisms. *Mutatis mutandis*, the task of the epidemiology of representations, is not to describe in any detail the actual causal chains that stabilize (or destabilize) a particular cultural representation (although, in some cases, it is of great historical interest to be able to do so), but it is to identify factors and processes that help explain the existence and effect of these causal chains. For instance, showing that a particular folktale has an optimal structure for human memory and that there are recurring social situations in a given society where people are motivated to tell it or to have it told helps explain why the tale is told repeatedly, with little or no distortion of content in that society.

The central question, which an epidemiological approach focuses on, is, what causes some representations and practices to become and remain wide-

spread and relatively stable in content in a given society at a given time.⁴ In so framing the question, we depart from the goal of generally explaining all or even most sociocultural phenomena in one and the same way, either as fulfilling a function (a coarse functionalist approach) or as contributing to reproductive success (a coarse sociobiological approach). True, from an epidemiological point of view, all explanations of sociocultural phenomena will have to invoke both mind-external ecological factors linked to the transmission of cultural contents and mind-internal psychological factors linked to the mental representation and processing of these contents. However, the particular factors at play and the way they combine vary with each case (just as, in medical epidemiology, a different combination of organism-internal physiological factors and of organism-external environmental factors characterizes each disease).

Because of this multiplicity of cooccurring causes we aim only at identifying some of the factors that contribute to explaining particular instances. These factors play a causal role only in specific historical and environmental circumstances and therefore can never be sufficient to explain fully the local cultural forms. Caused in part by the same factors, these forms have recognizable similarities, which we aim to help explain. On the other hand, we merely identify a couple of important and recurring factors among many other diverging factors: Each cultural form in its full local specifics is therefore unique to its particular historical context.

This, of course, is, first of all, simply to return, though more explicitly and critically, to the general type of multifactorial explanations that were typical of anthropology before its recent relativist turn. Two things may be new, though. Rather than accepting implicitly some nondescript naturalism or objectivism about kinship, we appeal quite explicitly to naturalistic considerations about evolved, genetically transmitted psychological predispositions. The result of this explicitly naturalistic account is, however, weaker in its predictive pretensions than the type of accounts found, for example, in

⁴How stable do representations have to be to count as stable? From the epidemiological viewpoint, there is no expectation that there will be a neat bipartition, among all representations that inhabit a human population, between individual representations that never stabilize in the community on the one hand and cultural representations that are transmitted over time and social space with relatively little modification. We expect on the contrary to have a continuum of cases between the idiosyncratic and the widely cultural. This viewpoint differs quite radically from the memetic approach to culture of Richard Dawkins and others (e.g., Blackmore, 1999; Dawkins, 1976) for which memes are true replicators and other mental contents are not. One might wonder then when is a representation stable enough to be seen as a cultural representation. We argue, against that very question, that, from an anthropological point of view, representations are best viewed as more or less cultural depending on the width, duration, and stability of their distribution.

Goody's functionalist thesis. There the sister's son's privilege appeared as an almost necessary solution to a structural problem found in certain patrilineal societies. Similarly, this solution was to account for the particular form of the institution (e.g., snatching of significant property). According to our more explicitly naturalistic, but at the same time more modest account, there are some factors that increase the chances of the sister's son privilege stabilizing as a cultural form in these societies, and we can expect, and not be disturbed by, a wide range of unaccounted variation in practices because these will always be combined with many other factors and many different histories. We avoid, or so we hope, both the too strong explanations of functionalism, old style cultural evolutionism, or sociobiology without giving up on causal explanation either.

A few easy examples give an idea of the range of factors that an epidemiological approach would consider relevant and the complex interrelation between mind-internal and mind-external factors. Density of population is a mind-external factor in the stabilization of drumming as a means of communication. That percussion sounds tend to preempt human attention is a mind-internal factor in the culturally stabilized uses of percussion instruments. The ability of human memory to retain more easily texts with specific prosodies is a mind-internal factor in the stabilization of various forms of poetry; familiarity with specific, historically evolved poetic forms is a mind-internal factor in the acceptability, learnability, and therefore chances of cultural stabilization of new poetic works. The effectiveness of internal combustion engines for moving vehicles is a mind-external factor contributing to the stabilization of the techniques involved in constructing and maintaining these engines; however, untutored human minds do not spontaneously or even easily acquire these techniques. Hence, the recognition of the effectiveness of internal combustion is a mind-internal motivating factor in the setting up of appropriate institutional teaching without which the relevant technologies would not stabilize. Institutional teaching itself involves a complex articulation of mind-internal and mind-external factors.

As these examples illustrate, both mind-external and mind-internal factors explaining cultural phenomena can pertain just to the natural history of the human species and its environment or involve also the sociocultural history of the populations involved. On the mind-external side, density of population is a natural factor found in all living species but that can be modified by cultural factors. Demographic density has a wide variety of cultural effects, the stabilization of drummed communication in some low-density populations being a marginal but obvious illustration. On the mind-external side again, the presence in the environment of vehicles powered by internal combustion engines is a wholly cultural factor, which does not mean that it is unnatural; it is, after all, the product of evolved mental mechanisms exploiting natural laws that contributes, among many other sociocultural effects, to the

stabilization of the techniques necessary for their constructions and maintenance. On the mind-internal side, the tendency of human attention to be preempted by percussion sounds, even if it can be culturally modified, is basically a natural trait that humans share with other animals. The ability to organize knowledge in a hierarchy of concepts is typically human, and although it is likely to have a strong natural basis, it is certainly enhanced by language, writing, and formal teaching. Familiarity with specific poetic forms is a wholly cultural trait. This illustrates an important disanalogy, among several, between the epidemiology of diseases and the epidemiology of representations: Culture occurs both inside and outside of minds, whereas diseases, *qua* diseases, occur only inside organisms.

The epidemiological model therefore does not deny the complexity of the process of human history. It fully recognizes that culture is both in us and outside; that it is not—not even remotely—just a matter of human beings with genetically determined mind/brains reacting to diverse environments according to the dictates of their nature. But the recognition of this complexity and of the unique fact that humans are beings that, in a strong and important sense, make themselves, still leaves room for considering, *inter alia*, the role of factors such as human psychological dispositions resulting from natural evolution. However, just as cultural patterns are never simple phenotypic expressions of genes, they are never simple social-scale projections of the individual mind. Culture is not human mentation writ large. It is, rather, the interaction of psychological dispositions with mind-external factors in a population that can best explain the fitful recurrence of certain types of behaviors and norms in a whole variety of guises. The inability of other models to do this, an inability common in the social sciences, has left anthropology ill-equipped to explain many of the cross-cultural regularities that have, in the past, rightly fascinated the subject.

A rich example of the relationship between evolved psychological dispositions, mind-external factors, and cultural phenomena is afforded by the case of language. A common assumption in cognitive psychology is that humans come equipped with a language faculty. This language faculty is neither a language nor a disposition that generates *ex nihilo* a language in the individual; it is a disposition to acquire a specific language on the basis of external linguistic inputs. The disposition is assumed to work like this: Infants react differently to sound patterns typical of human speech. They pay particular attention to these sounds, they analyze them differently from other sounds, they look for special evidence such as speaker's gaze to associate meaning to sound, they structure meaning in partly preformed ways, they test their knowledge in themselves producing speech, and generally they develop a competence in the language of their community. That the language acquired by the members of a community depends on the public linguistic productions encountered in this community is a truism. However, the languages found in

all human communities depend on the psychological disposition that individuals bring to the task of language acquisition. Generally, human languages have to be learnable on the basis of this disposition. More specifically, phonetic, syntactic, and semantic forms are more likely to stabilize when they are more easily learnable. All so-called natural human languages—that is, languages, the evolution of which is essentially the output of spontaneous collective linguistic activity—will therefore exhibit structural features that make them highly learnable as a first language by humans.

Languages—Chinese, English, Maori, and so forth—differ because they have different histories, with a variety of factors, such as population movements, social stratification, the presence or absence of writing, affecting these histories in subtle ways. However, these mind-external, place-and-time specific factors interact at every generation with the language faculty found in every human. It is this interaction that determines the relative stability and the slow transformation of languages and that puts limits on their variability. For a variety of sociohistorical reasons, topics of conversation, preferred words, socially valued patterns of speech, and so on vary continuously over time in a manner such that every generation is presented with a somewhat different sampling of linguistic inputs, to which it reacts, in the acquisition process, by unconsciously bringing about minor changes to the underlying grammar. Generally, whereas day-to-day cultural changes in language use may introduce new idiosyncrasies and difficulties, such as hard to pronounce borrowed words, the language learning disposition operating at the generational time scale pulls the mental representations of these inputs toward more regular and more easily remembered forms. For instance, the more difficult phonology of borrowed words, or the more difficult semantics of meanings stipulated as part of sophisticated theories, are likely to be normalized by language learners in the direction of easier forms. This determines a slow evolution of languages that is constrained both by the necessity of intergenerational communication and by the universal constraints of language acquisition.

The case of language learning, therefore, illustrates how the existence of a genetically inherited disposition is a factor in the stabilization of cultural forms, not by directly generating these forms but by causing learners to pay special attention to certain types of stimuli and to use—and sometimes distort—the evidence provided by these stimuli in specific ways. This leaves of course room for much cultural variability. Moreover, dispositions capable of affecting cultural contents may be more or less rigidly constraining, the language acquisition device envisaged by Chomskyans being on the more constraining side. In general, cultural representations departing from those favored by underlying dispositions, though possible, don't stabilize as easily. In the absence of other stabilizing factors counterbalancing the dispositions (e.g., institutional support), hard to learn representations tend to get transformed in the process of transmission, in the direction favored by the dispositions.

The epidemiological approach to culture provides a way of understanding the relationship between psychology and culture that neither denies the role of psychology nor reduces culture to mind. In a nutshell, the idea is that psychological dispositions in general (whether evolved basic dispositions or culturally developed dispositions) modify the probability—and only the probability—that representations or practices of some specific tenor will spread, stabilize, and maintain a cultural level of distribution.

How might all this help explain the regularities in the relationship between mother's brother and sister's son in patrilineal societies that are the topic of this chapter? To this we now turn.

APPLYING THE THEORY TO THE MOTHER'S BROTHER-SISTER'S SON RELATION

Underlying the theories of the structural functionalists concerning the mother's brother-sister's son relation in patrilineal societies is the assumption that all human beings reckon kinship bilaterally. This makes the occurrence of unilineal rules to form descent groups something that somehow goes against nature. Thus Fortes (1969) contrasted, on the one hand, the domestic domain where relations were governed by biology and natural emotions and, on the other hand, the lineage domain, which was constrained by politico-jural considerations that conflicted with this biology. For him, therefore, the claims of the sister's son were a kind of reassertion of underlying bilaterality. Goody (1959), although distancing himself somewhat from the Fortesian formulation, seems to imply something similar in that the reason why the sister's son is being "cheated" from his inheritance by the patrilineal rule is because in reality, he, like the maternal uncle's children, is a true descendant of his mother's parents. The objection to Fortes's and Goody's position, however, has been, as we showed, that they seemed to assume that people act in relation to genetic relations, rather than in terms of a very different thing: their representation of socially specified relations. But what if there was some indirect causal link between the social representations and genetic relations? Then the accusation of naïve empiricism might fall away and the Fortes/Goody argument might be partly reinstated. How this might be possible is what much of the rest of this chapter is about.

We begin by noting that support for the structural functionalist's assumption of the universal bilaterality of kinship seems to come from an unexpected source. This is Hamilton's (1964) neo-Darwinian explanation of kin altruism and its development in sociobiological theory. However, this kind of theory has been rejected out of hand by most social and cultural anthropologists (e.g., Sahlins, 1976). It is necessary to briefly outline the theory of kin altruism and why it has been rejected to see if, after all, it might not be used legitimately in favor of the kind of argument implicit in the writings of Goody and Fortes.

The by now familiar kin altruism argument can be summarized as follows: Genealogical relationships in the strict biological sense exist among all organisms including humans. The transmission of heritable biological traits through genealogical relationships is what makes natural selection possible. Natural selection favors genes that have the effect, given the environment, of rendering more probable more replications of themselves in future generations. This includes genes that promote the reproduction of the organism in which they are located, genes that promote behaviors favorable to the survival and reproduction of descendants of the organism in which they are located, and also—and this is fundamental to the Hamilton thesis—genes that promote survival and reproduction in yet other organisms, which, being genealogically related, are likely to carry copies of the same genes. A gene causing an organism to pay a cost, or even to sacrifice itself for the benefit of its lateral kin, may thereby increase the number of copies of itself in the next generation, not through the descendants of the cost-paying or self-sacrificing organism (which may thereby lose its chance of reproducing at all) but through the descendants of the altruistic organism's kin who are likely to carry the very same gene.

The potential contribution of kin altruism to what is known as inclusive fitness favors the emergence of a disposition to helpful behavior adjusted to the genealogical distance between the altruist and the beneficiary. For such a disposition to exert itself, the organism must have the possibility of discriminating kin from nonkin and, among kin, degrees of relatedness. This does not mean, of course, that the organism must have the conceptual resources to represent genealogical relatedness and its degrees precisely and as such. What it means is that, if the ecology is such that degree of relatedness can, at least roughly, be discriminated thanks to some simple criterion such as smell, appearance, or habitat, then a disposition exploiting this possibility may be selected for.

The importance of the theory of kin altruism for evolutionary biology and for the sociobiological study of animal behavior is not in dispute. But what are its consequences, if any, for the study of human behavior? At first sight, this theory transposed directly to humans, would predict that the requirements of this altruism should, in humans, favor an instinctually based universal bilateral recognition of kinship. This would give a priori support for the structural functionalist's assumption. Here, however, is where the objections of most anthropologists come in.

These objections are fundamentally two. One, the great variability in kinship systems throughout the globe seems unaccountable in terms of pan-human characteristics. Secondly, humans live in the world via their representations, and how you get from genes to representations or norms is just not thought through in the sociobiological literature (which has been criticized precisely on this ground by evolutionary psychologists; see Tooby & Cosmides, 1992).

The first objection means that the explanation in terms of genes is far too direct. One should note however that the sociobiological position not only is compatible with the recognition of some degree of variability but also purports to explain it. The expression of genes is always contingent on environmental factors, and it may be part of the contribution of a gene to the fitness of the organism that it has different phenotypic expressions in different environments. For instance, the sex of many reptiles is determined not directly by their genes but by the temperature at which eggs are incubated, females developing better, it seems, and being more often born in a warmer environment, and males in a colder one (Shine, Elphick, & Harlow, 1995).

Closer to our present concern, Alexander (1979) offers an explanation of both matrilineal inheritance and sister's son rights in patrilineal societies in terms of uncertainty of paternity. An evolved disposition to favor kin should be sensitive to degrees of doubt or certainty of relatedness. In particular, a man's investment in his putative children should be sensitive to his degree of confidence that he is actually their biological father. If there are reasons why this degree of confidence should be low, then a man's closest relative in the next generation may well be his sister's children. On this basis, Alexander predicts "that a general society-wide lowering of confidence of paternity will lead to a society-wide prominence, or institutionalization, of mother's brother as an appropriate male dispenser of parental benefits" (p. 172). One may accept the premise that there is an evolved disposition to favor kin that is sensitive to confidence in relatedness and yet doubt Alexander's conclusion, in particular regarding the institutionalization of matrilineal inheritance. True, there is ethnographic evidence showing that confidence in paternity tends, with exceptions, to be lower in matrilineal than in patrilineal society as the famous case of the 19th-century Nayars illustrates (Gough, 1959), but it is most probably even lower in societies that have neither matrilineal nor patrilineal descent groups (Gibson, 1986; Stack, 1983). Furthermore, a correlation is not sufficient to determine that there is a direct causal relationship, let alone what the direction of such a causal relationship might be.

The ethnographic and historical record shows that matrilineality and patrilineality and related patterns of inheritance are fairly stable systems, with very rare documented examples (such as Barnes, 1951) of a society shifting from one to the other. On the other hand, changes in sexual mores toward or away from greater permissiveness and associated lower confidence in paternity are very common and may be caused by rapidly shifting economic, demographic, or ideological factors. It cannot be the case, then, that a lowering of confidence in paternity systematically, or even frequently, leads to the institutionalization of matrilineality. Alexander's claim, therefore, is at best unconvincing. One could, for that matter, argue that the greater commonness of low confidence in paternity in matrilineal society is an effect rather than (or as much as) a cause of the descent system. When the inheri-

tance system is matrilineal, then a man knows that his heirs will be his sister's children rather than those of his wife. His chances of investing in his wife's children's welfare may be further reduced by rules of separate residence of the spouses, as are often found in matrilineal societies. To the extent that the opportunities for a man to invest resources in his wife's children are limited, it may matter relatively less whether these children are biologically his own, especially if the counterpart of greater paternity doubts is a greater chance of having children with other men's wives. This fits well with the common ethnographic observation that, in most matrilineal societies, there is less control over the sexual fidelity of women.

Extending Alexander's (1979) line of reasoning to the case with which we are concerned here, one should predict that the chances of having institutionalized privileges for the sister's son in an otherwise truly patrilineal system should be greater when paternity doubts are greater too (but not great enough to tip the system over toward matrilineality). In this case, however, there is no evidence that we know of showing a correlation between institutionalized privileges of sister's son and paternity doubts, let alone a causal link in the hypothesized direction.

The second standard anthropological objection to a biological account means that, even if we accept that a disposition to Hamiltonian kin altruism is biologically advantageous and therefore likely to have somehow evolved, something that is clearly plausible, it is not clear at all what would follow regarding cultural norms of human behavior—probably nothing directly and unconditionally because dispositions to behavior need not actually lead to behavior, let alone to culturally codified behavior; they may be offset or inhibited in indefinitely many ways. Moreover, assuming that a disposition is not inhibited, it still need not be reflected in a cultural norm. In most human society, for instance the disposition to use, in certain conditions, an eyebrow flash as a sign of recognition is both uninhibited and culturally uncodified (see Eibl-Eibesfeld, 1975). Should we then, like most cultural and social anthropologists, simply forget about all this biological stuff and, like the theologians and philosophers of old, recognize that the categorical uniqueness of human beings frees them completely from animality?

The epidemiological approach offers a way of avoiding this type of dismissal yet taking into account what is valuable in the objections. Let us accept, as a hypothesis, that there is an evolved disposition to try and differentiate people in a way sensitive to their degree of genealogical relatedness to self.⁵ It is most unlikely that such a disposition would be such as to cause

⁵Hirschfeld (1984) can be read as suggesting a similar approach and as insisting, quite rightly, that an essential relatedness and not just any kind of relatedness is aimed at. On the other hand, his description of this kind of relatedness in terms of a natural resemblance seems to us inadequate.

the individual to seek actual genealogical information as such. It would be rather a disposition merely to seek whatever available information might indicate relatedness to self. Now, such a disposition would favor the cultural stabilization of systems of representation providing for such ego-centered differentiation without determining their exact nature. The disposition would not be the source of these representations. These would arise as part of the process of distribution of ideas and practices—the historical dialectic of thought and communications so to speak—and its interaction with the individual cognitive development of the members of every new generation. The epidemiological approach seeks factors explaining the transformation and stabilization of representations in the process of their transmission, including biological factors. It does not pretend, as might a classical sociobiological approach, that these biological factors somehow generate the representations or that culturally sanctioned behaviors are phenotypic expressions of genes.

One prediction that would follow from the hypothesis we are considering is that individuals would tend to show interest in evidence of relatedness, whether or not culturally codified. For instance, if a single kinship category included full-sibling, half-sibling, and more distant relatives, with the same cultural norms of behavior *vis-à-vis* all, the prediction would be that individuals would nevertheless tend to differentiate both cognitively and behaviorally between these different types of individuals falling under this common category (see, e.g., Bloch, 1998). This further interest could be carried out individually, without being particularly culturally condoned, as we have just envisaged, or it could contribute to the stabilization of further cultural representations (e.g., folk theories, tales, alternative or complementary terminologies for kin) drawing finer-grained distinctions than the basic kinship terms system. In other words, whenever representations involving classifications and norms that distinguish kin in terms of closeness appear amid the babble and multiplicity of other representations caused either as a result of individual imaginations and circumstances, or through more general sociohistorical circumstances, these particular representations seem strangely right, attractive, natural, or obvious to people. This would be the case without individuals being at all sure why these representations have these qualities, and even, if they gave reasons, these reasons would often be merely post hoc rationalizations.

Assuming this general framework, we make the following predictions. In unilineal systems where transmission of rights and goods and generally helpful behavior creates an inequality of treatment among individuals who are equally closely related to ego, and therefore goes against the predisposition in question, there should be a general, nondeterministic, tendency to compensate for this imbalance. Norms or institutions capable of playing, in such a system, a compensatory role would simply stand a greater chance to

stabilize than those in systems where the imbalance does not exist. The special rights of the sister's son found in some patrilineal cultures could well be a case in point.

The relationship between biological disposition and cultural norm we are envisaging in this case is one between a biological causal factor obviously not sufficient and maybe not necessary, but such as to render more probable the emergence and stabilization of norms of the type in question. We emphasize that this more sophisticated naturalism makes, in this case, weaker claims than the commonsense naturalism of anthropologists, such as the cultural evolutionists of the 19th-century and Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes, or Goody. According to their commonsense naturalism, there are natural kinship facts that people are somehow aware of and that guide their sentiments and behaviors. This makes a strong universalistic claim about human cognition, emotion, and behavior, which are taken to be neatly attuned to natural facts. If these classical claims may superficially appear misleadingly weaker and more acceptable than those we are tentatively considering here, it is only because they are made, for the most part, implicitly, whereas we have tried to spell out a possible naturalistic approach.

According to the approach we are considering, there are indeed biological facts, and in particular genealogical relationships. These, however, need not be cognized as such by people. A predisposition to attend to reliable correlates of these relationships cognitively, emotionally, or behaviorally, in one or several of a multiplicity of possible ways, is likely to have evolved in many species, including the human species. In humans, this attention to relatedness encounters a wealth of relevant cultural inputs. More specifically, the developing child, searching his or her environment for evidence of relatedness to others, finds kinship terms (kinship now in the cultural rather than the biological sense), people identified as related to him or her by means of these terms, do's and don'ts relating to kinship categories, folk theories, and so on. Because of his or her evolved disposition, the child attends to this information or even seeks it, retains it, guides his or her behavior accordingly, and becomes, in turn, a transmitter of such information.

At this stage we seem to be just defending a weakened, updated, and explicit version of the implicit or less explicit naturalistic claims of Fortes and Goody regarding the mother's brother-sister's son relation in certain patrilineal societies. In fact, given the sweeping and careless way in which these claims have been dismissed, this is worth doing anyhow. We are defending them, however, in a way that is not contradicted by the very real uniqueness of each case. Furthermore, unlike sociobiologists assuming a fairly direct connection between genes and culture, we claim only an indirect relationship of genetically favored receptivity to specific information, favoring in turn the stabilization of cultural representations of a more or less specific tenor.

WHY RITUALIZED TRANSGRESSION?

From Junod to Goody, ethnographers have stressed the transgressive style in which the sister's son's rights are exerted. This may take many forms, from ritualized insults among the BaThonga to ritualized snatching of meat among the Lo Dagaba. Why should it be so? The general approach we are proposing might help us understand the recurrence not just of the recognition of the subsidiary rights of the sister's son in his mother's brother's property but also of the ritualized transgressions so often involved in exerting those rights.

From a cultural-epidemiological point of view, cultural norms (such as the norm that authorizes a Lo Dagaba man to snatch meat from his mother's brother) are just a kind of representation that is widely distributed in a population through various processes of transmission. What makes them norms is that they represent the way things are required or allowed to be. In the social science literature, norms are mostly envisaged as causes of behaviors conforming to them. However, norms play other causal roles, which may be no less important than that causing conformity. In particular, norms serve to pass approval or blame on behaviors attributed to oneself or to others, or just on behaviors that occur very rarely, if at all, but the very possibility of which captures imagination and defines the limits of what is acceptable. In most societies, for instance, norms against cannibalism are much more important as a topic of narrative and conversation than as a guide for behavior. It would be interesting to know how much the norm permitting a sister's son to take his mother's brother's goods in one or another ritualized way results in actual taking of goods with significant economic effects, as opposed to being a topic of conversation with occasional symbolic enactments, serving to define social roles more than to reallocate economic resources. Alas, the literature does not seem to offer the kind of data that would answer this question. Moreover, things are likely to differ in this respect across different societies and times.

Norms are not just causes of behaviors; they are also effects of behaviors. Their spreading is caused by the different types of behaviors that are themselves caused in part by the norms. In other words, norms are cultural to the extent that they are distributed by causal chains where mental representations of the norms and public behaviors (including public statements of the norm) alternate. Again, it would be interesting to know how much a norm such as that permitting snatching is maintained by actual acts of snatching and how much by statements of and about the norm.

Both universal and culture-specific factors may contribute to the acceptability and attractiveness of a norm and therefore to its chance of reaching, in a given sociohistorical situation, a cultural level of distribution. Whatever the extent to which a norm permitting ritualized transgression causes behaviors that conform to it, the cultural stability of the norm is a sign of its psy-

chological acceptability and attractiveness, which have to be explained. Here we propose some considerations relevant to such an explanation.

Suppose there is a type of behavior that, for different reasons, is simultaneously attractive and unattractive in the same society. As a result, there are, in that society, factors that would favor the stabilization of a norm approving this behavior and other factors that would favor the stabilization of a norm prohibiting this behavior. In such conditions, the stabilization of one of the two types of norm is an obvious obstacle to the stabilization of the other, opposite type.

In such a case, things can go in one of three ways. The first possibility is that indeed the stabilization of one norm effectively counteracts factors that would have favored the stabilization of the other. For instance, religious iconoclastic movements have, in different societies, effectively suppressed any type of image even though the receptivity to iconic representations, we assume, was still psychologically present and would have otherwise favored the cultural approval of image production. In such a case, a psychological disposition, although present, fails to favor any direct cultural expression. The second possibility is that the factors favoring opposite norms end up stabilizing some compromise norm, as when images are accepted and even encouraged, but only with religious themes. Then, there is a third possibility, where the stabilization of one norm helps the stabilization of a well-contained, ritualized form of the opposite norm. One norm dominates, but the other norm applies in clearly insulated circumstances. This state of affairs may actually contribute to the stability of the dominant norm by highlighting the exceptional character of its occasional violation. Thus Bloch argued that the sexual chaos expected at certain stages of Malagasy royal rituals must be seen as scene setting for the extreme domestic order dramatized in the next stage (Bloch, 1987).

The behavior studied by Goody might well be such a case of a potential conflict of norms that results in the stabilization of two sharply contrasting cultural norms caused by very different factors. One is wholly dominating, in this case patrilineal descent and inheritance, whereas the other, the rights of the sister's son, takes the form of an authorized transgression with ritual aspects, the very transgressive character of which contributes to the stabilization of the dominant patrilineal norm. This suggestion is, of course, reminiscent of a line of argument, famously initiated by Gluckman (1954) and developed by the Manchester school, and in particular in the work of Victor Turner (1969). What, however, the epidemiological approach does and the Gluckman type explanation does not is seek to explain the macrocultural fact of the asymmetrical equilibrium between a dominant norm and its authorized, or even prescribed, transgression in terms of factors affecting the microprocesses of cultural transmission.

Given the stabilization of a patrilineal norm (the explanation of which is not the topic of this chapter) and the persistence of evolved psychological factors favoring investment of resources in all close kin, whether patrilineally or matrilineally related, we may expect individuals to be welcoming to expressions of these psychological factors provided that they are not incompatible with the patrilineal norm they have internalized. These psychological factors may find an expression through the informal helping by the mother's brother of his sister's children. Here, however, we are talking of individual attitudes rather than of a culturally sanctioned practice. A cultural practice that acknowledges the rights of one's sister's children would normally go against the patrilineal norm and would be unlikely to stabilize (unless the patrilineal norm itself was in the process of destabilization). On the other hand, expressing interest in the sister's son-mother's brother relationship while highlighting that this relationship does not ground normal, regular rights of sharing or inheritance is a way of reasserting by contrast that very patrilineal norm. More specifically, ritualized transgression practices of the type we are discussing here underscore the out-of-the-ordinary character of a sister's son's rights over his mother's brother's goods and thereby contribute to highlighting the normal character of patrilineal transmission of goods. Thus the combination of the dominant patrilineal norm internalized by all members of the society, and the psychological factors favoring all close kin, render people receptive and welcoming to a norm of ritualized expression of sister's son's rights.

Note that the norms and practices or ritualized transgression that are likely thus to stabilize are catchy because of their psychological rather than because of their economic effects. These are first symbolic practices that need not have any significant—let alone any major—effect regarding the actual allocation of resources between direct and lateral descendants. This is a further contrast between the epidemiological account we are sketching here and any sociobiological account that would explain such practices in terms of their putative effects, through reallocation of economic resources, on social stability or biological fitness.

All that we have said, of course, does not amount to a comprehensive explanation of the particular forms of the sister's son's privileges in any one of the societies discussed by so many ethnographers, and it is important to understand why. There are two reasons for this—besides the very sketchy character of our attempt. First, we relied on the hypothesis that there is an evolved human disposition that is aimed at modulating behavior in a way sensitive to degrees of biological relatedness, but this hypothesis is based on speculation, however well motivated, more than on conclusive hard evidence. Second, we are not offering an explanation for such facts as why, for example, Lo Dagaba sister's sons behave in precisely the way they do. In-

deed, we think a unifactorial, or bifactorial, explanation of such an ethnographic datum would inevitably be insufficient. Actual cultural practices, as performed by specific individuals at a given time, are embedded in the social historical processes that have distributed, stabilized, and transformed cultural representations and practices in the population to which these individuals belong. Each of these historical flows is unique. These processes are influenced by many types of factors, evolved psychological predispositions being only one type of relevant factor. Mostly, but not exclusively, cultural processes are influenced by other cultural processes. People's behavior, and in particular their conformity or nonconformity to norms, is guided by the representations they have of the world rather than by the way the world simply is. People's representations are influenced in several ways by the phenomena they are about, but they are influenced also—and to a greater extent in most cases of interest to anthropologists—by other representations and, in particular, culturally transmitted ones.

All these difficulties and caveats do not mean that we need to abandon altogether generalizing explanations of the kind we have attempted here. In other words, the recognition of the value of the objections to kinship studies by those such as Needham and Schneider need not lead to a denial of the relevance of general unifying causes, among which are some universal human dispositions likely to have been naturally selected in the course of evolution. Such a method, precisely because it sets nonabsolute conditions for the expression of general factors, can overcome the difficulty we highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, which seems to have overwhelmed anthropology. Reasoning in terms of such things as evolved human dispositions has, all too often, produced too powerful explanations. Although the refusal to try to explain obvious, though partial, recurrences across cultures in the end seems perverse and inevitably leaves anthropological questions to be answered by others in naïve ways, it does not repeat the errors that made anthropologists stumble in the past.

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The Use and Abuse of Classification

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What influence do systems of classification have on the construction of worldviews? How far do such systems form the basic and unchallenged presuppositions of such worldviews, or to what extent are they the subject of conscious reflection and criticism on the part of those who use them? Classificatory systems have been extensively studied by social anthropologists, cognitive scientists, philosophers, linguists, and historians. My aim here is to see what light the comparative data can throw on some of the philosophical issues traditionally discussed under the rubrics of the conflict between realism and relativism, the (in)commensurability of belief systems, and the relation between science and popular belief. I sketch a preliminary argument (to be elaborated elsewhere) on the multidimensionality of reality, which may help to resolve, or at least to clarify, some of the problems.

I start with a well-known controversy, one that stems from a dilemma, or at least from two conflicting intuitions. The first is that natural kinds are cross-cultural universals. What natural kinds include may be disputed, but certainly the biological ones, animals and plants, may be taken as paradigmatic. So the cross-cultural universalist view would insist that lions and tigers, for instance, are lions and tigers in zoos the world over.

But the second intuition is that classifications of natural kinds spring from, or are the work of, culture. That was a prominent theme in Durkheim and Mauss (1901–2/1963), and more recently Tambiah (1969) put it, following Lévi-Strauss (1962/1969), that animals are good to think—that is, good to think with. This is a theme greatly expanded in Jack Goody's (1993) anal-

ysis of cultural representations and, more specifically, with his demonstration that flowers, too, are good to think with. This view insists, then, that the ways in which plant and animal codes are used to think about other things are enormously diverse worldwide.

My tactics are first to elaborate and clarify these two positions, evaluating some of the evidence and arguments used on either side. I then turn to the role of classification in the styles of inquiry developed in the two ancient civilizations of Greece and China, both of which provide interesting and to some extent divergent evidence on the subject. The questions we must investigate there concern first the assumptions made about classes, categories, and domains of classification themselves. How, for instance, were classifications of natural and social phenomena related? To what extent were any of those assumptions explicitly analyzed or challenged? What room was there for what passed as new knowledge to be integrated into existing classifications, or how far did it suggest the need to modify them? Some of those who have argued that natural kinds are cross-cultural universals have postulated a convergence to a single system of classification as inquiries develop. To what extent does the evidence from Greece and China support such a view? But if it does not, or to the extent it does not, can we identify the factors that may account for continuing divergence, whether in the classes identified or in the very notion of classification itself? Classification is, no doubt, a pervasive, implicit feature of all language use. But how far was it a necessary condition, for inquiry itself to develop, that existing, traditional systems of classification had to be overhauled and maybe even abandoned? Or how far could inquiry grow within the framework of such systems?

The first stage of our investigation takes as its starting point the blunt, simplistic question, Are natural kinds cross-cultural universals or not? Both the assertion and the denial come in different forms: Both theses come in a strong, and in a weaker, version. The strong version of the assertion holds that the perception of animal kinds, for instance, is innate—or corresponds to a cognitive module—in all humans: The weaker version allows that this is true mostly, of most animal kinds, in most humans, but does not commit itself to this being universally the case. As I later show, sometimes the claim is that the ranking of animal and plant taxa is identical for all humans, but sometimes the claim is to do with the perceived species of animals and plants themselves.¹

¹Compare Berlin et al. (1973) and Brown (1984). As an illustration of the varying strengths of the hypotheses expressed concerning actual perceived classifications of animals and plants, compare Atran (1995, p. 221), "virtually all humans, at all times and in all places, categorize the animals and plants that they readily perceive in a very similar way," with Atran (1994, p. 322), "to be sure, cultural factors can increase the psychological salience of secondary biological properties."

The strong version of the denial has it that the classifications of animals and other natural kinds that we find in different cultures are purely cultural products (on a par with their classifications of social groupings), but the weaker version merely insists that culture is the dominant factor, not the only one at work.

Evidently the more dilute the thesis, on either side, the greater the chance of their reconciliation, though there may still be disagreements, however weak the thesis, on questions of emphasis, on which, precisely, is the more important factor at work, nature or culture. By the end of our study, however, we shall see the need to question certain assumptions that both sides in the debate generally appear to accept, namely concerning the viability, in biology, of the notion of species itself.

Further clarifications will be needed as we go into the different types of evidence and argument that have been adduced in relation to these themes, but three points should be made straight away. There is all the difference in the world between the claim that there is (or that there is not) an innate tendency to classify, and one that there is (or that there is not) one to classify in a particular way, with a particular set of genera and species. Is the claim that nature (or that culture) governs the finding of kinds (in general)—or the findings of the kinds there are? Some statements of the universalist position are compatible with the former, though usually they imply the latter. As to *which* those kinds are, on the universalist account we ought to know (ought we not?) by introspection, which they are: My original example was lions and tigers. On the cultural relativist account, by contrast, it is the diversity of cultures that is cited to explain the assumed diversity in the actual classifications attested across the world. As to how far they are diverse, that is a key question but not as straightforwardly resolvable by empirical inquiry as one might suppose.

Secondly, and relatedly, are we talking about the explicit classifications we actually find across cultures, or are the theses about what is *implicitly* recognized in those classifications or otherwise in the natural languages that express distinctions between kinds? Are the theses to do with reports of what people *say* or with what they *assume*—where that can be investigated by asking the appropriate questions or by looking at other features of their language. Thus, in some cultures where there is no term for “plant” as such, there may be grounds, nevertheless, for saying that the people in question recognize them as such. One could infer they have the concept, even if not the term, for example, if they use a particular numeral classifier for all and only plants (e.g., as is reported for Tzeltal²). Thus some (but not all) versions of innatism allow that there is quite a diversity in the actual animal, vegeta-

²See Berlin et al. (1973, p. 219); cf. Hunn (1977).

ble, and mineral taxonomies in the ethnographic literature but argue for innate universals at the implicit level.

Third, to follow up the last point, is the claim that the explicit or implicit universals pick out what is the case or not? What is the relation between the supposed universals and the findings of science? Some sociologists of science argue that science itself has to be relativized to the community producing it. On a cultural relativist view, the expectation would be that what a society picks out as the classes or kinds of animals and plants will correspond to its science, but on that view that entitles no inference to science as a universal, non-culturally relative, phenomenon. However, not many of those who have led the debates in social anthropology and developmental psychology in question are sociologists of science of that ilk. They tend rather to adopt a naive realist view of science, though the question of whether the universals that the innatists postulate or find correspond to science on that view remains an open one. I come back to that in due course.

So much, then, by way of preliminary clarifications of the various ways in which the issues have been presented. The evidence that has been brought to bear is of three major types, first the work of developmental psychologists studying infants or young children in the manner, though of course not necessarily in agreement with, Piaget. Second, there is the analysis of actual classification systems from different societies. Third, there is ethnographic fieldwork directed not so much at describing actual classifications as at investigating what is implicitly recognized by the people who use them (that corresponds to the second distinction that I made just now). In each category, the potential field of research one might attempt to survey is vast. Within the scope of this discussion we must be drastically selective, despite the risks of bias we thereby run. I concentrate, in the main, on the work of Carey and Spelke (1994) in the first mode, on work such as Brown's (1984) done in the wake of the classic paper of Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven (1973) in the second, and on the research of Atran (1990, 1994, 1995) and his associates in the third.

In an influential study by Susan Carey (1985), followed up by work with Elizabeth Spelke (Carey & Spelke, 1994) and by subsequent revisions, the claim was made that young children do not initially have a core domain that corresponds to *Living Kind*. They do not, that is to say, initially have a naive innate *biology*. Rather, they have a domain of *Animate Being* that includes both humans and animals but that is organized solely on the basis of a naive *psychology*. At first, animal behavior is understood in purely psychological terms—in terms of wants and beliefs, for instance—and only later does the child come to see that biological processes may not be psychologically driven; that is when the child has *acquired* a new cognitive module corresponding to a naive biology. In 1985 Carey put that transition at around age 10 years, but

10 years later (Carey, 1995, p. 299) she put it a bit earlier, namely, between 6 and 7 years old, while still insisting that naive biology comes later than naive physics and naive psychology.

From the perspective that principally concerns us here, two points are fundamental. The first is that (as in Piaget himself) we are dealing with a transition, or maybe more than one, between stages in the child's development. So far as hard-wiring (innateness in that sense) goes, it is not as if the child is, on Carey's view, hard-wired for *biology* from the outset, though the innatists may still want to claim that the child is hard-wired to *acquire* the naive biology at a particular stage of development.

The transition opens the door—and this is my second point—to questioning the factors at work and indeed the possible input from the side of culture in the process. Cognitive modules (as Carey, 1995, p. 271, for instance, has suggested) may not *require* innateness, but then how they are *acquired* is always going to be problematic. Just how much stimulus comes from the side of culture? Just what is the effect of the acquisition of the natural language of the society in which the child grows up? The study of Western children's development is controversial, as the debate on Carey's results testifies. But the cross-cultural study of non-Western children, by researchers paying due attention to the problems of possible cultural bias may at present simply not be advanced enough to yield decisive evidence to discriminate between the contending theses. We may note, however, that some studies of the development of Japanese children, by Inagaki and Hatano (1993), seem to suggest that they acquire *distinctive* vitalist conceptions, ones that seem to owe something to the Japanese concept of *ki* (cf. Chinese *qi*), that is, breath/energy.³

Reference to the actual classification systems contained in various natural languages takes us to our second main type of evidence. Berlin et al. (1973) summarized a very considerable body of data on folk biological taxonomies, the result of extensive inquiries among, and by, ethnographers across the world. This work took as its model the study of color terms by Berlin and Kay (1969), imitating its methodology and coming to similar results. The principal findings were that there were five or six general, if not universal, ethno-biological categories that underpin and are present in such taxonomies worldwide. In the five-category version, these are unique beginner, life-form, generic, specific, and varietal. Brown (1984) was one who developed this to suggest a sequence in which the categories are acquired—though it should be noted that Berlin himself, in his more recent book (1992), modified some of his own original positions.

³Carey and Spelke (1994) cite Jeyifous (1986), whose studies of Yoruba children have been taken to suggest that there are differences between the naive biology they acquire and that of American subjects, but both the data and their interpretation have been contested (Atran, 1995, p. 228).

The fundamental methodological difficulties in this area of research stem from the researcher using protocols that already presuppose the distinctions he or she is interested in. In the work on color terms, the investigations of Berlin and Kay and their associates focused on hues. Indigenous peoples were asked to name the colors exhibited, under given conditions of lighting and so on, on color charts or Munsell chips. But what was then reported as the results, with regard to the color identifications present in different natural languages, was heavily influenced, if not determined, by the form of the questions put. The investigators, or at least Berlin and Kay interpreting their work, got out what they had put in. That is most easily demonstrated by referring to languages where the basic discriminations, in color terminology, do not relate to hues but rather, for instance, to different intensities or the luminosity of color, or even to such differences as those between living things and dead ones or between the wet and the dry. The terms may be related to certain hues and can be made to correspond to certain focal points on a color chart. But that is not what they primarily connote. In such cases what they do connote may not show up on color charts of Munsell chips at all, and that was downplayed, when it was noticed at all, in Berlin and Kay's reports.⁴

Similarly in the case that concerns us here, if the questions put presuppose existing animal or plant species or groups (as the researchers themselves identify them), the same kind of objection applies. The answers will be matched to the assumed natural kinds, even though they may not correspond to the original connotations of the terms used.

Some disarming remarks by my next witness, Atran (whom I consider shortly) can be brought to bear on the methodological issues and the difficulties that some claims for cross-cultural ethnobiological universals face. Atran is interested not so much in actual explicit taxonomies in the groups he studies (principally the Itza-Maya of Peten in modern Guatemala) as in the implicit categories they recognize. But in a footnote to one of his papers (1994, p. 336, n. 4), and in some comments he made on the topic in an oral presentation to a Paris conference in 1993, he records some of the problems he encountered when he first arrived in the field. He had secured considerable funding to study the Itza-Maya, one of the last remaining groups of Maya in central America. His research team (almost as numerous as the subjects they were studying) were all keenness itself, and yet when they first started to question their informants, they got nowhere. The Itza-Maya classifications

⁴Berlin and Kay (1969) note some noncolorimetric components as relevant semantic features of some color terms, doing so in relation to Conklin's famous study of the Hanunoo in particular (Conklin, 1955; cf. also Lyons, 1995). However, that did not deter them from claiming universality for their analysis of color terminology and its evolution across natural languages worldwide.

were in terms of the distinctions between wild and domestic animals, between edible and nonedible kinds, and between land, water, and air creatures, and that, from the point of view of Atran's program (the quest for cross-cultural universals) was hopeless. It was only when he and his team started questioning the Itza-Maya about which kinds are 'companions' (*et'ok*) to others that they found they were able to elicit the recognition of the similarities and differences they were after.

I review Atran's own thesis in a moment. But for now the point in relation to some of the ethnobiological studies carried out on the model of Berlin and Kay's work on color is that the framing of the questions may elide the *original* interests. As Atran's own preliminary experience shows, the folk taxonomy the Itza-Maya (at least) presented him with was not concerned with zoological systematics but with the contrasts that are crucial for *their* culture, such as domesticability, edibility, and habitat.

But what about Atran's own work, with its very different focus, not on the explicit taxonomies reported in answer to the question of the groups of animals recognized but rather the implicit ones, elicited by asking which animals are 'companions' to which, that is which are similar to which, and how close are their similarities? His analysis of degrees of resemblance is sophisticated, but there are problems with other aspects of the methods used. His Itza-Maya studies were based on a tiny number of informants (10 in the 1994 paper, 12 in the 1995 one in a comparative study with the same number of Michigan students), and these informants had to be trained ('familiarized') to use the name cards for different species that were presented to them. They had in some cases to be *taught* the correct names; they were then tested to see if they understood, and any who did not were not subsequently used in the study. Moreover, they were questioned on how they ranked, for companionship, a variety of creatures (and other objects) that they had never seen. That included the robin, but to the objection that that term is ambiguous, as between the North American robin and the quite different European bird that passes by the same name, Atran's once again disarming defense was that it did not matter. Both birds are kinds of thrush, and robins are going to come out closer to peacocks than to mahogany trees either way.

But methodological issues aside, what about Atran's results? Although there was, he claimed, a high degree of correlation both between his Itza-Maya subjects and the group of Michigan students whom he also investigated, and between both and 'science' (i.e., what evolutionary taxonomy would suggest), he ended his 1994 paper by challenging the idea that there is a normal conceptual convergence *toward* science, and elsewhere too he contrasted the cross-cultural biological universals he discovered with the views of science. The ideas that there is such a convergence and that increasing complexity of taxonomy goes with increasing accuracy have been widespread in both philosophy and psychology since Piaget.

But the problem that arises, at least on a realist construal of science, can be stated in the form of a dilemma. If the cross-cultural universals coincide with science, we would seem to be all innate scientists. Science would then simply confirm what we know all along, thanks to our core cognitive equipment (a view that, as with other, Chomskyan, notions of deep structures, has obvious affinities with Platonic *anamnesis*, the idea that knowledge is recollection, in Plato's case of eternal intelligible Forms). But it seems highly implausible to represent the debate in evolutionary taxonomy over recent years as merely the result of more or less accurate introspection on the part of those involved. I come back to this debate shortly.

But if the results do not coincide with science, how does any scientist come to disconfirm what is known as part of his or her own cognitive equipment? It looks, on that story, as if someone has been playing games with that equipment.

A via media—our core module gives us some but not all of what science tells us, but there is still more work to be done—still leaves problematic the relationship between the two.

Atran mentions the problem of the rupture (as he puts it) between science and what he calls common sense, but he claims that it is not one between what is true and what is false: "Rather, it is between how the world (ideally) is in itself, independent of human observers, versus how it must appear to people, whatever science holds to be reality" (Atran, 1995, p. 229). But this seems to discount the human input into science, in the sense that, to gain access to how the world is in itself, we as humans have no option but to call on human observers. Moreover the formulation leaves quite unresolved how it is that human scientists are supposed to come to deny how the world must appear to everyone, themselves included.⁵

Besides, what we now think we know about animal and plant taxonomy is highly complex and should be deeply worrying for some versions of the cross-cultural universality proposal. Science has not only rejected essentialism but also radically subverted the notion of species in zoology and botany so that

⁵When faced with examples, such as whales and bats, where the findings of "science" appear to conflict with "common sense," Atran's (1990) response is to insist on how rare such cases are and on how much of "common sense" remains in place in the face of science (e.g., p. 268). Yet quite why science should ever correct common sense, on his view, and quite why science is ever needed, if common sense delivers the way in which we—all of us—as humans perceive the world, are questions that Atran has, in my opinion, never satisfactorily resolved. Thus he put it that "speculation can . . . prevent common sense from exceeding its proper authority—for common sense remains valid only so long as it is restricted to the manifestly visible dimensions of the everyday world, that is, to *phenomenal reality*" (1990, p. 2f). Yet he had just said that "no speculation can possibly confute the grounds for this common-sense view of things because all speculation must start from it."

there is now an immense literature on what Mayr (1957, 1969, 1982, 1988; Hull, 1965, 1991; Stanford, 1995; contrast, e.g., Simpson, 1961) dubbed the species problem. True, there may be reasonable taxonomic evolutionary order in the higher animals, but that soon runs out with lower life forms. As Jardine (1969) and Jardine and Sibson (1971) demonstrated, to arrive at an orderly taxonomy, the similarities and differences invoked have to be weighted, and that obviously risks circularity: You get out what you put in.

Jardine and Sibson identified no fewer than six criteria to decide which groups of populations should be accorded species rank. They were morphology, differences in ecological range, interfertility, cytology (i.e., chromosome number), serology, and the extent of DNA hybridization. Although some of the results of using different criteria converge, that is far from true across the board. In particular, morphology and interfertility do not. If just the gene flow argument is used, every *individual* in asexual organisms will have to be considered a *species* because they do not export or import genes (Jardine, 1969, p. 45), and Jardine further remarked (1969, p. 50) on the distortions that arise from the attempt to impose a hierarchic classification in such cases as the enterobacteriaceae and the sapotaceae. Nor are the problems confined to the question of species. The orders of plants, above the family level, remain deeply controversial, despite the very considerable efforts that have been made, including by international committees set up for the purpose (see Lanjouw et al., 1961), to impose standardization.

Our rapid survey of some recent studies of cognitive modules can hardly claim to do full justice to the richness and complexity of that work. But it is enough to indicate both the variety of evidence attested and the diversity of positions that have been maintained. But what about the cultural relativist side, it too with its hypotheses of varying strengths, and it too with its conceptual and empirical problems. The classic studies that date from the 1960s and 1970s, from Lévi-Strauss (1962/1966, 1962/1969), through Douglas (1966, 1970), Bulmer (1967), Tambiah (1969) and so on, showed how the animal code (or rather codes) were used in different ways, not only to make sense of animals but also to make sense of a variety of other things as well. Animal taxonomies often relate to, and can throw light on, kinship relations, marriage rules, ideas of pollution and taboo, and religious, social, and moral values, generally. But those are not the only ways in which animals are 'good to think with'. The perceived or assumed differences between animals are very commonly used to map both the differences between human characters and those imagined between human races.

But if those general tendencies are very widespread, the actual ways in which animals are so used vary enormously. Both the ancient Greeks and the Chinese, for instance, have animals that stand for cunning, deceit, gluttony, lechery, filth, bravery, cowardice, intelligence, stupidity, cruelty, industry,

opulence, and so on, but it is not always the same animals in each case in both cultures.⁶ Again, representations of other peoples as or as like animals is very common (it flourished in early modern Europe especially), but not only was there great variety on the question of which races were assimilated to which animals but so too the underlying animal symbolisms fluctuate, even just within Europe.⁷

But as the problem for the cross-cultural universalist is to make any, or enough, allowance for the actual diversities in the animal codes encountered across the world, so the problem for the cultural relativist is the converse. The cultural relativist's strength is in relating the actual ideas about animals, for example, found in different societies to the uses those ideas are put to, in the context of the cultural specificities of the society in question, its value system, marriage rules, social ordering, or whatever. But the converse weakness is that this sometimes makes it appear as if there were no constraints whatsoever on the ways in which animals can be so used, as if cultures could adopt any boundaries they liked, whereas what they actually do is, rather, to make the best use they can of the local fauna, from lions and tigers to pangolins and cassowaries. The units out of which cultural codes are constructed generally correspond to recognizable zoological groups even though those codes may also include 'ghosts' or 'spirits' or legendary creatures treated on a par with other animals.

Thus far my comments on the psychological and ethnographic debates have been from the sidelines because I cannot claim expertise in the relevant domains. I have certainly not myself conducted experiments on 3-year-olds to probe their cognitive modules or lack of them, nor have I undertaken fieldwork on folk taxonomies in Meso-America or anywhere else. But first, positions taken in those debates certainly bear on the strategic topics that I am concerned with, as a historian of ancient societies, particularly the conditions under which inquiry develops and the constraints it may be under as it does, and second and conversely there are points that come from a study of the ancient world that may be thought to have a bearing on the more general issues at stake in those debates. We have some well-articulated explicit theories in both ancient Greece and ancient China: We do have ancient reflections on and criticisms of them, and we can study these matters diachronically and ponder the reasons why views changed, whether or not such changes were in a direction that might later be taken, either inside the society in question or outside it, to be toward a more accurate account.

⁶Some such Chinese symbolic uses of animals are discussed in the special number of *Anthropozoologica* devoted to China, 1993. The pig, for instance, stands for wealth and prosperity, rather than filth, in some Chinese perceptions.

⁷See Lévi-Strauss (1962/1966, p. 115ff) and cf. Goody (1977, p. 153ff).

Both ancient Greece and ancient China amassed a range of information on animal and plant kinds, including on such matters as the periods of gestation of different animals, their habitat and diet, their predator-prey relations, their methods of reproduction, and so on. On the Greek side, we have, most notably, the zoological and botanical treatises of Aristotle and Theophrastus. On the Chinese, even though there is nothing quite as systematic as that, there are discussions of nomenclature in such works as the *Erya*, there are specialist works on herbals and veterinary medicine, and in the *Huainanzi* especially some sustained reflections on such topics as the generation of animals, their patterns of behavior, origins, and metamorphoses.

But although in both ancient societies we can trace the development of certain types of inquiries into animals and plants, how far they were motivated by the same interests and preoccupations, by the same program of research in other words, is a very different matter. We can use our two ancient societies to test hypotheses concerning the changes that take place both in systems of classification and in the notion of classes itself.⁸ How far did sustained inquiries lead to modifications to traditional assumptions: How far did they merely make explicit what had been implicit all along? Do the data for those ancient societies support either the hypotheses of the cross-cultural universalists or those of the cultural relativists, or do they suggest that there are problems with both?

At first sight significant broad similarities can be suggested between the use of animal codes in China and in Greece. I have already remarked how animal species—though not always the same ones—are used in the stereotyping of human characters. The same applies also to representations of other peoples, where we may note as a distinctive feature of the Chinese language that the terms used for many of the foreign peoples they were familiar with incorporate the radicals for animals, the pig (*shi*), sheep (*yang*), 'insect' (*hui*), footless reptile (*zhi*), and especially dog (*quan*). The last figures in the names of no fewer than nine quite well-known tribes (*di*, *yun*, *guo*, *yao*, *mu*, *liao*, *xun*, *xiao*, *luo*) as well as many lesser known ones.

Then, a second point of similarity concerns the assumption of a hierarchy or scale of beings. In general, in Greece, it has often been forcefully argued (Detienne, 1972/1977; Vernant, 1972/1980), humans are sandwiched between the gods on the one side and the other animals on the other. They share with the other animals that they are mortal, but they are marked out from them, among other reasons, because they sacrifice to the gods. In China, too, humans, *ren*, are frequently contrasted with spirits, or the divine or demonic, *shen*, on the one hand, and with both domesticated and other animals on the other.

⁸In what follows I draw on Lloyd (1997, 1999).

Moreover, in both ancient societies, those ideas are codified and become the subject of explicit elaboration. Aristotle thinks of a scale of vital faculties. Plants possess the nutritive and reproductive faculty alone. Animals, at least according to the usually stated view,⁹ possess perception as well and may have locomotion, desire, and imagination in addition. Humans add to those faculties that of reason, *nous*, but the fact that they share those other faculties establishes their common nature with other animals. Gods, of course, are different, in that they have the faculty of *nous* alone.

That classification of vital faculties is not identical with, but at least is broadly similar to, the stepped ranks of beings that are set out in *Xunzi* (9.69ff), for instance. There we read, "water and fire have *qi* but do not contain life (*sheng*). Grasses and trees contain life, but have no knowledge (*zhi*). Birds and beasts have knowledge, but no righteousness (*yi*). Humans have *qi*, contain life, have knowledge and also have righteousness and so of all that is in the world they are the most noble" (cf. Graham, 1989, p. 255). It is striking that where the Greek philosopher distinguishes humans via a cognitive faculty, the Chinese one does so via the moral sense.

Thus far Greco-Chinese comparisons yield some strategic resemblances, both in the interest in animal and plant classifications and in a variety of their uses. The classifications, on either side, are anything but value neutral, and the animal codes, in particular, are deployed to express differences between human types that are steeped in moral evaluations and value judgments of all kinds.

Yet when we look further and deeper, fundamental contrasts begin to emerge. If we take the framework within which the *Huainanzi* develops its observations about the different kinds of animals, in chapter 4 especially, that is in certain crucial respects quite different from what we find in Aristotle. It is true that the extent of Aristotle's own interests in zoological classification as such is disputed.¹⁰ Yet on all sides it is agreed, and it is obvious, that the zoological treatises engage in analyses of the causes of the zoological phenomena he describes. This is a branch, one of the most important, of *phusike*, the study of nature, and it is particularly valuable, as Aristotle himself tells us in *On the Parts of Animals I* (chap. 5, pp. 644b24ff), in that we can, if we make the effort, learn a very great deal about every kind of animal, not just humans, the kind most familiar to us, but about every other kind as well, however lowly it may be. Yet our inquiry, he hastens to add, should be directed principally at the formal and final, rather than at the material, causes. It serves indeed to reveal the beautiful in nature.

⁹Compare, however, below for some reservations on this issue.

¹⁰Thus Pellegrin (1982, 1986) denied taxonomy, though conceding some classificatory interests, in Aristotle.

Huainanzi, chapter 4, for its part, certainly sets out the main differences between the five main classes of animals it identifies: These are the naked (here identified with humans¹¹), the feathered, the hairy, the scaly, and the shelled (p. 16A9ff) (cf. Major, 1993, pp. 208ff). We may note in passing that the *Huainanzi* does not here use an overarching term for 'animal' as such. The word often used for nonhuman animals in general, *shou*, is here used for the hairy ones: nor does it employ the term *dongwu*, literally "moving things,"¹² while the other generic term available, namely *chu*, generally signifies domestic animals. However, the *Huainanzi* certainly may be said to have the concept, one that corresponds to what these five classes are classes of. At 9B1ff (cf. Major, 1993, pp. 179ff) the text brings to bear a set of paired, contrasting, differentiae, including egg producers and fetus producers (i.e., *ovipara* and *vivipara*), swimmers and fliers, animals that swallow without chewing and those that chew, that last opposition being correlated with animals with eight bodily openings and those with nine. Further horned is opposed to hornless, "fat" to "nonfat," those with 'front teeth' (incisors) and those without, and those with 'back teeth' (molars) and those without. These pairs combine in a variety of ways to yield not a single dichotomous hierarchy so much as a complex polythetic network.

But the text also deals with the origins of each of the five kinds, and in each of the last four cases (the naked excepted) the structure of the account follows a similar pattern. We begin with a mythical or fabulous creature, one that has, as part of its name, the name of the kind that will come from it. Thus the feathered kind descends from a creature called Feathered Excellence (p. 16A11), and the shelled from one called Shelled Pool. Those first creatures then produce a distinct type of dragon (*long*) each, and passing through a number of other divine or fabulous creatures (they include the *feng* or phoenix, and the *qlin*) we come, in each case, to the ordinary or common (*shu*) birds, beasts fish and turtles, from which are born the feathered, hairy, scaly and shelled kinds as a whole. The origin story of the naked kind, and of ordinary people, is different. They do not come via dragons, but via Ocean-man and sages. Yet by the end of the account, all five kinds are said to flourish in the outside world and to propagate according to type (p. 16B9).

Two fundamental features, in this account, stand out, and will point the way to some radical divergences between the Chinese and the Greek ways of classifying, the interests at work in the processes of classification and the concepts of classes and categories themselves.

¹¹Ba: elsewhere, however, another term for "naked," *luo*, is applied not to humans but to smooth-skinned or relatively hairless animals. Thus the *Guanzi III* (p. 8:1a) speaks of 'hairless' animals that the commentators exemplify with tigers and leopards. There are other correlations of types of animals and other pentads in the *Liji* (6 62, 44.11f).

¹²As opposed to *zhiwu*, stationary things, sometimes used of plants.

1. First there is no sense, in the account in this chapter of the *Huainanzi* or elsewhere in that work, of a radical break between divine or mythical creatures from past time, or creatures that have never been seen, and ordinary animals. On the contrary, the common or garden animals we know have origins that all go back to the mythical creatures named. This is, of course, no evolutionary theory, nor are what we might call the 'zoological' interests clearly marked off from the stories of origins. That is not to say, however, that there is no sense of the viability of the principal existing groups themselves. They are clearly characterized with definite features, and as noted, propagate according to type. Yet the framework within which the account is set is one of the story of change and transformation. It is certainly not a story of the fixity of species for all time.

The contrast with Aristotle (at least) could hardly be more striking.¹³ One of the main articulating concepts of his zoology—although it usually goes without saying—is the notion of nature itself, and it structures his investigation in certain fundamental ways. First he is constantly on his guard, in the zoology as elsewhere, against what savors of the mythical in a pejorative sense. He repeatedly criticizes 'what is generally believed', 'what is said', or 'what is reported' when that seems to him unlikely or absurd¹⁴—or he just suspends judgment and demands further investigation or verification. Particular writers, not just poets, but also prose writers such as Ctesias and Herodotus, are rebuked for their gullibility. Hesiod may have delighted in giving an account of the generations of the gods that eventually leads to humans, but that is just 'theology'. Empedocles, who fantasized about ox-headed humans and human-headed oxen (Fr 61), is no better.¹⁵ What the inquiry into nature has to investigate is not such speculations but what is true 'always or for the most part', regular natural processes in other words. What is contrary to nature, *para phusin*, is recognized, in the sense of the exceptions to the general rule, but not as what stands outside the realm of nature altogether.

2. Then the second radical difference picks up the point about change and the transience of the categories themselves. To begin with Aristotle, this time, it is true that the question of the extent of his commitment to the eternity and fixity of species is, again, a disputed matter (Lennox, 2001, chap. 6). There are some incidental references, in the zoology and elsewhere, that have led some scholars to the view that Aristotle did not entirely rule out the possibility of

¹³ Yet if the point of comparison is with Empedocles, his ideas share far more of the features of those in the *Huainanzi*, notably in his interest in the origins of different types of animals, and in his readiness to invoke creatures that are not part of ordinary experience, such as ox-headed humans and human-headed oxen, that I mention shortly.

¹⁴ Yet Aristotle regularly starts his investigation with the common opinions or the beliefs of other, reputable authorities.

¹⁵ See, for example, *On the Parts of Animals* (p. 606a8), *On the Generation of Animals* (p. 756b5ff), *Metaphysics* (p. 1000a9ff), *Physics* (pp. 198b31ff, 199b9ff).

changes to species of animals, just as he certainly did not rule out, indeed he maintained, changes in the distribution of land and sea masses on earth, an idea connected with his view of the cyclical changes that affect the conditions, including the political conditions, of human life.¹⁶ But again to cut through the controversy, it is agreed on all sides that the working assumption of the zoological treatises is that the species of animals he is talking about are permanent. Nature allows growth of individuals, without a doubt, but the natures of natural kinds are not subject to change as the natural kinds they are.

But if we turn back to the *Huainanzi*, change, transformation, and metamorphosis are not just ruled out; they are the topic of recurrent interested comment. First, there are those original transformations, in the story of how the different kinds were produced by their respective originators. That already shows that the kinds in question are not imagined as unchanging, fixed for all time. To that we may add an interest in the metamorphoses that various species continue to undergo. To be sure, metamorphosis is a theme that, as Joseph Needham showed (1956, p. 420), came to be much developed in later Chinese thought, under the influence of Buddhism. But that influence is not responsible for its presence in the *Huainanzi* because that was composed well before the rise of Buddhism in China. Yet our text shows an interest not just in the transformations of insects, for instance, but in those of other creatures as well. Certain birds, for example, are said (p. 9B3ff) to change into clams. Quite how such ideas are to be interpreted is the subject of some speculation. But the moral to be drawn concerning some Chinese classificatory systems—and what they classify—is clear. The focus of Chinese interest is often not on fixed, eternal natures but, precisely, on change and transformation.

That Aristotle copes, better or worse, with the data known, or admitted, by him on the question of animal metamorphosis is testimony (I would argue) to his readiness (on occasion at least) to respond to the problems by some shifts in his basic positions.¹⁷ But what Aristotle found moderately embarrassing was accepted without qualms by most Chinese observers for whom animal metamorphosis tallied well enough with their expectations of process and transformation.

We come, then, to the crucial question of the Chinese concepts of classes and categories themselves. Although they did not operate with the dichotomies of nature and culture, and of *logos* (as rational account) versus *muthos* (in the down-grading sense of fiction), they were nevertheless deeply con-

¹⁶*Meteorologica* (p. 351a26ff), *Politics* (p. 1329b25ff), *Metaphysics* (p. 1074b10ff).

¹⁷In Lloyd (1996b, chap. 5), I deal with the evidence concerning Aristotle's views on metamorphosis and give other examples, elsewhere in that book, of his flexibility in response to the difficulties he encounters in the data.

cerned with the dominant characters of things (*jing* or *xing*—the latter used of human characters especially), with their patterns (*li*, as in the grain of wood or the markings in jade), with, indeed, their kinds or categories, *lei*. That last is the term used in the *Huainanzi* of the five main kinds of animals, but it is also used of social groupings—the four classes of *shi* ('officials', 'gentleman retainers'), farmers, soldiers, merchants—and again of rulers and ministers, and, more generally 'those above' and 'those below', the foundation of social order on which so much emphasis is put.¹⁸ But further afield *lei* is also used in such other contexts as mathematics, in relation to geometrical figures, that is of the classes of such, though once again these are classes that are subject to transformations.¹⁹

But a recurrent key point is this. It is not just that an individual item may figure now in one category, now in another. More fundamentally, the categories themselves are often not fixed entities but relational, aspectual, interdependent. *Yin* and *yang* exemplify this strikingly. They do not denote permanent essences but aspects of a constantly shifting balance or interrelationship. What is *yin* in one regard may be *yang* in another: Typically either *yin* or *yang* is on the increase, at the cost of the decline of the other.

Similarly Chinese accounts of change are in terms not of essences but of phases, cycles of transformation, of mutual conquest or of mutual production. In the conquest cycle, wood overcomes earth, which overcomes water, which overcomes fire, which overcomes metal, which overcomes wood, to start the cycle again. In the cycle of production, the sequence is wood, fire, earth, metal, water, wood. Yet each of these is thought of not as a substance but, precisely, as a phase, not static, but dynamic and interactive.

Analogously, the classes or categories of living creatures are not fixed and eternal, nor the boundaries between them impermeable. They have a history and are subject to shifting cycles of transformations.

If we turn back to the Greeks, we find the terms *genos* and *eidos* (which do not, as many scholars have insisted, by any means coincide with "genus" and "species") used in a huge variety of contexts, either side of, and across, the boundary that many Greeks did want to emphasize, between nature and culture, not just of the kinds of animals and plants, and of colors and sounds, for example, but also those of political constitutions, of moral excellences, of the genres of literature or the types of rhetoric.

There is often a Greek insistence on species boundaries even within what are (and were recognized to be) continua. Indeed, some Greek thinkers theorized about such cases under the rubric of the investigation of the *limit* within

¹⁸Compare the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 25 2, 1642 (Knoblock & Riegel, 2000, p. 627ff) for the general importance of categories and 25 5, 1669 (Knoblock & Riegel, 2000, p. 637ff) for that of ranks or positions, *wei*.

¹⁹For example, *The Nine Chapters of the Mathematical Art* (Qian Baocong, 1963, p. 168).

the *unlimited*. The latter includes such continua as sound, color and what we think of as temperature, but the Greeks treat as the hot and the cold (or the hotter and the colder).²⁰ In some cases what is picked out as the limits, or species, within such continua, relates directly to distinctions made in ancient Greek, the natural language. Thus Aristotle's systematization of the kinds of colors stays close to ordinary usage. He focuses on *leukos* and *melas* (i.e., light and dark rather than white and black) and has five colors between them, distinguished not so much for hue as for intensity. But, we must insist, Aristotle was certainly in no way merely a prisoner of the natural language he spoke in the taxonomies he proposed.

This becomes clear when he finds he needs new terms to mark out the animal groups he recognizes. Thus, none of the names for the four kinds of what he calls 'bloodless' animals is well entrenched, in Greek, in that usage before him. "Bloodless" itself, too, is a new usage, though not a new coinage. Thus *entoma*, for insects, literally "cut in pieces," had been used of victims sacrificed to the dead. *Malakostraka*, for the crustacea (mainly), literally "soft-shelled," may have been a coinage of Speusippus, but the other two terms, *malakia*, "softies," for the cephalopods, and *ostrakoderma*, "potsherds-skinned," for the testacea, are very probably Aristotle's own inventions.

The classifications of animals and plants, in Aristotle and Theophrastus, bring out very clearly both their general expectations concerning species and genera and the extent to which they were prepared to adapt those assumptions to what they perceived to be the data. Despite Aristotle's general confidence that he knows what an animal is and what a plant is, he explicitly raises as a problem where precisely the boundary comes and where that between living things and the inanimate.²¹ In that context, he even says at *History of Animals* (p. 588b4ff) and at *On the Parts of Animals* (p. 681a9ff) that nature moves in a *continuous* sequence between them. Faced with certain problematic creatures in the sea, he appeals, in fact, to several criteria, not just perception, to determine animalhood. Some creatures that he accepts as animals have, he says, no perception, yet they are animals nevertheless because they can live detached from the earth, even though he knows of other animals of which that is not true, which rank as animals, rather, by the perception criterion, not the detachability one.

His colleague and successor, Theophrastus, carries on the tradition of calling into question what was nevertheless a basic tenet of his metaphysics and science, namely, the notion of species itself. His botanical treatises frequently

²⁰One of the chief texts that develops such an analysis is Plato's *Philebus*. The extent to which he is there drawing on earlier Pythagorean beliefs is unclear, but according to Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (986a22ff), the notions of limit and the unlimited were at the head of the Pythagorean Table of Opposites.

²¹The evidence is set out and discussed in Lloyd (1996b, chap. 3).

problematic the question of where differences amount to a difference in species. He does this with regard, for example, to the relations between the wild varieties of plants and the domestic, to the problems of degeneration, and to the effects of human intervention, in producing, by hybridization, new strains of fertile plants.

In the *History of Plants* (I, p. 3) he first offers a fourfold classification of the most important kinds, into trees, shrubs, undershrubs, and herbs (corresponding roughly to what Brown might call a Stage 3 language). But then he remarks that his definitions apply only generally, that there appears to be some overlapping, and that some plants, under cultivation, seem to change their nature, where what is shrublike becomes treelike, for instance (a notion that many Chinese thinkers would surely have found congenial). Theophrastus has, in other words, a keen sense of phenotypical differentiation. The upshot is that—as he says—we should not attempt to be too precise: The definitions must be understood as providing just rough and ready classifications of the general type.

So what can these rapid sorties into some of the ancient Greek and Chinese materials teach us about the general debate between the cross-cultural universalist and the cultural relativist with which we began and about the underlying philosophical issues? We started with the simple-minded question, Are natural kinds, principally the biological ones, cross-cultural universals or the products of culture? The one side argues that certain universals are innate, or otherwise correspond to core cognitive modules common to all humans, whereas the other claims that the differences observed in existing classifications are driven, in the main, or exclusively, by cultural needs and interests.

Both sides evidently take kinds or species as the focus of attention or in some sense the explanandum. But what that seems to leave out of account is that science long ago debunked the idea of essences and problematized that of species itself. There is no one correct taxonomy of animals to which all classificatory endeavors must be thought to be directed. Rather reality, here as often in other cases, should be recognized to be multidimensional, and that makes room for different programs of inquiry. There is, to be sure, never any unmediated access to reality. But where the inquiries are directed, as classifications of animals are, to different aspects of the relations between them, there are no necessary grounds for supposing, rather every reason to deny, that the schemas on offer constitute totally incommensurable systems of belief between which no mutual intelligibility is possible.

But the fact that different schemas may relate to different programs does not mean that they cannot be judged objectively with regard to whatever program they pursue. You can clearly have more, and less, accurate classifications of animals focusing on DNA, for instance, or on morphology. Indeed, we can make room also for symbolic systems, even though they have to be judged not so much in terms of accuracy as in those of appropriateness.

Moreover, we can now see that you do not need modern science for a challenge to be mounted to the notion of species itself. For the Chinese, classes are often relational and aspectual, whereas some of the Greeks explicitly raised difficulties about the boundaries between animals and plants, and within plants, and explicitly recognized the unbounded as continua.

These ancient reflections may stimulate us to reflect more critically ourselves on the sources of a certain zeal for classification, on its *varieties* and on its *exaggerations*. The taxonomic preoccupation has its excesses. Of course, we can see that classifications are not just useful but inevitable. To acquire a natural language is to acquire a gamut of categories for use in classifying things, charting their boundaries—without which we could not manage our everyday existence. Firm social boundaries no doubt have their contribution to make to the survival of human groups, even though some societies seem to need them to be much firmer than others, and some are quite intolerant of any relaxing or erosion of those boundaries. It is not just the cognitive scientist who may argue that there is an evolutionary advantage in being able instantly to recognize lions and tigers—without stopping to ponder whether the classes are relational or maybe even culturally induced.

Yet we should recognize, first, that classifications themselves come in very different shapes and sizes: This is the point about variety. A Linnaean style taxonomy is *more or less* appropriate to different data. Presupposing such a style in the interpretation of other people's categories is equally risky. Ellen (1993), in particular, protested that processing indigenous responses to questioning in terms of a taxonomic model generally ignores the pragmatics of the communication situation in which the responses are given—the urge to help the questioning ethnographer and fulfill his or her expectations. That A is a kind of B, and B a kind of C, may or may not go with any perceived notion of A as a kind of C, and there are other failures of transitivity that defeat taxonomy and point to underlying groupings that are nontaxonomic, nonhierarchical, polythetic, continuist.²²

So variety must be given due weight, and, second, we should be wary of excesses. One of the most obvious examples is the use of animal kinds as a way of apprehending and reinforcing social boundaries, between roles, groups, races, and character traits. Although the animal code emphasizes character traits and makes them seem more fixed and permanent than would otherwise be the case, it does so at the price of stereotyping. Achilles much always be lionlike, even when he weeps over Patroclus. Again, language itself depends on mark-

²²Besides, even among basically hierarchical classifications, I would insist on a difference between the Greek and the Chinese uses of such. The Greeks see the superior as itself independent (so far as possible) from the inferior (as the master is to the slave—or so they imagined). For the Chinese the dominant idea is that of the interdependence of high and low, differentiated though they are (cf. Lloyd, 1996a, chap. 6).

ing differences, for sure, but there are differences in spectra as well as in discontinuous kinds. The gradational quality of many phenomena (e.g., young and old) may be suppressed in the name of discrete quantum jumps.

The zeal to classify has an untold number of sources. But the constraints under which it operates are of different kinds, and though they sometimes reinforce one another, they can and do conflict, and sometimes that zeal runs up against what resists speciation in the first place. Some bits of nature are better behaved, in that respect, than others. We do not need to cope with clouds in the manner of Polonius²³ because we can appeal to reasonable enough distinctions between cirrus, cumulus, cirrocumulus, and so on. We do not need to cope with stones in the manner of Theophrastus, who identified them, often, merely by the locality, for example the particular mountain, they came from. At one, the better behaved, end of the spectrum, we have parts of chemistry. But at the other, there are continua where nature offers no marked boundaries, as with the wave length of light, or pitch, or temperature, or smells.

The rule of species (in other words) runs wide, but it runs out. That has been shown most dramatically by modern biology. But, as I have argued, it did not need modern biology to bring that to light. Ancient reflections on species and essences already provide some of the wherewithal for different types of critique of common ideas of classification, the development of different ideas of classes, the challenge to the very notion of species itself. It is not that I would claim any continuity between the ancient Greek and Chinese authors I have cited and those who work with chromosomes and DNA. Not at all. Indeed many of those ancient ideas were, from the point of view of their impact, still-born.²⁴ Yet those ancient authors began, at least, a process of inquiry.

²³*Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 2:

Hamlet: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

Polonius: By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

Ham: Methinks it is like a weasel.

Pol: It is backed like a weasel.

Ham: Or like a whale?

Pol: Very like a whale.

²⁴Much use was eventually to be made of the Aristotelian texts that speak of nature passing in continuous sequence between the inanimate and the animate, and between plants and animals (see pp. 157–158), in connection with the idea of the Great Chain of Being (Lovejoy, 1936). But that idea was very different from Aristotle's in this respect: It focused on the plenitude of creation, seen as evidence of the greatness of the Creator and as confirmation of the special place of humans in the order of things, whereas Aristotle's concern, in those passages, was rather with the problems of demarcation. The Aristotelian and Theophrastan worries over such concerns tended, indeed, to be generally ignored in pagan, as well as Christian, antiquity.

Although animal and plant kinds provide exceptionally rich materials for potential investigation, it is clear that when more systematic reflection began in Greece and China, there was nothing inevitable, nothing preordained, about the way that developed. Rather, in each, different opportunities were taken to modify understanding both of animal and plant classifications and of what a classification is. One route was the route that insisted on a nature/culture divide, and, in the domain of nature, sought, in principle, stable essences, genera and species, though some recognized that in practice recalcitrant data defeated that ambition. The other route was one that from the outset allowed interdependence, interaction, process, and transformation, while nevertheless seeking order through correlation.

Evidently it was not the case that there was a mass of obvious truths that somehow forced themselves on Aristotle and the authors of the *Huainanzi* as soon as they began to ponder the question of animal kinds and animal behavior. But no more was it the case that all they did was produce some theory that corresponded to preconceptions that were built into the social relations or values of the cultures in which they lived, let alone to ones that were already implicit in the language they spoke.

Let me elaborate those points briefly in conclusion, and first as to language. I remarked on the coinages that Aristotle made in his ordering of animal kinds. In China, too, as knowledge of animals and plants expanded, so new names were needed and created, even though this was largely the responsibility of the emperor or the imperial authorities. But in neither case should we say that observers in the field were the prisoners of their own natural language.

Then, as to inevitability, I remarked on significant similarities between Greek and Chinese animal classifications, in that both make heavy use of animals to express differences between humans, and in both cultures the classifications are hierarchical or otherwise heavily value-laden. Nevertheless in other crucial features they differ. First there is a question of the manner in which debate and discussion proceed. Aristotle frequently explicitly rejects what other learned authors proposed and what was commonly believed. In his bid to show his mastery of the field, he exhibits well-known Greek adversarial tendencies, though these are less marked in Theophrastus. By contrast, even though several aspects of the account in the *Huainanzi* are distinctive, they pass without being signaled as such in the text. A particular fivefold classification of animals is set out in *Huainanzi*, chapter 4, and these are correlated with the five phases in the next chapter. Yet neither text remarks on where its proposals differ from other views, although we know of other fivefold classifications from the *Erya*,²⁵ and I noted the variety of opinions on what the 'naked' animals comprise.

²⁵In *Erya*, Sections 15–19, the five main kinds of animals are 'insects' (*chong*), fish (*yu*), birds (*niao*), quadrupeds (*shou*), and domestic animals (*chu*).

Then so far as the operative concepts of class and classification go, I suggested a broad contrast between a Greek insistence on stable essences and a Chinese focus on processes, transformations, and interdependence. To some extent that contrast can be correlated with some of the salient values of these two societies. Certainly many Greeks expressed the importance of political stability, even though, or maybe in part because, instability was such a prominent feature of the political life at least of the city-states of the classical period. Again, Greek intellectuals, in their competition with their rivals, strove to secure certainty and eternal truths. Conversely, interdependence is not just a key motif in Chinese notions of categories in general but also an expressed ideal for social relations in particular, for those between ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, older and younger, and high and low in every context.

Yet it would be absurd to suggest that all that Aristotle and the writers of the *Huinanzi* were doing in their accounts of animals was to read off some conclusions from such assumptions, however deep-seated these may have been. That would fail to do justice, among other things, to the divergences within Chinese accounts that I have just remarked. Most notably, it would fail to explain how, faced with what they saw as problematic data, both Aristotle and Theophrastus raised questions concerning their own assumptions of hard and fast boundaries between and within animals and plants.

The ancient classificatory endeavors we have been discussing bear many marks from the cultures that produced them, from their value systems and ideologies. But they also exhibit a certain plasticity, a certain openendedness, which, insofar as it problematizes the notion of species itself, challenges a common assumption that underpins the debate between the cross-cultural universalist and the cultural relativist. Inquiry has always, to be sure, to be conducted with an explicit or a covert program in view, and we have seen that the agenda of Greek and Chinese investigators differed in important respects. Yet the results obtained were not always predictable, nor always predicted by the ancient investigators themselves—thereby giving the lie, one might say, to both extremist parties, to those who postulate a universal common sense underlying all zoological classifications and to those who assume they are all determined straightforwardly by cultural factors.²⁶

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²⁶The ideas developed in this chapter originated in a Marett lecture that I had the honor to be asked to deliver at Oxford in 1997. I am happy to offer them as a contribution to the volume in honor of the work of Jack Goody, from whom I have learned so much and not least from his forays into the cross-cultural examination of ancient societies.

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Images in Flowers

Jean-Claude Schmitt

It is thanks to the fortunate initiative of a few mutual friends that I met once or twice, but too rarely, Jack Goody: in Paris, at Lucette Valensi's, or at his home in Cambridge, where I visited him a few years ago, together with Christiane Klapisch Zuber. What wouldn't I have done to be able to spend more time listening to him telling of his countless voyages and thus rediscover the dazzling sensation felt while reading his books. Thanks to them, I had the impression that Jack had been my traveling companion right from my first steps as a historian of medieval Europe. And as I have never been indifferent to ethnology and anthropology, how could I ignore this anthropologist with a passion for history, and to whom the historians, particularly the medievalists, owe so much? *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Goody, 1977) was the first of several of his books that played a fundamental role in my training in research. I read this book in its translated form, with its French title, which seemed to me particularly well-chosen—*La Raison Graphique*. Ever since, this book has continued to be with me and to inspire me. It is because of what Jack Goody wrote on the logic of lists and more generally on the intellectual tools that I immediately started working on the emergence of classification by alphabetical order in works destined for preachers or indicators of the 13th-century (Schmitt, 1977). A little later, under the same theme of inspiration, I took an interest in classifying images, which allowed Middle Age clerics to visually condense all their knowledge (Schmitt, 1989). During the same period, the lovely book written by a friend and Oxonian colleague, Alexander Murray (1985), documenting the pene-

tration of arithmetical thought into central Middle Age culture comforted me in the idea that reason, with all the meaning of the medieval Latin term "ratio," should be placed at the heart of the social and cultural transformations that marked this epoch in Europe. It was with Goody and Murray in mind that I titled one of my books *La Raison des Gestes* (1990), to show how, in the same movement, medieval learned culture, by internalizing new practices of writing and numbers, attempted to domesticate the body, making it listen to reason, while at the same time came up against the irreducible ambivalence, as Jack Goody says, of gestures whose meanings are never unequivocal and that never allow themselves to be completely mastered or put into order.

I shall not reiterate the extent to which medievalists, in particular in France after George Duby, are indebted to *L'Evolution de la Famille et du Mariage en Europe* (Goody, 1983). For my part, and more recently, it is *La Culture des Fleurs* (Goody, 1993) and its ambitious program in comparative linguistics that allowed me to fully grasp the originality of the way of thinking of Jack Goody. I especially admired the idea itself, of writing an anthropology or a history of flowers, the capacity of detecting the problems caused by objects so familiar that it is difficult to imagine that they can cause any. Often, it is the best historians', anthropologists', and sociologists' virtue of astonishment that allows the social sciences to renew itself: as when Philippe Ariès showed that "attitudes in the face of death" possessed nothing that was historically inevitable, or when Jack Le Goff "invented" purgatory in the 12th-century. It was in that century that the adjective "purgatory" came to be treated as a definite spatial location, thereby designating a new relation between the living and the dead.

While reading *La Culture des Fleurs*, my surprise came mainly from the demonstration of "the anomaly of Black Africa." Contrary to Asia, the starting point of the investigation, and of Europe, a whole continent would be, if the author is to be believed, little inclined to cultivate flowers and to see in them as a possible reservoir of symbolic values. To explain this anomaly, Goody tells us, an absence must be taken into account: the absence, in the very early times, of the urban and agricultural revolution of the Bronze Age, which allowed elsewhere a more marked social differentiation and investment, both material and symbolic in all forms of luxury, and thus in flowers. On this matter, the point that held me more than others was the link established by the author between the culture of flowers and the culture of images. My own research on medieval images, from this point on, became most attentive to the thoughts of Jack Goody on the representation of images (Goody, 1997).

I was sufficiently attentive and I persuaded myself that in this domain, perhaps more than any other, the comparative process, as practiced by Goody, was pertinent and even indispensable. A few long voyages, although

less numerous than those described in his books, comforted me in my idea that specialists in Western art should, in an urgent manner, widen the field of their observations to other cultures where the treatment of images appeared differently, either more restrictive or, on the contrary, more exuberant. In 1989, on my return from Australia, I spent some time in Malaysia on the island of Penang in the northwest of the country, where I encountered an extraordinary mosaic of different peoples, cultures, and religions in a naturally narrow and confined region: In the same street, I came across haphazardly, a Muslim mosque, a Hindu temple, an Anglican church, a Burmese Buddhist temple, a Catholic church, and a Taoist temple, among others. This was, in the space of a few hours, an unforgettable lesson in live comparativism, which made me understand the relativity of our judgments on the subject of art and images. Until then I had considered Catholicism as passionately icon loving: From then on, especially in comparison with Hinduism, it seemed much more "puritan" and sparing of images than I had imagined. I received confirmation of this a few years later, during a longer stay in Rajasthan, in the summer of 1996, when I was able to contemplate a polytheism in full vitality, with all that is implied by its profusion of images, the valorization of the body, and the exhibition of sexuality. What Jack Goody wrote in his last book regarding the statues of Khajuraho has revived my own memories. My travel notes record the feeling of vertigo that came over me in the mixed crowd of men and women congregated in front of the silver door of the temple of Nathdwara, between Udaipur and Chittogarh. When this door opened, the pressure of the crowd projected me into a court with those who were suffocating with me, then dragged me, at running speed, to the main chamber of the temple to confront the hieratic image of Krishna, whose chin is adorned with an enormous diamond. Standing, their hands clasped above their heads, the women (in front) and the men (behind) repeated, in a sort of collective delirium, the invocations addressed to the god. Before the alcove where the image of Krishna had just been unveiled, a priest gently moved Krishna's swing, an event that happened only once a month. I thought back to what my training as a historian had taught me, something that Jack Goody, as a neighbor from Figeac, also knows well, namely, the description by the monk Bernard d'Angers of the crowd of pilgrims pushing, at the beginning of the 11th-century, against the cast-iron grill that, in the chancel of the abbey church of Conques, protected the reliquary statue or "majesty" of Saint Foy. Suddenly, as the hagiographer tells us, the grill opened miraculously by the will of the saint, and the pilgrims were able to touch the statue and search in its expression some sign that their prayers would be answered before falling asleep at its feet and living, if only in their dreams, the much-awaited miraculous healing or liberation.

Such thoughts and experiences have long convinced me that images, like the flowers examined by Jack Goody, make up a good criteria of the compari-

son of cultures. Moreover, I asked myself if it wasn't possible to classify cultures in terms of their attitudes toward images, depending on the forms these receive and the practices of which they are the objects (Schmitt, 1997), and cover, in this way, all the different possibilities, from the most icon-loving cultures to the most icon fearing, or at least iconoclastic. Thus, we could place on one side, the Byzantine iconoclasm of the 8th–9th centuries, Sunnite Islam, and Judaism, and place on the other side Hinduism and its icon-loving outbursts. Arrayed between these extremes would be found the diverse versions of Christianity ranging from an iconodoule Byzantine slant to the more restrictive Calvinist Protestantism. Right in the middle might be found the Latin and Catholic via media that in time as in space, has never stopped evolving.

I am well aware of the limits of such a plan of classification, which does not, in itself, explain anything, ignores the specific contexts, and does not take into account historical evolution. It is only a common means of representing the extreme diversity of possible attitudes to images. This is where we find the main benefit of Jack Goody's book, which clearly demonstrates that, to successfully carry out a real comparative analysis, it is necessary to go beyond the specific contexts and evolution to place the problems at the most fundamental level of representation in all its forms, inasmuch as it characterizes the cognitive experience of persons in all places and at all periods of time.

The notions that are essential to a comparative anthropologist's approach are present in the book titled *Representations and Contradictions*. Over and above the infinite variety of empirical attitudes fixed in their specific contexts, one must start from what is both the deepest and the most universal of the cognitive contradictions, those inherent in human language. The function of the latter is representation. This is characterized by its ambivalence. Whether it is necessary to say (a word, a myth) or to show (an image, a ritual) every form of representation is, according to its own principal, stamped with doubt, because of the interplay between the signifier and the signified: The statue of a god makes the god present here and now; however, the statue is not really the god; the relic of the saint is the saint, but it is only really its metonymy, and so on. Ambivalence and doubt feed the reservations about, or the refusal to accept, figurative representation, especially in three dimensions: In many polytheist societies in Black Africa, of which European culture has retained only masks and fetishes, it must be noted, says Goody, that the "High God" is never figured.

The observation of the essential and universal character of ambivalence reduces, according to Jack Goody, the explanatory relevance of the binary oppositions dear to structuralism. The example to which he comes back on several occasions is what he calls the "Black is beautiful" problem, which, in his opinion, renders invalid the binary opposition of Black versus White that,

following a long tradition the colonialist and racist prejudices, produces the double equation Black = evil and White = good. I am not sure that the example is well chosen inasmuch as the inversion of the antagonistic terms that is the basis of the Black identity does not really stem from the original binary system. As for structuralist analysis, it seems to me that in fact it has managed to embrace ambivalence, far from contenting itself in simply opposing opposites. (One of the best examples, to my knowledge, is the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant, 1999, on the subject of Greek myths and particularly of the *métis*.)

More basically, Goody is right: An examination of ambivalence is in fact an essential task today for all human sciences. In its way, psychoanalysis has opened the way. The historical and anthropological examination of the ambivalence of symbolic systems (language, gestures, images) must not be overlooked, and on this point Jack Goody must be faithfully followed. Contradictions and ambivalence are a universal constraint to be confronted by all cultures in their specific evolution, which together with secondary and contingent constraints local to a region finally explain the unequal distribution of attitudes regarding different forms of representation.

As he positions himself, before any empirical considerations, at the level of cognitive contradictions, Jack Goody defines two other characteristic traits of his approach, which also hold our attention. The first consists of always choosing a viewing angle that is different from that most familiar to us, that of our own Western and European culture. In the case of flowers, it is in Black Africa, in as far as the observer finds neither the images nor the myths (the Bagré itself is nothing other than a recitation) that he was expecting.

From this approach comes a second trait: It is better to start off from what is absent than from what is present. The vocation of comparativism is to consider the similarities and the differences of the phenomenon studied. But usually attention is given to positive facts, what is present in one form here and another there. Jack Goody shows that comparativism permits a different approach, forbidden in the monographic study of only one object or only one culture: It examines societies with shortages to try and understand why they are deprived, against all expectations, of that which exists in abundance elsewhere. Thus, he is able to correlate several characteristic absences in Black Africa—the culture of flowers, the images of the high god, the myths—and to question himself on crossed absences—why artistic Hindu traditions exhibit sexuality but not really nudity, and, on the contrary, why Black Africa exalts nudity but hides sexuality. In traditionally Judeo-Christian Europe, both are, in principal, taboo (see on this point the objections made (but unfounded in my opinion) by H. P. Duer, 1988, to Norbert Elias).

This is according to the expression of Steinberg (1983). The limit of the book exists in that the author seeks in art the positive marks of a human sexuality, instead of remarking that they are more often than not "absent" (concept dear to J. Goody), limited in fact, excluding exceptions, to the images of

the infant Jesus (at the age where he was unable to procreate), although Christ on the cross does not show, one can be sure, any sex at all, either masculine or feminine. This emptiness signifies that the generation of Christ (not his sexuality) is not "of this world": It is by his blood, by the wound in his side, that Christ on the cross gave engendered the Church. Yet, as Jack Goody rightly indicates, the articulation of the divine and the human is, here as elsewhere, the source of ambivalence of representations: Christian art has equally valorized the nudity of Adam and Eve before sin as a sign of innocence, along with the (prudent) representation of the sexuality of Christ (the genitalia of the infant Jesus) and the nakedness of the crucified Christ (where the flowing of blood, analogous to spiritual semen, begot Ecclesia). However, nakedness and sexuality are notions that the anthropologist or comparative historian must use with as much caution as, for example, the notion of soul, whose case Jack Goody discusses: These words have not, it is certain, the same meaning, the same value, in different cultures. In each of these, it is necessary to distinguish between the images and the real customs (we do not usually behave with our bodies, as do models who pose for advertisements). Neither must we forget that images have their own code: In a medieval miniature, a king who is well dressed but without a crown or shoes is naked. Finally, religious images are often old images, and their great age contributes to their venerable character. Those who look at them and pray to them are not their contemporaries, and I have remarked the astonishment—and knowing smiles—of young Indians before "luxurious" sculptures of Hindu temples several centuries old.

The principle merit of Jack Goody's approach to representations, in my view, is to bring into one view the unequal distribution of objects—images, theatre and rites, myth and story, relics, sexuality—which our cultural apriorisms and university disciplines (history of art, history of literature, history of religions, etc.) lead us to approach separately. Only this widened view, aided by an immense cultural background, allows us to grasp the patterns of relations belonging to each culture. But as the author admits, he has only chosen to deal with certain types of representations. For my part, I regret that Jack Goody did not devote a chapter to dreams, which I consider as being one of the biggest reservoirs of representations and contradictions of human societies and whose rapport with material images and the other themes developed in his book seem extremely close (Schmitt, 1999a). This other form slips perfectly into Goody's demonstration: The dream reveals in the deepest and most universal manner the cognitive contradictions of men. It is known that ambivalence characterizes dreams better than any other form of representation. But, as for all the others, it would be advisable, to obtain real comparativism, to accord the dream its own place in each culture and to examine the specific relationships dreams have with the other forms of representation, for example, fiction, images, or sexuality. These relation-

ships may be obvious in our own culture, but in a way that is specific to this culture and cannot be exported into other cultures. The prolific proposals of psychoanalysis concern European Judeo-Christian and bourgeois societies of the 19th and 20th centuries, as Freud observed it. The immediate application of the principles of dream work during previous periods of European history, in the Middle Ages for example, would not be legitimate either. The dreams of the Middle Ages are known to us mainly via monastic introspective literature. The contradictory relation between the monastic environment and sexuality—in its combat against the flesh and for the defense of virginity—defines this environment and allows us to distinguish it from all the other social systems. The dreams of monks, described in writing and in Latin, are the expression of this combat of identity. One may not apply the conclusions we reach on reading monastic descriptions of dreams to the whole of the society of this period. But once the necessary precautions are taken, it is possible to attempt to clarify the relationship between dream, images, sexuality, and other forms of representations—at least for this well-read, monastic and the clerical group, a group familiar with the ways that writing externalizes its contradictions, as Jack Goody would say.

For my part, I set about working on the whole of the field covered, in this culture, by the notion of images. This notion is central because it gives an account of the three orders of reality that incorporate, in fact extend, the vast field set out by Jack Goody:

1. In the Christian culture of the Middle Ages, it is initially man who is designated as *imago*. In the founding myth of Genesis, it is said that God created man "in his image and likeness." The second part of the myth, the Incarnation, acts more or less as a validation of the first part: God became man, it was possible to see him, and from then on the representation of God as man became legitimate. All Christian art takes its theoretical justification from here.
2. *Imago*, from there, comes to designate material, ornamental, or figurative images, often anthropomorphic ones (especially when regarding divine representation) and which when pushed audaciously in the 9th–10th centuries in the West, came to the point of adopting, not without contradictions, the third dimension.
3. From these small images, one must not exclude those stemming from the imagination, such as those of dreams and visions (Schmitt, 1994). It is indeed the same word *imago* that is used to designate them. Thus dreams—monks' dreams but also those of simple laymen—were used to legitimize and create new three-dimensional cultural images, of which the relic statue of Saint Foy is the most famous example. Because dreams are ambivalent, they require a guarantee of authenticity that only authorized people, men of the

Church, can give. Once this is done, the dream is declared as being "true," of divine origin. Whether it serves to pass on the divine order to make a statue (as in the case of the Virgin and child of Clermont in the middle of the 10th-century), or allows a pilgrim sleeping at the feet of the *majesta* of Conques to "see" the saint descend from heaven to heal his blindness, the true dream gives to the cultural image the divine guarantee it requires. Such was, as early as Byzantium, its function. But later, due to the terrible conflict of the iconoclasm, the defenders of icons needed other defenses, thus the iconodoule theologians Jean Damascène, Theodore de Stoudion, and Nicéphore le Patriarche came to write apologetic treatises. Aside from a few very isolated cases of iconoclasm, in the Latin West the evolution was never as brutal, neither can one find a theology of the image comparable to the theology of the icon of the Greeks. However, even here dreams were the major means of legitimizing images and their cults by guiding simple men toward solitary places where holy images, after the fashion of saints' relics, were waiting to be invented. In England, for example, we have the stone cross of Waltham, created in accordance with a dream that gave the model and measurements to a sculptor or goldsmith (Schmitt, 1999b, 2002). Or the case of Volto Santo de Lucca or the Virgin of Clermont, which incited not only pilgrimages but also a level of generosity to rival that of the clerics responsible for the safe-keeping of the image of the Virgin.

I do not think that I have betrayed the intention of Jack Goody by finishing with my own field of research. It is just that neither comparativism nor the alliance of history and anthropology are a means in themselves. These are methods that are only valid if they allow empirical and more limited studies to go further than usual. Jack Goody's LoDagaa would not be the same if he had not, to visit them, gone via India, China, and medieval Europe. My LoDagaa are Christians, clerics, and laymen of the 11th and 12th centuries. To study them without the anthropological and comparative experience of Jack Goody, I hear in his books the incessant reminder that relativity is necessary in a historian's vision. It is in this sense that Jack Goody, anthropologist and historian, man in the field and comparativist, is really a master.

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III

ORALITY, LITERACY, AND WRITTEN CULTURE

Orality in Politics

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SPEECH TO BE CONSUMED

Almost as soon, in the West, as thoughts began to be written down and made public, there were reservations. Written works, Plato remarked (*Phaedrus* 275c–276a), leave questions unanswered, cannot be finely tuned to an audience, and allow dialogue to be circumvented. They may, it is true, help memory, especially in old age (276d). But they can also do much to degrade it. Jack Goody would be the first to say (Goody, 2000, pp. 1–25) that the triumphs of oral recall can be overrated. Plato himself may have done so. Goody would also say, of course, that much of what we take to be distinctive about more modern societies would not have been possible if thoughts and much else had not been written down. Our precepts would not have been so elaborate, and our practices so successful, if we had had to continue to rely on generation after generation transmitting everything by word of mouth. There would have been interruptions, in which much would have been lost. And if the number of generations alive at any one time would have nevertheless continued to increase, and there had not been writing, change, one can imagine, would also have been slowed. Yet the history whose recovery Goody has done so much to stimulate is the history of the consequences of what Roland Barthes (1976, pp. 22–23) called texts to be reread rather than consumed. Barthes' was a distinction for *littérateurs*. Texts to be reread are those to be pondered and criticized; texts to be consumed are those for the naive reader, unreflective, uninterested in memory, and not easy, perhaps, to

remember. But it is a distinction that is important also for politics. For here, naivete matters.

This is not of course to say that in politics, only naivete matters. The move from archaic politics to our own is marked by texts to be reread. In Athens, there was what came in the course of its emergence to be called a *demokratia* for a hundred years or so before there was a constitution for it. It was only at the end of that first hundred years, in the 4th-century, that what we retrospectively recognize as thoughts about politics appeared, and in writing. And it hardly needs saying that the legal and administrative apparatus of the more modern state would have been impossible without texts to be read and reread, interpreted, applied, and revised to be interpreted, applied, and revised again. But politics does not consist solely of reflections about its purposes and about how these can be grounded, in volumes of codified principle and procedure and endless memoranda. It also consists of those who have power or aspire to it, whom we now call politicians, trying to persuade others that they should have the power they wish. In so doing, these people have standardly used speech, speeches to the naive, to be consumed.

Like much else in what we now take politics to be, the importance of speeches in politics was first revealed in Athens in the 5th-century B.C., that moment at which what had previously been spoken was beginning to be written: in the comedies and tragedies, most clearly in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. This book (the title is not Thucydides' own) was composed at some point during the war, or series of wars, between Athens and Sparta and their allies from 431 B.C. to 411 B.C. (The conflicts actually ended with Athens' defeat by Sparta in 404, and there are signs in the text that even though Thucydides did not finish his narrative, he did continue writing to the end.) Thucydides composes a narrative in the course of which he reconstructs speeches, often in pairs, that were given by various men. (He does so usually in direct speech but readily concedes that recalling what men said, or deciding how far to trust what others may have recalled, had been difficult and that he had had to resort to what he "thought each would have said what was especially required in the given situation" [1.22].) If one looks at the book in the context of the new literature in Athens, of which the *History* is one of the most spectacular instances, the speeches as well as the narrative are to be read, and reread, critically (Yunis, 2003, pp. 198–204). They are for that new audience that books created. (Thucydides himself was at pains to insist that he did not write the book "as a competition piece to be heard for the moment" [1.22].) But the point of the speeches is to reveal the "different levels of thinking behind a political or military action" (Macleod, 1996, p. 68). These are no doubt to be reread. Thucydides did after all intend the *History* to be "a possession for all time." As speeches, however, they are writing to be reread for what they reveal about the consumption of naivete.

In the Athenian democracy, it could not have been otherwise. Although the more important decisions may have written down, persuading what would in the later 5th-century have been an assembly of still generally nonliterate citizens to agree to them could not have been done in any other way than speech. There were no manifestos, no fliers, no press releases, and no published interviews. This moment in that city was a moment of a kind that has been encountered in many other places, including many much more recent democracies, in which a publicly contestatory politics predated widespread literacy. It was a moment of a kind that in a more modern state in a more modern society, once it acquires the modern devices of publication and persuasion, might be thought to have passed. But this is not so. Speech and its attendant devices, speech to be heard naively, if not so often now, elaborate speeches, are intrinsic to all politics.

SPEECH TO REASON WITH

The first and most obvious reason for this, as Thucydides saw, is that speech is intrinsic to practical reasoning. Practical reasoning in politics, in which judgments are formed and from which action comes, is not of course ever fully accessible. Even in a relatively simple political society like those of the Greek states in the 5th-century, it will not always and only appear in public speech. One can only begin to see what it is like in those cases (increasingly common now that voice recordings are being released to the public, a nice consequence for the oral record of the ways in which records on paper have been stored for posterity) in which there is a minute by minute record of discussions to a decision. In a sophisticated modern state, of course, such reasoning travels through a mountain of documents. In the 13 days of what Americans call the Cuban Missile crisis, for instance, in October 1962, the small group of men in Washington who formed an impromptu Executive Committee of the National Security Council to address the problem they saw in Russia's installing nuclear-armed missiles on Cuba proceeded on a pile of departmental documents, aerial photographs, and other materials (May & Zelikow, 1997; Stern, 2003). These materials, however, consisted only of what modern states call intelligence, of policy papers (although in this particular instance, which was unforeseen, relatively few), and written recommendations for action from one or another branch of the state and various other advisers. The actual thinking in the 13 days in the White House about what the situation was and how to see it, about what lay behind it, what might follow from it, and what might and might not be done about it, took place in a series of extended conversations. In these, individuals thought aloud, addressing their thoughts to someone else and what he had said, asking questions of each other, suggesting this or that strategy and tactic, more often

than not in unfinished sentences, gradually, over a space of days, reaching decisions where they could and where they could not (or, as in this case, in which the president, chairing most of the meetings, did often not want them to), not. Only on the 6th day did anyone from the group make a speech (although there had been questions in the Senate). This, by the president, was brief, on television, and revealed only a very small part of what was known, had been said, and was decided.

The discussions of the Executive Committee of the NSC are remarkable only for their urgency and the potentially momentous consequences of what they might have led to. But they are otherwise unmysterious. Almost everyone working in any modern institution will have had, more or less willingly, to take part in some such discussions about something. Even if the discussion is with oneself—John Kennedy had seen and learned from the dangers of deciding in this way after the failed invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961 did so 18 months later only in recollection of what others had said (May & Zelikow, 1997, pp. 171–172)—the process will be the same. It is mysterious (and to the historian or anthropologist or student of politics, frustrating) only to the extent that it can so rarely be recovered and subsequently described.

The discussions in Washington in the 13 days of October 1962 about what do about the Russian missiles in Cuba is a paradigm instance of the kind of practical reasoning that politicians can engage in by themselves, away from their publics. That is to say, it is an instance of where the situation facing the group is (or at least, is seen by all to be) far too grave to use the opportunity of any conversation to score points off rivals and improve one's standing in what is, in general, an inherently and intensely competitive profession. To read the transcripts of the Kennedy tapes in the Cuban crisis is to read a series of exchanges between men of very different kinds and qualities of experience, intelligence, and judgment. But the conversations contain no more of the delights and deviations of politics than an average (if perhaps more than averagely determined and urgent) academic seminar. All are concentrated on seeing what exactly the problem at issue is and how it might be resolved, on the better arguments, the more practicable courses of action, and what the more likely and acceptable consequences of following one course of action rather than another might be. (It is striking that in these particular conversations there is no reference at all to the ideological antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union, an antagonism that dominated all public political discourse in America at the time. The only point made of a moral kind is how the United States could not be party to a surprise attack on Cuba of the kind that the Japanese government made on Hawaii in 1941.) The audience for each speaker, one might say, is wholly internal to the group, and to the extent that each speaker is thinking aloud, it is the speaker himself. It is drama without an audience. The transcripts bear

the kind of rereading, one might say, that even true dramas, if read without thought of their audience, do not.

The second reason for suggesting that speech and its devices are intrinsic to politics lies in the continuing fact of the political speech itself. It lies more exactly in the fact that speeches are for an audience. Thucydides may have written the protagonists' speeches in his *History* in such a way, as Harvey Yunis (2003) claims, to bear repeated reading and analysis. Until the recent inclination in literary appreciation to make all texts problematic, indeed, at least one of these, Pericles' oration for the Athenian dead in the winter after the first summer of fighting, "coming forward from the tomb to a platform that had been elevated so that he could be heard by as much of the crowd as possible" (2.34), had famously been taken as a document in its own right on democracy in the city. (The wicked thought already in the ancient world was that the literary quality of this oration was a tribute as much to his mistress Aspasia, the rumored author of all his speeches, as it was to Pericles himself in giving it.) But Thucydides reconstructed these speeches as speeches to make a point about the ways in which political arguments were made.

Yet within the speeches that he does reconstruct, there is an evident difference. Archidamus, one of the two Spartan kings, speaking at an assembly in Sparta in 432 to consider whether Athens had broken a treaty between the two states; Diodotus, in 427, suggesting a more prudent punishment than others were recommending (and which the Athenian assembly had already once approved) for rebels against the empire at Mytilene; and Nicias, in Athens in 415, arguing that the proposed Athenian expedition to Sicily was ill-advised, are all setting out calm and reasonable cases. Each (even Diodotus, who appears nowhere else in the record and has been thought by some to be an invention of Thucydides' to insert his own voice) can certainly be said to have had a personal reason for doing so. But none is using the devices that his opponent resorts to. Each is telling his audience things that they will not necessarily want to hear. Each, in his own way, could be said to be truthful. The opponents, by contrast, Sthenelaias in response to Archidamus, Cleon arguing the case that Diodotus rejected, Alcibiades countering the case that Nicias made, are each supporting his purposes with tendentious claims and selective rhetoric very evidently designed to rouse the passion rather than the reason of his audience to achieve what he wants to. Only Diodotus, of the three more honest speakers, succeeds, and he only to a practically insignificant degree.

As Hobbes remarked, Thucydides leaves the reader "from the narrations [to] draw out lessons to himself, and of himself to be able to trace the drifts and counsels of the actors to their seat" (cited in Grene, 1989, p. xxii). It would seem to be clear what the lessons about speeches are. Thucydides offers them in a characteristically paradoxical and ironic fashion. To Diodotus,

the more prudent and in tone more moderate speaker in the Mytilene debate, the one to whom all but the most skeptical reader will at first be drawn (to whom indeed almost all readers have been), he gives the observation that "as for speeches, whoever maintains that they do not teach practicality is either stupid or has some personal bias: stupid if he supposes that there is some other way the future and its uncertainty can be considered; biased if he supposes, in his desire to succeed with a disgraceful case, that he would not speak effectively in a cause that is wrong yet by slandering effectively he would intimidate both the opposing speakers and the listeners" (3.42). To Cleon, in tone less moderate and ostensibly less prudent, he gives the accusation to the assembled citizens that they are "overcome by the pleasure of listening, like men seated for entertainment by sophists rather than to deliberate for the city" (3.38). Yet to Diodotus, again, even though he is the more evidently prudent, and the more cautious, Thucydides allows the thought that although "it is right to expect us, the speakers, regarding the most important matters . . . to take a longer view than you whose attention is brief, . . . it is . . . necessary that the man arguing for the most terrible proposals win over the people by deceit and the man with better advice make himself trusted by lying" (3.43). The final irony is that Cleon was "the most violent of the citizens and by far the most persuasive among the people at that time" (3.36). Cleon is most persuasive speaker and accuses the citizens of being too easily persuaded by speeches. Diodotus emphasizes the importance of speeches, appeals to the citizens' sense of decency, yet tells them that those who speak sense must lie to be believed. In the debate at Athens 12 years later, on whether to attack Sicily, Nicias speaks the truth and achieves exactly the opposite of what, in so doing, he intends (6.16–23). (He also proved to be a poor general in Sicily itself.) "Of all the Hellenes, at least in my time," Thucydides remarks after his eventual murder by the victorious Syracuseans, "he was the 'least deserving to reach this level of misfortune because of a way of life directed entirely toward virtue'" (7.86).

Of these three men, one might say, Nicias understands almost nothing about speeches, Diodotus understands something, and Cleon understands everything. Nicias does not understand that to achieve what one wishes one must not speak plainly and not tell unpalatable truths. Diodotus understands that one must lie and that it is risky to directly challenge a powerful opponent but does not understand that there is some risk in appearing to be cool and claiming to know better than the crowd. Cleon understands that it is passion that works, that a crowd can be excited by being abused, that it can be swayed by an ingratiating allusion to the fact that speaker's speech is unlike any other they might hear, that he is in this way one of them, and that he can then lead them, again with passion, to a violent conclusion that they will think is theirs. (To the objection that Cleon, if narrowly, lost the second Mytilene debate with Diodotus, one should remember that he won the first.)

Nicias and also, to an extent, Diodotus speak as if to be reread. This, no doubt, is why they have tended to come so well out of the scholarly commentators' rereading. Cleon speaks to be consumed. This, no doubt, is why he has been the scholars' butt. Yet as David Lewis shrewdly observed, "there is nothing which can be inferred of Cleon which could not be said of Pericles" (Lewis, 1992, p. 405).

SPEECH NOW

Thucydides himself, one can say, understood everything about politics. The Athenian democracy at this time, it is true, was a tumultuous affair, and in the war, unsteady. It had not been designed to embody the principles that underlie modern liberal democracies. Indeed, it had not actually been designed as a democracy at all. Although it had, by the end of the 5th-century, come to suit those who had managed to hold power in it to describe it as the *demokratia*, and when it suited them, as it suited Pericles in his oration in 431, to laud it as such, it as yet had no written constitution. That came later, by which time it was being given conceptual shape, not least by the philosophers, as the form of rule we think of now. Many since Hobbes have concentrated on what they take to be Thucydides' criticism of the self-destructive divisiveness of the form, and there are grounds for that (2.65). But one can argue that as in so many political societies since, the divisions were at least as much the effects of war as of the democracy. And even if Thucydides did dislike the politics of his city because these were democratic (he was himself exiled from Athens, perhaps at Cleon's instigation, for 20 years), and is read to be expressing that dislike, as he did for the oligarchy that followed it after the defeat in Sicily in 411, this does not affect the point. In what he reveals about political speech in his reconstruction of the speeches themselves in the Mytilene debate, in what he exposes about civil war in his account of the fights in Corcyra (3.82–83) and in what he shows about the terrified ruthlessness of a fearful imperium in the Athenians' attitude to the resistant leaders of Melos (5.85–113), as in what he says about the oligarchy (8.89), Thucydides reveals his commanding insight of the condition into which parties in contention can put themselves.

Richard Lebow (2003) extracts from this a thesis that bears in a more general way on the question of speech in politics. This is that Thucydides is himself more generally lamenting the fact that in the extreme condition of contention, which is war, language, at once the vehicle of convention and its ground, breaks down, and with it, civilization itself. The corollary, as Lebow makes clear, is that an acceptable political order is one in which there is a commonality of mutual understanding and agreement. The common reason that agreed speech allows, *logos*, triumphs over passion, *orge*. This may be so,

although if such a common order were by chance to extend to agreement on all things, it would not be political. Thucydides is certainly writing about politics, about war and what it does. But what one can infer from his remarks about public speech, most particularly from the speeches that he gives Diodotus and Cleon in the Mytilene debate, is that insofar as politics is practical reasoning to a purpose, and insofar as practical reasoning to a purpose is done in talk, the talk in which it is done will be turned to the purpose in question. Anyone who confuses a common understanding of a common language with a common purpose (Thucydides, I believe, does not) will be making a mistake. Insofar as the two main protagonists in the Peloponnesian War, Athens and Sparta, had purposes, as cities, which can be said to be their own, independently of the war, these were in several respects very different. In conditions of peace, or against a common enemy, the citizens in both may nevertheless have understood much of language they shared in similar ways (van Wees, 2001). In war, by contrast, as Thucydides makes plain, they tended to understand and use it differently. Diodotus and Cleon are themselves very close. They share a language and agree that a rebellion against Athens' authority should be put down in such a way as to deter any other colony from making a similar move. They differ greatly, however, on the relative importance within their shared understanding of the same language of the claims of prudence and justice, just as they do on how to use that language.

This is not to say that the questions of how common a language may be, and insofar as one can ever determine it, of how common the understanding of a common language may be, are not important. They very evidently are. In the contests of politics, however, one's interest will be as much in the differences in each and in the different ways in which language is used. Yet even if the most interesting difference is captured in Barthes' (1976) distinction between language to be read and reflected on and language to be consumed, there are many more ways now in which both can be conveyed. Athens in the 5th and 4th centuries was a self-consciously sophisticated political society, but its political media were few. Important agreements were marked on stone and increasingly on papyrus; otherwise, all was done orally, in direct encounters in conversation and in public speech. The range of performances in modern societies is far greater. Texts that composed as texts are reread by administrators, lawyers, bankers, academics, journalists, and people in commerce, both by individuals in one or another of these professional capacities and in the course of the collective deliberations of councils, courts, committees, seminars, and editorial meetings. They exist in print, in files and archives, and, increasingly, on the web. Speeches are made in legislatures, at party meetings, and on the stump. Interviews and broadcasts (including broadcasts of speeches and political advertisements) are consumed, more often than not in comparative privacy, by a large range of people. Sources and

styles are more varied than they were, and the sheer quantity of material is uncountably greater.

Its penetration is also much wider. There is more to read, and reread. There is also much more to consume. Commentators suggest that the electronic revolution in the transformation of knowledge is at least as great, in its consequences for politics as for much else, as was the revolution in printing, perhaps greater. The pessimists, like Henry Kissinger (2001), will think that leaders now "rise to eminence by exploiting and manipulating the mood of the moment," that "they define their aims by consulting focus groups rather than following their own perceptions," and that as a result, they cease to lead and instead "view the future as a projection forward of the familiar" (p. 286). The optimists, like James Fishkin, will believe that electronic polling can excite greater interest and participation in the citizens of democratic states. Polls in themselves, perhaps, even when clearly focused, as in the experiments in responsive political television that have been done in Columbus, Ohio, can secure at best simple responses. But if they are followed up, before elections perhaps, in what Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin (2004) nicely describe as deliberation days, democracy itself can be extended to that fuller exchange of opinion to which many aspire. Citizens are no more condemned to poll alone than they are, in Robert Putnam's bleak image, to bowl (Ackerman & Fishkin, 2004; Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003).

One may agree that there is truth in the one view and true hope in the other. Yet behind the difference in spirit, there is a common assumption. More citizens than before in modern states, it is true, may read. Even in the United States, where rates of an even minimally functional literacy are lower than in most other comparable countries, more are now educated to do so than ever before. But through the more truly mass media of communication, more also consume. And many do only consume. Deliberation days are at best days for thought and talk, not for reading. The thought will be about what people have seen on television (including, in the United States at least, the now pervasive political advertisements), not about what they have read. The talk, no doubt, will be talk of programs and policies, but it will be informed by slogans, bites. Moreover, the bites will be from celebrities from other fields of life who have been hired by the professional politicians for the appeal they have beyond politics itself and their usually much greater facility in the new media. Once again, there is pessimism and optimism. Pessimists see in this the further evacuation of serious content. Politics is less distinguishable from show business. Optimists, by contrast, see not merely the triumph of unprecedentedly penetrating and effective techniques of communication but also the natural way in which professional politicians excite an interest in politics now that the end of ideology has at last arrived. Citizens can concentrate on the particulars that matter rather than have to listen to empty generalities that have little bearing on the lives they actually lead and

aspire to. Indeed, where a facility in the media combines with a genuine wish to explain and converse, as in the long, open-ended television program *Aló Presidente*, with which Hugo Chávez has fascinated a large part of Venezuelan society (and infuriated a good part of the rest) for several hours each Sunday, there can conceivably be a degree of connection between leaders and led not known, even in other populisms in Latin America, since Greece.

Like his hero Fidel Castro, who in the days before television in Cuba notoriously spoke to his people for several hours, Chávez is a man of the word. One doubts if there is now anyone in politics anywhere who regularly says so much to his citizens. These men, however, are exceptions. Castro in the 1960s and 1970s set no precedent for anyone other than Chávez. One doubts whether Chávez himself will do so now. These are leaders who have dominated the politics of their countries to a degree that is now rare. In most societies, there are more politicians who seek a voice, and their leaders are usually pleased, other things being equal, to let them have it. Governments can risk too much in investing too much in one person. Even Pericles, at least in Socrates, drew detractors. (And there is surely irony in Thucydides' remark that what was in name the democracy was in fact the rule of the first man [2.65].) There is a larger number of voices, too many to repeatedly speak at length. There are political reasons, therefore, as well as those of a technical kind, to believe that beyond the confines of the legislative chamber, and perhaps even there, the extended speech may in most places have had its day. Political shorthand is now in order. And this requires all the devices of modern communications to make the impact that those devising it require. It does not merely allow but demands the extended use of symbols of one kind or another. These are not those that political contenders have standardly used in the politics of semiliterate societies, the mute face of pretenders on every wall, for instance, or flags, or pictures, like the Indian Congress Party's holy cow, on the ballot papers. They are the symbols of personality, verging on celebrity, that are carefully crafted by media advisers to frame a sentence or two, at most a paragraph, for the photo opportunity and the television studio.

SPEECH AND THOUGHT

"Writing makes a difference not only to the expression of thought but to how that thinking is done in the first place" (Goody, 1987, p. 257). In politics, as in other areas of life, it makes us think, among other things, as Goody's own work has done, about the oral. In politics, it allows the accumulation of ideas to think with, ways of thinking about ideas, and ways of putting ideas into practice for the more or less complex constitutions for the complex institutions of the modern state. These are the aspects of politics

that are repeatedly read and reread, defined, redefined, and refined. Politics, however, does not consist only in the accumulation of theoretical reasoning, reasoning to fit the world. It also consists in practical reasoning, reasoning that one or another protagonist wants the world to fit. Because it is in this sense practical, it threatens itself continually to overturn what are claimed to be its achievements in theory. (As an aspiration to cumulatively acceptable knowledge, political science is thus an oxymoron. This is one of the few truths about the subject that endures. It is one that, in another idiom, Thucydides conveyed.) And because to reason practically, as Plato saw, is to raise questions about what to do, to raise these questions to a more or less particular audience, and to persuade that audience of one's answers in more or less open contest; because it is to engage in what may in an extended sense of the word be described as dialogue, politics is at its center ineradicably oral. Communications of an oral kind are much more deliberately and now variously performative than those that are written. The political speech comes closest, perhaps, to a text that is to be read and reflected on. But the speech itself is not the only oral performance in politics. Among themselves, those who are deciding what to do have extended discussions. They talk. Before their publics, they and those who aspire to decide know that in order, so to speak, to be read, they have first to be heard. And they know that to do this, they have to attract attention. If they can attract attention and make their case without extended speech, which in many political circumstances they have to do, and which modern means of communication allow them very easily to do, they will be pleased merely, in Barthes' sense, aurally and visually to be consumed. "Thinking alone is not enough," Goody wrote immediately before the sentence I have just quoted, "to make an intellectual." Being an intellectual, he might have added, is certainly not enough, except perhaps for other intellectuals, to make a politician.

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Writing and Kinship in Northern Ghana: From Cowry Payments to Paper Documents

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In *Tristes Tropiques* Claude Lévi-Strauss's (1997) claimed that the Nambikwara of Brazil did not understand writing when it was first introduced to them, but during a discussion of "the violence of the letter" in *Of Grammatology* Jacques Derrida (1976) challenged this claim. The anthropologist described in his thesis that they had quickly used the example of this new medium to make their own diagrams "describing, explaining, writing, a genealogy and a social structure." According to the philosopher, this merely confirmed "unquestionable and abundant information" that "the birth of writing (in the colloquial sense) was nearly everywhere and most often linked to genealogical anxiety." For Derrida, writing "in the colloquial sense" allows for the "supplementary objectification" of existing "genealogical classification" at another level, that is, beyond the order of "arche-writing," and so still "within writing in general." The Nambikwara that the anthropologist gave paper and pencils to merely accede to writing, according to the philosopher, because they had already acceded to genealogical thinking (pp. 122–125).

Connections between writing and genealogical anxiety are not so easy to discern and certainly not as automatic as Derrida would have us believe. It is not a question of whether writing and genealogy are somehow related; they obviously can be in several ways, but they also do not have to be. Rather, it is question of whether they are necessarily related and, even more important, how and why they are related. When they are, as Jack Goody has shown, writing imposes determinative forms of classification on speech by encourag-

ing "the explicit formulation of category systems and semantic fields" that are "exhaustive and exclusive"; in other words, writing forces the elimination of ambiguity and the emergence of genealogical classifications that "may be quite divorced from the situation of the (oral) actor, whose field of perception is less differentiated, more homogeneous, than the one forced upon the literate reader" (Goody, 1977, pp. 105–107).

Derrida's (1976) assertion implies that genealogy is the calculus of a particular anxiety, with writing being merely an effective agent for its articulation. Even though he makes no mention of the source or the form of this particular anxiety, his assertion seems to support what Maurice Bloch and Dan Sperber (2002; this volume) call "the hypothesis that there is an evolved human disposition that is aimed at modulating behavior in a way sensitive to degrees of biological relatedness" (p. 734). In their discussion of the mother's brother controversy, they revive the question of the relationship between biology and kinship in a distinctly nuanced manner—agreeing with critics of anthropological kinship theory such as Leach, Needham, and Schneider who argued that representations of kinship, which would include genealogies, are largely determined by cultural and historical factors rather than biological facts, but also insisting that biology is nevertheless relevant. Whether such dispositions, which they also refer to as "naturalistic considerations," result in cultural expression or codification and are stabilized in social norms and representations is the result of "a wealth of cultural inputs," of which the psychological disposition "to try to differentiate people in a way sensitive to their degree of genealogical relatedness to self" is but one factor (Bloch & Sperber, 2002, pp. 728, 731, 732).

For Bloch and Sperber (2002) there is only "an indirect relationship of genetically favored receptivity to specific information," making their argument quite distinct from the deterministic arguments of sociobiologists, not to mention the speculative theories of their 19th-century precursors who first sought to explain matriliney as a way of assuring certainty of genealogical connections in primitive states of extreme biological uncertainty over the paternity of children (Bloch & Sperber, pp. 732, 734).¹ In causal terms, Derrida's assertion, in contrast to the Bloch and Sperber's hypothesis, argues for an unmediated and direct relationship between genealogical anxiety and writing. The contrast is instructive. Cultural specificity disappears and, as Goody has argued, through the "ahistoricity" of Derrida's (1976) approach, so too do the differences between writing and speech, just as the LoDagaa and Nambikwara become indistinguishable from the Chinese and Indians from the perspective of communication (Goody, 2000, p. 114).

¹McKinnon (2001) notes a connection between the notion of a "spermatic economy" in evolutionary psychology of the 1970s and the connections that Henry Lewis Morgan made between kinship, marriage, and property in the 1870s.

In this essay I discuss a court case from among the LoDagaa of northern Ghana in which genealogical anxiety and writing were connected, albeit in quite complicated and indirect ways. Showing how and why they were connected in this case also draws us intimately into the work of Jack Goody in two important ways. First, for much of his early career, he lived among these people and studied their culture and society; he was as much their anthropologist as they were his people. Because of the popularity, and indeed wider importance, of his later comparative work, this earlier fieldwork, which did partially inform the theoretical insights of the former, has been overlooked. Although acknowledged as a major theorist of comparative anthropology and history, the remarkable precision and insightfulness of his ethnographic writings on the LoDagaa have not been sufficiently recognized.

Second, the two major themes of Goody's work—the study of kinship and the consequences of writing—are connected in this case in ways that he directly considered in his work on the LoDagaa. Throughout much of his career, Goody was motivated by the need for comparison but not of the type that ignored differences. Instead, he has used the comparative approach to bring our attention to many important differences between the material conditions, and hence social and political organization, of most cultures in Africa, the LoDagaa included, and their Eurasian counterparts (Goody, 1976, 1990). Although a more prominent feature of his work on kinship, where it has been an important articulator of striking original and systematic theses, the comparative approach has also informed his understanding of communication, most particularly the effects of writing (Goody, 1986, 1987). However, he has never gone back to examine the role of writing—as both technology and as medium—on LoDagaa notions of kinship, and particularly on ideas of paternity.

PAPER PATERNITY AND THE DISTRICT MAGISTRATE'S COURT

In April of 1980 Andrew Maanyugr, an employee of the Ministry of Agriculture at Damongo, came to the District Magistrate's Court in Lawra, the capital of the most northwesterly district of Ghana and the home to most LoDagaa, to claim custody of a child of which he was the genitor but not the effective pater. Beatrice, his former wife, had left Gilbert, her former and now present husband, and had taken up with Andrew on the understanding that if she became pregnant she would marry him. She had left the small village of Goziiri to visit her sister, who was a beer brewer in Damongo, a predominantly Gonja town and administrative capital of the district to the southeast of Lawra District. According to Andrew's testimony, when Beatrice met him she explained that her infertility had been the cause of the

dissolution of her union with her former husband, and she would only marry him if he helped her obtain treatment for her infertility and she became pregnant. Andrew went to an herbalist, and after the treatment she became pregnant. Following the birth of the child, she returned to Gilbert before Andrew was able to present conjugal payments but after he managed to name the child and obtain a birth certificate indicating that he was the father. The child was born in a government hospital, so Andrew had additional written documentation to present to the court: a maternity card; an antenatal record card; an outpatient identification document with Beatrice's name on it that also indicated that she was not married; another outpatient identification document in the name of Andrew Mwinkum, which was the name he had given his son; and receipts for hospital bills in addition to a written list of other expenses.

For her part, Beatrice denied that she told Andrew that she was not married, insisting that she had explained that she was married "in a church" and argued that it was her sister who procured the treatment that enabled her to become pregnant even though she admitted that Andrew was the biological father. Under cross-examination from Andrew, she explained that "once my husband dowried me anything that I have belongs to him including the child." Andrew argued that even though he had not "dowried" the woman, that is, presented conjugal payments to her father to be returned to Gilbert, the woman had told him she was divorced, and she behaved as if she was—returning to live at her father's house and then moving to live with her sister for 2 years at Damongo. During this time when Beatrice became pregnant by Andrew, Gilbert was living in Obuasi, a gold mining town in southern Ghana.

Over three quarters of a century after the British first introduced courts, writing, and a whole set of practices from what David Olson (1994) calls "the world on paper,"² this was the first case involving the custody of a child where a litigant had used written documentation to support a claim. By presenting documents as evidence, Andrew was attempting to make an argument for the recognition of paternity outside the realm of LoDagaa practices; these pieces of paper referred to bureaucratic practices of the state and the formal process of birth within an institutional setting. The use of such forms of documentation by modern Western states was designed to create what James Scott (1998) called "legible people." Initially, this had been done by imposing or requiring permanent surnames, but names were later superseded by reliable and ubiquitous forms of documentation. As Scott notes, in the context of European colonization many generations of disciplining people

²I used this concept and Olson's approach extensively in a book (Hawkins, 2002) that looked at the connections between writing and colonialism in the history of the LoDagaa. This chapter draws on this work to make a distinct and separate argument about the relationship between writing and kinship.

into assuming fixed and stable identities was compressed (pp. 65, 68–69, 71).³ The hospital records that Andrew hoped would make his son legible to the court combined this bureaucratic desire for legibility with a biological definition of paternity, giving the documents not only the authority of the state but also that of science—paper and blood were symmetrically aligned.

Even so, documents were not Andrew's only strategy. Although he asked the court to recognize the conventions of the state bureaucracy and government hospitals—both of which borrowed their hegemony from an external ideology of what was “modern”—he also appealed to social conventions internal to LoDagaa culture in making his claim. In particular, he attempted to argue, under cross-examination from Gilbert, that Beatrice was his wife and that they had therefore been married, even though he had not presented conjugal payments, which alone could have emphatically extinguished any uncertainty over whose child this was in a social as opposed to biological sense. If the first strategy, which was obviously rehearsed in so far as Andrew came to court bearing these pieces of paper, attempted to invoke forms of external hegemony, the second strategy, which was largely impromptu in so far as it emerged in responses to questions from Gilbert, was, from a local perspective, counterhegemonic as the following exchange makes clear:

Q[uestion by Gilbert]: Do you maintain that she is not your legally married wife?

A[ndrew's answer]: The woman withdrew her support for me when we came home to perform dowries. . . .

Q: When she told you she had no husband did you know she had relatives?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you take possession of a property before asking the owner for it?

A: I did not beg her but she begged me and we arrived at a compromise.

Q: If the woman died during the treatment [for infertility by a herbalist] would you have buried her or given her to the parents?

A: I had earlier sent word to the parents that she was with me and if she had died I would have brought the corpse home to my family house.

Q: This would have meant that you had taken full control of her.

A: Yes, as the father of the woman had consented to our being together.

Q: Is that how our custom goes?

A: Yes. The parents of the girl can demand full dowries before burial takes place or they may choose to bury the corpse themselves or another compromise reached.

³Caplan and Torpey (2001, pp. 1–2) note that “Scott’s metaphor of ‘legibility’ reminds us of the centrality of writing to modern forms of rule, so that universal systems of individual documentation are unthinkable without mass literacy and an official culture of written records.”

Q: If you pay full dowries before the burial does it mean that the woman was not your own before the death occurred?

A: . . . It simply means that while she was alive she was my wife and at death she was my wife.

Q: Do you mean that as you did not dowry her she was not your wife?

A: She was my wife and we were to follow the custom which was later not supported by the woman. (Hawkins, 2002, pp. 313–314)

Here Gilbert presented an orthodox, jural interpretation of marriage, based on the economic interests that the presentation of conjugal payments established, but Andrew offered an anticipatory argument based on how the matter might have been resolved during the funeral of Beatrice if she had died. The use of death to define the uxorial status of women was a common rhetorical device in LoDagaa culture. "There is a recognized connection of jural status with place of burial," Goody (1962) noted a generation before this in *Death, Property and the Ancestors*, "which even if it operates mainly in anticipation, has nonetheless a considerable influence over people's actions" (p. 53). However, as I show, the uxorial status of a women could only determine the custody of child if a man had rejected his wife and returned her to her parents; outside the courts it was secondary to considerations entailed in the substantial conjugal payments that the LoDagaa made to ensure the custody of children. In this case Andrew was arguing that because he regarded Beatrice as his wife, they were married in spite of his failure to make conjugal payments, and therefore the child belonged to him.

Gilbert challenged this posterior construction of a marriage by his rival, demonstrating that it did not satisfy his perspective, which saw interests as rights validated by the transfer of conjugal payments and not relying on any wider social recognition. His argument failed because he could not separate the status of the woman from the custody of the child; the two were linked only because the court thought that biology, and not conjugal payments, should determine paternity, and therefore that marriage should be defined socially rather than economically. Given earlier decisions by A. Z. Kpemaal, a previous magistrate in the same court, that were highly critical of custody claims based wholly on a proprietary language that emanated from the substantial wealth entailed in conjugal payments, it also did not help that one of Gilbert's witnesses explained the case to Andrew during cross-examination in the following terms: "If one possesses a she-goat and it goes out and comes back with a kid, the he-goat [i.e., Andrew, the plaintiff] cannot claim ownership of the kid" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 314). In part because of the language used by Gilbert's witness, but also because of his own disposition to do so, as well as the state's willingness to support him, Y. B. Siddique, the magistrate in this case, strongly rejected tying conjugal payments to the custody of children: "This idea of having a cow and the cow going out and bringing back a

calf which automatically belongs to the cow owner must stop. A human being cannot be mistaken for a cow. . . . Our women folk even though they are dowried with cattle cannot be regarded as cattle and driven into the woods to flirt and bring children back home. This cannot be countenanced in these modern times" (Hawkins, 2000, p. 291).

This case was part of a growing effort by some litigants and the court to move away from a jural construction of marriage as an institution based on economic interests and to construct a social definition of marriage from other practices, some of which, such as the hypothesis of death, resonated with local practices, and others, such as the rights of a genitor, relied largely on external recognition. Andrew employed both strategies.

In the courts, the use of death as a rhetorical device to argue about the uxorial status of women was an innovation that came from litigants. In the 1950s, when Goody noted how it was used outside of the courts, it was largely ineffectual in the courts, but by the 1970s it had been endorsed by the courts. At first glance, the willingness of the courts to hear such arguments might seem congruent with indigenous social practices. However, it was actually a distortion of those practices because of the social category that was being defined—that is, marriage (Hawkins, 2002, pp. 229–241). In addition, unlike the first litigants who used this argument in the 1950s to avoid charges of adultery from more older and more powerful men (Hawkins, 2002, pp. 266–276), Andrew was not a marginalized man. As an employee of the Ministry of Agriculture, he was a salaried man who had the benefits of a school education and was very familiar with the external norms and prejudices of the world on paper, hence the heavy emphasis he placed on documenting his claim with paper. Furthermore, he was not using the hypothesis of the death of Beatrice to avoid being sued for adultery but to claim a child. That the court acceded to his argument had much to do with developments that had been underway for three decades, from the time Goody began his fieldwork in Lawra District.

In 1954 the Native Courts of Indirect Rule were replaced by more formal judicial structures with better record keeping and more formal procedures as the British prepared the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast for incorporation within the future independent state of Ghana. These Local Authority Courts, which were staffed with assessors from the local elite of colonial chiefs, were displaced in 1960 by the District Magistrate's Court, which continued to operate until 1991, with magistrates being appointed by the government of Ghana. The increasing distance between local society and the courts, first with the displacement of local chiefs and later with the appointment of a series of lay magistrates in the 1970s who had a decided commitment to an ideology of "modernity," greatly facilitated the type of decision quoted earlier,⁴ however, so too did the legacy of Victorian attitudes toward marriage and colonial efforts to change LoDagaa marriage.

VICTORIAN ATTITUDES AND COLONIAL INTERVENTIONS

It was not until the 1950s that anything vaguely approaching genealogical anxiety first began to affect the LoDagaa, and even then the form it took was very weak. Goody noted that in situations where a woman had been unreservedly and unilaterally rejected by her husband, children of such a union would have normally accompanied the woman to her home as *yirbie* of her agnatic household: "By the formula of rejection, the husband abdicates his position as pater or legal father of the children." However, a decision by the District Commissioner of Lawra around the time of Goody's fieldwork in the early 1950s altered this situation: "He [the district commissioner] maintained that in this case the begetter of the child should be its legal father and this is now generally accepted by the LoWiili in the Gold Coast" (Goody, 1956, p. 55). This decision only pertained to disputes between the households of a man and a woman; it was only later that interventions were made in disputes between the households of rival men to extend this principle of rights over children by virtue of physiological parentage.

By coincidence, this was precisely the time at which many anthropologists were engaged in arriving at a universal definition of marriage. Especially influential was A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's (1950) definition of marriage as "a social arrangement by which a child is given a legitimate position in the society, determined by parenthood in the social sense" (p. 5). This functional definition presumed that legitimacy and illegitimacy were significant social statuses in all societies and that they proceeded from the status of conjugal unions. It appeared in a book that defined the study of both marriage and kinship in sub-Saharan Africa for over a generation; indeed, this definition of marriage is still very much alive in the "autoethnographic" writings of the LoDagaa.⁴ However, for all the apparent hegemony of the idea of LoDagaa marriage in the external world, it was directly contradicted by the social practices that were operative outside the courts and by the rhetoric of many litigants before the courts. The operative principle governing the custody of children among the LoDagaa was, as Goody reported in the 1956, "the child belongs to the man who paid the bridewealth" (p. 64). In other words, conjugal payments did not define marriage, and marriage did not determine the custody of children, but conjugal payments did determine the custody of children.

⁴For a more complete discussion of these changes, see Hawkins (2002, pp. 280–283).

⁵I am borrowing the term "autoethnographic" from Pratt (1992, p. 7). She uses the term to describe representation that "engage with the colonizer's own terms." For examples of this, see Kuukure (1985), Dery (1987), Kpiebaya (1990), and Tengan (1990).

That custody was not the direct result of marriage had been noted indirectly at the beginning of the last century in a report by Major M. Read, the first colonial officer to write an ethnographic account of the LoDagaa. Among other things contained in his report were the following comments: there was no marriage ceremony, women did not make good wives, their unfaithfulness had led to a considerable amount of fighting, and, finally, disputes over the custody of children were very common—so much so, he argued (borrowing from Homer) that “it is a wise child that knows his father” (Hawkins, 2002, pp. 229–230). The latter was true of LoDagaa society only insofar as paternity was not the direct result of a physiological process, much less the status of conjugal unions, and was therefore often contested. However, the sentiment that informed the observation came from the *Odyssey* via Edwardian Britain; it was not an indigenous perception. Read’s worries can be traced back to the sexual anxieties of the preceding generation of British middle-class males. These were fully articulated in McLennan’s *Primitive Marriage*, a text full of concern over “certainty of male parentage,” which stemmed from the hypothetical state of “primitive promiscuity” it was argued that Victorian society had emerged from a long time ago yet whose vestiges were still faintly present (Stocking, 1987, pp. 201–202).

The LoDagaa children born to a woman who still lived under the authority of her household’s ancestors were attached to that household as her father’s children. Writing in the 1950s of the indigenous designation *yirbie*, “housechild,” among the LoWiili, one of several LoDagaa congeries, Goody (1956) referred to such children as “illegitimate,” even though he also noted that they encountered no disabilities, possessing “the rights and duties of a full [household] member in nearly all respects” (pp. 62–64). The same could have been said of adulterine children. According to Goody (1962), there was a recognized distinction between physiological and social paternity, and where the two did not coincide, it was the latter that was socially determinant, and without prejudice. In fact, when descent and filiation did not coincide, it was said of such children “they know their father,” with father referring to genitor rather than pater (p. 94).

The divergence between a universal definition of marriage and LoDagaa experience raises the question of why, then, the question of legitimacy figured so prominently in Radcliffe-Brown’s definition. There was no concept of illegitimacy in many African societies, the LoDagaa among them; this definition of marriage was only partially applicable to large parts of the continent. When the colonial ethnographer R. S. Rattray (1932) traveled through the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Colony (later northern Ghana) in the late 1920s, he noted that among the LoDagaa and other societies of the region, filiation was far less important than considerations of descent: “I am becoming more and more convinced that here . . . a man acquires his clan,

not because of a physiological process, that is, not because he is the son of his father, or because he is the son of his mother, but by a purely artificial process of adoption into a particular clan by his participation after birth in clan sacrifices and by 'eating clan medicine' " (p. 411).

In 1938, three decades after Read's complaint about the number of custody disputes, it was observed that the "allotment of children" was still a persistent source of disputes (Hawkins, 2002, p. 299). Yet what was being disputed in these cases was not who the biological father was but rather the timing of conjugal payments—that is, when the conjugal payments had been presented or returned in terms of when the women became pregnant. As indicated by Read and evident in court records ever since, the ultimate importance of conjugal payments rested almost exclusively on the custody of children. The primacy of children was reflected in the indigenous meanings attached to conjugal payments and had important implications for the nature of conjugal relations. In his discussion of Tallensi marriage, a society similar in many respects to the LoDagaa, Meyer Fortes (1949) explained the importance of children, and hence women, to men in particularly effective terms: "In a society almost devoid of durable goods of great productive or prestige value and possessing few prestige conferring offices . . . [w]ives are the sole means of attaining the supreme end of life for natives, the perpetuation of a man's lineage" (p. 83) whether biologically based or not.

The desire to ensure the survival of the household, rather than genealogical anxiety, explains disputes in the courts over the custody of children and attendant disputes over the uxorial status of women; it also explains the importance and meaning of conjugal payments. Goody (1962) observed that the LoDagaa placed little emphasis on "marriage ceremonies," but he added, "On the other hand, ceremonies centering on the conception and birth of children are more elaborate" (p. 196). Jane Guyer (1989) noted that "what Eurasian traditions refer to as conjugalit is not a key institution in Africa either as the architecture within which people live their sexual and reproductive lives or a channel through which property is transmitted" (p. 429). Yet from the 1920s through the 1940s, anthropologists participated greatly in the "conceptual normalization of marriage," not only within anthropology but also within the institutional framework of colonial and postcolonial courts (Guyer, 1994, pp. 234–235).

Similarly, in an article revisiting his earlier work on bridewealth and dowry with Goody, Stanley Tambiah (1989) observed that in Africa, unlike in Eurasia, there was a separation of rights *in uxorem* from rights *in genetricem*, which meant that conjugal payments served mainly "to secure all children born to a married woman to her husband" (p. 424). In North India, the Eurasian counterpart to Africa in Tambiah's survey, sexual control over a wife and the biological (as opposed to social) legitimacy of children were far more important: "If the wife's 'purity' through exclusive access to her husband was

assured, then the children's status could be directly linked to their father's. . . . the husband's rights in *uxorem* and in *genetricem* were seen as indissolubly merged" (p. 424). These differences were accordingly manifest in "ideological valuations" attached to conjugal practices in Africa and North India. In contrast to the elaborate and explicit emphasis on the formation and dissolution of unions in North India, Tambiah noted that "such ideological and ritual elaborations are conspicuously weak, even absent, as far as I can see, in the African ethnography concerning the conjugal state" (p. 425; see also Goody & Tambiah, 1973).

Instead, much more emphasis is placed in African cultures on "initiation, achievement of membership in ritual societies, steps in age-grades, and, above all, the achievement of ancestorhood at death" (Guyer, 1989, p. 429). We should add the custody of children to the list of features Guyer makes of things that are much more important than marriage in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa because its importance is not in doubt, and, among the LoDagaa at least, its determination was largely independent of considerations about the marriage or the status of conjugal unions.

For many early colonial administrators in Lawra District, the absence of the same ideological valuations and ritual elaborations concerning relationships between men and women was inconvenient and irksome. The annual report of 1907 attributed the inconstancy of LoDagaa women to "the absence of any strict laws or even customs over matrimony" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 230). In 1938, after an intensive period of direct rule, the district commissioner was still able to write that "the ever-recurring problem of the district is the marriage problem" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 230). These administrators did not define marriage, or attempt to ascertain whether it was a category of indigenous experience, or investigate its nature, or place it in the context of other indigenous social practices. Instead, they merely identified it and conveniently ascribed to it all possible social conflicts, thereby ignoring the complex and separate issues that informed disputes, which were often dismissed as "mammy palavers" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 230). This identification of marriage as a social problem was highly significant for the colonial and postcolonial history of the LoDagaa, not least because marriage was presumed to be designed to ensure certainty of paternity.

Although the term "marriage" was used as a means of access to colonial patriarchy and postcolonial legitimacy by individual litigants, this alien concept never achieved sufficient influence outside the courts to actually lead to an alteration or adaptation of practices (see Hawkins, 2002, pp. 279–283, 316–320). Language referring to conjugal unions remained highly contextual; it had to be to accommodate both the autonomy that women had enjoyed before the colonial period, which made unions uncertain, and the rivalry between men, which made them unstable. Among the LoDagaa the terms most commonly translated as marriage were the gender-specific and

locational terms *de pog*, "take a wife," and *kul sir*, "go to a man." There were no terms referring to a conjugal institution; there was only the agreement of man and woman to live with each other. Similarly, terms for the dissolution of unions were equally locational, with the man sending the woman away or the woman leaving the man (Goody, 1956; Kpiebaya, 1990; Kuukure, 1985; Rattray, 1932; Tengan, 1990).

From a comparative perspective, it should not be surprising that among the LoDagaa neither paternity nor custody was the result of marriage. Instead it depended on the presentation or refusal of the first substantial conjugal payment (cowries), which in this context has been more appropriately categorized by both Jack and Esther Goody as "childwealth" rather than bridewealth. Writing of indigenous implications of conjugal payments in the wider Voltaic region, they noted that "the out-going funds are not only—not even perhaps primarily—for sexual (i.e. coital), domestic, or economic services, but relate to the proven procreative powers of the woman. For the payments are not made in a lump sum but by installments, as the children are produced. . . . Bridewealth is largely childwealth" (Goody, 1982, p. 101). Among the LoDagaa, additional conjugal payments (more cowries or cattle) were made after a woman had "proven her fertility" (Goody, 1956, p. 51). Similarly, although Gaspard Dery, the first LoDagaa anthropologist and author of a revision of Goody's work, claimed that "marriage as a social institution is universal," Father Edward Kuukure, a local priest and author of the first book on the LoDagaa published outside Ghana, noted 2 years before that in terms of local conceptual categories, the term marriage was an "abstraction" (Dery, 1987, p. 28; Kuukure, 1985, p. 30).

"FIFTY PESEWA HAS NO CHILD"

There was no evidence that the ruling Goody referred to had had any effect on the decisions of the chiefs in the Local Authority Courts. In a case where the plaintiff claimed a child from his former wife's father, the court ruled in 1954, "Since the father has paid and the woman delivered he [the plaintiff] cannot get the child back" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 301). The dispute centered on whether the plaintiff had rejected the defendant's daughter or whether she had left him of her own accord. Because the plaintiff had demanded that conjugal payments be returned to him before the woman entered into another union, the court decided that the woman had been rejected. On the other hand, another Local Authority Court awarded custody to the father of a man's former wife not only because the father had returned the former husband's conjugal payments, albeit after conception, but also because at the time of conception the woman was not his wife and he was not the biological father of the child.

This case, *Kuuluo Panyanti vs. Timbiile Dazuuri*, was heard in 1959, just at the end of the period of the Local Authority Courts, when the official role of chiefs in hearing disputes was coming to an end. It is interesting not because it explicitly contradicted earlier decisions but because it anticipated later ones, both in its emphasis on physiological paternity and in its attention to the uxorial status of the woman. The court supported Timbiile's custody of his daughter's child, even though she had delivered the child before the conjugal payments had been returned and Kuuluo had remitted 500 cowries when the conjugal payments were returned to him for the maintenance of the child until it was weaned. Goody (1962) noted that this presentation, usually made with a basket of guinea corn, was made "to publicly establish the paternity of a newborn child" (p. 105). Timbiile refused to accept the remittance; if he had, it would have amounted to an acknowledgment of Kuuluo's claim of paternity. Here the court took into consideration the plaintiff's admission "that the girl had not conceived when she left to the father's house," as well as the woman's statement "that if she died the father would be responsible." Because Timbiile had made up a shortfall in the cowries returned to Kuuluo due to the inability of the new husband to raise the whole amount, Timbiile, and not the new husband, was awarded the child (Hawkins, 2002, pp. 301–302). Here the court used the idea of physiological paternity negatively, as a justification for not awarding custody; after all, Timbiile was no more the genitor of the child than Kuuluo. With the exception of two cases in the early 1960s, where magistrates invoked "natural law" to deny indigenous descent principles, it was not until 1973 that a consistent change set in.

As late as 1970 one district magistrate had ruled: "The Dagarti marriage custom allows that no person has any entitlement to any children such person may have with a woman whose dowry has not been paid" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 302). But only a few years later, two successive magistrates began to attack the divergence between physiological and social paternity. In so doing, they were attempting to define marriage independently of conjugal payments. Given that conjugal payments did not define unions and the courts wanted to override indigenous notions of descent, which were determined by conjugal payments, this is not surprising. The courts were also trying to suppress the practice of large conjugal payments and to compress them into a single moment that could act as "a precise legal technique for entering into and sealing the marriage contract" (Fortes, 1937, pp. 6–7).

Strategies for imposing such precision on inherently ambiguous social practices—to make them "exhaustive and exclusive"—varied. For example, Kpemaal ruled in several cases that the presentation of the "greetings," a preliminary and symbolic payment, regardless of subsequent payments, was alone sufficient to establish marriage and, therefore, warranted awarding custody to the genitor of a woman's children in the absence of the completion of

the later, substantial conjugal payments: "If the greetings are accepted, the marriage is declared legal and lawful, and without even paying the dowry, the children born by the girl are for the husband" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 293). In this case the magistrate was reinventing "customary law" for the clear purpose of asserting physiological over social paternity. Similarly, in other cases he argued that the remittance of foodstuffs, rather than the presentation of conjugal payments, was the social practice that should determine the custody of children (Hawkins, 2002, p. 302).

In the case of *Ben Bonkan Isang vs. Dennis Puozuu*, which came before the District Magistrate's Court in 1973, we see a similar trend. The defendant, a mine worker at Tarkwa, had "eloped" with Mary, the plaintiff's elder brother's wife, from her father's house 3 years after her former husband's death. The woman returned to her parents after her husband's death, but the defendant did not make conjugal payments until after the birth of two children. The first child had already been claimed by the plaintiff from the woman's household, but the defendant had refused to hand over the second child, who was still living with him, because even though the child had been conceived before the conjugal payments had been returned, the child was born after they had been returned to the plaintiff. During the hearing the defendant made much of the fact that the plaintiff's household had not presented millet and guinea corn to him after the birth of either child. Following the argument presented by the defendant, the court ignored that he had failed to make the expected conjugal payments, preferring to focus instead on the plaintiff's household's omission of foodstuffs. The court perceived this failure to be a "miserably pitiful negligence which the law cannot side with." It asked the plaintiff, "As a pure Dagaa do you know that you are duty bound by the Dagare customary marriage laws to send a basket of millet and a guinea fowl to your rival and to return an amount of not less than three hundred and not more than five hundred [cowries] out of the dowry to him if you wish to be qualified for any claim in the form of a child?" In fact the plaintiff's household was not in a position to present foodstuffs for the maintenance of the first child because it was born while the woman was in southern Ghana with the defendant. The court was particularly annoyed that in earlier, "highly irresponsible" decisions made by the village and paramount chiefs, the defendant had been denied custody of the second child, thereby "allowing the Defendant to be the loser while the Plaintiff was given the right of the defendant without justification whatsoever. This sort of judgement is a very poor way of administering justice and must be deplored if customary laws are to be applied and upheld in esteem" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 303). The strong, upbraiding language of this decision disguised Kpemaal's own predilection, witnessed in subsequent decisions, for overruling the indigenous principle of descent.

After 1977, the succeeding magistrate, Siddique, attempted to affect similar alterations of social practices. However, his interventions were not as circumspect and did not require the same interpretative fictions. This was possible because in that year the government of Ghana issued a decree allowing the courts to overlook "customary law" in cases of child custody where the child's welfare would be adversely affected (Korbieh, 1990, pp. 50–51).⁶ Here the adverse effects were based on cultural and social rather than economic considerations.⁷ For example, in *Saaluah Kpinibo vs. Motogo Peter Mwinpuo* the court intervened to award custody to the genitor rather than to the child's pater. The defendant had taken one of the plaintiff's household's wives as a wife, and the couple produced a child before the defendant presented the necessary conjugal payments to the woman's household to be returned to the plaintiff. When the conjugal payments were eventually returned to the plaintiff, in cash, the plaintiff had subtracted 50 pesewa (cash substitute for cowries: 50 pesewa in coins equaled half of a 1 cedi banknote), which were to be returned to the defendant in lieu of foodstuffs to establish his paternity. What is especially revealing in the record of this case is that the plaintiff did not base his claim on the status of the union but on the fact that he had been responsible for the conjugal payments, which had not been returned until after the child was born. This was apparent in the defendant's cross-examination of the plaintiff:

Q: Can you remember you told me if during the delivery of the woman she happens to die you would come for your dowries?

A: I said so.

Q: If therefore she had died would you have come for the dead child or the dowries?

A: I would have demanded the dowries.

Q: Now that she has safely given birth why are you demanding the child instead?

A: Because you could not pay the return dowry and the woman gave birth.

Q: I put it to you that the child is mine and not yours.

A: I don't agree with you because according to the custom you did not return the dowries before the woman gave birth.

Q: I put it to you that the fifty pesewa you paid cannot cater for a child. . . .

A: Your parents accepted the fifty pesewa according to custom.

⁶Of relevance here is Article 24 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), which, as Caplan and Torpey (2001, p. 6) note, stipulates that "every child shall be registered immediately after birth and given a name."

⁷Siddique was from Wa, to the south of Lawra District, where the local practices of the Wala gave ascendancy to physiological over social paternity where the two diverged.

Q: I impregnated the woman and she gave birth. Fifty pesewa has no child.

A: The child belongs to me because I paid the dowries. (Hawkins, 2002, p. 304)

The defendant was attempting to discredit the plaintiff's claim for custody by arguing that the woman was actually his wife, in a social sense determined by the question of funeral performances rather than conjugal payments, and that he was the genitor of the child. Both of these arguments had currency in "the world on paper," of which the court was part. The plaintiff did not object to either of these assertions, having based his claim instead on the fact that, regardless of these considerations, his conjugal payments conferred custody to his household over any children the woman had until conjugal payments were returned to them. The questions about the custody of the child and the status of a union, though separate in indigenous terms, were conflated in court.

The court ruled that the defendant was the "legitimate" father of the child in dispute, and that "the Plaintiff has no earthly right to claim the child." Although the recorded evidence did not suggest such a decision, an intervention during the proceedings revealed the reasoning behind the ruling. The magistrate asked the plaintiff, "Do you think it is wise to take someone's blood child into your family and call that person what?" There was no recorded response to this admonishment, but it is clear that the perception of the divergence between physiological and social legitimacy proceeded from the magistrate's own cultural and social sense of propriety. Although in a strict sense this decision contradicted the one offered by his predecessor in the earlier case where foodstuffs rather than blood was cited as the determining factor, because of the circumstantial nature of these rulings, a common underlying judicial intention is apparent despite the shifting substantive points between cases:

To think in modern times that the return of fifty pesewa can claim a child you do not have any connection with biologically is but a dream. . . . Indeed this custom whereby fifty pesewa and millet or grains are returned for someone's biologically born child should be frowned at with all indignation. It needs to be changed as it is outmoded. . . . The idea of waiting to collect illegal children into one's family must cease (cited by Hawkins, 2002, p. 305)

Here the court supported the defendant's argument that the woman was his wife in spite of his failure to provide for the return of the plaintiff's conjugal payments.

This magistrate's undisguised antipathy to conjugal payments was evident in his later ruling in favor of Andrew Maanyugr, where he rejected the claim of the former husband on the grounds that social practices treated women like cattle. That dispute had been decided by "traditional assessors" in the

defendant's favor by virtue of who had made conjugal payments to the woman's parents. In neither of these cases was there any suggestion that the magistrate's decisions were consistent with "custom."

Three years after Andrew Maanyugr came to court, judicial intolerance of LoDagaɔ principles of descent was enunciated in particularly dramatic terms in a case where the plaintiff was demanding the release of two children he had with his former wife, Amporeh, who had since deserted him and returned to her parents. He maintained that it was Amporeh who had persuaded him to defer conjugal payments, only to leave him later in "revolt" after assurances that her household would nevertheless recognize his claim to custody of the children. Whether or not this was true is impossible to assess because in the middle of the case the magistrate abruptly intervened after Amporeh attempted to illustrate the principle that the children of any union belonged to the household that had made the relevant conjugal payments. Commenting on one of the plaintiff's witnesses, Augustine Mwankurinaa, Amporeh explained to the court, "We have earlier mentioned that one cannot be robbed of a child for another. But in this instance the Plaintiff's witness himself was born by one Zuobogu. But in view of the custom and the dowries not paid the present father's name Mwankurinaa had to be attached to the witness. Why is it so?" The magistrate responded, "This is exactly what the court is attempting to abolish. In this instance [case] the children should belong to the Plaintiff as their natural father so that your insult to the Plaintiff's witness is not in any way transferred to the two children in the near future" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 306).

Before the 1950s, marriage, or the status of unions, had never determined the custody of children. By the 1970s the district court began conflating issues of custody with those of the status of unions. It did this to be able to award custody to biological fathers rather than to the households that had paid the childwealth. Increasingly the court ignored conjugal payments when defining the status of unions. Sensing this shift in the court's disposition, litigants began paying more attention in their rhetoric to the uxorial status of women to define conjugal unions as legal marriages that the court would recognize. Where conjugal payments did not coincide with biological paternity or the residence of a woman, they were often ignored. In attempting to deny the social and economic significance of conjugal payments, the courts were trying to define both marriage and paternity independently of cowries. This change might seem at first to have been more felicitous with the logic of social practices than the literal reading of conjugal payments as commercial transactions, which had been enshrined in court decisions since the 1950s; but it was merely transposing another literal reading—that of biology—for the economic model that was implicit in administrative and anthropological interpretations and often explicit in the representations of some litigants.

TEXTUAL ANXIETIES

The changing attitudes of the courts were also reflected in the representations of the local literate elite. Most significant among these writings is a monograph meant to present an alternative survey of the LoDagaa, by Gaspard Dery (1987), a graduate of the University of Ghana, which was published in 1987. Although he complained about some aspects of Goody's work, especially its allegedly esoteric nature, Dery's real reason for producing "a simple and comprehensive" monograph on the Dagaaba (LoDagaa) was to refute accusations concerning their alleged matriliney and to correct apparent misrepresentations of their conjugal practices. At the heart of both endeavors was a concern over how paternity was determined. He denied the notion that "housechildren" were claimed by the woman's household when they resulted from a "marriage in the making," that is, where birth had occurred before the presentation of the first substantial conjugal payment, or where the woman was a "spinster." This assertion seems to have been necessary because Dery derived his definition of marriage from anthropological discourse. He argued that such children did not enjoy the advantages of social legitimacy: "Social Fatherhood is only attained by the children who are offsprings of properly constituted marriages" (p. 2).

By the 1980s, biological as opposed to social paternity was gaining legitimacy not only in the courts but also in the written accounts by the local elites. Dery (1987) argued that when such children were claimed it was "never imagined that these children can be fixed in their descent line. These children cannot trace their descent to a common ancestor in that clan" (p. 45). Thirty years earlier, Goody had explained in some detail just how such children were integrated into their mother's household, being placed under the protection of the ancestors of the mother's lineage and taking their place in its affairs.

Dery was reacting directly to a short monograph that had been published in 1982 by Gabriel Tuurey (1982), another graduate of the University of Ghana, as well as schoolteacher and local historian, and only indirectly to Goody's work in as much as he felt it supported some of Tuurey's claims. The latter's monograph set out to explain the origins of the people of the region and to define an overall ethnic identity, which he referred to as Dagaba (LoDagaa). Significantly, Tuurey was seeking to come to terms with his "roots"—namely, the suggestion that members of his clan were "descendants of Mossi ancestors." This path of historical investigation led him to appreciate the greatness of the Mossi—immigrants from the east—and to ignore the stories he had been told in his youth that portrayed them as "dirty, lousy and despicable." Tuurey set out to make the "noble and courageous" Mossi, "who delight in displaying masculinity, martial adour and the love of justice," an integral part of the formation of the people he called Dagaba (p. 4).

The patrilineal character of the Dagaba provided Tuurey (1982) with a coherent perspective that gave his theory a trajectory. Although conceding that the Dagaba were the product of several migrations by different people, he refused to consider matrilineal inheritance of wealth as part of the same cultural and linguistic zone. Tuurey was forced to concede that the Dagaba had acquired many cultural traits from people to the west of the Black Volta—xylophones, filing of teeth, piercing of ears, wearing of discs in the perforated lips of women, and domestic architecture—that did not exist to the east, the putative direction of Dagaba origins. In his historical explanation, migrants from these areas had brought only their language and strict patriliney. Tuurey stated emphatically that the Dagaba were patrilineal “and would not accept the dominance of uterine kinship in their society”; this differentiated them from the Lobi to the west, who had “strong matrilineal tendencies” (Tuurey, 1982, pp. 19, 22). Echoing a line of evolutionary reasoning going back to McLennan, Tuurey argued that matrilineal inheritance arose from biological uncertainty over parentage—a problem that had never afflicted the Dagaba, “who were sure of the chastity and faithfulness of their wives” (p. 19). The clear implication was that “matriclan tendencies” were the consequence of a relative absence of sexual morality.

Dery's (1987) work arose from the public debate in the pages of the local Catholic newspaper following the publication of Tuurey's pamphlet. The most significant concerned whether the LoDagaa were patrilineal or matrilineal by descent and inheritance. Dery argued that the devolution of movable property through the uterine line among a few congeries was not tantamount to matriliney but rather to dual descent, or more precisely dual inheritance.⁸ Therefore, he argued, “allegations . . . that the Dagaaba [those people that Tuurey excluded from his definition of Dagaba—one “a” rather than two] are matrilineal by inheritance are unfounded and must be dismissed” (p. 20). By focusing on the continuities of kinship patterns, such as patrilineal descent, shared patriclans, and virilocal residence, instead of what he regarded as mere anomalies in inheritance patterns, Dery brought all LoDagaa congeries under the same classificatory umbrella, that is, Dagaaba. Unlike Tuurey, who argued that the people in the very northwestern reaches of Lawra District were matrilineal, Dery argued that all Dagaaba were patrilineal. Against Tuurey's contention that inheritance of movable wealth along the uterine line was the result of sexual promiscuity, Dery, drawing from oral traditions, argued that where this practice had arisen it had been the result of generational tensions between fathers and sons. In the stories he cited, a man was given assistance by his sister's children when his own refused to help him with farming. After the work was finished, the father de-

⁸Here Dery very much relied on the work of Goody (1961), which he criticized elsewhere, using it to override Tuurey's matrilineal classification.

clared that in the future his maternal relatives should have a claim on his property.

Throughout the colonial period, the LoDagaa had been known to colonial administrators as either Lobi (Dery's Dagaaba) or Dagarti (Tuurey's Dagaba). These colonial ethnonyms, as well as the ostensible differences between them, were colonial inventions. Half a century into colonial rule, on the eve of Ghanaian independence, Goody was able to point out that all these people spoke the same language—Dagaare—and shared many other features, all of which justified applying a single sobriquet to them—LoDagaa—in recognition of these similarities and to differentiate the Lobi of colonial discourse from the Lobi proper, that is, people who spoke Lobi and lived west of Lawra District in what was then Haute Volta, now Burkina Faso.

The original two ethnonyms, Lobi and Dagarti, played an important part in colonial thinking and were eventually assimilated by the LoDagaa themselves. During the first generation of colonial rule, the reputation that the Lobi had for treachery and violence was replaced with one of hard work and honesty; meanwhile, the Dagarti came to acquire a reputation for resistance and sullenness. The Lobi came to be seen in a more positive light than the Dagarti, despite the greater prejudice of initial descriptions, because of their seemingly more positive reaction to colonial rule following their initial hostility to colonial conquest. The rehabilitation of the Lobi in administrative eyes might have continued had it not been for the discovery of evidence at the end of the 1920s suggesting they were more "primitive" than their Dagarti neighbors to the east. This time their primitiveness was measured in terms of social evolution rather than cultural pathology.

In 1927, St. J. Eyre-Smith, a colonial officer, noted in a report on political oppression in Lawra District that some of the people previously classified as Lobi were really Dagarti. This reclassification was based on his discovery that among the former inheritance was "through their mother," whereas among the latter it was "father to son" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 89). Social primitiveness soon replaced earlier discourses on Lobi political intemperance. In 1932, Rattray concluded from his own fieldwork that the people he called the Lobi, "perhaps the most primitive of any of the tribes in the Northern Territories," had reached a transitional stage in an evolution from matrilineal to patrilineal descent:

As we have seen, in one respect the transition is complete—the son belongs to the clan—that is totemic group—of his father, not of his mother. . . . In spite of this important breakaway from the older traditions . . . inheritance of property is still through the sister's son, though here again we find that time and changes are causing the full practice to become irksome, and it will not be long, I believe, before the Lobi also follow the system now in force among their near neighbours. (Rattray, 1932, p. 433)

In 1938, a colonial officer corroborated Rattray's view of a transition, noting that although children now belonged to their father's clan, "originally, amongst the Lobis, this cannot have been so; but the transition has reached the stage where, for personal relationships, the clan is becoming more important than the blood group" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 89). Whereas matrilineal inheritance was equated with unsophisticated biological reckoning, patrilineal descent was seen as the result of social development.

The shift in classificatory emphasis helps explain the astounding anomaly between the census statistics of 1921 and 1931 for Lawra District, during which time the Dagarti population doubled while the Lobi population remained static. The same thing occurred between the censuses of 1948 and 1960. Yet when the "tribal" statistics of the 1948 census are compared with those of 1960, it is clear that other factors besides new criteria for classification must have been involved in these anomalies (Hawkins, 2002, pp. 90–91). The use of inheritance patterns as a criterion for ethnic ascription can account only in part for this second set of disparities. Shifting self-definition in terms of the Lobi/Dagarti dichotomy must also have been an important influence. As early as 1918 one district commissioner, commenting on the names under which military recruits registered, noted, "It is curious that so many Lobis have changed their names on enlisting and enlisted as Dagartis as if ashamed of the name Lobi. But I think it is now a thing of the past. One recruit however who left Lorha in the spring of this year as Mora Lobi comes back with his discharge certificate as Mora Dagarti" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 91).

The perceived differences between the Lobi and Dagarti and the explanations offered for them were largely imaginary. The word "matrilineal" was highly misleading. The allegedly matrilineal Lobi of Lawra District inherited only movable wealth through the uterine line; land passed patrilineally, just as residence everywhere was virilocal. This social system was more appropriately described by Goody (1961) as one of dual descent.

Goody conducted most of his fieldwork in the last years of the colonial era, when there were still only a few literate LoDagaa and even fewer LoDagaa who had traveled outside the Northern Territories for anything but labor migration. That situation changed after independence, when the LoDagaa gained access to postsecondary secular education and with the development of an indigenous Catholic clergy, who often went abroad to study. By the 1980s the term "Lobi" had almost entirely disappeared in northwest Ghana as a term of self-designation. Even so, among indigenous writers on identity—most of them Western-educated teachers and priests—matrilineal inheritance of wealth became an important factor in how ethnic identities were articulated (see Lentz, 1994). It is true that these anxieties that informed the monographs of both Tuurey and Dery were articulated in writing as opposed the spoken discourse of litigants, but the anxieties them-

selves came from external texts about the LoDagaa and "the mother's brother controversy" rather than from deep within the psychological recesses of LoDagaa culture.

CONCLUSION

Just as Tuurey and Dery inherited their worries about "matrilineal tendencies" from the world of texts, the type of indignation that we see in the rulings discussed earlier from the District Magistrate's Court emanated from the anxiety of the magistrates, not the litigants. Unlike that of the magistrates, the genealogical anxiety of the litigants was not over uncertainty of paternity but over the new implications that "the world on paper"—the court and its refusal to allow cowries or cows (conjugal payments) to deny the rights of any genitor, the state and its advocacy of "modernity" and wish for a literal reading of fatherhood, and the hospital and its biological understanding of paternity—was suggesting that a narrowly defined and particular form of paternity should have for the custody of children. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, Goody noted that writing forces the elimination of social ambiguity and the emergence of genealogical classifications that "may be quite divorced from the situation of the (oral) actor, whose field of perception is less differentiated, more homogeneous, than the one forced upon the literate reader." The magistrates in these cases from the 1970s and 1980s, where cowries violated the "exhaustive and exclusive" truth accorded to blood, were acting as literate readers; the literalism of writing was disposed to favor the naturalism of biology. Some of the litigants engaged in similar readings, but they had to disguise these views by reinterpreting local practices at the same time that they appealed to external biases.

This discussion brings to mind two important points. First, in the 1950s, before attempts were first made by the colonial government to interfere with practices regulating the custody of children, the emphasis on conjugal payments in determining the custody of children among the LoDagaa was even more pronounced than among the Tallensi in the 1930s. Fortes argued that when a Tallensi woman left her husband and "married" another man with whom she had a child only to return to her former spouse, the second husband was able to redeem the child from the woman's original husband even if he had not fulfilled "the formalities of marriage." He did so by presenting the relevant conjugal payments: "His right rests upon the fact of his acknowledged paternity. Tallensi attach so much importance to having children that they generally make every effort to assert this right" (Fortes, 1949, p. 27). In analogous circumstances, Goody (1956) observed that the LoDagaa ignored or suppressed the physiological dimension: "Formerly, if a wife ran away, remarried and then returned to her first husband, the young chil-

dren by the second husband would be attached to the clan of the first, although the payment of bridewealth at the appropriate times might appear to give the second husband the right to his children" (p. 56). In other words, physiological paternity was much less important among the LoDagaa than among the Tallensi, despite an additional generation of colonial rule and, hence, exposure to writing "in the colloquial sense."

Why this might have been so is difficult to say. However, one reason might be that the exposure to the matrilineal devolution of moveable property to the east of the LoDagaa, among the Lobi proper. Low certainty of paternity, Bloch and Sperber (2002) argue, cannot lead to "the institutionalization of matrilineality." However, they suggest that the opposite might be true: "the lower confidence in paternity in matrilineal society is an effect rather than (or as much as) a cause of the system of descent" (p. 731). The idea that emphasis on biological paternity might be less pronounced in systems of dual descent is provisional, but it deserves further investigation.

The second point is the relationship between group identities and personal identification. In 1918 the process of labor migration and colonial surveillance gave birth to Mora Lobi (as well as to his double, Mora Dagarti). In doing so, it created identities that became increasingly important, unofficial passports for the LoDagaa to deal with the external world. By recognizing Andrew Mwinkum (son of Andrew Maanyugr) in 1980, the District Magistrate's Court was beginning to count individual identification in much the same way that the colonial state had counted, both literally and figuratively, "tribal" identities. Andrew Mwinkum became the first person in almost four generations of court records whose paternity was literally and figuratively tied to "the world on paper."

The controversy over group identities among the LoDagaa in the 1980s was just beginning to be mirrored in disputes over individual identification in the courts, where writing was becoming as important as cowries in the process of determining personal identities. The case of Andrew Mwinkum is an early sign of a transition between what Goody (1968) called restricted literacy and what the French sociologist Claudine Darby has described as "the land where everything is written down, where individual and social identities are inscribed in the innumerable records that organize people's lives" (cited in Caplan & Torpey, 2001, p. 2). For the majority of LoDagaa, accession or acquiescence to restricted literacy is quite advanced, but paper (or "blood") paternity is still some way off even though the tensions between it and social (or "cowry") paternity are clearly evident in the cases discussed in this chapter. However, despite Derrida's confidence to the contrary, there is nothing inevitable about the outcome of this conflict. Cowries may well prevail over paper, even if at the same time LoDagaa male intellectuals continue to feel impelled to make assertions about the constancy and faithfulness of the LoDagaa women, the stability and regularity of their conjugal unions, and

the decidedly patrilineal character of their culture in an effort to refute externally derived stereotypes.

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The Writing of Social Organization and the Literate Situating of Cognition: Extending Goody's Social Implications of Writing

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Writing is a means of communicating between people across time and space. Writing can serve to mutually orient attention, align thoughts, coordinate actions, and transact business among people who are not physically copresent as well as among those who are. These social accomplishments depend on the text inducing appropriate meanings in the minds of the receivers, so literacy activates psychological mechanisms by which we make meaning and align ourselves to the communications of others. These psychological operations activated by literate practices may induce pleasures in themselves and evoke attention to our own inner processes of feeling and thought, such that we may find reading and thinking to be ends in themselves. Nonetheless, reading and writing are deeply social processes, connecting people's thoughts, perceptions, experiences, and projects into wider collectivities of organized action and belief.

The scholarship on the consequences of literacy that Jack Goody helped initiate over 40 years ago reminds us that these inscription and interpretation practices affected the people who engaged in literate practices, that there was more to literacy than was to be found in the text. Goody as anthropologist was aware that cultural practice affects the development of individuals and their forms of thinking as well as the communal life and so was willing to contribute the discussion of the cognitive consequences of literacy. But he never forgot the important social and cultural consequences of literacy. His account of how literacy has influenced the organization of society provides the starting point for understanding the complexity of modern social life and

how it is maintained and evolves through literate practices. Such a social account of literacy as I develop in this chapter helps us understand the kinds of meanings produced in the course of our social and cultural life and how those meanings foster activity within and between social groups. Further, such an account suggests how forms of literate participation shape our attention and thought in ways even more profound than first proposed concerning the cognitive consequences of literacy.

Because we live in a social world pervaded by literate practice transacted in semiprivacy, it is understandable that early inquiry into consequences of literacy focused on cognition. Although reading and writing can be group activities with high degrees of interaction, contemporary forms of literate practice are carried out while insulated from people immediately around us to attend to the words of people distant in time and space. Reading and writing consequently are closely linked to the contents of our minds, and we are likely to view the greatest effects of literacy to be psychological. We associate the historical growth of literacy with the cultural growth of interiority and individuality of conscience and consciousness. Moreover, because texts may travel in time and space, far from the heat of face-to-face interaction, we tend to attribute the changes literacy brings to our minds as cognitive, even though we are ready to recognize some texts as quintessential statements of passion. Further, because written communication takes such a different form than spoken communication, inscribing a visual and often enduring medium rather than transiently reorganizing air to momentarily catch the attention of another, we are rightly fascinated by the affordances of the medium and the processes by which we interact with it. Finally, because of our concern for literacy instruction, we rightly worry about how each person interacts with text through writing and reading.

The development of literate, educated individuals with extensive interiority is itself a sociocultural development that in turn creates new social formations and communal ways of life—whether in monasteries consisting of individuals living in the aura of the same book, in bureaucracies where individual work is regulated by textualized procedures and directed toward creating documentary records for future action, or in universities that bring together in dialogue people of varied, extensive reading. Though written words move minds, minds move people, and people move in the social and material worlds. Changes in our communicative lives have consequences for our lives in these worlds, and these changes, rather than the changes inside our minds, were the central interest explored by Jack Goody in his germinal 1963 essay with Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy." This essay discusses how literacy affects such social and cultural issues as collective memory, communal self-image, political participation, complexity of cultural knowledge and available cultural repertoire, division of labor, complexity of institutions, and social differentiation and stratification. The various essays col-

lected by Goody (1968) in the follow-up volume *Literacy in Traditional Societies* also examine the particular sociocultural formations within which literacy takes its unique shape.

REMEMBERING THE SOCIAL

After the more cognitive book *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Goody, 1977), Goody rearticulated and expanded an analysis of the social and cultural implications of literacy in *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society*. This 1986 book synthesizes archeological data of early literate societies with ethnographic studies of recently literate societies to delineate literacy-based transformations in economics, religion, law, and government. In each domain, Goody sees literacy supporting class stratification, extended reach of institutions, and change in the self-conscious definition of the institutional entities and their practices. These changes are not determinative—they do not happen in all cases, nor do they always work out in the same ways. Further these four domains do not stand fully apart and distinct. In different societies the relation between the church, the economy, law and government work out differently, with alliances, combinations, and dominations of different orders and flavors. Nor are these major institutional domains comprehensive; for example, Goody does not examine separately the later-developing systems of scholarship, knowledge maintenance, and knowledge production that grew out of collections of documents in the domains he does examine. Nor does he examine the later systems of secular cultural production that grow out of both public sphere and commercial interests.

Some of the social consequences Goody identifies may be seen as direct changes enabled immediately by writing—such as the facilitation of common sets of beliefs to be held constant over time and across distance, or the stabilization and extension of legal regimes based on a written legal code, or the generalization of moral principles abstracted beyond local judgments in local conditions, or the ability to collect records. These consequences, however, soon ramify in complex ways. Bureaucracies develop to maintain the records and to exercise the monitoring powers afforded by the records. Religions form using the text as a center of identity, ritual, schooling, and proselytization. Reform and heretical movements form on the basis of dialectically written countertexts. To provide for participation in bureaucracy, economy, or religious hierarchy, schools then begin to take a special place within the community, with consequences for family life and the development of the young. These new institutions, particularly with the introduction of schooling, depending on how they play out, may become vehicles of social mobility or the reproduction of class advantage. These changes follow increasingly different paths of cultural creativity and differentiation. The complexities of

history breed the particularities of each way of life in constantly changing and differentiating societies. But each evolving way of life incorporates an infrastructure based on literacy. That literate infrastructure provides, I believe, the greatest implication of the social story Goody tells. The scholar's task then is not to find the universal social consequences of literacy but to understand how each society has elaborated a way of life on the matrix of literacy, with the consequence that each participant in the society to some degree participates in the particularized literate systems, whether or not each participant reads or writes.

AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIOCULTURALLY LOCATED LITERATE PRACTICES AND SENSIBILITIES

Niko Besnier's (1995) study *Literacy, Emotion and Authority: Reading and Writing on a Polynesian Atoll* describes the literate practices that have emerged in the last century and a half as an oral society came in colonial contact with Western literate forms of religion, economy, and governance. The forms of literacy the islanders of Nukulaelae developed reflected the local interests, motives, and affiliations of the inhabitants at the same time as accommodating to imposed orders. The new forms of literate life reorganized the islanders' intragroup relations as well as relations with surrounding communities of those who left the island in search of employment. Literacy is now such an essential part of the cultural life that by Besnier's report all the inhabitants of Nukulaelae are literate—a remarkable 100%. This universality of literacy attests to the fact that one cannot live as part of the contemporary community without participating through reading and writing. Yet the forms of reading and writing are limited, mostly to Bible reading, sermon preparation and delivery, and letter writing with overseas community members.

The local genre of letter writing draws on traditional preliterate community values, traditional leave-taking emotionality, as well as Christian themes of charity to remind the off-islanders emotionally of their bonds to those at home and the obligation to provide material support and goods, placing great obligations on the off-islanders who work hard with limited earnings. Similarly the practices of sermon writing are local reinterpretations of traditional island oratorical genres with Western sermonizing genres, as evolved within local cultural struggle within the community and with Western proselytizing mediated through missionaries recruited from different Pacific island communities. In both cases the forms are local and particular, serving the immediate needs of islanders and part of the evolution of the personalities, affect, and social roles of islanders. But they are also located within much larger systems of literate religions, economy, and governance, reshaped in local form.

These are just the kinds of transformations of societies, cultures, and people that Goody identified as the consequences of literacy.

Remarkably, however, Besnier (1995) positions his work as theoretically opposed to Goody's. Besnier attributes to Goody an autonomous view of literacy as a form of technological determinism, something Goody denied from the beginning. But I think the larger misunderstanding is that Besnier so focuses on the local agency and the formation of locally constructed sensibilities that he misses the larger structural importance of the history and institutions that he includes in the admirable ethnographic completeness of the account. These islanders make their own lives and their forms of subjectivities but not in the conditions of their own making, to paraphrase Giddens (1984) paraphrasing Marx (1963). That is the import of Goody's history of the role of literacy in shaping the social institutions.

In such examples we see the indirect psychological, cognitive consequences of literacy through restructuring the cultural and social environment within which each person experiences, thinks, and acts with available cultural tools and socially available responses. In Besnier's (1995) account, one of the key mechanisms for the structuring of messages and action within cultural forms is genre. Both primary genres of local writing that Besnier studies—letters and sermons—mix Western and local elements of expression, action, and role. Both also draw on Western and local genres. These recognized forms of social communication provide hybrid spaces that allow local action within reproduced elements of social structure and organization of action. They are a means by which society is reproduced and changed simultaneously by new individual acts drawing on culturally available communicative opportunities, much in the way suggested by structuralist sociologists, such as Giddens (1984) and by phenomenological sociologists, such as Schutz and his students (Bergmann, 1993; Bergmann & Luckmann, 1994; Luckmann, 1992; Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). The role of genres in structuring social situations, relations, and actions has been a major theme of genre theory, as I discuss later.

The particular cultural communicative opportunities of these genres were made possible by literacy. Letters and preparatory inscription of an intended speech and its use in guiding future sermons are in a direct sense made possible by writing. Although paler equivalents may have been accomplished in societies without literacy by sending brief messages along with travelers in the hope that they would meet the desired receiver and would remember something like the intended message or by mental rehearsal of planned speeches,¹ writing made such activities more convenient, elaborate, reliable, and frequent. It is not just the particular textual forms that emerged with

¹Rhetoric's interest in memory has its origin in the need to be able to remember prepared topics for delivery.

writing; it was the entire set of cultural and social circumstances that surrounded the communications that had writing built into them. The letters were located in systems of commerce, property, immigration, cash economies, wage labor, scheduled ship traffic, and a thousand other literately supported systems that made possible and desirable just such a particular use of letters by these participants at the same time. The sermons sat within histories of scriptural religion and missionary activities to spread the book and to set up bureaucratic systems of governance. They further sat within the Western tradition of published sermons imported onto the atoll as well as the traditions of clerical training bodily carried by the missionary preachers. Complex politics among British missionaries, Samoan missionaries, and the inhabitants of Nukulaelae further influenced the particular hierarchical structures on the island and the particular sermon writing and delivery practices on the island.

AGENT, AGENCY AND THE INFLUENCE OF LITERACY

The example of Nukulaelae suggests that literacy's influence on social interaction (as well as attention and thought) is pervasive but does not operate in a direct and determined causal way. Rather literacy is part of the stuff out of which a way of life is made—it is an essential element of the experiences and acts of individuals, but it is not the cause of them. Literate action is always a situated choice by people in particular circumstances. But the use of literacy within the action facilitates some developments and makes less likely others. Literacy does not determine a fixed path of consequences, not just because events are complexly multicausal but because the uses of literacy depend on agentive, strategic choices of actors. Can we say wood causes or implies a chair? Can we say the chair is the consequence of cutting and carving tools, or a tradition of design, or an interstate system of commerce that encourages the production of manufactured goods, or cultural patterns that encourage eating at a table, or cultural tastes for well-turned matched sets of furniture in rooms designated for dining? Of course not. But each contributes to the particular chairs in my dining room. But also required are the actions of many people to harvest the wood, make the tools and use them to cut and carve the wood, design and construct the chair, invest in the factories, organize the front office, merchandise and sell, move that chair, and so on. These actions may be carried out in purely typical ways but ways that nonetheless require intention and commitment; other actions may involve innovations or adaptations to local situations that will have consequences for changes in chairs, their costs, and distribution. The wood or the saw haven't caused any of this, but it couldn't have happened without some material of construction and means of manufacture.

Thus in looking at how people may have used literacy in social interaction and in organizing and structuring ongoing activities and institutions we need not attribute the agency to literacy itself. The agency remains with the human actors who developed and carry out life activities using literacy, even if there were unforeseen consequences to their choices, with literacy fostering something different from what they anticipated. Literacy is a constitutive part of a matrix of complex cultural and social formations of modern society where we respond to institutions, beliefs, and groups of people located far from our daily life and that encompass far more people than you can shake a stick at, as the old saying goes.

GENRE: GIVING SHAPE TO LITERATE INTERACTIONS

To understand how new literacy-based social structures created new literacy-saturated situations calling for literate forms of action, let us return to the issue of genre. A group of theorists and researchers largely based in rhetoric and composition studies has elaborated an extended genre theory that explains why genres would take a central visible role in contemporary society. This group, following the lead of Carolyn Miller (1984), has combined genre theory with Schutz's ideas of typification in the production of the everyday life world.² The recognizable genres of a society provide an available repertoire of forms, actions, and motives. The forms are ways of seeing which acts are available that are appropriate to the moment as you see it—what you can do, what you might want to do. For example, you may perceive a moment in a disagreement as offering possibilities of either a rejoinder or an apology. Your motives, goals, and plans will take shape within those two constructions of potential action. You would not even consider appropriate filing a legal brief—and if somehow you found a motive and means to pursue that path, that would radically change the nature of the situation and your counterpart's set of genred options. Such a theory of genre, consistent with that of Volosinov (1986), differs from most other theories of genre in focusing on the positive force of the utterance enacted within generic form more than the limitations, regulations, or textual features. Accordingly, this theory also emphasizes the strategic agency of the user of the genre, attempting to carry forward his or her interests through one of the recognizably appropriate forms of response. Both utterer and auditor draw on their experiences of kinds of utterances to make sense of the situation and typify the moment and

²For a review of the literature on genre studies in this tradition, see Russell (1997). More recent collections within this approach include Coe, Lingard, and Teslenko (2002) and Bazerman and Russell (2003).

response. The personal archive or repertoire can be drawn on, evaluated, reshaped, recomposed for both utterer and auditor in light of their perspectives and interests, but the degree of congruence between the genres invoked in production and reception determine the degree of congruence of the mutual understandings of situation and utterance. This is why the development of a socially shared repertoire of situations, forms, actions, and motives—embodied in genres—is essential for high degrees of mutual understanding, coordination, and cooperation—even as part of creating opposed or differentiated positions.

Although genre is important for the organization and interpretation of face to face talk, the rich and complex embodied signaling of mutual intelligibility or lack thereof and the constant unfolding of interchange by which the situations evolve provide real-time guideposts for constant adjustment of sense making and adjustment of future utterance. In written language the writer-reader relationship is much more tenuous and uncertain.³ Messages rather than arising in recognizable physical surroundings come from a distance, stripped of some of the embodied context that provides orientation clues. In the earliest days of letter writing, a messenger bearing the identity of the king carried the letter, and the message was delivered with some ceremony to reproduce the royal presence. Now most texts sit in among other texts or with few external orientation clues. The reader and writer need the genre to create a communicative meeting place legible from the very form and content of the text. Further, once that place is recognizably presented, readers may easily lose their place if the text starts doing something different. Thus, the push to remain within genre and use it for positive effect in writing is much greater than in face-to-face interaction, where footing may be changed rapidly and subtly and the success of the change can be monitored in real time.

Even when communicated in familiar genres, writing is in some ways more fragile than face-to-face interaction. Written communication is easily disrupted through loss of attention, imposition of alternative unintended frames, multiple proliferation of alternative meanings, or the construction of hostile, unsympathetic countertexts. Even sympathetic extended interpretation can lead to proliferating meaning, especially as motivated by different interests—both cognitive and material. Thus, interpretive professions, such as law, philosophy, theology, or literary studies, rarely lead to definitive meanings except through some hierarchical ruling, such as in the courts or a supreme religious body.

³This thinness of situational markings in written texts led some in the first generation of consequences of writing scholars to call written texts contextless. Rather, I claim that removal from an immediate set of circumstances require special kinds of textual work by writers and readers to establish the communicative situation.

These frailties of written communication create an even heavier burden on genres to define the situation and align participants to congruent roles, so that they can reach some degree of coordinated sense. This is especially true in fields where there is much at stake or bureaucratic consistency is required. Thus, well-worn, well-typified language is used in legal contracts, police reports, and similar documents, where the only novel portions are the particulars of the case. Similarly, highly structured questionnaires are used to direct and constrain the gathering of bureaucratic information. Also in situations where attention is likely to be distracted or peripheral, information is presented in easily recognizable forms with redundant information and text organization devices, as in news stories. Every additional degree of novelty requires higher degrees of attention and alignment from the audience as well as introduction of possibilities for divergent sense making. The divergence in sense making of any text often does not surface to socially recognizable disagreement because few opportunities arise to compare or make accountable different readings of a text, except for situations specifically structured for that purpose, such as reading comprehension exams, classroom discussions of the interpretation of a text, or courtroom disputes over the applicability of specific laws to the case at hand. But even in most classrooms or monitoring of job performance, references to text meaning are so broad-brush as to not uncover focused differences of interpretation. To avoid difficulties that might come from interpretation, students and employees often stick closely to the authoritative words of textbooks, company documents, teachers, or supervisors. Sticking close to the received word encourages shallower readings that do not get one into deeper waters by wondering what the words might actually mean.

THE ABSTRACTION OF SITUATIONS AND SITUATED ACTIONS

Despite the difficulties of interpreting texts from a distance, today we have many highly specialized forms of communication that are embedded in specialized practices, beliefs, knowledge, and stances of particular social formations. Academic disciplines and subdisciplines, such as rational choice economics; professions and subprofessions, such as patent law; bureaucracies, such as social services; religious and philosophic communities, such as Christian existentialists; and participants in elite cultural activities, such as postmodern poetry, can orient toward and make sense of texts that are unfamiliar and opaque to those outside of those social groupings. Ability to understand the genres of these fields—including the kinds of roles and stances one adopts, interpretive procedures, forms of contention, and uses to be made of the texts—is the result of substantial enculturation and apprenticeship.

ship that make these odd and particular forms of communication familiar, meaningful, and intelligible in detail and nuance.

These texts no longer are situated in familiar forms of face-to-face interaction but rather create new meeting places that are embedded in a world of literate interchange. Taxpayers communicate with their government in some abstracted space of machine-enhanced accountancy. In most cases, the tax form is "read" by a machine, with only a few samples ever coming to the attention of a human reader or what is called an auditor. In reading and writing philosophy, the professional philosopher joins in the great conversations of philosophy in an imagined place situated above and beyond any seminar room free from real-time but still respecting the chronology of authorship.⁴ Of course, this discussion uses skills honed in classrooms and is rehearsed in numerous seminars but acknowledges contributions beyond those face-to-face locales to become part of the discussion in the literature.

But when literacy began 5,000 or so years ago, the only places that were recognizable were the actual places of face-to-face communication. A number of written genres originated as transcriptions or reproductions or reenactments or transformations or preparatory scripts for recognizable public events—such as recitations of odes and epics, or dramatic performances, or philosophic dialogs, or commands of the king. Or they were records of the counting house, to be contained within the accounting and record-keeping practice of the church or royalty or rich. Texts at first were often used for memory purposes so that the original person could reconstruct the meaning, intent, and situational purposes behind the inscriptions. But another means of making writing socially intelligible is for it to take on the voice of direct address while providing all the situational information necessary for the scene, relationship, and occasion to be reconstructed by the reader. This is the form of a letter, headed by a date and place of origin, specifying an addressee who is directly spoken to (typically in the second person), and undersigned by the speaker. The letter is then taken to be in the voice and name of the undersigned who is often represented in the first person. Even when a king's letter is drafted by an advisor and read aloud by a nuncio, the voice of the king remains. The body of the letter typically narrates the specific situation that occasions the correspondence and often refers to the current well-being or activities of both correspondents. Further greetings, closings, internal compliments, and personal statements and other devices build goodwill between the parties. This establishing of social roles and the building of goodwill so as to reinforce the relationship necessary for the commission of the business of the letter was a particular concern of the medieval guides for letter writing, the *ars dictaminis*, even though social relations were already embedded within hierarchies of church and state (Murphy, 1971; Perelman,

⁴See Geisler (1994).

1991). From letters' overt representations of social situations, relationships and actions, more abstracted forms of interaction gradually emerged that take place only in the world of written communication. Letters have had a role in the formation of military and governmental directives and reports, philosophic treatises, church doctrinal documents, business and bureaucratic records, organizational communication, newspapers, scientific journals, financial reports to stockholders, contracts and deeds, and many other kinds of documents (Bazerman, 1999b).

THE EMERGENCE OF ABSTRACTED MEANING SYSTEMS: THE CASE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The most striking example of specialized genres emerging from letters is the emergence of financial instruments, including checks and paper currency. These documents still bear residual markings of letters, including date, signature, and some message to the bearer or a financial agency. Financial instruments had their origin in communications from wealthy folk who had deposited holdings with bankers, for those specific bankers to release or transfer precious to particular parties. Bonds, letters of credits, promissory notes, loans, and eventually redeemable currency became abstracted from these specific forms of correspondence that depended on personal trust of all the parties concerned. Eventually banks and then governments issued paper to make up for a lack of circulating metal, with promises that those certificates would be redeemed. In the last century trust in the general solvency of governments replaced specific promises of redemption. Increasingly the currency has been abstracted to electronic storage of digits in accounts, which we take to be meaningful and valuable, as long as we retain trust in the solvency of the government that backs the currency—which is no longer tied to gold or notes.

This case is striking not only because of the extreme reduction and transformation over less than 1,000 years of a rather concrete and particular genred communication into an abstract meaning that has only the slightest inscriptive trace to which we attribute great meaning. But the case is also striking in that the meaning we attribute to these inscriptions depends on an increasingly complex social system, consisting of many institutions. Governments, banks, interbank transfer agencies, national monetary policy boards, accountancy professions, laws, police, courts, bond markets, credit card companies, electronic technology companies and a host of other socially organized activities are part of the maintenance and operations of our financial system. All these socially organized systems must operate sufficiently reliably so that people can trust that their bank account will record their holdings

and will maintain its value—just so that people can earn and spend their limited resources. Every other person and organization with whom a financial transaction is made, locally and internationally, must also have similar trust in those systems, so that people can carry out our exchanges. Not only that, there are many other kinds of documents on which these systems are built and which are the life-blood of the flow of information by which they work. The statement of an account, though important to the account holder, is one of the most marginal of documents in these systems. Such systems range from commercial law and files of contracts to economic data gathered through questionnaires and processed through many reports and analyses to wind up with statements of federal monetary policy (Smart, 1993, 2000). Each of the systems and subsystems has its own flow of a set of genres that constitute its work (e.g., see Devitt, 1991, on tax accounting). The sets of documents are systematically organized with temporal and intertextual relations with each other and in relation to the activities and roles of the various socially organized participants (Bazerman, 1995). In the contemporary professionalized financial world, moreover, there are philosophic, political, and economic literatures that provide rationales, means of conceptualizing, and theorized methods of calculation for the management of the complex system of international economies and monetary policy.⁵

These documents are said to bear information. To successfully use information in the modern world one needs to know which documents bear the information one seeks. This suggests another underlying component of the textual systems. Information is created by inscription. And inscription of specific types only takes place in certain forms in certain documents and is stored for retrieval in other particular documents. For example, my salary gets reported in a few primary documentary systems. One set is internal to my university's budget and financing office, consisting largely of what are called the books, but also several subsidiary communications that have to do with particular adjustments, summer salary, change of health plans, and so on. Another set of documents are the communications between employer and employee, such as hiring letters and notices of pay increase. Because I am in a merit-based promotion system, current and proposed salaries are also represented in the documents surrounding academic evaluation and merit reviews. Another place where salary appears is in the transfer to my bank accounts, and another is in reports to the state and national tax systems. Each of the taxing agencies has complex sets of documents for the calculating, recording, and processing of my taxes—which then generates another set of correspondence between myself and the taxing authorities. The salary as a

⁵See McCloskey (1986) for an analysis of the typical discourses of economics and Bazerman (1993b) for analysis of an important moment in the founding of the ideology and conceptual basis of the modern financial and economic world.

piece of information resides in particular documents in these systems. The numbers of course must be coordinated, otherwise someone will discover their accounts run short. However, the numbers and event concepts are not the same because my bank receives only my net salary minus various health tax and other deductions. The government receives several different numbers, such as gross income and net taxable income. The academic evaluation system as well as the pension system only communicate with the base salary, without extra payments, such as summer pay or administrative stipends. The information, however, exists only in the documents of the system, and I need to know which document to retrieve to make comparisons with any particular number in any of the other documents used by different systems. Following Bakhtin (1981), we can in fact identify the particular chronotopes of each document in terms of the kinds of information each holds and each manipulates or tells a particular kind of story about. Bakhtin develops the idea of chronotope in relation to literary texts, where each kind of story typically takes place in a certain time and place, with certain kinds of objects, and certain kinds of characters and activities. But such typicality of objects, agents, setting, and actions is equally true of any kind of document. Fill-in forms are highly explicit about this, with the institutional general categories specified in the printed parts that then direct the person responding to fill in particulars, to create a certain kind of task-specific self-representation. The general categories and particulars in an application for college admission are quite distinctive from those on a loan application, and people would be quite surprised or even shocked to find some of the questions on one misplaced on the other. Even in a newspaper, people know the kinds of particulars, kinds of stories and actors and settings that would appear on page 1, on the sports pages, and on the entertainment pages, and we would find it strange to find a description of an interview with an actor about a new movie in the news section, just as we would find it strange to see a head of state's speech to the United Nations on the sports page, or battlefield reports in the entertainment section.

SCIENTIFIC MEANING AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE AND COMMUNITY

What is true so strikingly of the meanings of the financial information we have created is also true of most of the activities of modernity. For example, the experimental article in science was born in the early epistolary exchanges among mid-17th-century natural philosophers. This combined with another emergent form of scientific communication, when Henry Oldenburg, secretary of the Royal Society and center of a correspondence network, read from

his correspondence at Society meetings. These reports of correspondence formed the basis of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, first published in 1665. The earliest issues of this journal were descriptions and excerpts of his correspondence, but soon the pages were filled with the full text of letters composed directly for general distribution. Within a few years the articles dropped the trappings of a letter as well as the appearance of addressing a meeting of the Royal Society; articles instead became free-standing communications to the readers, contexted only by their appearance in the journal. Once the scientific article was recognized as being of its own type, it rapidly developed features that spoke to the rhetorical argumentative dynamics of the new social formation—meeting only in the literature. By 1800 the experimental article had many of the recognizable features of modern scientific article (Bazerman, 1988, chap. 3).

A particularly interesting example of this transition from letter to scientific article is Newton's letter sent to Oldenburg and the Royal Society describing his new theory of light and colors. When this was read to a meeting of the society on February 8, 1672, it met with general approbation and was published in the February 19 issue of the *Philosophical Transactions*. Robert Hooke, however, took a copy of the letter home and wrote a reply, which he read to the February 15 meeting of the society. Other criticisms arrived by letter and were published in the *Transactions*. Newton began answering all the objections in the journal. A controversy broke out in the pages of the journal that lasted 4 years and comprised almost 20 articles. In the course of this exchange Newton developed a new style of mathematical argument that was to be highly influential for the future of the scientific article (Bazerman, 1988, chap. 4).

Simultaneous with the emergence of the format, contents, and style of the experimental article, the scientific community developed roles, values, activities, and intellectual orientations organized around the production and reception of such articles. As the genre began to take its modern form, a readership had emerged that looked to the journals for the advance of knowledge. This audience read critically against their own knowledge and attempted to fit the latest findings into what they knew. They could actively respond by writing letters back or articles presenting contrary evidence. The readers also knew about experiments and were performing them more on their own. Around the production and dissemination of such knowledge a new profession had grown, often supported in educational institutions or other places of higher learning. These same professionals who also produced their own research took on roles of editors and referees as well as critical readers and consumers. The role conflicts that emerged in their multiple complex roles led to several characteristic values and social organizational features of modern science. These conflict-mediating mechanisms include the differentiation between professional and amateur audiences; the retreat

of the experiment to private laboratory, rather than public demonstration; scientific specialization; and the commitment to the advancement of knowledge over personal gain (Bazerman, 1988, chap. 5; Merton, 1973). Journal science describes more than just a means of communication; it indicates people who share significant beliefs, orientations, and commitments to this system of knowledge making, distribution, and use. The natural philosophers' commitment had been abstracted from regular attendance at meetings to a scientific production of an evolving literature, or rather in each person's mental projection of a dynamic discussion in the literature (Bazerman, 1988, chap. 8). One of the last major elements of modern scientific publication to come into place was the explicit intertextuality of reviews of the literature and citation practices. These intertextual practices placed the discussion within published findings of the accumulated experience of all scientists no matter what time or place they lived in (Bazerman, 1991). This literature was to become increasingly structured around dominant theories (Bazerman, 1988, chap. 8). Even critiques that wished to take fundamentally different theory positions had to characterize and reframe current theory to create a new place to meet their audience (Bazerman, 1993a).

These newly emerged scientists developed specialized means, stances, sites, and organizations of interaction and thought. They became socialized into arcane communities with specialized practices and long apprenticeships excluding others who don't learn to communicate and act according to the standards of the field. Nonetheless, in these transformations of the community and individuals, neither the individual nor the group loses agency. Rather, the socialization provides them the tools of agency to become powerful and authoritative actors on a highly specialized social stage of the scientific literature. They are the ones that have the right to speak and the means to speak forcefully so as to project new views into the virtual world of the literature and to thereby transform the knowledge produced by the fields and the very standards, organizations, procedures, and commitments of their fields. As well, their authority within scientific communications can lend authority in other areas of communication that grant respect to science and scientists.

AN AGENT: THOMAS EDISON

Power aggregates in these socially organized literate systems. Particularly, those who have the authority and means to communicate within such systems have access to power, as Goody pointed out in his analyses of the power and social mobility that flowed to the emergent scribal elites in the church, law, and state (Goody, 1986). However, this power is not an abstraction but only exists in its specific exercise in specific projects. These literate systems

are means of doing things through influencing others who are somehow tied to or beholden to these literate systems. Only through the active use of the systems through active production, reception, and use of particular texts is the social power of literacy realized. However, that agency may take many forms given the great variety of literate activity systems, their different configurations and evolutions, the different resources available to each particular agent who is differentially located in each system and has different access to resources of other systems, the different objectives and goals to be achieved in each case, and the inventiveness of each agent in pursuing communicative goals.

The communicative work that Thomas Edison and his colleagues did in multiple social systems to bring electric light and central power into being makes this case strikingly (Bazerman, 1999a). To gain cooperation of people in multiple social spheres—financial, technical, scientific, legal, governmental, and organizational—Edison had to communicate within many highly elaborated literate activity systems. But each system was configured differently, and Edison had different resources and aims in dealing with each. Patent law had stabilized almost half a century before Edison began working on incandescent lighting, so he had to work with his patent agents to file patent applications in standard formats for examination in a well-developed system of the patent office with highly typified criteria, procedures for appeal, and litigation. Nonetheless he and his agents strategically framed his patents, as all savvy applicants do, to give the broadest and most secure protection to the emergent work he was protecting. To enforce these patents, he and his lawyers contended within the well-structured and document-laden world of the courts. On the other hand, at the time of Edison's work, newspapers were undergoing rapid change and growth as a consequence of new print and paper technologies, urbanization, transportation, and telegraphy. Edison's career developed in the midst of these changes, so he was able to understand the power of the press and the means to get it; in particular, he saw early the advantage of the new forms of human interest story and quickly figured out how to be a good interview subject and gain publicity. He also identified moments when favorable press reports were so valuable as to warrant well-placed bribes. In the forefront of changing invention from an individual to a group activity at his Menlo Park labs, he transformed the personal discovery notebook into a mechanism for coordinating the work of his team. In each of these areas and others he needed different kinds of communicative work to establish presence, meaning, and value for his proposed technology so that it would gain the necessary support and cooperation of the various groups on which it depended. Then, as the material technology emerged, he needed people to attribute favorable meanings and value so as to firmly plant the technology in the daily life world. Only through complex accommodations and strategic actions within the many communicative systems could Edison

become the powerful actor, the powerful agent of change and social reorganization that he became.

THE INFORMATION AGE AS A LITERATE PHENOMENON

Today much of our sense of literacy's influence on life has been displaced onto the concept of information, which is said to surround us, rather than the texts, documents, files, and other inscriptions in which information is recorded, stored, and made accessible. The term "information" seems to decontextualize information and make it a pure abstract substance that rises above particular human uses and motives. But because information is produced within particular kinds of documents, it is embedded within the ideology of those genres (Beebe, 1994; Volosinov, 1986), even though we may forget the genres and the activity systems that give rise to it. Because information is produced and stored in literate systems of social activity and is then accessed from its inscribed storage for specific uses, it carries with it the motives of its collection, preservation, and dissemination, on which are superscribed the aims and motives of the new activities it is accessed for and enlisted within, as new sets of calculations. To understand what information is, how we use it, and how we compare and calculate and come to conclusions about it is to understand much about how we think today.

The examples of financial information I have already discussed exhibit how one common kind of information people use is quite concretely embedded within activity systems. Reports of prices of transactions exist only on the basis of existing markets, with their genres of bidding, offering, and coming to terms. But these prices only become available information of the kind we read about in the newspaper if the market has a bureaucracy of recording and reporting exchanges, turning them into information. Further, dissemination of the information requires genred media of ticker tapes, financial news pages, television screen-bottom crawls, or brokerage web pages. Typified documents make the information accessible to those with a stake in the market and provide the means and material of calculative thought. Whenever one uses a market-determined price, one invokes the whole ideological weight of the market system, which produced that information, and one enters into the regimes of calculation facilitated by the documents designed as part of the systems of use. For such reasons, the introduction of electronic spreadsheets that facilitated certain kinds of displays and calculations brought about major changes in many realms of financial action. The statement that the right to emit into the atmosphere a ton of carbon pollutants is now trading for a certain number of dollars is only informative because of recent laws that define rights to pollute and create the transferability of those rights,

thereby setting the conditions for a market, which is then formed. I may object to pollution being commodified, any person or organization being granted a right to pollute, even more to that right being transferable, and worst of all a profit being made from the trade; nonetheless, my invocation of the current market price invokes the existence of that entire system. It takes a second set of communicative acts to then wash my hands of the ideology and social understandings and institutions I have just invoked.

INFORMATIONALIZING THE ENVIRONMENT

Perhaps the commodification of pollution was a likely outcome within our modern world, where monetary value determined in markets is the ultimate form of communication. As Adam Smith proposed, market value has become the least common denominator of information for social exchange, such that all social systems are under pressure to translate their values and motives into financial terms in pursuit of individual ends (Bazerman, 1993b). But at least another element was necessary for this particular commodification and market to occur. The environment also had to be turned into various kinds of information. For many centuries information had been collected on the atmosphere, weather, and even toxic substances for various purposes, but the concept of the environment as something to be monitored because it was at threat really emerged only in the last half century. In the United States the concept of environmental information grew out of activist concern fostered both by Rachel Carson's polemic on the effect of DDT and other pesticides and by the antinuclear testing movement that identified public information on nuclear fallout as necessary for citizens to counter the government monopoly on confidential military information. The concept of scientifically based public information for the protection of citizen interests carried with it a number of ideological assumptions that framed the gathering, presentation, and interpretation of the information (Bazerman, 2001). As alarm over the harmful effects of pollution and the degradation of the environment increased, there came a more general call, not just by activists, to gather information about the environment so that decisions could be made on it. These calls took their most forceful shape in congressional hearings and associated documents and crystallized into laws calling for the production of environmental impact statements. This new genre and associated genres of monitoring the state of nature funded new research and gave shape to forms of reporting (Bazerman, Little, & Chavkin, 2003). In some cases new scientific specialties arose with new research methods to carry out new tasks with different theoretical grounding (Bazerman & De los Santos, forthcoming). Among the new methods was complex modeling of the atmosphere, enabling predictions about greenhouse gases and global warming.

Large literatures emerged on this subject within which new tools of inscription and calculation arose in the form of computerized programs. These programs further increased the need for specific kinds of information as input to the calculation and resulted in new kinds of output information reported in scientific circles as well as in newspapers, politic forums, legislatures, international diplomacy, and world conferences attempting to negotiate mitigations of the worst consequences projected by these calculations.

Many industries saw these calculations and the proposed remedies arising out of the several activity systems directed toward the monitoring and protecting of a threatened environment as having a negative impact on their own forms of accounting and calculation to serve the goals of their economic financial activity systems. Those industrial forms of calculation had few means, places, or genres in which to inscribe the effect of climate change, except in the form of casualty loss from extreme weather events that might affect some industries. Such casualty losses, however, would be insured and would turn up primarily as insurance cost. Further, the measures suggested to mitigate the global warming often had anticipatable accountable increases in the cost of doing business. One industry, however, is differently structured in its accounting, as it bears the burden of extreme weather and natural disasters—the insurance industry. Natural disasters, extreme events, and loss of property to rising sea levels are inscribed in their systems as major costs in payouts. The profitability and viability of insurance companies depend on complex forms of actuarial calculations and risk assessments, based on data gathered in various historical reports and supplemented by other inscriptive and calculative methods of projecting future conditions. By the early 1990s some insurers, especially in Europe, examining their own payouts recorded in their books and reading the press accounts and scientific literature concerning global warming, began to become concerned that global warming would have heavy impact on their industry (Mollin, 1993). Some insurers, particularly the large reinsurers such as Munich Reinsurance Company that served the industry by offsetting risks incurred by separate insurers, became so concerned as to hire their own meteorologists and climatologists to prepare internal reports (Mills, 1998). Each of the kinds of collected data, development of procedures for calculation and modeling, presentation and transmittal of findings, determination of effects, and recommendations are realized in particular genres of documents with associated activities, roles, and other socially organizing concomitants. Further, the translation and re-calculation of the environmental conclusions and projections into the systems of economic calculation of risk imply whole new sets of documents and organizational structures.

Of course, all this is just talking about the weather that we can sense without words by walking outside. But the inscription and aggregation of particular forms of data and the development of calculative and reporting gen-

res, as well as all the other action genres that create the large institutions of science, environmentalism, governments, and finances as well as the insurance industry, all that is built on literacy and the invention of complex forms of literate interaction and literacy-based activity systems.

These inventions of genres and forms of socially organized activities that rely on them, the data inscribed within them, and the calculations and conclusions and recommendations made on the bases of what is inscribed, elaborated, and thought through in documentary spaces are unanticipated, unusual, and complex in ramifications. Contingency, exigency, and creativity lead to the emergence of constantly evolving literate social systems and the documents that represent the inscribed meanings that coordinate and contend the relationships and activities. These literate social systems through the agency of humans come off the page into the formations of the social world and the material actions that form our relationship to the material world. These documents aid in the negotiation, planning, and construction of the built material environment and themselves form a built symbolic environment that shapes our understanding and approach to almost all aspects of the daily life in the contemporary literate world. But there is nothing determinative in exactly how we have used literacy in relating to each other and to the world. It is not implicit within the earliest use of counting tokens to keep track of livestock that an insurance industry 5 millennia later in the 18th-century would meet the needs of expanding capitalism by using new tools of mathematics to develop particular forms of record keeping and actuarial calculations to determine risks and insurance rates. Nor is it a necessary consequence that two centuries later, once insurance had become a major international industry, an environmental movement emerged that would encourage new forms of science that would then provide calculations that would explain changes in disaster payouts and would predict future increased risks. But out of such agency of many individuals and organizations we grow the changing literate environment, the intertextuality, which we use to orient to life in the 21st century.

EACH WORLD HAS ITS LIMITS: RETHINKING RESTRICTION

Goody (1968) was right to point out there are differences in the ways different societies and cultures use literacy and the kinds of organizations and actions they build out of the integument of literate interaction. Although the term "restricted literacy" implies far too simple a dichotomy between two classes of societies, one of which is defamed, it does open up the question of how the individuals and groups have found different uses for literacy. Some

societies have found uses for literacy primarily within scriptural religions and few other places of life, and at some moments it has served interests of some powerful people to put obstacles in the way of other individuals who want to gain the power of literacy or want to apply it to other domains. But so too in the political and economic realms individuals and groups have sought to restrict the access of others or the reconfiguration of literacies that would shift power to other activities, groups, and individuals. Further, the kinds of habits and typifications necessary to make written communication intelligible, particularly at a distance, encourage people to reproduce the kinds of typified practices and behaviors that constitute the literate order. It takes acts of invention and creativity, tempered by intelligible extension, to find new ways and uses for literacy. Such creativity is incited by some perceived exigency that would motivate individuals to discover new ways to communicate to people on different matters and to foster different sorts of actions. Such exigencies constantly appear in human life, as each person and group attempts to respond to their ever-changing conditions of life using, reconfiguring, and extending the particular set of cultural resources available in their world. Thus, each culture will appear particular in its set of literate resources and practices and each will develop on novel lines in its uses of literacy. Every literate community does some things in some ways and not other things in other ways. As one looks to the history, distribution, and variation of literate practices, one finds remarkable diversity, striking inventiveness, and unanticipated conjunctions and alliances. At the same time, texts are portable, and textual practices are constantly moving from one cultural context to others, but even then, the uptake, interpretation, and use may be different in the new sociocultural environment. So as in all cultural practice there is both dissemination and difference.

But to notice unanticipated difference is not to say that the uses of literacy are random and unsystematic. The operations of literacy tend toward systematicity because of the need for intelligibility at a distance. By understanding that systematicity, we can make sense of the varied literate configurations found in the world, how they emerge, how they are sustained, and how they evolve or collapse.

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN GETS OUR ATTENTION: RETHINKING COGNITIVE CONSEQUENCES

Understanding the social consequences of literacy may also help us move beyond an impasse that occurred in the cognitive consequences of literacy inquiry. Once Scribner and Cole (1981) forcefully established that the conse-



quences were variable based on social, institutional, and historical factors, cognitive consequences of literacy became recognized as particular and situated rather than general. This left cognitive studies of literacy only to look at individual situated cases. But if there is order to society, and that order has something to do with what has been done with literacy, perhaps the orderliness of literate practices and the way they enter into social structure can provide ways to sociologically characterize the orderliness of each literate situation, and thus begin to find order within the variety of literate situations. To understand the consequences of a commercially used literacy, we can go about understanding the ordered history and organization of a society's commerce and how it has built literate activity into its agreements, negotiations, conflicts, resolutions, record keeping, assignment of value, and distribution of property. If such structures are built on literacy not only will they use literacy, but also those uses will be consistent with, or symbiotically developed with, what we have discovered we can make literacy do.

Even more, because literacy does travel between minds and is a means for one mind to influence or orient the attention and operations of another, then the social organization will have cognitive components that are particularly related to the forms of social relation that are part of the literate way of life. That is, the social embodies meaning—particularly the more durable and widely traveling meanings evoked by literate artifacts.⁶ And those meanings, to gain congruency among readers, must be those kinds that can be conveyed by literacy and cast into the forms that literacy offers. The mechanisms of meaning are also socially effective mechanisms. To understand the cognitive consequences of literacy we need to look at the social consequences, but to understand the social, we need to look at how texts can come to be meaningful to different people, and thus must look at the cognitive. Ultimately we find that the cognitive consequences are more about the new meaning systems and activities that occupy our minds than they are just about the character of work with symbols. Coordinately, society is more affected by the systems of meanings it is saturated with through literate formations than it is just by the initial monopolies one or another class may have had on literacy. Whether one form of inscription is more efficient or more easily learned than another (the asserted alphabetic advantage) may be less consequential in its cognitive consequences than if a society has developed a large bureaucracy, literary culture, philosophic tradition, technology, commerce, and educational system using whatever form of inscription it has historically developed. It is those things that people will think about and that will be cognitively and affectively consequential for them.

⁶John Mohr (1994) is a sociologist trying to look at the social order through the structured social meanings represented by institutional texts.

THE LITERATE ACCOMPLISHMENT AND THE BUILT SYMBOLIC ENVIRONMENT

Over the last 5,000 years we have created new ways of life, new forms of social organization, new structures of commerce, new ways of knowing, new ways of growing up. Children of the forest since prehistory have learned to find their way in the natural environment they grow up in; as well they learn to find their way in the social environment of the people around them and in the symbolic environment created in their dialogue with others and the artifacts of the culture.⁷ But now children not only must learn to find their way in the built environment of the cities, suburbs, farms, and schools, but they also must learn to find their way in the built symbolic environment of books, media, and signs on the walls. And this built symbolic environment is inextricable from the extended social world they must come to understand. Full participation in many of the social domains of the modern world requires high levels of literacy skills as well as extensive knowledge relevant to that domain transmitted through literacy. The world we know, think about, and act within is saturated by and structured on the texts that travel from place to place and have some durability over the years. The built symbolic world on which we have elaborated new social meanings and relationships and that is the object of our thought and attention as we try to live our lives as successfully as we can within it, in that we find the consequences of literacy.

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⁷Olson (1994) explores some of the challenges that people face as readers in navigating the world of texts.

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Dynamics of the Emergence of Sociocultural Institutional Practices

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Jack Goody's work has shown how social structure, technology, and individual experience shape and reshape institutional forms. Because he tracks these changes over time, some critics have charged him with being an evolutionist and a determinist. Yet his work has never been about evolution in the old-fashioned sense of necessary mechanistic progress along some path toward higher social forms. Indeed, he and Keith Hart held a lively seminar at Cambridge looking at cases, including Greece, Rome, and Mesoamerica, where societies dramatically declined. Rather, he has been concerned with how technological innovation shapes specific social forms: first, through the body of work on how plow agriculture transformed reproductive strategies, inheritance, and kinship patterns (e.g., Goody, 1976) and, second, through the corpus of work on literacy both as a tool for thinking and as a tool for shaping bureaucracies (Goody, 1977, 1986, 1987). "Civilization" is seen as the outcome not of some necessary evolutionary process but of the gradual cumulative effects of the interplay of many specific processes.

This work necessarily looks at regularities of patterning. It takes its force from identifying a key feature or innovation and tracing its impact over time in several different sociocultural settings. There is a sense in which the whole body of Jack Goody's work can be seen as an extended exploration and successful demonstration of the comparative method as a tool for understanding human societies and cultures. Although critics correctly point out that categories as broad as "plow agriculture" and "bureaucratic structures" may include quite divergent local practices, Goody's work draws on a wealth of con-

crete detail of local variation, anchored in the specifics of ethnography. Variation is indeed the focus of his early work on the LoDagaa (Goody, 1956, 1962) among whom local descent groups shade into one another, differing in minor ways on such diacritical features as language, inheritance, ritual, and musical instruments. This fascination with variation has continued with his study of the culture of flowers (Goody, 1993), and of cuisine (Goody, 1982), and recently with contrasting versions of the Bagre myth (Goody & Gandah, 2002).

How can patterned regularities of institutional practices be reconciled with manifest local variability? At one level this is a problem of the transience of theoretical fashions. Yet this apparent contradiction between the power of the regular patterned effects of specific technical tools on social forms on the one hand and the essential uniqueness of each society on the other deserves attention. If uniqueness is a core characteristic of individual societies, this begs the question of how that uniqueness contributes to the emergence of the regular patterns of adaptation to technical innovations. This is the primary focus of this chapter.

There are two terms to this proposition: the social and cultural dynamics of daily life, of which unique, individual societies are the result, and the process through which the patterns that emerge locally come to be similar across societies. Although distinct, these are closely interdependent. To explore these relations we need to move down to the level of individual ethnographies. Within each ethnography, we can focus on those features around which a particular social and cultural world is constructed.

Several issues concerning the validity of using ethnographic accounts as data for comparative analysis would lead us too far afield. How does one compare ethnographic descriptions through time? How does one exclude the presuppositions of the observer in making an objective description? At the very least ethnographic accounts are partial records of the activities and beliefs of a particular society at a point in time. And particular ethnographies are accounts of unique, individual societies.

UNIQUE ADAPTATIONS AND THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIOCULTURALLY STABLE STRATEGIES

But how are we to study the emergence of unique adaptations? A useful place to begin is to ask, "How does it come about that even neighboring societies can differ markedly from one another?" Jack Goody's work on the nearly imperceptible shift from patrilineal to matrilineal descent features among the LoDagaa peoples draws attention to this problem. Indeed, what are called societies are often internally differentiated as well. I have usually

avoided writing about cognatic "Gonja kinship" because there are important differences within the Gonja state. My book *Contexts of Kinship* (E. N. Goody, 1973) is specifically about only three divisions of central Gonja. Western Gonja is influenced by the matrilineal bias of the Akan, eastern Gonja by the patrilineal bias of the Dagomba. These influences do not result in corporate unilineal descent groups, but they are reflected in biases in institutional arrangements such as fostering children and inheritance. It seems clear there are localized dynamics of some kind that act to shape behavior and that, over time, shape social practices in locally particular ways.

For the anthropologist engaged in fieldwork, the starting point has to be the daily life around one. After the first few weeks in Gonja, I remember thinking how ordinary everything seemed, much like life in any farming community. Women go to the stream for water, go to the farm to bring home food and firewood, prepare food, and bathe the children. Men farm and hunt and come home to eat. In free time people sit and talk or visit other households. Most of people's time is devoted to these routines of daily subsistence. I thought then, "How boring this must be for them." However, as I came to know their households better, their lives seemed to grow richer—certainly more complicated. The routine work was always there but could be seen to be shaped and organized by many factors. The agricultural cycle was central, of course. At various times this required finding extra labor to clear new fields, to plant and harvest others. "Who could be called on for help? Should I manage with my son and brothers? Should I call many men for communal farming? This would be much quicker, but food and beer would have to be provided. And if I call many, then later I will have to help them when they call me." These are decisions made individually, by each farmer. But clearly they are made as each man considers the resources or affordances as well as the obligations and constraints these entail of the forms of labor available to him.

To follow this example in comparative perspective, the labor resources and obligations entailed in their use differ across societies. Farming yams, maize, guinea corn, and rice each require different patterns of labor use. Again, using hoes, using a buffalo-drawn plow, or using a tractor draw on different resources (many men, each with his hoe; a buffalo and a plow, or money to acquire these; a tractor and its driver, or money to hire them). Technology and the commodification of tools and labor entail other constraints and affordances. Individual assessment of technological and monetary constraints and affordances is always embedded in a sociocultural nexus.

There are many communities of the Birifor, one of the LoDagaa societies, living in Gonja, that are known for their successful farmers. In the world of localized Birifor patriliney, a man remains a son under his father's complete control well into adulthood—until the father formally "frees" him by giving him his own hoe. A senior Birifor man thus controls the labor of both sons and wives, and both men and women take pride in skilled hard work. A

youth should also spend several weeks each year farming for the father of the girl he is betrothed to; he will not be allowed to marry until he has proven his farming skill and industry. It is within this sociocultural context that decisions are made about organizing farming labor.

In neighboring Gonja communities, women play no role in farming—"Women don't understand farming, they would spoil farming." Gonja men are, at best, reluctant farmers. Farm labor is seen as demeaning and is avoided where possible, by both fathers and sons. Authority is held by virtue of office and specific kin relations. A father or foster-father controls the labor of his adolescent son. When a foster son reaches adulthood, his foster father should offer him the choice between a horse (the mark of a Gonja warrior), a gun (weapon of hunter and warrior), or a wife (the basis of a family of his own). Although today this offer is less common, these choices represent different possible identities, different ways of being an adult Gonja. Often in fact, young men "roam" visiting kin in other places. This is seen as normal, though at the same time a matter of contention. This mobility is itself a way of declaring or defining adulthood. The low value that Gonja place on farming contributes to the mobility of young men. It is within this sociocultural context that Gonja make decisions about organizing farming labor.

Ecology, technology, and commodification place both constraints and affordances on the use of labor for farming as well as on the rights and obligations of kin roles. Cultural attitudes, such as the value placed on industry and skill in farming and conceptualization of valued adult male identities, also play a role. Men living in the Birifor world weigh these several constraints and affordances and individually decide how to plan and organize their farming. Men living in the Gonja world also individually go through the process of balancing constraints and affordances in planning and organizing their farming. In western Gonja, Birifor and Gonja communities are close neighbors, but the nexus of constraints and affordances affecting their individual decisions about farming are very different. In ethnographic terms, each is a unique society.

Socioculturally Stable Strategies (SCSS)

Within each society at any given point in time, the ethnographic present, individuals make plans and choices that have to work in that community. The anthropologist cannot live in a Birifor community without becoming aware of individual men making decisions influenced by farming practices. Consider the following two examples: In the village of Baale, one man married an older widow so he could use her planting and harvesting skills to extend the size of his farm. People commented openly that he would not want her as a wife, but he did need another woman to plant and harvest for him. The widow was delighted because this marriage ensured that she would be well cared for.

As a second example, most men keep one or more sons out of school, so they can keep cows away from growing crops (nowadays these cowherds are called cow boys). Youths who have not been to school are much less likely to leave the village in adulthood. This ensures the father of their labor as adults because even after they marry he can delay freeing them to farm separately for several years. Birifor men are famously fiercely independent. The only community-wide roles they recognize are ritual; they have no chiefs. (This is a separate story, though itself embedded in political, economic, and kinship constraints and affordances.) Decisions affecting the organization of farm labor are made by individuals, but however independently individuals seek to act, decisions are not made independently. Each personal decision is socioculturally negotiated so as to meet multiple role constraints as well as personal goals and ambitions.

These decisions have to work on several levels. First, alternatives have to be "conceivable" in the literal sense. People have to be able to think them. For instance, Birifor women define themselves and are defined by others as farmers. So the separation of conjugal into sexual and labor components is perfectly sensible. It would be "unthinkable" in Gonja to marry a woman for her farming skills, and this does not happen. Again, there is a long tradition of boys herding cows. Indeed, adults fondly recall their days as cowherds, days spent far from the village wrestling to see who would be the leader and roasting small game killed with their slings. Because few children understand much of what is taught in school—and thus most conspicuously fail—many boys today are eager to escape from schooling to the freedom of the herdboys' life. Further, there is a lack of suitable role models because the few educated men from the village have not prospered.

Adaptations to these factors in the organization of farm labor have to mesh with existing Birifor institutional constraints and affordances. A man cannot meet all his needs with his sons' labor if they also have to farm for fathers-in-law. Nor can he use his sons for tasks considered appropriate for women—"Women are the ones who know how to plant and to harvest." Of course, in an emergency men can do these things but to do so regularly is to risk one's masculinity. Individuals, then, make decisions about planning and organizing farming labor, but these individual decisions have to be conceptually available, and they have to fit in with ecological, technological, economic, social, and cultural constraints and affordances. When many individuals are adapting to the same constraints and affordances in solving the same problem, their solutions are likely to fall into recognizable patterns. Over time these similar strategies tend to become shared strategies. If they are effective, they may become culturally stable strategies, what may be called institutionalized strategies.

Dynamics of the emergence of socioculturally stable strategies (SCSS) at the local level may be metaphorically analogous to the evolution of biological

stable strategies (Maynard Smith, 1988, pp. 118–119). Where a replicated individual strategy turns out to be the most effective way to respond to shared constraints and affordances, it may “become unavoidable”; if it is adopted by most members of a large population, no alternative strategy, different from the socioculturally stable strategy, can do better. It is this relative effectiveness that underlies the emergence of new institutional forms.

At first, such SCSSs are perceived as individual strategies that work particularly well. Their persistence is pragmatic, depending on their continued effectiveness. If the balance of constraints and affordances alters, the strategies will change. Later, as individuals continue to follow similar strategies, these may come to be recognized as “the best or correct strategy,” thereby gaining normative force: they may come to have names, be endowed with moral value, and be enforced by sanctions. At this point they have become institutionally stable strategies, institutionalized SCSS. Persistence of institutionalized socioculturally stable strategies depends on both effectiveness and their very existence in the sociocultural world. Even if such institutionalized strategies become less effective because of changed constraints and affordances, they may persist, at least for a time, because they are entailed in other valued practices. Indeed, once institutionalized, socioculturally stable strategies may take on an element of independent existence and subsequently become adapted to quite different constraints and affordances. The elaboration of kinship fostering with the emergence of apprentice fosterage and client fosterage in complex hierarchical states can be seen in this way. I return to this point later.

Ecological, social, and cultural constraints and affordances differ between communities and societies. Even in communities confronting similar problems, different individual strategies may become pragmatic socioculturally stable strategies. And from among these pragmatic SCSS, some strategies may emerge as institutionalized and socioculturally stable. The result of the selective cooption and institutionalization of individuals’ adaptations to constraints and affordances results in the unique societies encountered by the anthropologist.

Yet the regular patterns of adaptation to technical innovations described by Jack Goody are too striking to ignore. This appears to be a contradiction, but surely that is a function of the level of analysis employed. Within each society, whatever the nature of ritual beliefs or definition of kin roles, affordances of greater productivity with the use of the plow and constraints of population pressure on land will have to be adapted to. Initially, in each society these will be individual responses. But some strategies will be more effective than others, leading to a convergence on those that are pragmatically successful and then to local socioculturally stable strategies. Because of the similar pattern of constraints and affordances—say, of effects of more intensive agriculture on population densities—very similar adaptations will prove

to be effective in widely differing societies, leading to convergence across societies on similar strategic solutions. These are the analytically striking regularities described by Jack Goody.

HOW LOCAL EMERGENT PATTERNS COME TO BE SIMILAR ACROSS SOCIETIES

The emergence of socioculturally stable strategies as a general dynamic of local communities and societies is, of course, hypothetical. Because this emergence occurs over time, it cannot be directly observed. The only way to evaluate such a postulated process is to see whether it is analytically useful. Field observations are replete with the strategic actions of individuals. But how are we to observe the process by which a few of these individual strategies become stable and shared and institutionalized?

A possible solution is to focus on comparison of selected dynamic processes, such as ritual practice, jural procedures, or economic activities. Joking relationships provide an example of a routinized, dyadic practice that clearly carries a strategic message. The individual members of a community confront very different if recurrent problems in daily life such as potentially conflicting role relationships. Joking routines do quite specific social relational work. Such routinized joking exchanges cannot simply be "hard-wired" because they take very different forms in different societies. Where do such routines come from? Research on irony (Brown, 1995), politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), on questions (E. N. Goody, 1978), and greetings (E. N. Goody, 1972) shows that each genre affirms and enacts a quite specific dyadic relationship depending on the relative power and status of each person in the dyad. Joking relations, because they are publicly dramatic and explicitly social, indicate a great deal about the structure of the society. Thus Radcliffe-Brown (1952) showed that joking relations occur in those role dyads whose members have ambivalent interests. In patrilineal societies joking is institutionalized between men and their sister's sons, men who are close maternal kin but belong to different patrilineal lineages. Such joking is inconceivable between men and boys of the same jural patrilineage in which authority, respect, and deference are primary considerations (see also Goody, 1969; E. N. Goody, 1999; Bloch & Sperber, this volume).

The emergence of institutionalized joking relationships provides insight into the interpersonal dynamics entailed in managing dyadic relationships. Interpersonal dynamics of this kind must underlie general processes of transition from individual actions to socially stable strategies applicable across a range of instances. A further, different kind of example is found in the concurrent contemporary existence in West Africa of three very different patterns of parenting. These patterns can be seen as socioculturally stable child-

rearing strategies that have emerged in adapting to correspondingly different patterns of economic and political constraints and affordances.

SOCIOCULTURAL STABLE STRATEGIES FOR CHILD REARING

How do parenting strategies adapt to different economic and political constraints and affordances? A society's view of the rights and obligations of a "good parent" tend to be highly specific and may change within two or three generations. We now see the power of a middle-class Victorian father to control his children's labor and his daughters' marriages (or spinsterhood) as anomalous, indeed unjustified. Yet within that world the father controlled family resources and was responsible for the use of these resources in the rearing and advantageous placement of his children. An approved parental strategy was for the eldest son to take over the family business or estate, a second son to go into the church, and others to go into the army or into colonial service abroad. If a daughter did not make a "good" marriage, then it was thought better that she remain at home, unmarried. Novels of the time reveal both this pattern and the struggles of individuals to escape it. As the balance of constraints and affordances shifted, so new forms of parenthood emerged (see Hobsbawm, this volume). In contemporary British society, parental strategies focus on education, and children are expected to become independent in their late teens or early 20s when their education is complete. Parents do not expect to support adult children, nor do they expect children to support them in old age. This new pattern of rights and duties between parents and children exists not at the level of laws or even informal rules. It has gradually become our socioculturally stable strategy as members of individual families contend with changing social and economic resources and constraints.

Kinship Fostering in Gonja

In my first fieldwork in Gonja I was confronted with what was to me an unfamiliar pattern of parenting. Children were sent to be reared by kin, and this was seen not only as normal but as having important advantages for children, parents, and fostering parents. There were terms for fostered children and for foster parents: Certain kin had rights to rear specific children, and supernatural sanctions were held to ensure that fostered children would not be ill-treated. Local censuses showed that between one quarter and one half of the children in the communities studied were fostered. In seeking to understand how and why this practice was so important, I was led to look at patterns of marriage and divorce, at the residence of adult siblings, and at inheritance. Fostering was embedded in, entailed in, all aspects of Gonja kinship (E. N. Goody, 1973).

Why term this fostering rather than adoption? Many anthropologists continue to treat any institutionalized rearing of children away from the parental home as adoption. Sometimes, as with the Inuit of northwestern Canada, this retains a long-established anthropological usage. Sometimes, as in recent West African ethnography, it seems to be the result of using a bureaucratic binary classification: Children are either reared by their own parents or they are adopted (see Hawkins, this volume). Some scholars, like Barbara Bodenhorn (2000) in her excellent work on the Inupiat of Alaska, have adopted the local people's usage of the English adoption as best representing their understanding of the relationship. In Gonja it is referred to as the sending of children to be reared (the Gonja term for bringing a child, person or animal to adulthood is *belo*). The rearing of a child has no effect on kinship identity or jural status; rights to inheritance are unchanged. Links between child, parents, and foster parents are maintained by visiting, and in adulthood the fostered child usually returns to live with or near birth parents. Familiar Western parallels are the sending of children to boarding school and apprenticeship. Indeed the contrast with Western adoption, where it has been thought necessary to break off all ties between the child and his or her birth parents, is extreme. Until recently an adopted child had no right to even know the identity of birth parents. (These issues of definition are treated at length in E. N. Goody, 1982a.) However, for purposes of ethnographic comparison, it is necessary to have a working definition: A fostered child is one who leaves the household of birth parents to be reared by others, with no change in kinship or jural identity.

One of the puzzles posed by Gonja fostering was its effect on fostered children. Current psychological thinking was that to develop normally, a child needed the affection and support provided by growing up with his or her own parents. Yet the fostered children I knew seemed no different from others. They were just as lively and friendly, just as hard-working when necessary (and as ready to avoid work when possible) as children being reared by their natal parents. Subsequent extensive formal comparison of fostered and parentally reared children indicated that some fostered children showed more independence and that as adults they were somewhat more likely to be successful economically or to hold office. Clearly, within the Gonja world, fostering was not detrimental (E. N. Goody, 1969).

COMPARISON OF FOSTERING ACROSS WEST AFRICAN SOCIETIES

The finding that fostering seemed to work well for the Gonja led me to wonder whether it was unique to them or was also practiced in other West African societies. Although there were no other societies in which fostering was described as a central feature (indeed hardly described at all), detailed read-

ing of ethnographies revealed a number with similar practices. However, comparison with the Gonja was not simple because the pattern in each society appeared to be unique; certainly both the anthropologist and the people themselves considered it unique. To give but one example, in Gonja both boys and girls are sent to a range of kin of each parent, whereas among the neighboring Dagomba the mother's brothers can claim one son, but daughters go only to kin of the father. The Dagomba explain their fostering practices somewhat differently than do the Gonja. A man's daughters go to his sisters because he has the obligation to ensure that they have children to help with household tasks. His wife's brothers can claim one son to learn their family skills (drumming, herbal medicines, etc.), and this youth in a way replaces the sister they have lost in marriage. There do not seem to be supernatural sanctions on the ill-treatment of Dagomba foster children (Oppong, 1969, 1973). If one looks closely at each case/society, its particular pattern fits with its other social features: Gonja kinship roles and resources are effectively bilateral; Dagomba kinship has a patrilineal bias, although there are no corporate patrilineal descent groups. For purposes of comparison it is necessary to move to an analytic level.

Reviewing the West African ethnographic material on societies with some form of delegated child rearing suggested that there were two main patterns. In some societies, children were sent only to kin, whereas in others they went to unrelated adults as well as to kin. Taking the mode of child rearing as the diacritical feature produces three sets of societies: those in which children are reared by their own parents, those in which children are sent to be reared by kin, and those in which children are reared by both kin and by unrelated adults. All these societies share many West African cultural and social features: People speak one of the West African languages, ritual and religious institutions follow West African modes, and agriculture is characteristic of the savannah lying between the Sahara and the coastal forests. In all these societies children are expected to contribute to household and farm activities. Beginning with small tasks, they gradually build skills and take on an increasing share of the labor involved in family subsistence. By their teens both girls and boys have a major role in the domestic economy (E. N. Goody, 1982a, 1993). Because these societies are so similar, why, then, do they have different modes of rearing children? *Parenthood and Social Reproduction* is devoted to the working out of this puzzle (E. N. Goody, 1982a). Here we must skip to a simplification of the concluding analysis as it relates to individual parental rearing strategies.

Children Reared by Their Own Parents

West African societies in which children are reared by their own parents are those in which resources, and parental rights and obligations, are vested in corporate unilineal descent groups. Jural and ancestral authority and rights

to land and labor are held within the descent group. Men want adult sons to remain with them because their labor is important and becomes even more so as the father grows old. To be effective as an elder a man needs to be seen as having adult sons and their families as dependents and supporters. Rituals performed by these sons will be necessary to ensure the elder's immortality as an ancestor. For the sons, although the father's authority may be resented, he is their source of rights to the land they need to build their own families and of their position in the community. In these societies rights over daughters tend to be transferred to a husband on marriage in exchange for transfer of economic resources—livestock or the groom's labor or both. Strategies concerning girls are about their marriages; rearing daughters at home maximizes a father's control over their marriages.

Children Reared by Kin

Societies in which children are reared by kin tend to be small, weakly centralized kingdoms. These have some economic specialization, and usually one or two towns are trade centers. In these societies kinship has become more open, with ties through both parents carrying significant weight. Many marriages tend to link partners from different communities, from different social estates (see later discussion), and with different occupational or sociocultural identities. Marriages are not defined by transfer of economic resources (bridewealth). Indeed, the Gonja disdain those peoples who give cattle to the bride's kin, saying that they are buying their wives. Rights over children in these societies are shared among kin of each parent, not exclusively defined and assigned to a unilineal descent group. Consistent with the sharing of rights over children, marriages are less stable in these societies. Women tend to have children with two or three husbands, and when child-bearing years are over, they usually return to their natal community to live with brothers.

These weak kingdoms are internally differentiated into social estates. The kin of the ruling estate provide village chiefs, subordinate only to the few territorial divisional chiefs. Residents of each village owe labor services to the chief and may be required to send a basket of grain or yams at harvest time.

A second social estate is formed by Muslims, who came originally from a number of centers in the Sahel. Divisional courts often include Muslim officials who play a restricted but important role in court ritual. Muslims are active in the trade for which these court towns may also be local centers. The third social estate consists of commoners belonging to the various highly localized linguistic and ethnic groups in each division.

Although these kingdoms are only weakly politically centralized, they are town-focused societies. Towns may have permanent markets instead of, or in addition to, the markets that are held in a different village each day of the week. Economic roles are somewhat differentiated by skills like those of

blacksmiths, weavers, drummers, traders, and ritual specialists. Although every family has a farm, subsistence farming is no longer the universal occupation. For those who live in towns, commodification and specialization has begun to affect daily life.

This economic and political differentiation appears to be related to nascent urban living. Did the political and economic differentiation in simple states create conditions favoring marriages across space and between estates and thus the shift from unilineal descent groups to cognatic kindreds? The new patterns of spatial mobility and the interdependence of differentiated political, ritual, and economic roles would have significantly widened the range of people one knew, and thus the pool of possible mates. Were such marriages inconsistent with the controlling of rights by descent groups? Whatever the dynamic leading to this change, marriage strategies are very different from those in the unilineal descent societies. Although some marriages are still arranged by parents, most are the outcome of courtship during a phase of adolescent freedom.

It is critical to note, as Jack Goody (1971) pointed out, that these states encompass and are surrounded by flourishing unilineal descent peoples. We are not dealing with blanket, universalizable regional changes.

Child-rearing strategies are accommodations to the constraints and affordances of such weakly centralized kingdoms. The constraints include, first, the need to reinforce ties with dispersed kin who provide vital support in times of trouble and who mediate rights to inheritance. Second, the need to ensure children's access to the skills, knowledge, and personal ties that will be advantageous to them as adults. Third, the need to provide well for all children in a large sibling group and, finally, the need to provide for children of a marriage broken by death or divorce.

What such child-rearing practices afford are the reciprocal claims that can be made of children of kin, claims to rights of succession to office, claims to rights of inheritance to kindred property, and control over the labor of children, labor which becomes increasingly important in adolescence and early adulthood.

In response to these constraints and affordances, certain patterns of parental strategies for child rearing tend to emerge. Some children are reared in the conjugal home and some are sent to be reared by kin of the father or by kin of the mother. Patterns differ between these societies when the parents' marriage is broken by divorce. In some (e.g., Dagomba), sons remain with the father; in others (e.g., Gonja), sons are sent to foster parents. Young daughters may accompany the mother into a new marriage, but older girls return to the father (Dagomba) or go to foster parents (Gonja). If either parent dies, the children may remain with the father's people (Dagomba) or go to foster parents (Gonja), though a widow usually keeps infant children "until they are old enough to have sense" and may keep a daughter with her.

A number of considerations go into the choice of a foster parent: first, the traditional rights of a father's sister to a daughter, a mother's brother (sometimes father's brother) to a son, and a mother's mother to a daughter. The second is the request by a relative for a child to foster. The third consideration is the prosperity and ability of the foster parent to sponsor the child in some adult role.

Children Reared by Unrelated Adults

Societies in which children are reared by unrelated adults as well as by kin are characterized by complex economic organization and elaborate political hierarchy. Here I draw on brilliant ethnographies of a number of historically important major states: M. G. Smith's (1955) studies of several Hausa emirates, Cohen's (1967) work on the Kanuri of Bornu, Nadel's (1942) classic study of Nupe, and Skinner's (1960, 1964) work on the Mossi. All were major centers of long-distance trade as well as centers of production for the market of commodities, such as special kinds of cloth, dyers for thread and cloth, makers of beads, iron tools, swords and armor, and gold work, and called for differentiation and specialization of skills. Crafts were learned by youths as they gradually became skilled enough to take over the bulk of the labor involved in production. They began doing unskilled chores in childhood (carrying water and firewood, digging and carrying iron ore, dredging dye pits, laying warp threads). Youths progressed to the routine simpler work basic to production (assisting with the smelting of iron, operating forge bellows, weaving). Those who proved adept went on to assist the master craftsmen in making more specialized products—weaving patterned cloth, dying thread and cloth, and forging axes, knives, and weapons.

Working and the learning of craft skills are inseparable in this context. The unskilled and semiskilled labor of these youths is also vital to the division of labor of the industrial production process itself. A recurrent feature of such industrial craft production in West Africa is that these youths are treated as dependent members of the craftsman's family. In return for food, housing, clothing, and the chance to learn the craft, they provide the essential labor on which it depends. Their master provides raw materials and makes all production decisions, and the profits belong to him. Even when they have mastered the full range of craft skills and make the product on their own, apprentices receive no pay. The conditions for achieving independence as a craftsman vary widely between crafts and across societies. Everywhere, however, an apprentice can only marry with the master's consent, and marriage often marks partial or full craft independence. Yet even an independent craftsman still owes labor and respect to his old master, as an independently farming son always does to his father. (For a detailed account of one case, see my papers on the Gonja weaving industry in Daboya: E. Goody 1978, 1982b.)

With striking regularity, craftsmen do not train their own sons. They train the sons of others and send their own sons away to work for and learn from another craftsman. In the Gonja weaving industry of Daboya, weavers' sons are sent as foster children to learn from a skilled weaver who may be related to either the father or the mother. The Daboya weaver who taught me had learned from his father's father's brother, and he placed his own son with his own brother. When I asked why he wasn't teaching the boy himself, Bakweji curtly insisted that this wouldn't work. It would only lead to trouble between them. A father would easily get angry if his son was clumsy or lazy, and the son wouldn't give the father proper respect. One afternoon when there was no one else to help him, Bakweji called his son over to help him fold a new set of warp threads into the weighted bundle used to set up the loom. This task requires close coordination between two people, who must keep tension constant at all times, as well as making sure individual threads do not get tangled. Within a few moments Bakweji was yelling that his son was stupid, was not paying attention, was not even trying to do it properly. The son sullenly continued to follow his father's instructions.

In the economically complex hierarchical states, kinship fostering continues to be used this way, but craftsmen also bring unrelated youths into their households as apprentices. Like the kin-fostered youths, these apprentices live and eat with the craftsman's family and in effect exchange their labor over many years for learning craft skills. Apprentices must do whatever work they are given, often sweeping and bringing water and firewood for the women of the household. They are under the absolute authority of their master and owe him respect and obedience at all times: "The master is like your father, whatever he does, you must obey and respect him." Because the apprentice lives and works with his master from late childhood through adolescence into adulthood, we can say that he is being reared by the craftsman who is his master. Thus in formal terms this practice can be termed "apprentice fostering." Apprentice fostering is widespread in the economically complex hierarchical states of West Africa.

Politically these states are elaborately hierarchical. This is vividly described for the Kanuri who have a nested series of chiefships, each of which is subordinate to that above it, which is in turn subordinate to the next higher chief and so on up to the paramount himself. At each level the chief is required to collect several kinds of tax from his subjects. It is expected that taxes will be set at a level that allows the chief to retain some after passing on what is owed to his superior. At each level there are officials responsible for the actual collection of taxes. One of the perquisites of chiefship is the appointing of the new subordinate chief when an office becomes vacant. A new chief will be responsible for collecting taxes effectively. If he does not trust the previous officials not to line their own pockets, he replaces them with men he trusts, his clients, to act as tax collectors. Thus, at every level

chiefs are surrounded by a network of clients. The plot thickens, however, because Kanuri succession to chiefship alternates between kin groups, which act as gates to office. In each gate, eligible men who aspire to office build up their own network of clients. Thus, when one gate holds a chiefship, there is one or more shadow networks of clients who hope for jobs when the chiefship comes to their patron's gate.

Kanuri politics is based on patron-client relations. Many such relationships begin when children are sent to be reared in the households of chiefs and officials. As with fostered apprentices, they are expected to do whatever work is needed: household chores, farming, and, paradigmatically, cutting grass for the chief's horses. As youths grow to manhood in a patron's household, the patron has ample opportunity to judge their individual characters. He comes to know who is hardworking or lazy, who is responsible, and who is honest. Adult clients are often selected from among client-fostered children. In writing about successful Hausa traders in Kano, Tahir (1976) described this same practice, noting that a trader will often trust a man whom he reared from childhood more than his own son. In these economically complex and politically hierarchical states, kin fostering appears to serve as a model for the functionally specific forms of apprentice fosterage and client fosterage.

Parental rearing strategies in these economically complex and politically hierarchical societies are grounded in the commoditization of many aspects of life. This means that effective adulthood entails some way of being able to earn money—through selling agricultural produce, craft production, or trading or through religious or political office. Children are fostered to allow access to specialized craft skills, capital necessary for trading, or patronage necessary for political or religious positions.

Comparison of Parental Rearing Strategies

In unilineal descent group societies, parents' major consideration is to rear children within the household to retain control over daughters' marriages and over sons' labor and descent group identification. Critical constraints and affordances focus on retaining control over one's own children to ensure continuity on lineage land. If the conjugal unit is broken by death or divorce, children continue to be reared by close kin within the same extended household.

In weakly centralized kingdoms with dispersed kinship, the parents' major consideration is that children be reared by "siblings" (i.e., close kin). This means that parents rear some of their own children together with some siblings' children. Children grow up with "siblings," some of whom are cousins. Thus, the effective sibling group is replicated in successive generations. The practice of fostering has emerged in response to the distribution and control of valued resources. In selecting between possible foster parents, those with claims to office, religious knowledge, or economic skills or resources are preferred.

In economically complex and politically hierarchical states, the parents' major concern seems to be to make use of the rearing process to ensure that the child will have access to resources necessary for more specialized adult roles. Where political systems and economies have become highly complex and hierarchical, economic resources are differentiated and power and influence less predictable. Specialist skills, including Islamic literacy, become critical economic resources. It is often not possible to secure access to these more specialized skills through one's kin. Moreover, in these societies continuity may also have become a problem for local craft, trading, or political groups. Consequently, new modes of rearing appear: apprentice fosterage, in which children's labor is exchanged for training in craft or trading skills and client fosterage, which provides the opportunity to forge patron-client relationships. Ethnographic accounts often assert that the relationship between craft master or patron and the child apprentice is modeled on that between father and son; in return for training, and sponsorship in adulthood, the youth incurs lifelong obligations of respect and support to his foster father. It seems both apprentice and client fosterage provide continuity for the enterprise of the master or patron at the same time that they provide the child with the skills and networks necessary for effective adult roles.

Two quite different sorts of discontinuity in patterns of constraints and affordances on parental roles can be seen in this West African material. The first is the shift from the control of identity and resources by localized unilineal descent groups to the vesting of resources and identities in dispersed kin groups. Responsibilities for child rearing shift accordingly away from parental to foster families, paradigmatically, among adult siblings. In many weak kingdoms throughout West Africa, each surrounded by a different complex of unilineal descent societies and complex states, the constraints and affordances operating on parenting have converged on the social strategy of kinship fosterage. It is as if each kingdom has reinvented kinship fostering for itself.

The second discontinuity in patterns of constraints and affordances concerns conditions for learning adult-role skills. In unilineal descent group societies, and in weak kingdoms (except perhaps for a few roles), children can learn all the skills necessary for adult roles from whoever rears them. In economically complex states the proliferation of craft production and trade means that skills must be learned from experts. Apprentice fosterage has emerged as an effective rearing strategy that provides the master with increasingly skilled labor at the same time the apprentice builds valuable skills. Patron-client relationships tend to provide access to power within the elaborate political hierarchies. Client fosterage has emerged as an effective rearing strategy in that it permits the patron to judge the capability of his clients while giving the client access to support and protection. Thus, apprentice fosterage and client fosterage have emerged in response to the discontinuity

between the skills and social networks of one's parents and those required for successful adulthood.

CHILD REARING IN THE CONTEXT OF FORMAL EDUCATION IN GHANA

For a multitude of somewhat obscure reasons, schooling is almost universally recognized as the exclusive route to successful adulthood, even in Ghana. English is the language of instruction in Ghanaian primary schools. The choice of language to be used as the medium of instruction in primary schools is generally referred to as the language policy. Until 2002 the language policy in Ghana was that for the first 3 years of primary school, instruction should be in the child's mother tongue. However, all written school materials have always been in English. In practice, teachers interpreted the language policy to be that the mother tongue should be the oral medium of instruction but that the teaching of reading and mathematics would, like the textbooks, be in English. The literate elite, who often speak English at home, have long argued that all instruction should be in English from the beginning of primary school. The Minister of Education has now been persuaded that if English were the only language used from the start of primary education, children (who come to school speaking only a Ghanaian language) would quickly learn English and therefore do much better in all school subjects. Experienced teachers are convinced that children who speak only the mother tongue will be at a lasting disadvantage in English-only schools. Despite an extended vociferous debate between these two positions, henceforth, all government schools will teach only in English, except for periods designated for Ghanaian language and culture. Literacy and numeracy in English are the goals of both education policymakers and parents. This is not surprising because effective English literacy has become the key to entry into all modern occupations, including government bureaucracy, teaching, nursing, as well as professions such as medicine and law. Thus the quality and availability of schooling have become central constraints and affordances in shaping child-rearing strategies. A recent review of basic education concluded that rural schools are so poor (the few teachers come irregularly and teach badly) that in terms of schooling there are in fact two Ghanas, one for the urban elite and a different one for everyone else (Kraft et al., 1995).

Schooling Strategies of Literate Elite Parents

The literate elite send their children to private schools, beginning with prekindergarten day nurseries. "Everyone knows" that this is necessary to get children into a "good" kindergarten, which is necessary to get the child into

a "good" primary school, and so on through each step on the educational ladder up through university. In private schools, and even in some government primary schools, children are tested to be sure they can already read and write before they are accepted into first grade. Private tutoring— evenings, weekends, and during vacations—grows increasingly important as children reach postprimary levels, with the accompanying regime of examinations. The child-rearing strategies of elite parents, like those in the West, are clearly focused on educational success.

Schooling Strategies of Nonelite Parents

The situation is very different for village children and town children whose parents are not literate or barely literate. For some of these nonliterate, nonelite parents, the choice is whether or not to send their children to school; for others, it is to decide which of several children to send to school. Most of those who do send at least one child have no choice about which school because there is a single government school that is near enough for young children to walk to. An hour's walk is considered reasonable. In towns where there are several schools, some parents are aware that schools have different reputations for effective teaching. Most simply send the child to the nearest school.

A central constraint is that these parents are usually not themselves securely literate. They cannot assess what is happening to their children in school, and they feel helpless when confronted with school demands that their children work harder or do better in examinations. Teachers "know" that children can do well if only they are respectful and work hard. But they do not seem aware of the role that growing up in a literate home plays in children's ability to understand what schooling is about. This myopia is probably linked to the fact that teachers tend to be at least second-generation literates themselves. They have no experience of living in a nonliterate world. So when pupils do not do well, teachers attribute this to lack of interest and effort. When teachers say that failure is the child's fault, parents accept this as true. School fees, costs of pencils, pens and paper—and of uniforms (even for kindergarten children)—are serious constraints for nonelite parents whose links to a cash economy are tenuous.

How do child-rearing strategies respond to these constraints? The critical factor appears to be parents' perceptions of what their children will gain from schooling. Today's Ghanaian parents are asking whether sending children to school will give them skills and contacts important for adult roles, just as did their own parents and grandparents.

Empirically, very few children complete primary school with basic literacy skills. Nationally, fewer than 10% meet basic norms for reading and mathematics. Scores are dramatically lower in rural areas. When parents see that

children consistently fail, they question whether attending school provides any advantage for adulthood. Although there are strong local pressures on head teachers to send all primary school leavers on to junior secondary schools, they often lack the literacy skills to succeed. And yet it is only the secondary schools that give access to training in technical skills, to literacy-based skills such as stenography, computing, or nursing and to training as teachers or to places in university. Parents are quick to realize that even those children who do complete junior secondary school have little chance of going on for training in good jobs, such as postal workers, police, teachers, nurses, or soldiers. Nor will they work in the private sector as secretaries, accountants, or telephonists or as technicians in infrastructure institutions for communication or transportation.

For those not attending school or those leaving midway, the only access to modern occupational skills is through apprenticeship. Carpenters, builders, mechanics, electricians, plumbers, traders, tailors, seamstresses, and repairers of radios, watches, and bicycles take on young people to work for them. These are essentially informal apprenticeships. There are no trade guilds to set working standards or tests of skill for admission as independent craftsmen. Until very recently apprentices exchanged their labor for food, a place to sleep, and the chance to learn the craft, exactly as in the old forms of apprentice fosterage and client fosterage. Now in some crafts the masters demand that apprentices pay what they call fees, which they liken to school fees. Here there is a clear trend toward the commodification of apprenticeship. Sometimes the completion of training is marked by a ceremony and a certificate much as in the school model. Modern apprentice fosterage had begun to appear in coastal West African towns in the 1970s (see E. N. Goody, 1982a, chap. 8). Fees and certificates have only begun to appear in northern Ghana in the last few years.

The domestic labor of children can be exchanged for sponsorship of the child's schooling. In northern Ghana this began to happen for children of the societies already practicing kinship fostering in the early years of Western schooling. A child would live with a teacher or other literate family and be responsible for carrying water, gathering firewood, and cooking in exchange for food, shelter, and supervision of schoolwork. Because school fees were supposed to be paid by the local authority, this was only an occasional practice. Now, parents must pay the increasingly large school fees. This exchange of domestic labor for sponsorship at school has recently appeared in societies in which formerly all children were reared by their own parents. Indeed, this might be termed "school fosterage."

There are a number of critical constraints in using schools as a means of child rearing, including the alienation from schools in which everyone speaks an unknown language (English), the high costs of schooling, the loss of children's domestic labor, and the improbability of actually succeeding.

Schooling does afford access to prestigious and well-paying jobs for the most successful. Links through kinship to successful literate adults who will sponsor children in school or membership of a church that sponsors education for able children may help to ensure success. Parents gain prestige from having a child succeed in school and can expect support from successful school graduates.

Literacy and Class Status and Parental Response to Western Schools

Relying on the school as a means of raising one's children depends on the parents' own literacy and whether they are living in a rural area or in a town. These two factors are closely related. Because effective literacy has become the gateway to middle-class and professional occupations, socio-economic class has emerged as a strong element in West African political economies. The concentrations of literate occupations in towns has meant that it is literate town parents who demand good schools and who can pay for private schooling. The consequence has been that in terms of education there are "two Ghanas": rural schools, from which few children enter the elite world of middle-class occupations, and town schools, which produce most of the next generation of the literate elite. Of course town children from nonliterate working-class homes resemble rural children in finding it difficult to do well enough in primary school to proceed further and enter the literacy-based occupations. Thus there are in effect two very different sets of parents, the literate elite of the towns and the nonliterate town workers and villagers; each has its own school-related rearing strategies, strategies that become routine and shared and come to characterize whole groups within and across societies.

OVERVIEW

This chapter began with a puzzle: Given the manifest differences in social and cultural patterns between individual societies, how are we to understand the regularity with which certain patterned relationships recur across societies? Many of these patterns are elegantly delineated in Jack Goody's *magni op*i** that demonstrate the interplay between kinship, inheritance patterns, and technology. The consequences for population dynamics and inheritance of the introduction of the plow, the effects on political and economic forms of the emergence of writing, as well as the subtle interplay between representations and imagination, performance, and memory are all exemplified in his work. In each of these studies the relations among many closely observed

factors is shown to lead to the development of characteristic institutionalized patterns of action.

The puzzle is to understand the nature of the processes through which large-scale patterned regularities emerge from the uniqueness of individual societies. In looking closely at the dynamics of everyday life in particular societies I suggested that a core process is the endeavor of individuals to solve recurrent problems within shared constraints and affordances offered by social relations, physical and cultural context, and available technologies.

In the same community, individual strategies tend to take a similar form because they are adaptations to common constraints and affordances. Over time these similar strategies tend to become shared as pragmatically stable strategies. If they are effective, they may become culturally stable strategies—institutionalized socioculturally stable strategies, SCSS. In this sense new institutionalized forms are emergent from individual action.

Socially defined relationships and a culturally created world are among these constraints and affordances, as are the nature of political power and the form and complexity of economic activities. Thus, even where ecological and technical factors are similar, such as between neighboring but different societies, the whole package of constraints and affordances may be very different. Individuals' solutions leading to local SCSS ultimately produce unique societies.

The emergence of socioculturally stable strategies is a dynamic process because successive generations of individuals are continually confronted with the same kinds of problems. If the balance of constraints and affordances alters, the strategies will gradually change.

Major changes in political organization, economic complexity, and technological resources entail new constraints and affordances. The strategies parents adopt for child rearing reflect the problem of continuity of position and resources across generations. When neither positions nor resources (ritual and economic) are clearly enough defined, as in some hunting and gathering social groups, parents show little effort to manage these resources across generations; child rearing is, so to speak, left to the children. Even under conditions of a high level of political and economic complexity, parents at the bottom, those with little or no access to resources, may simply opt out of any attempt to arrange for their children's adulthood. Thus, we would expect parental rearing strategies to be particularly responsive to such changes in resources. The more resources accessible, the greater effort to capture these advantages for their children. In some societies this means arranging that their children will succeed to local, kin-held resources and offices; here parents tend to rear their own children. This might be seen as the default parenting strategy where spouses live together in the same household.

In societies in which kin and resources are dispersed, parents may follow the strategy of exchanging children between related households, thus making

use of the reciprocities of rearing established during childhood to reinforce and recreate kin bonds and the claims based on these. The rearing of children in kinship fosterage is found in many unrelated small-scale kingdoms in West Africa where it appears to be the result of the process leading to emergent sociocultural stable strategies. That kin fosterage takes a very similar form in unrelated societies is due to convergence on this as an effective solution to the same general problem under similar constraints and affordances.

In economically and politically hierarchical states with specialization of economic roles and the commodification of production, fewer parents are themselves able to give their children necessary skills and resources. Two new child rearing strategies, apprentice fosterage and client fosterage, have emerged in which the labor of unrelated children is exchanged for their opportunity to learn craft or trading skills and the chance to forge patron-client links. These patterns seem to have been reinvented repeatedly in unrelated West African states. And indeed they have appeared historically in comparable European societies such as medieval Wales and 16th-century England and Germany. In these complex hierarchical states similar constraints and affordances lead parental role strategies to converge on similar solutions.

The spread of formal education has radically altered the nature of resources critical for modern adult roles and thus also the pattern of constraints and affordances influencing parental child-rearing strategies. Yet elements of existing strategies are being adapted to the new conditions. New forms of apprenticeship are emerging to fill the gap between occupationally irrelevant primary school qualifications and popular demand for craft and mechanical skills. New forms of fostering are also appearing. In urban centers parents from nonfostering societies now sometimes send children to be fostered by kin who are doing well in literate occupations, specifically to ensure their success in school (Oppong 1969, 1973). West African societies that traditionally reared their children at home are now sending children to be fostered in English families in Britain where they will grow up to be fluent in English (see E. N. Goody, 1982a, chap. 10 & 11). Here we find individual child-rearing strategies emerging as stable strategies beyond particular West African societies, indeed beyond West Africa. As parents become part of a global Western-educated elite, processes of convergence on effective stable strategies respond to global constraints and affordances.

It is a special pleasure to contribute to this Festschrift paying tribute to Jack Goody's work. As my supervisor when I arrived as a young, naïve American sociology graduate student at Cambridge, he was my first anthropology teacher. He then introduced me to the mysteries of fieldwork, being intrepid enough to take me along when he began work with the Gonja. To spend my apprenticeship with a gifted fieldworker with a brilliant, intuitive, and inquiring mind showed me how to question.

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Not by Words Alone: Reclothing the “Oral”

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Among Jack Goody's manifold contributions are his fertile publications on literacy and orality. Enormously influential but (equally valuable) never uncontroversial, Goody's insights and claims have released a flood of publications from the 1960s to the present, supporting, challenging, and interacting with his positions. Much of the discussion has revolved around issues about literacy. This chapter focuses on the other end, the concept of “oral.”

UNCOVERING THE ORAL

Here Goody's works have been seminal. Many others before him had of course concerned themselves with verbal art, oral tradition, or vocal communication, and there was already extensive scholarly research within, for example, philology, folklore, classical studies, and linguistics. But a new impetus was set by his essay with Ian Watt on the consequences of literacy (1963) and his edited *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (1968). The particular challenge was to anthropologists, with their focus on “traditional” “preliterate” societies, where writing was either (apparently) absent or, if present, to be brushed aside as artificial intrusion. I well remember the startling impact of that 1968 volume. At first it seemed near revolutionary that the study of writing itself could and should be part of the anthropological enterprise. But in Goody's (1968) much-quoted statement:

At least during the past 2,000 years, the vast majority of the peoples of the world (most of Eurasia and much of Africa) have lived . . . in cultures which were influenced in some degree by the circulation of the written word, by the presence of groups or individuals who could read and write. . . . Even if one's attention is centred only upon village life, there are large areas of the world where the fact of writing and the existence of the book have to be taken into account, even in discussing "traditional" societies. (pp. 4–5)

This was more than just an injunction to include writing within ethnographic research, important as that was. It also directed attention to writing as a topic in its own right, worthy of comparative investigation across traditional and modern societies alike and initiated Goody's long quest for the differences between oral and literate cultures.

And if writing was a fit object of social scientific study, then the same was true of the unwritten, the "oral." This too could not just be taken for granted—just there as the bedrock—but demanded study as the counterpart to literacy in the study of human modes of communication. Orality, too, was, in a favorite Goody phrase, a "technology of the intellect."

Goody's work interacted with parallel streams that were gathering momentum from the 1960s onward. Parry, Lord, and their followers were uncovering what they termed "oral-formulaic" features in Yugoslav heroic poetry, and then on into classical, Old English and biblical studies, and more. McLuhan and Ong stirred the imagination about the qualities of oral versus written expression. Decolonization gave newly independent nations an additional interest in recording and dignifying their local oral forms. New vantage points emerged as spoken utterances were increasingly captured through audio recordings. Though Goody was not the only influential figure in this congeries of interests, he unquestionably played an important role within it as the concept of "oral" became increasingly visible and investigated, an object of study in its own right.

Less widely cited but of comparable importance were his substantial field-based publications on the Bagre myth of the West African Lodagaa (northern Ghana). This was recited during the initiation of those opting to join the Bagre association, a society with medical and social benefits for its members. The "White Bagre" myth was associated with initiation into the first grade and its secrets, the "Black Bagre" with the second stage:

In the beginning was god,
the god of the initiates,
and their gods . . . (Black Bagre lines 1–3, translated in Goody, 1972, p. 224)

Goody's initial view of the lengthy two-part text that he wrote from dictation in 1950 was of a myth "handed down in more or less exact form, as a unique cultural expression, from generation to generation" (2000, p. 36)—a

common enough expectation at the time. Returning later with a tape recorder he discovered the existence of a multitude—an infinity—of versions. Over several years he and Kum Gandah, a Bagre member, recorded some 15 versions of the White Bagre and nine of the Black. There were extensive differences between them, noticeable even when the same man recited on different occasions or different people recited on the same occasion (the myth had to be recited three times at each ceremony); those between nearby settlements (e.g., 10 m apart) were enormous. The versions varied in content and tone, too. In general, they revolved around the tripartite relationship of man, God, and beings of the wild, but some stressed intermediaries or human agents; others were more theocentric and speculative.

Goody published several analyses of these recitations, significant not only as oral literary forms but also for his concept of "oral culture": He built on his Bagre experience by consistently emphasizing the variable rather than (as once supposed) fixed nature of oral expression and the creativity and diversity within a nonliterate community. He produced long and meticulously edited texts of several Bagre recitations, complete with translations and detailed commentaries, a massive contribution in itself (Goody, 1972; Goody & Gandah, 1980). Again, I recall vividly how enlightening I found these, with their empirically as well as analytically based insights and their well-documented revelation of the sophistication with which so-called simple peoples could manipulate their verbal texts and present differing, and skeptical, worldviews.

So how does Goody characterize "orality" or the "oral" in these classic publications, which have so expanded the interest in modes of communication? His views, though—or because—they are so widely published and admired, are still subject to much debate.¹ Of equal interest, they contain more than one strand. The second of these, I argue, deserves far more attention than it has hitherto received.

"ORAL" AS COUNTERPART OF "WRITTEN"

The best-known strand in characterizing "the oral" within Goody's *oeuvre* has been to counterpose it to "the written." This has been a preoccupation throughout his scholarly life, from his 1960s publications to *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (1977), his 1980s "attempts to spell out some of the general differences between the social organization of societies without and with writing and the process of transition from one to the other" (Goody, 1986, p. xi, also Goody, 1987) and his recent volume on "the nature of the

¹The substantial and argumentative literature around Goody's work is a tribute to his influence (any skeptical comments in this chapter should of course be seen in that light).

differences between cultures with writing and those without" (Goody, 2000, p. 2; also related comparative works (Goody, 1996, 1997, 1998). All are typical Goody productions, marked by both comparative theory and empirical illustration and returning time after time to the differences between oral and literate societies. He himself dates his interest back to his experiences as a prisoner of war in the 1940s when books were sometimes scarce or absent, raising questions about modes of communication (Goody, 1995, p. 137). Further, "among the reasons I originally undertook fieldwork in West Africa was the wish to lay out more clearly for myself some features of western society, for example, in the contrast between the written and the oral" (Goody, 1986, p. vii). Many have shared Goody's interest, but surely none can match his sustained contribution to the subject through half a century.

Goody's strategy has been to explore oral culture through contrast, by considering "the effects of writing on social organisation and cognitive processes" (Goody, 2000, p. 3). He reveals cultures with writing as characterized by the ability to store and accumulate knowledge, to appeal to and critically examine externally fixed written formulations, engage in formal logic, and facilitate bureaucracy—developing "forms of rationality as well as commerce and social stratification" (Goody, 1998, p. 2). Oral cultures broadly lack these features, except perhaps in "embryonic" form. Their major focus is on face-to-face relationships with little or no cumulation of knowledge or exact verbal reproduction—thus more flexibility and change, usually unawares in the absence of written records to measure it by. Memory is unsupported by external means because "without writing there is virtually no storage of information outside the human brain and hence no communication over great distances and long periods of time" (Goody, 2000, p. 27). Goody (2000) recently summarized his position as follows:

What Durkheim saw as the mechanical solidarity of simpler societies is not only a matter of the division of labor. Social relations and values have more obviously to be upheld in face-to-face situations; there is no possible recourse to a text as an external sources of guidance. . . . The restriction of linguistic communication to the oral channel accounts for some of those features that are commonly regarded as characteristic of the "primitive mentality." The greater concreteness and relative lack of abstraction must be linked to the dominance of the context of the interactive situation. Inhibitions are placed on the elaboration of general rules, which are more often implicit than explicit. In the terminology developed by Max Weber and Talcott Parsons, such societies tend to be particularistic rather than universalistic.

Social institutions are much affected by the limitations of the oral channel. Religions tend to have a more local focus, to be more clearly intertwined with everyday life. Legal procedures are less governed by general laws, by formal procedures. . . . The homeostatic tendencies of memory usually consign to

oblivion what is no longer wanted. Oral communication in the political field obviously restricts the buildup of bureaucratic government. . . . The more complex the organization of the state and the economy, the greater the pressure toward the graphic representation of speech. (pp. 24–25)

At first sight this looks like one of the pervasive narratives of Western cultures: of a radical opposition between primitive and civilized societies/minds. On the one side, this recounts, lay primitive society: uncreative, dominated by religion and magic, homogeneous, communal, local, swayed not by reason but by emotion and custom, "traditional," non-Western, oral. On the other comes modern culture: progressive, urban, economically developed, civilized and civilizing, secular, scientific, individualistic, heterogeneous, literate, rational. The details of this mighty origin myth have varied over the years—sometimes a story of fixed opposing types, sometimes of a gradual progress up to Western rationality and science—but versions of the story are recycled repeatedly through contrasts like simple/complex, modernization/tradition, development/underdevelopment, ourselves/others. It has seemed to follow that "orality" is inevitably associated with the traditional type: unchanging, homogeneous, nonrational.

In fact Goody has been querying certain elements of this myth for a generation, long anticipating the recent challenges to the ethnocentric and loaded features of such grand narratives. He has consistently attacked the assumption that nonliterate societies are homogeneous and credulous. In his 1972 edition of the Bagre myth—open-minded and thorough ethnographer that he was—he stressed the existence of skepticism and divergent views within LoDagaa culture. New initiates were positively encouraged to go round different Bagre performances and learn from them (Goody, 2000, p. 126) and there were multiple differing versions of the myth (the kind of differences, he comments, often overlooked by lazy ethnographers; Goody, 1998, p. 220). He finds "skepticism widespread in oral cultures" (p. 184) and rebuts the stereotype of oral cultures as unchanging and uncreative, questioning the "communal memory" once widely assumed to distinguish "primitive" society from the individualism of literate modernity (Goody, 2000, pp. 43–44). He also queries the once-prevalent view that "orality" is now outdated and superseded by writing—the simplistic version of unilinear evolutionism—for it remains a dominant form of human interaction, even if modified "by the addition of new means and modes of communication" (Goody, 2000, p. 2).

Goody similarly rejects the notion that the advent of literacy had automatic and immediate results. He initially spoke of "consequences" (Goody & Watt, 1963) but later preferred to speak of "implications" and multiple changes rather than monocausal determinism. There was not some wholesale transformation of society after the invention of writing but a gradual process interacting with other developments; "in taking writing and the writ-

ten tradition as my topic . . . I do not imply for one moment that these are the only factors involved in any specific situation, only that they are significant ones" (Goody, 1986, p. xv). Rather than a sharp discontinuity between radically opposed types of society, elements that were already implicit became fully developed in "written cultures" because writing made explicit "processes [which] are embryonically present in oral societies" (Goody, 1996, p. 242; also Goody, 1997, p. 16).

Above all he goes out of his way to challenge both the "great divide" tradition, which sets a definitive chasm between ourselves and our predecessors, and the overprivileging of European experience that this so often implies. Witness his clarion call introducing *The Myth of the Bagre*:

Even anthropological readers are only too ready to assume a great divide between "primitive" and "civilized" thought, between "mythopoeic" and "logico-empirical" modes, between the wild and domesticated varieties. . . . It is a view that requires a major revision. . . . The radical dichotomy that lies at the basis of such sociological and anthropological thinking, as well as behind popular belief itself, seems to me entirely unacceptable, a relic of academic colonialism. (Goody, 1972, p. 3; also Goody, 1986, pp. 181–182)

His own approach is to focus on more specific investigations, exploring the cognitive processes and social institutions linked to modes of communication and analyzing them within a developmental framework. This means rejecting elements of the generalized discontinuity versions of the traditional myth. His ethnographically informed approach brings out instead continuities and gradual transitions associated with changes in communication. The overall development, both social and cognitive, was in one general direction, but the advance was complex and uneven (Goody, 1977, p. 151):

The balance of my argument continues to be a delicate one. In the first place, I have attempted to set aside radical dichotomies; in the second, I reject diffuse relativism. The third course involves a more difficult task, that of specifying particular mechanisms . . . [analysing] some aspects of the processes of communication in order to try to elucidate what others have tried to explain by means of those dichotomies. This is not a great-divide theory. It sees some changes as more important than others, but it attempts to relate specific differences to specific changes. (p. 50)

All the same, Goody's long insistence on the contrasts between oral and written cultures carries echoes of the Western origin myth. He seems to accept the notion of a contrast between societal types (traditional/modern, simple/complex, primitive/advanced) as a self-evident issue that needs further—though of course more self-critical—explanation (e.g., Goody, 1977, p. 50; 1995, p. 138; 2000, p. 8). This is his point of departure for examining

the specific mechanisms bringing about these differences and for his own alternative explication of the differences between simple and civilized cultures. Despite his qualifications, these are credited above all to the advent of literacy: "writing allowed a quantum jump in human consciousness, in cognitive awareness" (Goody, 1998, p. 1). His magisterial *The Power of the Written Tradition* (2000) treats "the nature of the differences between cultures with writing and those without. The line of argument and the presentation of evidence develop a theme that I and others have previously proposed, stressing the transforming effects of literate activity on human life" (p. 2). The message is that "the emergence of writing and literate activity some five thousand years ago transformed human life as profoundly as the earlier revolution of intensive agriculture" (Goody, 2000, cover). Goody links his own typology of oral versus literate societies with those of earlier theorists like Durkheim, Weber, and Parsons and with distinctions such as those posited between simple and complex societies, domesticated and savage, primitive and advanced, hot and cold (e.g., 1977, pp. 16, 147; 1987, pp. 290–291; 2000, pp. 5, 24–25). Indeed one element in the welcome accorded to his work may partly lie in the resonances that some readers find, rightly or wrongly, with these still deeply emotive classifications.

Goody's delineation of "oral" through its contrast with written eventually turns out to be somewhat elusive. This is partly because he in fact focuses more fully and directly on the implications of written than of oral communication. In sketching the nature of "oral cultures" he does make some direct points about flexibility, creativity, and change; cultural homeostasis; the relative insignificance of material mechanisms for cumulating knowledge or communicating across space and time (a debatable point); the possibility of skepticism and diverse views; and the shadowy existence of "embryonic" forms to be more fully developed in "civilized cultures." But are we to conclude that these are characteristics of all truly "oral cultures"? That they regularly go together and are (or were) therefore likely to be further associated with, for example, localized outlook, relative lack of bureaucracy, low division of labor, little explicit rationality or abstraction, particularistic rather than universalistic norms? And, as sometimes implied in Goody's terminology, that all this together constitute "oral culture" as a type about which we can generalize—a better-informed version of the traditional myth then, this time depicting not a grand fixed chasm but a gradual transition from one pole to the other, with some quantum leaps and major transformations on the way, leading ultimately to the literate culture of the modern West? Or, rather, are these traits, which are often—but not always—found in specific cases of oral communication, which can therefore best be examined as specific, relative and varying processes in particular historical contexts? That would fit with some of Goody's exposition. But if so, are some features more salient than others and where does this leave the characterization of "orality"

or "oral culture"? And just as it is now recognized that it is not so much a matter of literacy as of multiple literacies, so too there are no doubt multiple oralities, a huge diversity of ways in which humans turn oral communicating to their uses. Amid this, has the "oral" perhaps dissolved as something in its own right? At any rate, within Goody's strategy of revealing it as the counterpart of "written," the exact conclusions about the "oral" end of the oral-literate juxtaposition remain somewhat cloudy.

A further difficulty is the focus on the oral-literate contrast itself. This has the advantage, admittedly, of replacing wholesale generalization about "primitive society" (etc.) by specific investigations concerning speech and writing. But such a choice is also to narrow down to one model of humanity: privileging language as the key dimension of human history and culture.

This is in tune with a long-entrenched view of humanity in Western tradition, one that received particular impetus in Enlightenment formulations. *The Origin and Progress of Writing*, for example, by the 18th-century Keeper of Records at the Tower of London, Thomas Astle (1784), succinctly summarized a widely accepted opinion: "The noblest acquisition of mankind is SPEECH, and the most useful art is WRITING. The first, eminently, distinguishes MAN from the brute creation; the second, from uncivilized savages" (p. i).² In its essentials, this ideology of language as humankind's defining characteristic is still highly influential today. It often reiterates, too, Astle's further assertion that "without speech we should scarcely have been rational beings" (p. 2). Similarly, writing is the means to human progress and destiny: "an invention," in Astle's words, "which hath contributed more than all others to the improvement of mankind" (p. 10). This is often enough extended into an account, overlapping with elements of both the divide and the developmental narrative, which depicts the rational functions of language as not only setting humanity apart from animals but through the advent of writing (above all in its full alphabetic form) moving humanity onward into the scientific efflorescence of the West.

Goody invokes a similar paradigm. Language is the overriding constituent of human culture whose presence over the ages may even have altered human physiology through "the enlargement of the right hemisphere of the brain" (Goody, 2000, p. 133). In his early joint essay "the most significant elements of any human culture are undoubtedly channelled through words, and reside in the particular range of meanings and attitudes which members of any society attach to their verbal symbols" (Goody & Watt, 1968, p. 28). Later too, "the acquisition of language, which is an attribute of mankind alone, is basic to all social institutions, to all normative behaviour" (Goody, 1977, p. 9), and:

²I owe this reference to Olson and Torrance (2001, p. 3).

Language is the specific human attribute, the critical means of interaction between individuals, the foundation of the development of what we call "culture" and of the way in which learned behaviour is transmitted from one generation to the next. But if language is inextricably associated with "culture," it is writing that is linked with "civilization," with the culture of cities, with complex social formations. (Goody, 1987, p. 3)

In societies without writing the spoken form of language—oral communication—bears all the burden of cultural transmission (Goody, 2000, p. 23). Then comes writing to transcribe speech into visual form, with "effects . . . on social organization and cognitive processes . . . of primary importance in the history of human cultures" (Goody, 2000, pp. 3–4); "cognitively as well as sociologically, writing underpins 'civilization'" (Goody, 1987, p. 300). Or again, differences such as those between primitive and advanced "can reasonably be attributed to the advent of writing and the subsequent developments—the formalization of discourse, the extension of some forms of abstraction, of logic (e.g. the syllogism) and of rationality" (Goody, 1987, p. 291).

From this perspective, then, the key factor in human development is verbal language and the two forms (spoken and transcribed) in which this is handled. These are crucial not just for social organization but for cognitive development too, manifested in technologies of the "intellect," storage of knowledge, the "mentalities" related to changes from oral to literate communication, and (in time) the formalized rational dimensions of writing. The differences are set "in a developmental way" (Goody, 1995, p. 137) along a linguistically based continuum, culminating finally in the "full" form of alphabetic writing (Goody, 1999, p. 30). This is not so far from the outlook of intellectuals such as Thomas Astle. It fits well into a cognitive, language-centered, model of the nature and destiny of humanity, which has been one powerful theme within Western thought—but one not necessarily shared by all cultural traditions. Of lesser importance in this paradigm—indeed tacitly swept aside—are the pictorial, sculptural, gestural, tactile, musical, choreographic, affective, or artifactual dimensions of human life.

And yet—other aspects of Goody's work seem to tell a different story. He, of all anthropologists, has set the role of language in human affairs into perspective by complementing his studies of the oral and literate with striking accounts of other dimensions of human culture. These necessarily—if only implicitly—convey the insufficiency of a linguistically defined model of humanity. This breadth is clearly evident in his detailed ethnographic analyses, while his comparative works on food and cooking, the culture of flowers, love, iconography, and image (Goody, 1982, 1993, 1996, 1997, 1998) take us well beyond any assumption that words are everything or that the features

embraced in the literate/oral contrast make up the whole of culture. He considers visual mnemonics like the Australian Aboriginal stylized maps formulated in their sacred *tchuringa*, the insignia of the Ashanti golden stool, or the Native American Ojibway birch-bark drawings (Goody, 2000, pp. 30–32), and his *Representations and Contradictions* (1997) ranges generously over painting, sculpture, visual images, theater, and relics.

This latter vein in Goody's work suggests a very different viewpoint on the "oral." So rather than pursuing the more general oral/literate comparisons for which he is so famous, I propose now to follow up this second strand.

PUTTING THE "ORAL" IN CONTEXT

To do so we can return to Goody's accounts of the Bagre. His 1972 version of the White Bagre opens with one of the "first" two men (the "elder") consulting a diviner about the causes of humanity's recurrent ills:

Gods,
 ancestors,
 guardians,
 beings of the wild,
 the leather bottles
 say we should perform,
 because of the scorpion's sting,
 because of suicide,
 aches in the belly,
 pains in the head.
 The elder brother
 Slept badly.
 He took out some guinea corn
 And hurried along
 To the diviner . . .
 And he picked up "deity"
 And he picked up "the wild"
 And he picked up "sacrifice."
 He picked up "deity,"
 That was what
 He picked up first.
 He picked out "deity"
 And began to ask,
 What "deity"? (Goody, 1972, p. 121; lines 1–15, 20–27)

He is led to the deity of "meetings," among which the Bagre initiation rites are among the most important. The text continues (from line 60) with words

that go along with the ritual and are recited during it, explaining and prescribing the ceremonies as they are performed.

On the face of it what we have here is a verbal text. In the major publications of the myth (Goody, 1972; Goody & Gandah, 1980), it is the one-lined text that is printed and translated, and the notes focus on the words and their meaning. The myth is to be defined, it appears, by its transcribed words. The verbal elaboration is in fact impressive. The dictated version of the White Bagre runs to over 6,000 lines (78 pages in its double-column translation in Goody, 1972), and others too stretch to several thousand lines. But when we look closer it becomes clear from Goody's account that the verbal text we see in the printed book was emphatically not the full action.¹

Goody shows that the recitation is marked not just by speech but by non-verbal components and their settings. The White Bagre recitations are performances rather than self-standing verbal texts, performances furthermore that are inextricably enmeshed into the enactment of a prolonged series of ceremonies and interwoven with music, dance, and sociability:

Probably the most talked-about and rejoiced-in part of social life is the series of Bagre performances, associated with "the deity of meetings," of coming together. For here, in the long, warm evenings, there is the music of the xylophones, the poetry of the myth, the dancing of the young, the conversation of the old, and plenty of beer, food, and girls. (Goody, 1972, p. 12)

Many of the participants were themselves initiates from previous occasions and for them in particular "the performance of the ceremonies themselves, the food, the beer, the music, the throng of dancers, the subjection of the neophytes to ordeals through which one has successfully passed—all is a source of pleasure to the initiated" (Goody, 1972, p. 41). And for all "it is a time of relaxation and enjoyment" (p. 41).

If that is the framework, what about the utterances themselves? Goody gives us some indications of the modes of delivery. The ritual sections delivered by the senior reciters were in a special recitative form, delivered rapidly to a beaten accompaniment. Each phrase was echoed by those present and repeated three times. Its manner of recitation, different from that of any other Lodagaa verbal genre, was part of its message and meaning. There were also relatively discrete prayers or songs where the initiands and others were

¹The analysis in this section is based on Goody (1972, 1987, 167ff; 1997, chap. 5; 2000, 36ff, 49ff; Goody & Gandah, 1980) and also shorter dispersed comments elsewhere in Goody's publications. My discussion is selective, with no attempt to give a full account of the lengthy and elaborate ceremonies involved (for which see references in previous note). The analysis mainly refers to the White Bagre, of whose performance Goody has given much fuller descriptions, but it seems that the less ritual-based Black Bagre too had musical, rhythmic, visual, proxemic, and artifactual dimensions.

singing, chanting or crying out in prayer. The final dance involved large numbers of people with joint singing, some of it no doubt in the classic African call and response mode, together with xylophone players and drummers. The varying styles of delivery brought their own contribution to people's experience and understanding, well beyond the impression given by the printed words alone.

Music, song, rhythm, and instrumental accompaniment were part of these performances. A rhythmic beat was essential. A reciter shook a rattle, tapped on a shrine or was accompanied by beats on xylophone slats; other participants too produced rhythms whether by a sacrificial knife, a stone struck on an altar, sticks on wood, or tapping a calabash. The rhythm of the Black Bagre—faster and more complex than the White—was beaten out by xylophone sticks on a wooden plank or trough. The large-scale dancing at the climax of the ceremony was enlivened by drums, xylophones, and song. Other sounds too sometimes formed part of the performance—hand clapping, iron bells, ululation, and gun shots when the neophytes emerged from their room after successfully passing their ordeals.

The one-voice impression given by the linear printed text does not match the reality. There is some basis for it, for much of the formal recitation was in one sense delivered by single individuals. But in practice multiple participants took part at different points in the ceremony—leaders, elders, guides, relatives, second graders, the initiands themselves, and at some points the gathered crowd of spectators. The leading part was taken by one or more "speakers," senior men who carried out the main recitation, instructing the neophytes who sat patiently to listen to them in the secluded Bagre room in which they spent much of their time. These sections were performed three times over (sometimes by two people reciting simultaneously, to save time!), up to the point when a particular ceremony was to begin, providing both a kind of mnemonic and an explanation of it. The initiands chanted too, repeating the speakers' words. Other phases were in the open air, where the leader's chant could be taken up line by line by the whole assembly as the participants as a whole—spectators and supporters as well as initiands—gathered together in the specified locations. At certain stages the neophytes had to sing as they went about their ceremonial tasks, for example circling three times to find their hidden ritual bells, and songs were sung by their sponsors or guides; sometimes new songs were created about them for playing outside the Bagre room. The voices of several reciters could overlap and intertwine, sometimes interspersed with comments or corrections from experienced listeners or mixed with shouts or ululations from the gathered participants. It is not self-evident where—or whether—one should draw a line between the text "proper" and contingent "interruptions". In a sense all were part of the performance as actually produced and experienced. The whole at-

mosphere and setting with its interactive engagement of many participants besides the lead reciters helped to shape its meaning.

Thus the words as transcribed on the page are far from conveying all the auditory features. Even less do they communicate the visual dimensions of the performance. Goody (1987) depicts the White Bagre as both "visual and verbal action . . . tied to ritual, to a set of standardized visual acts" (p. 171). As well as the observed ceremonial enactments without which the Bagre recitation could not be properly accomplished at all, the speakers' gestures helped to structure the chant, the reciter of the moment raising and lowering his left arm "to mark the beginning and the end of formal speech, during which period no interruption will be possible" (Goody, 2000, p. 53). The initiands' visible appearance was another carefully managed feature of the whole. At various stages they had to don special clothing, carry prescribed objects, and have their head shaved or be dressed in special ways and their bodies whitewashed with thick white stripes. At the end they processed in public in their finery, displaying their Bagre accoutrements and visibly supported by their sponsors and admirers.

The spatial arrangements were also part of the occasion: where people were positioned, their respective spacing, how they were marshalled. The initiates took up particular locations for the different stages, spending much of it in their special room listening to the recitation of relevant parts of the Bagre myth but emerging to enact ceremonies in prescribed places, be led in procession, or assembled in due order. People's movements were relevant too, embodied experience as well as visual display. The neophytes had to conduct themselves in particular ways, showing their status not just through their words but in their bearing—downcast eyes and silent humble demeanor, thrown off only when their induction was complete. Other actions too, such as using oil to create relationships between ancestors and initiands, beating the shrines, running "elegantly," were necessary dimensions of the full enactment. So too was food and drink. Commensalism and fasting were parts of the unfolding ceremonies, and the neophytes' avoidance and consumption of food and beer at the due points constituted public declarations of commitment validating the ceremonial sequence.

The movements of dance were particularly prominent. "The xylophones begin to play and all present, both men and women, join in the Bagre dance . . . the girls gather round in a circle at the side and dance and sing to the clapping of hands" (Goody, 1972, p. 75). The culmination of the ritual was the Bagre dance when the new members were formally inducted into the society. It took place over 3 days, often when the moon was full to light up the complex scene. The whole was brilliant with singing and instrumental music—specially xylophones and drums, whose histories and donors were part of the whole—as well as food, beer, and the ambiance of courtship and play.

In the published texts the words are brought together as "the myth." But in practice they were enacted in a series of performances as the initiation ritual unfolded over several months, and were performed by several different participants at different times. The whole was united less as verbal text—the impression given by its identity in print—than as protracted series of linked enactments. "Une unité comme celle le Bagré possède ne repose pas sur la seule narration verbale. En vérité, on ne peut considérer la récitation que comme partie de l'ensemble total qu'est la célébration, la cérémonie (et, dans ce sens, le rite)" [A unity such as the Bagre possesses does not lie in the verbal narration alone. In fact one can only consider the recitation as part of the whole, which is the celebration, the ceremony, and in that sense, the rite] (Goody & Gandah, 1980, p. 52).

So—sounds of many kinds, modes of delivery, visual gesture and spacing, clothing and material accoutrements, bodily adornment, demeanor, movement, dance, food, drink, sociability, pride, excitement, emotion: all these were not "mere" context but integral to the meanings and experiences of the Bagre performances. Goody conveys it well in another context when he comments on "the immediacy of the face-to-face contact, the visual gesture and tones of voice [marking] oral communication. It is the play seen, the symphony heard, rather than the drama read, the score studied" (Goody, 1977, p. 50).

This strand in Goody's treatment brings out the multidimensionality of oral expression, giving a richer and more contextually based approach to characterizing the oral. Not all cases will be just like the Bagre, of course. But Goody's account gives us a clue as to the kind of range that can be looked for when we encounter the term "oral." Orality is revealed as multiplex rather than a matter of words alone.⁴ Many dimensions can enter in: visual, kinesic, acoustic (not just the verbal sounds but other sonic effects, too), proxemic, material, tactile, bodily presence, and movement—all are potentially relevant, if to varying degrees depending on occasion, participants, and location. This approach provides a more rounded and more realistic viewpoint on what is involved in oral expression than the thinner, linguistically based model.

PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE, SPEECH AND WRITING

The multimodal and contextual approach to oral expression and communication in this strand of Goody's work chimes in with several other trans-

⁴The same could be said of the comparable, though not identical, multimodality of writing, a topic it is not possible to pursue here (for some comment see Finnegan, 2002, p. 229ff).

disciplinary developments, in particular changing attitudes to the analysis of language. Where the emphasis used to be on decontextualized and impersonal properties and on textual products, recent analyses now increasingly take on the idea of language as action. Some of these streams date back some time, like Goffman's dramatistic approaches, Austin's "speech acts," and work in the ethnography of speaking, performance, and experience by anthropologists and sociolinguists. But they are now flowing together into a view of speech and communication, not as autonomous systems of signs for conveying independent pieces of information but modes of social action, created by interacting human agents in specific situations.⁵

The spotlight is thus turned on people's actions, rather than on self-standing systems of signs, and on people's active deployment of a wealth of varied resources. Verbal language in the narrow sense is indeed one of these, and an important one—but only one. In their communicating humans also regularly exploit such diverse tools as facial expression, gesture, bodily orientation, spatial indications, movement, touch, images, and a variegated range of material objects, from scepters, flags, or guns to meaningful apparel, stethoscopes, and pulpits. And even if we focus only on the auditory dimensions of speech, we have to take account of intonation, tempo, dialect, rhythm, volume, timber, emphasis and all the near-infinite modulations of the speaking—and singing—voice. These may not appear in the traditional grammar books. But they are essential for language-in-use—a huge constellation of potential resources for communication and expression.

This also connects with recent debates about the language-rationality association—the viewpoint, that is, that was conveyed in Astle's presentation of speech as enabling men to be rational and formulated most directly in Locke's prescriptive, "scientific," and referential view of language. Despite its pervasive influence, however, this is actually only one view of language and humanity. A countertradition is now making a comeback—language as essentially contextual, multisensory, emotive, and intertextual (see Bauman & Briggs, 2000). Linguistic anthropologists and social interaction linguists among others are highlighting the multidimensional features of linguistic action and the emotional as well as the cognitive aspects of language. Some argue for a wider definition of "language" to encompass the gestures coordinated with speech (Haviland, 2001; McNeill, 2000; Sheldon, 1999; Streeck & Knapp, 1992) or see "context" as integral to linguistic action (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992), undermining any supposition that the settings of performances like the Bagre are only peripheral. The multisensory dimensions, together with the audiences, spacings, sounds, gestures, accoutrements, touches, and so on, are not merely contingent when set against the ostensi-

⁵On these developments see, for example, Clark (1992), Duranti (1997, 2001), Hanks (1996), and Tracey (1999).

bly more concrete conceptualizations within the verbal text, but themselves a solid part of the action.

This broader outlook gains further support from yet other threads in recent scholarship. A sensitivity to the manifold dimensions of our human experience is scarcely new, but recent approaches to material culture, cultural history, studies of the body and its adornment, and the anthropology of the senses have all been highlighting the complex spectrum of multisensory and multimedia resources used in human communication, our use of "mediational" forms of communicating as well as our somatic interactions.⁶ Scholars across several disciplines are challenging the assumption that human life and communication are fully described by their cognitive features, just as studies of language are taking on affective as well as conceptual aspects. Human beings are not solely intellectual or linguistic creatures, and their pictures, gestures, costumes, facial expressions, human-made artifacts or bodily movements are also significant dimensions of their communicating.

Work in performance studies feeds into this, too. From informal conversations or everyday greetings to more heightened and formalized art forms, their import cannot be appreciated through words alone without some consideration of, for example, visual effects, music, material accoutrements such as dress, audience, interaction, or location. As Isidore Okpewho (1992) rightly characterizes oral performance in Africa, "the words spoken are only part of a general spectacle designed to please both the ears and the eyes" (p. 48). Many analyses of "oral" events now parallel and extend Jack Goody's account in going beyond the verbal text. Kpelle epic performances from Liberia for example are shown to intermingle singing, narration, dramatic enactment, and instrumental accompaniment, with "sounds and movements textured with the voice . . . an aural type of texture augmented with dramatic gestures. . . . The epic is heard, seen and felt" (Stone, 1998, pp. 135, 137). Across a range of disciplines, such as linguistic anthropology, folklore, performance studies, ethnomusicology, and sociolinguistics, it is now accepted practice to inquire into the multidimensionality of performance.

The technology of writing naturally privileges the ontological status of the written word. Dictated texts like Goody's first Bagre version once seemed to give the "real thing"—the single-voiced linear text, fixed and recorded through writing. But the widening availability of audio technology has revealed new facets, strikingly exemplified in Parry and Lord's discoveries about the mingled variability and formulaic qualities of Yugoslav sung epic (Lord, 1960) as well as in Goody's later audio recordings of the Bagre performances and in the extensive work on the sonic features of oral expression,

⁶See, for example, Graves-Brown (2000), Kwant et al. (1999), Schiffer (1999), Burke (1997), Entwistle (2000), Featherstone (2000), Classen (1997), Howes (1991), Scollon (1999), and Silverstone (1999).

from African storytelling to Native American verbal art and beyond. We can hear and analyze volume, tempo, dynamics, intonation, intensity, participating audiences, and song, all capturable on audiotape. And now video can record gesture, visual display, material symbols, spacing, and dance, supplementing still photography by the experience of movement, temporal development, and the seen dynamics of audience and performer interactions. Study of all the participants—not just the apparent lead performer—is encouraged by the advantage of audio-video technology over print for capturing multiple voices. The Bagre dancers and their actions, the xylophone players, the responding choruses, the massed procession—all are part of the Bagre, not just the senior "speakers" whose words appear in the published transcripts. Inevitably our awareness of what is involved in oral expression—even what an oral form really "is"—has been widened from a prime focus on writable one-voice texts toward an appreciation of the multifacetedness of oral performance.

This brings us back to the relation of writing to speaking, an issue that needs some further comment. Earlier scholars often regarded writing as essentially a transcript of speech and thus most fully developed in the phonologically based alphabetic system. This tends to be Goody's approach, too, complementing his view of the centrality of the two modes for handling language, humankind's key attribute: speech and its transcript in writing. Writing is the "means of recording speech . . . [the] visual transcription of oral linguistic elements" (Goody, 1987, pp. 54, 78). Alphabetic scripts are the "fully fledged writing systems with which one can transcribe the whole range of the spoken word" (Goody, 1999, p. 30).

This model is now under attack from several directions, however, as both lacking comparative perspective and being out of touch with current realities. In fact, not all writing systems are parasitic on spoken language or directly representative of it—unless, that is, one takes the narrowest of definitions by which only alphabetic scripts can qualify as "true" writing. Some recent analysts argue convincingly that such examples as Chinese writing or Mesoamerican pictorial and hieroglyphic systems can be described as semasiographic in that, in contrast to phonographic systems, the visible marks "communicate meaning directly . . . independently from language" (Boone & Mignolo in their aptly titled *Writing Without Words*, 1994, p. 15); here the meaning is not ultimately reducible to, or a transcription of, spoken words.⁷ It was once widely taken for granted that such forms were either dead ends or, at best, merely evolutionary antecedents on the way to "full writing" as manifested in the alphabet—"the most highly developed, the most convenient and the most easily adaptable system of writ-

⁷Terminologies for writing systems—even the delimitation of "writing" itself—of course remain controversial. For some provocative and insightful recent accounts see Biddle (2002), Boone and Mignolo (1994), Harris (2000), Kress (2002), Perri (2001).

ing . . . now universally employed by civilized peoples" (Diringer, 1968, p. 13). But given the variety of visual-graphic communication systems that might be encompassed in broad definitions of "writing," it is surely a limited ethnocentric view that assumes alphabetic systems as unquestionably the pinnacle of writing's development. Though alphabetic writing has indeed ousted other forms as part of imperialist Western expansion, it does not follow that non-speech-based systems are in themselves less efficient, subtle, or "contemporary." Chinese writing is used by a sizeable proportion of the world's population, based largely (though not wholly) on "stylised drawings of things in combination with one another to convey ideas" (Brown, 1998, p. 17); it shares with other semasiographic systems—among them musical and mathematical notations—the advantage of transcending linguistic barriers. In fact even in alphabetic systems, a significant role is played by nonphonetic elements: images, diagrams, numbers, layout, spatial relationships, typography, and so on.⁸ (This often remains unrecognized in folk ideologies which envisage writing as the mirror of speech.) Nonverbal visual presentations, furthermore, are central in modern science, and our prolific contemporary use of images, icons, and computer-mediated visual display is being further enhanced by technologies for transferring images across space through faxing, scanning, and the web.

This joins with the transdisciplinary developments mentioned earlier to challenge and enlarge the word-based model of both writing and human culture more generally. Linguistically based forms, it turns out, are far from the only modes of communication. Besides the visual images so important today, there are and have been multiple other modes and media throughout the world: the classic forms of dance and mime, both Western and non-Western; silent films and cartoons; the complex gestural systems of some Native American or Australian peoples or the comparable British Sign Language used so effectively by deaf people to communicate in three-dimensional space; the Walbiri/Warlpiri "sand stories" and "trace" inscribing of aboriginal Australia; the miniature brass images representing proverbs once used to weigh gold in West Africa; the pictorial narratives on cathedral facades or stained glass windows; South Pacific story boards; and the many other material memories that are indeed used in communicating but that would surely be far-fetched to regard as transcriptions of speech.⁹ The "oral-literate" con-

⁸Also recognized by Goody—for example, in his discussion of numerals and of "graphic representation [such as] . . . the table . . . the matrix . . ." (Goody, 1986, p. xiii) and his criticism of simplistic visible speech models (1977, pp. 76, 124). But he keeps returning to language as the bedrock: such tables are the "graphic representation of language" (1986, p. xiii), writing is "the graphic representation of speech" (2000, p. 25), and the mnemonic images described in Frances Yates' study of memory involve "the prior reduction of language to a visual form" (Goody, 1985, p. 16).

⁹For elaboration and references see Finnegan (2002), also Biddle (2002), Kwint et al. (1999), Perri (2001), and Rumsey (2001).

tinuum starts to look very incomplete as a compass for human modes of communication. Nor are interactions between different modes exhaustively described by considering the apparent opposites of oral and written. The colonial period of Aztec Mexico for instance saw a triadic relationship between oral communication, Latin alphabet, and local pictographic writing (Perri, 2001, p. 273) while in parts of Africa the communicative modes of drums, dance, song, displays of clothing, or three-dimensional wooden or metal images contended, complemented, and mingled with spoken word or written scripts. Modes of communication are more multisided than can be conveyed by word-based models because humans draw variously and disparately on a multiplex spectrum of sounded words, graphic representations, music, gestures, images, and much more.

These various perspectives are replacing a view of human culture as based primarily on verbal language—oral and written—by more complicated models embracing a multiplicity of media and resources. Goody's term “technology” can similarly be enlarged from just ways of handling language to other communicative modes, too: to the diverse cultural systems surrounding the uses of pictures and images, of buildings and costume, of dance, of touch and space, and of the formalized usages of bodily movement in gesture: “this old, efficient, and beautiful technology of communication” (Streeck, 1994, p. 266).

The strand in Goody's work that widens the conspectus beyond a narrow focus on words is thus both supported and further extended by current perspectives on the multiplicity of communicating. This in turn entails questioning the powerful but arguably ethnocentric model that picks out the verbal as the key element whether in any given act of communicating or in the long development of human culture and communication more generally, which also lies among Goody's interests.

THE "ORAL"—DISSOLVED OR RECLOTHED?

Should we then give up the term “oral”? It has lost its preeminent position as one of the two crucial poles in the (linguistic) framework shaping human cognitive and social processes because insofar as it is a distinguishable term at all it is only one of several communicative technologies. It is not a clearcut concept with self-evident edges but is constantly entangled with other modes and media. It only too easily carries a loaded set of connotations with it, too. Especially when used as a key term for analyzing human cultures or history in some general sense, it so often seems irretrievably intershot with questionable overtones of uniformity, of verbal prioritizing, or even, at times, of the ethnocentric origin myth telling of either radical dichotomy or a progressive development up to Western-oriented forms.

There is something to be said for keeping "oral" as a limited analytic term, however. If human communication is indeed multimodal and multimedia, it is helpful to sort out the variegated threads even if they are in practice intertwined. Even though more elusive and multiplex than used to be supposed, vocal speech is still clearly one important dimension of human communication. So it can be illuminating to explore the diverse ways that differing aspects of vocal utterances can be cocreated in conjunction with, for example, written overtones, visual images, auditory resonances, musical enactments, material artifacts, and bodily engagements. Unpicking the oral features and how they are brought into play enables a fuller appreciation of the complexity of communicating.

There are two corollaries to this. First, the term has many ambiguities, not least that between 1) what is spoken, uttered through the mouth and 2) everything that is not written (the first thus excluding physical monuments, gestural systems, or instrumental music, the second including them). The former is arguably more useful, but whichever coverage is intended this certainly needs to be made clear—a simple-sounding injunction but by no means always observed in scholarly discussion as one sense seeps into another and "oral" is deployed ambiguously as if its meaning is self-evident. Second, if "oral" is used in this potentially more delimited sense, where are its boundaries? "Uttered through the mouth" or "vocalized" appears precise, a good focus for investigation and analysis. But of course as soon as we start digging, the edges start dissolving. Is it just the "words," in the sense of units transcribable into writing? Or also pauses, intensities, or volume—elements that in writing might be partially signaled by punctuation or layout? What about sobs, laughs, silences? Or the indications of mood, irony, or emotion that can come through in intonation or dynamics, or the multilevel meanings wound into the overlapping of several voices? It seems scarcely possible to omit such elements (or indeed to sideline them by marginalizing terms like "paralinguistic"). But if so, can we exclude the gestures, facial expressions, and spacings that can play a comparable part in shaping meanings? And what of the visible and palpable accoutrements that sometimes go along with these? The recorded or broadcast vocal sounds that are nowadays a significant dimension of contemporary culture? Or the instrumental sounds and sonic ambiances that mediate and formulate their impact? Further, the immediacy of the unrolling event, the temporal moment of performance, the overlapping involvement of the coparticipants' bodily presences—all these too may, and probably will, have their own creative input and shape the emergence of potentially multiple meanings in ways that would be seriously undervalued by an analysis of spoken "words" alone. Again the oral, even in the apparently limited sense of vocalized utterances, turns out to have permeable boundaries indeed.

Taking "oral" as a focus then demands an awareness of its lack of clear delimitation, the need for greater clarity as to which potentially multiplex ele-

ments are included, and an awareness of the arbitrary and perhaps culture-bound nature of the boundaries we set, likely to vary with situation and folk definition as well as with the analyst's interests. All in all this can only throw further doubt on general conclusions about the "oral" as a basis for social organization or mental processes even as it alerts us to its complexity and multidimensionality.

Perhaps in the end we need to look at "oral" not as a settled descriptive or analytic term after all but as a prompt to explore a range of questions. It is true that for something to be reasonably termed "oral" at all we would (probably) expect some aspect of voice to be somehow involved, but this can only be the starting point for a series of questions about the range of dimensions and media with which it might be interwoven—visual, auditory, tactile, kinesic, proxemic, material, and musical resonances, pictorial associations, evocations of written words (that too), somatic presences, and movements. In practice, most forms labeled "oral" turn out to have some element of multidimensionality about them. To illuminate this fully a host of issues need to be pursued: the local conventions and institutions that to an extent formulate, facilitate, and constrain the intermixtures; folk ideologies about the ideal or actual mixtures and their relative significance; how people manipulate, extend, or, perhaps, narrow down the relatively accepted spectrum on particular occasions or with particular participants. It is only an openness to exploring the range across this kind of broad multisensory and multimedia spectrum that can really give us insight into the oral.

This perspective draws attention to the multifaceted sophistication of human modes of communication. To make expression through words the key factor is to rest content with a much feebler vision. We would do better to follow and extend Goody's insights into the multiplicity of the Bagre oral performances and of the iconography, material monuments, ritual actions, scents, and sights on which he has written so eloquently. Paradoxically, this leads back into a challenge to those very word-based models of human development and experience that he also promotes, linked to a linguistic concept of human culture along the "orality-literacy" scale. It is timely to reassert that second strand of his work to open a broader perspective on the "oral"—reclothing it within the rich complexity that has too often been overlooked.

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The Documentary Tradition in Mind and Society

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*I paused a little while to think
About this older age of ink.*

—Guest

That's the age we live in. The documentary age.

—Shields

The literacy *episteme* (Brockmeier, 2002), the series of theories and conjectures about the nature, significance, and implications of writing, took its modern shape in the hands of Jack Goody who proposed that writing and literacy may be one of "the mechanisms behind sociocultural change" (Goody 1991, p. 18).

In fact Goody explained social structure and social change primarily in terms of three major factors. The first was the development of intensive forms of agriculture that allowed for the accumulation of surplus—this was used to explain much of the great divide between African and Eurasian societies as well as much about family structure, death, and inheritance. Second, he explained social change in terms of urbanization and the growth of bureaucratic institutions that alter and sometimes replace more traditional forms of social organization, such as the family or tribe, thereby identifying civilization as the culture of cities. And third, he attached great weight to the technologies of communication, especially writing, as instruments of social change. He associated the beginnings of writing with the task of managing surplus, and in an important article with Ian Watt, he advanced the ar-

gument that the rise of science and philosophy in classical Greece depended on their invention of an efficient writing system, the alphabet. It is this third factor that has drawn a great deal of controversy and research, including my own.

In highlighting the revolutionary implications of the technology of writing, Goody joined forces with four contemporaries working from somewhat different perspectives. Harold Innis (1950) at the University of Toronto was the first to suggest that the media of communication had what he called a bias. Writing on stone, he suggested, organized societies through time, as in Egypt; writing on paper, on the other hand, organized societies across space, as in Rome. McLuhan (1962, 1964) whose work is currently being republished by MIT Press, like Goody and Watt (1963) argued that as a visual medium writing allowed the accumulation and comparison of texts and thus helped to define the now again-contested distinctions between myth and history, between rhetoric and logic, and between science and magic. Havelock (1963; but see also Havelock, 1991, for his magisterial summary of his work including his relationship to Innis and McLuhan written shortly before his death in 1988) contrasted the oral poetry of Homer with the written philosophy of Plato and was unique in that, as he pointed out, he was the only writer on this topic who was professionally committed to the study of Greek and Latin. Until his death, Havelock argued that the roots of modern Western culture lay in the Greek invention of the alphabet in that the alphabet was the first script that could preserve unambiguously and precisely oral statements. Rereading such a record, he argued, is a kind of reflection, the defining feature of literate thought and discourse. Ong (1982) examined the relation between writing and modes of thought and discourse in the early modern period, arguing that writing raises consciousness. These books provided a basis for an outpouring of research on the social and psychological implications of literacy.

The very scope of these theories made them vulnerable to criticism. According to some definitions of literacy—literacy as expertise—all societies are literate societies. According to some definitions of society—social organization—all cultures, including traditional ones, are societies. Sawyer (2002) summarized the criticisms of Goody in terms of three principles held by Goody that are largely rejected by the anthropological community: the ideas that social change is progressive, that social change is technologically driven, and that writing is categorically different from speech. First, in the latter half of the 20th-century, evolutionary theories and the belief in progress evaporated, and anthropologists adopted a more relativist approach with attention to the local and particular, that is, with the structure of societies in their own right. Second, social change is seen as caused by persons and groups dealing with situations for which technologies may or may not be useful. Although technology may account for some aspects of social change, the technologies

of communication, including writing, were seen as secondary, if relevant. And third, the recognition of the ascendancy of speech, a universal human competence, cast writing as a narrow and secondary skill. For many linguists, following Saussure writing came to be seen as a mere cipher on speech (Mattingly, 1983) and written texts were viewed as the merest suggestion of organized discourses (Silverstein, 1993, p. 38).

The denial of these assumptions resulted in flourishing ethnographies that captured the diversity and coherence of exotic cultures on one hand and the universal pragmatics of oral language on the other. For his part, Goody (1997) did not think highly of what he called reportage ethnology, the detailed description of the local and exotic. Explanations in terms of culture or cultural differences he described as "the weakest of all possible narratives" (p. 16). Rather, he sought mechanisms of social, evolutionary change.

More detailed criticisms of Goody tended to contextualize rather than to deny Goody's claims. Thus, Lloyd (1979) and Thomas (1989) showed how literacy rather than radically transforming societies was assimilated into existing social arrangements even if those arrangements were somewhat modified in the process. In *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society*, Goody (1986) spelled out how social practices ranging from accounting to law were transformed as they came to be organized by means of documents. For Goody, the product of exploiting the possibilities of writing by a society over historical time was written culture (Goody, 1987).

By written culture, I, following Goody, mean a society that both assumes a particular form of psychological competence—the ability to read, interpret, and construct documents in a standard, norm-based way—and a particular form of social organization—*institutions organized around constitutions, rules of order, contracts, and explicit norms set out in written documents*. I, like Goody, am surprised that such a seemingly obvious claim can be widely disputed.

However, the idea that written cultures involve a distinctive set of psychological competencies runs foul of the pervasive belief in the unity and rationality of all mankind, an idea going back at least to Hume and now enshrined in both anthropology and developmental psychology. It is widely assumed that regardless of how esoteric or bizarre, behavior must make sense and in that sense be rational to the actor. Again, beliefs may differ, but rationality is assumed to be universal. And the idea that modern societies are uniquely rational ran foul of the pervasive anthropological belief that all societies are rational, organized around shared beliefs and norms embodied in a shared set of linguistic practices, rituals, and other forms of social action. Consequently, as Smith (2001) recently noted, "For whatever reason, sociology has not recognized texts as implicated in social organization," a situation she, like Goody, attempts to change by arguing, that "ruling relations are essentially text-mediated" (p. 164).

The main problem with claims regarding the significance of writing lies in identifying precisely what writing contributes to written culture. If writing is merely a record of speech, though it may extend the life span of utterances, it is difficult to see how it could have an impact on thought or social relations. I (Olson, 1977),¹ following the general lead of Goody and Watt (1963), psychologized the distinction, claiming that even within the same individual or the same society, one may distinguish between oral utterance and written text in the ways they are constructed and interpreted, a distinction that has continued to attract criticism of both Goody and myself.

Although some linguists such as Chafe (1985), Coulmas (1989) and Harris (1986) treat written language as distinct from speech, others deny the unique place of the written altogether by defining text as discourse and relegating the written to the "merest suggestion" of a text (Silverstein, 1993, p. 38). Still others acknowledge the importance of activities built around writing and book reading, for example, but note the difficulties in strictly distinguishing the oral from the written and orally based from document-based institutions, pointing out that all literate practices assumed some oral discussion about the texts and that reading aloud had some of the properties of oral performance (Finnegan, 1988, this volume; Heath, 1983). Indeed, some anthropologists (Spittler, 1998) have found that literate cultures are far more oral than so-called oral ones in the sense of being willing and able to talk about almost anything to almost anyone. Certainly attempts to identify mental or social functions that are uniquely tied to writing and literacy have not been encouraging (Feldman, 1991; Scribner & Cole, 1981).

What the critics of the literacy hypothesis have importantly contributed, in my view, was to show that literacy serves very different functions in different cultural and historical contexts (Doronila, 2001; Street, 1984), that the imposition of literacy does not necessarily bring progressive social change (Triebel, 2001), and that reading and writing as a means of communication are always secondary to the social and cognitive functions of oral speech (Feldman, 1991). As Chartier (1995) has pointed out, the problem with great divide theories—including the oral versus the written—is that the divide appears in every generation in almost every society between elite and popular cultures. Chartier therefore emphasizes the modes of appropriation of texts and documents. The same texts may be revered or merely consulted,

¹In 1975, I presented Goody a preliminary draft of the paper that would later be published as "From Utterance to Text" at his office at St. John's College. He read it silently while I sat there nervously awaiting his response. I noted his occasional signs of agreement and modest pleasure at what he took, correctly, as a sympathetic reworking of his views. Shortly thereafter, and to my great satisfaction, he began to use the terms "utterance" and "text" contrastively, as I had.

taken as universal truths or as mere records of the experiences of the past. Consequences accrue less to what is given than to the ways of taking.

Thus, although the concepts of a written culture and a literate mentality are vulnerable to the charge of oversimplification in that they imply that all literate people and literate societies are basically similar, the more nuanced claim would be that writing is essential to certain bureaucratic forms of social organization and that participation requires or recruits a specialized type of intellectual competence. Max Weber (1948) described this shift as rationalization, the formalization and documentation of roles and explicit rules and procedures requiring a new and distinctive mentality. Weber took a tragic view of such modernization, deplored what was lost in such a shift and underestimating the very real gains (von Holthoorn, 2003). Such rationalization depends on the construction and consultation of written texts, yet such texts are the rationalization of something, namely, social interests and functions. As Cole and Cole (this volume) put it, literacy is always embedded in some social practice or activity. Having granted that, we still must confront the questions regarding the ways that social practices are changed as they become documentary practices and, more important, how writing something down could change our representation of a thing, as Carruthers (1990) once asked.

Even within such social practices, the concept of a text remains problematic in that, as mentioned, for many linguists a text is nothing more than a discourse. Consequently, in Olson (2001) I elaborated my earlier distinction between "utterance" and "text" by distinguishing between text as discourse and text as document, and I advanced the argument that a document may be defined as a kind of reported speech and, as such, calls for a special, opaque mode of construction and interpretation. Once this distinctive property of a document is recognized, we may go on to ask about the psychological competencies relevant to the creation and interpretation of such documents and about the institutional arrangements needed to give those documents the authority to control interpretation and to mandate compliance. The very idea of a written culture is thus a way of characterizing a modern society organized around roles and rules of a bureaucracy and underwritten by the psychological competencies needed for the routine construction and interpretation of documents in those institutional contexts (Brockmeier & Olson, 2002). Written cultures, as Smith (1990) argued, are document cultures, and their functioning depends on what Elwert (2001) called "societal literacy." Writing and the written tradition pervades many aspects of modern society, including those relevant to government, science, literature, economics, and education. With a clearer notion of a document in mind, we can revisit the two main hypotheses advanced by Goody and others, namely, that writing may have had an impact on social organization and an impact on the cognitive processes.

WRITING AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The great German sociologist Tönnies (1987) classified societies into two types, those based on inherited authority, as in a family, clan, or tribe, what he called *gemeinschaft* societies, and those based on impersonal bureaucratic systems, which he called *gesellschaft* societies. Max Weber (1948), too, distinguished social systems, such as that of the family or feudal system, from bureaucracies that he took to be typical of modern societies, distinguishing the two, as mentioned, in terms of rationalization. Goody acknowledges that he was drawn to this contrast by the war-induced juxtaposition of life among intellectual Cambridge and peasant Abruzzi (Goody, 1991). Yet Goody's attempt was to escape such dichotomies by offering a technological factor, writing, that set the bias one way or the other (Goody, 2000, p. 8). The availability and use of writing and literacy was advanced as an account both of differences in social organization and of the transformation from one type of social system to the other. Writing was credited with this role because of its explicitness—the alphabet was seen as exceptional in its ability to control interpretation—and its durable, publicly consultable form.

In explaining the implications of literacy, there is some question as to the relative weight to be given to writing as a technical competence as opposed to the existing cultural practices that writing is assimilated into. Whereas Goody and some others (Olson, 1994) see writing as having an important and often unintended impact on both social organization and intellectual specializations, others such as Street (1984), Scribner and Cole (1981), Boyarin (1992) and Cole and Cole (this volume) see culture as overwriting writing, thereby assimilating writing into the dominant social practices in quite radically different ways. Although admitting the diversity of uses of writing, it is one set of these uses, namely, creating documents of certain types, such as constitutions, contracts, writs, and deeds for property, and also creating the institutions needed for giving such documents status and power that I suggest gives modern societies their characteristic bureaucratic form. Scripting and documenting social practices, thereby rationalizing them, brings new levels of social organization into the realm of possibility. Because such documentary practices are so readily borrowed from one social group to another, there is a great uniformity among bureaucratic arrangements even in quite different societies (Messick, 1993). Institutional theorists (North, 1990) refer to the resulting similarity of institutional structures as institutional isomorphism.

Thus, literacy is not seen as a cause of social organization—that vastly preceded literacy—but as a factor in managing institutional change. Literacy is related to social organization and social change in three ways. First, although social change in the direction of increasing bureaucratization may not be progressive in the sense of "better," it may be progressive in the sense

of increasing social inclusiveness; nations are more inclusive than tribes. Whereas implicit cultural knowledge and ongoing social practices may be sufficient for levels of social organization based on fathers, gods, princes, and heroes, it is insufficient for a large-scale society of strangers. The appeal of written law, for example, is that it gives the possibility of applying a common metric to rulers and ruled alike and to friends and strangers alike. Similarly, surplus requires accounting; large-scale societies require bureaucracy, and so on.

Second, it is inescapable that the major institutions of a modern bureaucratic society are sustained by documentation. It is difficult to imagine a world championing the rule of law if such laws were not documented and precedents recorded. It is equally difficult to imagine a world of science or scholarship without a documentary tradition (Johns, 1998; Olson, 1994). And most conspicuously it is difficult to imagine a complex economy without contracts and records. This is not to say that these documents could work by themselves without the appropriate controlling bureaucratic institutions. Law is only as good as the courts. Accounting and contracts are only as good as the enforcing agencies. Scientific documents are only as good as the interpreters and writers and editors of those documents. Consequently, in my view, it is inappropriate to frame the argument as between the primacy of institutions and the primacy of writing, between the social and the technical. Writing has its place in social functions and practices (Cole & Cole, this volume), but documents are essential to the form that those functions have taken in modern societies. As Schlicht (1998) pointed out, law is rooted in custom and would have no force without both custom to make the law comprehensible and courts to adjudicate those laws. Yet writing and the documentary tradition gives law, as well as the economy, literature, and science, the particular character we associate with complex modern societies.

Consider in somewhat more detail the relation between literacy and one social function, that of child rearing, a function that in literate societies has been institutionalized in the form of public schooling. Historically speaking, schooling goes back to the invention of writing and the growth of cities in the 4th millennium BC in ancient Mesopotamia (Damerow, 1998; Nissen, 1988) and at about the same time in Ancient Egypt (Gaur, 1984). In this period, writing was used for a variety of royal, legal, and bureaucratic purposes, and schools were established to train people to make and read, file and retrieve such inscriptions. These roles were highly specialized and often marked by high official status. A similar pattern is found in ancient imperial China. The Mandarin scholar-bureaucratic tradition was maintained through an arduous civil-service examination system initiated in the Sui dynasty (AD 589–604) (Taylor & Taylor, 1995). Ever since, schooling has been a process of induction into the currently dominant literate tradition, first the Church and later, in the 19th-century, the nation-state. A national system of

schooling was seen as essential for creating a modern nation-state (Holthoorn, in press). In France, for example, after the revolution of 1789, civil unrest was quelled only when Napoleon managed to establish a modern state with a civil service, a system of taxation, an army, a civil code, and a national system of education. In 1802 an educational act created the *lycees*, secular schools controlled by the central government and the Ecole Normale et Supérieure, founded in 1808, to provide teachers for the *lycees*. This centrally organized and controlled system of education was what was required for turning peasants into Frenchmen (Weber, 1976).

Schools are literate institutions first in the sense that children are introduced into the documents that make up our sciences, literature, and political and economic systems. But they are also literate institutions in the second sense that the school itself is organized bureaucratically with centrally controlled curriculum, standards of promotion, credentials, and accountability, all scripted by written documents.

LITERACY AND COGNITION

The central claim linking literacy and cognition is that the habits of reading, writing, consulting, and interpreting texts in the dominant cultural practices become routinized as modes of thinking. Further, these habits are seen as distinctive from those involved in ordinary speech (Hemphill & Snow, 1996). Put simply, if one learns to read and interpret a document in a unique yet standardized, culturally sanctioned way, one can begin to interpret other experiences in an analogous way. Reading the book of scripture in a certain way invited 17th-century scholars to read the book of nature in the same literal way (Olson, 1994) and to institutionalize that way of reading as a method taught to initiates.

Admittedly, literacy can give access to documents that are read and misread outside of their appropriate institutional context. Ginsburg (1982, p. 10; Feldman, 2000) gives a nice example of what may happen when documents fall into the "wrong" hands. Menoccio a 16th-century miller was tried, found guilty, and burned at the stake for claiming that all the sacraments, including baptism were "human inventions," claims he based on his personal if idiosyncratic reading of scripture. Thus, to understand the role of documents in culture and cognition it is necessary to understand at the same time the official institutions of the society that determine how and what is written and read and the implications, sometimes severe, of reading them the "wrong" way.

Literate competence, then, is not only the ability to read but to read in functional and institutionally sanctioned ways. Schooling is learning to deal with writing and the written tradition of a particular society in socially mandated ways. Seeing literacy in its institutional context would go far to accom-

modate Scribner and Cole's (1981) suggestion that literacy is best seen as a culturally situated practice. Writing need not be used as a basis for social organization, but special types of complex social organization rely necessarily on a documentary tradition. Thus, learning to read and write is not enough; social institutions such as schools, courts, and the sciences are also implicated. Because literacy is exploited in such social activities as the law, the sciences, and literature, those activities change to take on their more-or-less modern form. And the schools' emphasis on literacy reflects these dominant social concerns.

Precisely what is learned in the course of learning to read and write a particular script is itself the subject of a burgeoning literature. In learning to read an alphabetic script, learners acquire concepts of phonemic segments as well as concepts of words, sentences, and those structures marked in the script (Homer & Olson, 1999; Vernon & Ferreiro, 1999). In general, in learning to read one not only masters a script but also becomes aware of or knowledgeable about those properties of their own speech that are marked in the writing system. Thus, it may be argued that literacy is intrinsically metalinguistic (Olson, 1991). A less widely discussed aspect of Scribner and Cole's (1981) research program on literacy among the Vai demonstrated a similar effect in a comparative context. They compared those literate in Vai with those literate in schooled literacy and found that what was learned reflected those aspects of the language that are captured by the script. In learning to read Vai, a syllabary, learners became conscious of and skilled with the analysis and synthesis of utterances into syllabic constituents. Because words were not marked in the Vai script, learners failed to acquire the concept of a word. Those learning to read a standard alphabet learn to analyze speech into phonemes, words, and sentences because these are the elements marked in the script. This finding is now well documented in comparative research (Morais, Alegria, & Content, 1997).

In addition, Scribner and Cole (1981) found that these metalinguistic and metacognitive practices—talking about words, understanding rules, and providing justifications for decisions—were dramatically enhanced by schooling with the consequence that schooled literates became quite proficient in the giving of reasons. Scribner and Cole tend to disparage such effects, saying that children were good at what they had been given practice in. In my view these reason-giving activities are essential aspects of literacy in a document culture—consulting a text, quoting a text, referring to a text, justifying interpretations by appeal to a text, granting a text a kind of autonomy and self-referentiality. Schools tend to reflect in their literacy programs the functions valued in the larger society.

In my view (Olson, 1977, 1994) learning to read and write any script is a lesson in metalinguistics that may, in certain cultural contexts, be turned into a lesson in metacognition. That learning to read and write brings aspects

of the implicit linguistic structure of speech into consciousness, whether as phonemes, words, sentences, or speech acts, is now well known. What needs to be spelled out is how that metalinguistic knowledge may translate into a mode of thought. To take this step requires that we notice that in the act of writing, words are not merely used but mentioned; that is, the words or expressions themselves become possible objects of discourse. The written record of even a mundane utterance immediately confronts one with the possible distinction between the primary intended meaning, what the writer means to convey to a reader, and a secondary sentence meaning, what the text records independently of its primary communicative intent. The distinction is equally well phrased as that between what "he said" and what "it said." The written transcription, so to speak, talks back to you; it has an independent voice, an autonomy. As suggested earlier, a written text is both a message and a document, an artifact that may be read and reread by oneself or another. As a message, a written form in the simplest case may be little different from a spoken form. But if intended and taken as a document, it achieves an independence and an objectivity difficult or impossible to achieve with directly spoken utterance.

To elaborate on this point and its implications for cognition we may rephrase the older distinction between utterance and text as one between a discursive text and a document, drawing on the classical distinction between "use" and "mention." "Mention" is prototypically expressed through direct and indirect quotation and in writing enclosed in quotation marks. The suggestion is that writing is learning to compose as if relying exclusively on mention, as if everything one wrote was in quotation marks. All reading is the simultaneous confrontation with both use and mention; consequently, in learning to read and write one is simultaneously learning something about the message communicated and about the linguistic form in which it is expressed. Consequently, one acquires conscious or explicit knowledge about the language, not just the message communicated. Goody's emphasis on explicitness can be reread in this light. Explicitness is the product of a double consciousness—consciousness of both utterance meaning and sentence meaning—inviting a comparison of the two. Further it allows for editing to make the two more or less congruent.

Consciousness of the distinction between a text as discourse (what the author intends to communicate) and text as document (a visual artifact suitable for reading and rereading) arises early in the process of becoming literate, as the following conversation recorded and transcribed by Julie Comay illustrates:

Two five-year-olds are sitting with their teacher at a table in their classroom. The first child is orally dictating a story, which the teacher is transcribing. The following conversation ensues:

Child 1: "... and then Lucy grew up to be a lovely girl."

Child 2: "Who is Lucy?"

Child 1: "She's the baby I was just talking about."

Child 2: "Then you should say so in your story. You should say, 'The baby's name was Lucy.'"

Child 1: "No, I don't want to. It wouldn't sound good. It's not part of the story."

Child 2: You should say it. Otherwise people won't know who you mean. You could say, "The baby, whose name was Lucy . . ."

Child 1: "Oh yeah. OK. (turns to teacher) "Write 'The baby, whose name was Lucy, grew up to be beautiful.'

Teacher: "'Beautiful' or 'a lovely girl'?"

Child: "Beautiful."

Teacher (writing as she speaks): "The baby, whose name was Lucy, grew up to be beautiful.' Go on."

In writing one thus learns to deal with this double consciousness. Some further research documents this new literate understanding. Kamawar and Olson (2002) showed that the children who can talk about "the very words," namely, what is captured by a written record, are the children who understand the implications of quoted clauses. Quoted clauses have the special property that philosophers refer to as opacity. To understand quoted clauses as opaque, one must treat the clause metalinguistically, that is, as detached from the context of utterance. The contrast is shown in A (transparent) and B (opaque). If children understand opacity they will agree with the following:

(A) If there is a ball in the closet, and the ball is yellow, it is true that there is a yellow ball in the closet. But

(B) if John knows there is a ball in the closet, and the ball is yellow, it is not true that John knows there is a yellow ball in the closet.

Yet children under the age of 5 or 6 years, prior to the time they become readers, mistakenly insist that John thinks that there is a yellow ball in the closet. They fail to recognize the opacity of quoted clauses. Recall these are the children who fail to distinguish the meaning from the wording, that is, the very words.

Two implications follow. Literacy encourages the tendency to think not just of discourse but of documents. Children learn to apply to documents the rules earlier applied in a limited way to directly and indirectly quoted speech. And, second, these findings suggest that writing not be thought of as categorically different from all speech but rather as a specialized development of one of the resources of speech, namely, its resources for treating language "offline" as mention rather than use or as direct quotation rather than utter-

ance. This view has the implication that competence with direct quotation and, hence, with referential opacity is related to the advance of literate thought. The very concept of sentence meaning like literal meaning is a literate conception. On the other hand, all languages have the resources for self-reference, that is, for direct quotation. It is this universal property of language that is exploited, elaborated, and routinized in a document culture. I see this as a way out of the great divide between spoken and written—writing is the specialization of one of the resources of speech, its capacity for self-reference.

There is an affinity between the early suggestion by Vygotsky and the argument advanced herein. Vygotsky (1986[1934]) was among the first to assert that "writing . . . brings awareness to speech" (p. 183). The act of writing, he argued, called for a reflective search through one's utterances for features that could then be expressed in writing, a kind of search not required in speaking. His associate, Luria (1946, cited by Downing 1987), pointed out that for the beginning reader "a word may be used by not noticed by the child" (p. 36). Noting, that is, consciousness of the word, comes primarily with learning to read as I argued earlier. Hence, children's first concept of "word" is as a piece of print, not as a unit of speech (Reid, 1966).

Not only are words quoted, that is, mentioned rather than used, but also whole expressions may be quoted and thereby treated as a document (primarily but not necessarily written down). Recall the distinction between text as discourse and text as a document, an artifact that can be consulted in the way one consults quoted speech. This distinction applies to the ongoing arguments about logic and rationality. These arguments frequently confuse the logic implicit in ordinary thought and discourse from the logic of quoted speech, that is, the logic of documents composed of statements and propositions. Goody's claim about logic was about the latter, namely, about what follows necessarily from a statement treated as a document and not a claim about the logical properties of ordinary speech. Luria's (1976) widely quoted study of reasoning among nonliterate adults may be reinterpreted in this light. Luria found that nonliterate adults in a traditional society frequently failed to draw the expected inference as in the following: All the bears in Novaya Zemla are white. Ivan went to Novaya Zemla and saw a bear there. What colour was the bear?

Rather than reply "white," subjects tended to say: "I've never been to Novaya Zemla, you'll have to ask Ivan." This is a perfectly reasonable response if the original statement is treated as ordinary discourse but inappropriate if treated as quoted speech, that is, a document. Luria (1976) interpreted this as a failure of logical reasoning; others, as a failure to grasp the requirements of the task (Scribner & Cole, 1981). Clearly, it is a failure of strict deduction, and it is a failure to grasp the requirements of the task. But what, precisely, are those requirements? Following the previous distinction

between use and mention, that is, between text as discourse and text as document, I would argue that Luria's subjects were inexpert at treating the text as a document. They failed to recognize that the problem statement was, as it were, in quotation marks, thus requiring a special, opaque interpretive stance. Consequently, they imported information inappropriately, drawing on their prior experience, rather like our earlier mentioned young subjects who claimed that "John knows that the ball is yellow." Note that this is not to say that nonliterate subjects lack the ability to handle quotation or metalinguage generally (Feldman, 1991) but rather to say that literacy and schooling make the recognition and interpretation of quoted expressions, that is, documents, routine. These routines are not to be found in the documents independently of the institutions, such as schools, that set and monitor the standards for the drawing of such inferences. Literate cognition is a kind of expertise in dealing with expressions in this particular and special way. Documents composed of expressions to be treated as if in quotation marks constitute a major archival resource in modern document-based bureaucratic societies, and in learning to cope with them children acquire a distinctive kind of competence not inappropriately described as literacy. As Goody (2000) put it, literacy is a kind of "technology of the intellect" (p. 132).

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Rethinking the Goody Myth

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Among Jack Goody's numerous works, his studies of literacy have had an especially influential and continuing impact on a wide range of different disciplines. Even the briefest search in the *Social Citation Index* reveals that his work on this topic continues to be used by anthropologists and historians, psychologists and sociologists. The range and depth of Goody's scholarly contributions to our understanding of literacy make any attempt at a brief but comprehensive summary a difficult undertaking in any circumstances. In approaching an analysis of his contributions to literacy studies appropriate to this occasion, we seek to understand a peculiar dynamic that seems to characterize academic appropriations of his ideas concerning literacy and the empirical materials on which they are based.

We begin by summarizing the major points of the initial Goody and Watt essay, "The Consequences of Literacy" (1963) which was the starting point of what we refer to in our title as the Goody myth. We then pause to examine aspects of the article's sociohistorical context, including the context provided by other prominent scholars writing in fields where literacy was a recognized focus of attention. We believe that the construction of the myth depended in good measure on these social-historical contextual factors. Our reexamination of Goody's writing on literacy and its interpretations leads us to a somewhat ironic conclusion. According to what we are terming the Goody myth, Goody is said to believe that literacy is the autonomous driving

¹The order of authorship was determined by genetic lottery.

mechanism of change that heats up "cold," homeostatic, amnesic, face-to-face, nonliterate societies, transforming them into "hot," rapidly changing, rationalized, bureaucratically organized, and possibly democratic societies peopled by rational, modern thinkers. As Brian Street (1984) summarizes, "The claims are that literacy affects cognitive processes in some of the following ways: it facilitates "empathy," "abstract context-free thought," "rationality," critical thought" post-operative thought . . . detachment and the kinds of logical processes exemplified by syllogisms, formal language, elaborated code etc." (p. 2). Sometimes this belief is met with disapproval (Ahern, 2001; Gee, 1990; Kawatoko, 1995; Street, 1984). At other times the idea of literacy as the engine of social and intellectual change is met with approval and extended to studies of educational design and policy both domestically and internationally (Gustafsson, 1991; Olson, 1989).

Whatever their attitude toward his ideas, many critics and admirers alike ascribe to Goody the view that literacy is an autonomous causal agent in history. This consensus is odd because, as we shall see, from the very beginning Goody explicitly rejects the technologically determinist view that his critics ascribe to him. For every text fragment that contains statements that provide "clear proof" that Goody is a technological determinist, one can find just as clear statements that the consequences of literacy at all levels of human activity are contingent on the cultural circumstances in which they are embedded.

In fact, some commentators believe that the literacy thesis is without merit precisely because, as his views have become more elaborated, he often emphasizes the special effect/potential/implication of a technology of communication (such as alphabetic writing), even while he affirms the central role of the society in determining what is, or is not, made of/with that technology. From this perspective, Goody is making two contradictory claims at once. The result is said to be incoherence or the implosion of the literacy thesis (Halverson, 1992).

We prefer to adopt the view that Goody has, from the beginning, been attempting to develop an account of literacy's role in historical change and human consciousness that does justice to both the peculiarities of the medium of communication and the sociohistorical context. Time and again, in various turns of phrase, he argues, "I want to maintain a balance between the refusal to admit differences in cognitive processes or cultural developments on the one hand and extreme dualism or distinction on the other" (Goody, 1977, pp. 16–17). These goals present difficult dilemmas that to date have not been successfully resolved, but it is not clear why they should entail a necessary contradiction; instead, the challenge is to articulate the dynamic interplay of tool and context that a balanced position requires. In what follows, we offer a reading of Goody's work that sees the route to achieving the needed balance and sense of complementarity in that emerging stream of social science research and theory that focuses on cultural practices, including

practices of literacy, as the appropriate unit of analysis for the study of culture and mind.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LITERACY

Written jointly with Ian Watt in 1960 at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, "The Consequences of Literacy" (Goody & Watt, 1963) starts from the following premise: We can no longer accept the ethnocentric notion that rational thought characterizes people who live in complex societies, whereas prelogical thought is typical of simpler societies, nor can we afford to ignore the differences between societies that represent polar opposites with respect to the complexity of their technological infrastructure. As a result, Goody and Watt set out to understand the differences between civilized and primitive societies by focusing on the different ways that cultural transmission takes place in them. In primitive/oral societies, they suggest, transmission of cultural heritage takes place through a "long chain of interlocking conversations between members of the group" (Goody & Watt, 1963, p. 306). Goody and Watt acknowledge that there may be some mnemonic devices in preliterate cultures that resist absorption into the "tyranny of the present," as well as individuals who retain a critical attitude toward the past. In general, however, they conclude that the whole content of social tradition apart from the material inheritances is held in memory, which tends to work through a process of automatic updating, shedding aspects of social life that are no longer relevant (p. 307). As a result, the past is transmuted in the course of being transmitted. This process of continual transformation means that the "individual has little perception of the past except in terms of the present" (p. 312) and that people's perceptions of social experience are therefore kept in line with the basic Durkheimian categories that organize social life.

Using ancient Greece as the germinal case, Goody and Watt (1963) hypothesize that the widespread use of alphabetic literacy, which they suggest was first attained in 5th and 6th-century Athens, had important effects on many aspects of social and mental life. They are careful to note that the degree to which literacy actually produces such changes varies "according to the system's intrinsic efficacy as a means of communication, and according to the social constraints placed upon it" (p. 311). They also point out that the widespread diffusion of the alphabet in Greece was "materially assisted by various social, economic and technological factors" (p. 318). These factors included an economic revival that followed on the Mycenaean collapse in the 12th-century, a relatively decentralized social system and increased contact with the East that brought "material prosperity and technological advance" (p. 318). As a further caveat, they suggest that even when a society is

widely literate, oral means of communication continue to exist and may be more compelling than literate modes of learning, making the actual effects of literacy relatively shallow.

Acknowledging the potency of social context and the complex balance of social, cultural, and material factors that comprise it, Goody and Watt (1963) still suggest that widespread literacy may have facilitated some important, if not all-pervasive, developments in Greece. In particular, they suggest that literacy may have enabled the emergence of the Western practice of history because writing enables the accumulation of different historical sources, potentially allowing people to scrutinize their thought critically and thus to assess more accurately when such accounts are false. This enhanced scrutiny, in turn, promotes an increase in skepticism. They also suggest that this general tendency toward a skeptical and critical orientation to the past may have been further developed in the Greek case where writing fostered the creation of logical reasoning by allowing words to be stripped of their original social context, enhancing the potential for critical scrutiny. Finally, they suggest that because literacy enables the accumulation of masses of information no individual will be as completely integrated into the entire cultural corpus, thus leading to greater individuation as individuals pick and choose from the cultural repertoire, but also greater potential anomie. As they emphasize, "writing, by objectifying words, and by making them and their meaning available for much more prolonged and intensive scrutiny than is possible orally, encourages private thought" (p. 339).

It is important to emphasize that the Goody and Watt (1963) article was explicitly framed as an idea piece—a set of speculations, not an empirical study. Goody was to spend some 25 additional years gathering historical and ethnographic data to test the speculations in this initial article. Both the initial formulation and the context in which it was read and interpreted played a role in how the ideas have been developed. We turn now to that context in two of its aspects.

THE CONTEXT OF "THE CONSEQUENCES OF LITERACY"

Both the broader political-historical context of the 1960s and the simultaneously emerging scholarship in the social sciences are important for understanding how Goody and Watt's (1963) ideas were initially received.

Political-Historical Context

The early 1960s was a time when many nations were still emerging from the aftermath of World War II and many decades of colonial rule. There appeared to be a general consensus that the former colonized societies should

be brought into more equitable interaction with their former colonizers in the industrialized world. Many people conceived of this process of change as a process of development in all spheres of life—the political, the economic, and the psychological. The proper end point was assumed to be that people everywhere would live and think like those in the more developed West. And in all spheres, people believed that literacy (ordinarily equated with formal education) was an essential engine of change (UNESCO, 1951).

These widespread views were captured in the influential work of Daniel Lerner (1958), who argued for the centrality of education to economic development. Education, he believed, leads to modern thinking, a key attribute of which is the ability to take another person's perspective and to empathize with that person's point of view. Lerner made the link between the psychological capacity for empathy and economic development quite explicit. Such perspective taking, Lerner wrote, "is an indispensable skill for moving people out of traditional settings. . . . Our interest is to clarify the process whereby the high empathizer tends to become also the cash customer, the radio listener, the voter" (p. 50). Leaving aside the question of whether or not such changes are desirable, the important point is that they represented but one symptom of a longstanding belief in social and economic progress founded on the increased intellectual capacity of a country's citizens, who in turn were assumed to depend on their mastery of literacy delivered through systems of formal schooling. From this perspective, there was nothing particularly new to the Goody myth; it was simply another manifestation of enlightenment/modernist ideology. Some people celebrated it; others deplored it.

The Scholarly Context

Although it would be inappropriate to claim a direct causal connection, it is a curious fact that several influential books reevaluating theories of the differences between small, face-to-face, and large, literacy-mediated societies appeared in a very short period of time in the early 1960s. Consistent with Goody and Watt's (1963) own synthesizing intentions, many of the fields where their ideas are currently influential can be found in their own footnotes. Although anthropology and sociology play a central role in their story, so does the work of classicists, historians, and psychologists. Several texts can be singled out for special attention.

In 1960 Albert Lord published *The Singer of Tales*, which introduced the idea, first developed by his mentor, the classicist Milman Perry, that the advent of literacy in ancient Greece fundamentally changed the way that poets remembered and performed epic poetry. Lord argued that the forms of remembering involved in an oral performance are fundamentally different from those based on a written text. "The change," he wrote, "has been from the stability of essential story, which is the goal of oral tradition, to stability of

text, of the exact words of the story" (p. 138). Classics was also the provenance of Eric Havelock, whose monograph, *Preface to Plato* (1963), extended the Perry-Lord thesis beyond a focus on the role of literacy in the production and reproduction of poetry to encompass a general "cast of thought, or a mental condition," which, he said, came to dominate Greece in the centuries preceding Plato. In Havelock's view, the crucial foundation for the pervasive consequences of literacy was the alphabet. Here he was following that thread of Goody and Watt's (1963) essay in which they suggested that phonetic writing systems are especially well suited for "expressing every nuance of individual thought" (p. 315) in contrast with syllabic or other writing systems, which "were too clumsy and complicated to foster widespread literacy" (p. 312).

Havelock (1978) argued that the alphabet's effects went beyond mere rendering of text into language and vice versa; it was the foundation for a new and more powerful mode of thought: "Atomism and the alphabet alike were theoretic constructs, manifestations of a capacity for abstract analysis, an ability to translate objects of perception into mental entities, which seems to have been one of the hallmarks of the way the Greek mind worked" (1978, p. 44).

A very different line of inquiry, this time from psychology, appeared consistent with the conclusions suggested by Lord and Havelock. *Language and Thought*, written by the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky in 1934, was published in English in 1962 with an introduction by Jerome Bruner, an influential developmental psychologist whose work subsequently contributed to questions of education and its psychological consequences. Working within a Marxist framework, the basic assumption of cultural-historical psychology developed by Vygotsky and his colleagues is that the human mind is formed through the active appropriation of the cultural store of the past, embodied in material artifacts, rituals, belief systems, writing systems, and the modes of social interaction they entail. This process of appropriation is itself conditioned by the particular culture and historical era in which the person lives.

As children acquire their native language(s), rich new resources become available for gaining access to, and participating in, the process of cultural production and reproduction. It is during this period, according to Vygotsky, that "thinking becomes verbal" and "language becomes thoughtful" (1987, p. 112). These new forms of thinking and communicating remain with people for the rest of their lives. They are a universal achievement, attained by all normal people in all of the world's cultures.

Several years later, when children begin the transition to adulthood that we refer to as adolescence, a new transformation occurs in the relation between language and thought. Young people begin to acquire scientific concepts, by which Vygotsky (1934) had in mind something like closed systems of meaning with fully specified logical relations among all the terms. Such

concepts, he believed, reorganize the spontaneous, everyday concepts that children have acquired before they are exposed to school.

Drawing on his own cultural circumstances, Vygotsky (1934) assumed that writing was central to this process of change. In a manner that echoes Goody and Watt (1963) (and a good many psychologists during the 20th-century), Vygotsky believed that the acquisition of literacy/schooling requires the ability to think in terms of a double abstraction: Language provides a first-order abstract representation of experience and writing, and a new materialization of language involves a second process of abstraction. As he put it, this materialized/abstracted nature of written language "requires a high degree of abstraction. Written speech lacks intonation and expression. It lacks all the aspects of speech that are reflected in sound. Written speech is speech in thought, in representations. It lacks the most basic form of oral speech; it lacks material sound" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 202).

Writing also entails a different form of social interaction: "[Written speech] is speech without an interlocutor . . . speech monologue. It is a conversation with a white sheet of paper, with an imagined or conceptualized interlocutor" (Vygotsky, 1987, pp. 202–203).

As a result of these and related characteristics of the ways that literacy changes the structure and content of human activity, a conscious mental effort is required to both acquire and use it. From the perspective of the individual, it is a more difficult form of thought, but its difficulty is compensated for by the way it decontextualizes thought, enabling people to think and act in the more complex ways demanded of citizens of an industrialized world.

The reader can no doubt add to this list of texts from various disciplines that adopted a perspective similar to that proposed by Goody and Watt. It appears clear, for example, that the psychological consequences Vygotsky claimed for literacy/schooling are similar to the forms of conceptual activity that Lévi-Strauss (1966) associated with scientific thinking as compared to bricolage. These ideas also bear a strong resemblance to ideas put forth by Walter Ong (1967), who argued that the spatialization inherent in print enabled a transformation of consciousness in which an individual sense of self is differentiated from the social matrix of human life.

Space limitations preclude pursuit of these interesting parallel contributions. However, these examples should make it clear that Goody and Watt's (1963) initial statement of the relation between literacy, society, and thought was part of a much wider zeitgeist that made it an attractive tool for understanding processes of historical and cognitive change at several levels.

At the same time, as we have been at pains to note, Goody was keenly aware that the processes he was talking about highlighted only one side of a complex cultural-historical dialectic—the technology itself. As we read matters, his subsequent work on literacy was an attempt to achieve both more detailed and better balanced evidence concerning both sides of the dialectic,

moving back and forth from the sociohistorical context of various forms of literacy to a focus on the technology of literacy more narrowly considered. The difficult challenge, of course, was (and is) to represent both sides of this coin at the same time.

LITERACY IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

Five years after the publication of "Consequences," Goody returned to the topic with the publication of an edited volume, *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Goody, 1968). Goody frames the collection of essays as an effort to understand why the Semitic alphabet, which was diffused widely over the world, did not always have the same radical and pervasive effects that it appeared to have had in classical Greece. It is here that Goody begins to gather the ethnographic material that could allow him to understand the social factors that promote or retard expression of the potential implicit in written forms of communication. Most of the chapters, which focus on societies ranging from ancient India and China to Madagascar, are intended "to analyze in detail the uses made of writing in a particular social setting" (p. 4). Although all studies in this volume are relevant to appreciating the myriad roles that literacy plays in traditional societies, Goody's introduction and one of the chapters are particularly useful for our current concerns.

In the book's introduction, Goody (1968) sketches some of the restraints that limit and shape the potential impact of writing. These restraints on the effects of literacy include the practice of secrecy, which may limit the circulation of books and which usually arise when "people have an interest in maintaining a monopoly on their sources of power" because literacy is a source of power and prestige (p. 12). Another restriction is that in many societies writing becomes associated with magic and religion, which may foster an emphasis on the literal character and sacred repetition of the word.

In her chapter, Kathleen Gough offers a corrective to the general emphasis on the special properties of the alphabet. Drawing on case material from China and India, Gough forces recognition that non-alphabetic scripts can be exceedingly widespread. She disputes the universality of claims for the democratizing effect of literacy or the idea that literacy transforms myth and encourages the skeptical questioning of authority. Goody welcomed these correctives and asserted that "we are dealing with necessary rather than sufficient causes; with this we are in entire agreement, doubting whether there are any 'sufficient' causes which can account for the complex aspects of human behavior" (p. 69). However, at least when it comes to claims about human thought processes, agreement about necessary causes would prove more elusive than Goody anticipated.

DOMESTICATION OF THE SAVAGE MIND

If *Literacy in Traditional Societies* focused on the social, cultural, and historical features associated with the consequences of literacy, *Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Goody, 1977) focused more on the media themselves and the presumed cognitive consequences of their use. Although Goody devotes some attention to questions of history and social organization, as its title suggests, it is cognitive processes associated with different means and relations of communication that are the concern in this book.

Goody (1977) begins by summarizing the evidence offered in favor of a great divide between the primitive and the civilized mind, drawing on a variety of influential authors including Levy Bruhl, Robin Horton, and, most importantly, Lévi-Strauss. He faults these approaches as being "either non-developmental or simplistically so." Early on he summarizes the main line of argumentation:

I have tried to take certain characteristics that Lévi-Strauss and others have regarded as marking the distinction between primitive and advanced, between wild and domesticated thinking, and to suggest that many of the valid aspects of these somewhat vague dichotomies can be related to changes in the mode of communication, especially the introduction of various forms of writing. (p. 16)

And once again, he is very explicit about his antidichotomous intentions and his suspicion of developmental accounts:

There is no single opposition but rather a succession of changes over time, each influencing the system of thought in specific ways. I do not maintain that this process is unidirectional let alone monocausal; thought feeds back on communication; creed and class influence the kind and extent of literacy that prevails; only to a limited extent can the means of communication, to use Marx's terminology from a different context, be separated from the relations of communication, which together form the mode of communication. (p. 46)

After reviewing literature in the great divide tradition and his strategy for superseding it with respect to issues of literacy and modes of thought, Goody sets out to destroy the dichotomy. Arguing that if one has a simple dichotomy with two homogenous and opposed sets of characteristics, change is impossible, Goody begins by exploring the heterogeneity that must exist if change is to occur by focusing on the phenomenon he refers to as intellectuals in nonliterate societies. Drawing on a variety of ethnographic examples, particularly his own work in Ghana, Goody finds ample evidence of critical thinking among a variety of specialists in a variety of nonliterate societies. He concludes that "even in non-literate societies there is no evidence that

individuals were prisoners of pre-ordained schemes, of primitive classifications, of the structures of myth. Constrained, yes; imprisoned, no" (p. 33).

He caps this line of argument by turning the presumed features of writing against those who support great divide theories. Goody argues that because they use writing to record the behaviors of people in so-called primitive societies, observers distorted what they had seen in the process of recording it. They did so precisely because they represented it in writing and other literate devices, such as tables and lists, which highlight and exaggerate the degree of stability within, and difference between, the categories they were presumably describing in constituting the great divide. In essence, what he argues is that many of the features, and particularly the binary thinking that we see as constitutive of the great divide, are artifacts of the technology of writing.

But Goody has repeatedly declared that there are differences to be explained, and in the remaining chapters he sets out to do so. He does so by drawing on a mixture of historical and ethnographic data, to provide particular instances of how the modes of communication might plausibly condition associated modes of thought and how the accumulation of these changes in some cultural circumstances (accumulation aided and abetted by the technology of writing) could produce the marked social (and presumably cognitive) changes that are the starting point for great divide theories.

Reception of *Domestication*

On this description alone, one might have thought that *Domestication* would be accepted as providing, in more detail than *Consequences*, a general resolution to the question of literacy's implications that skirted either reduction to an unexplained binary division or silence on the mechanisms of change. As we have outlined his argument, Goody seemed to have destroyed the traditional binary division and made plausible, through historical and ethnographic example, the interweaving of people and their modes of communication, which are themselves quite variable both synchronically and diachronically.

But over the course of the following decades, several authors stepped forward to argue that Goody had, in fact, failed to supersede the great divide. A consistent refrain in these critiques has been that Goody claims that literacy exerts effects independently of the context in which it occurs and the uses to which it is put in a given culture (Gee, 1990; Kawatoko, 1995; Street, 1984). Given that *Domestication* seemed so clearly to have just the opposite intentions, how are we to understand the continued dominance of an autonomous/causal interpretation of Goody's ideas about literacy's cognitive consequences?

There are undoubtedly many contributing factors, depending on one's domain of inquiry. But we would like to suggest that a common theme running

through many of the critiques is a general concern that despite Goody's disclaimers concerning causal and directional contributions of literacy and the heterogeneity of literacy effects within as well as between societies, time and again one finds that he writes both individual assertions and entire essays that are very difficult to interpret in other than developmentalist, social-evolutionary terms. Although this feature of such texts can be expected to evoke opposition in many fields, we want to concentrate on the special difficulties it causes with respect to claims about cognitive consequences. We offer an alternative formulation that remains true to Goody's overall goals of providing an explanation for sociocultural-historical difference that avoids them-us, binary thinking. We choose to concentrate our efforts in this way because the issues involved fall at the intersection of our own concerns about culture and psychological processes as a cultural psychologist and anthropologist, respectively.

DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE LITERACY THESIS

During the 1960s and 1970s, when Goody was venturing to account for the consequences/implications of literacy, a parallel effort was underway in developmental psychology. We already mentioned that in 1962 a translation of Lev Vygotsky's *Language and Thought* was published with a forward by Jerome Bruner. In 1966 Bruner and his colleagues published a monograph on cultural differences in thinking linked closely to questions of literacy and schooling, which explicitly invoked Vygotsky's ideas about the transformative influences of writing on thinking. Not long after, A. R. Luria, Vygotsky's student and colleague, published the first account of their jointly planned research comparing the cognitive performances of literate/schooled and non-literate Central Asian pastoralists conducted during the early 1930s (Luria, 1971, 1976).

Luria (1976) presented a wide range of reasoning and classification problems, including logical syllogisms that appeared to reveal developmental differences when presented to children of varying ages in Moscow. Common to all of the studies was the finding of a difference between literate and non-literate populations that conformed to the general picture that Goody had provided concerning historical change, literacy, and cognition. For example, in contrasting nonliterate pastoralists with literate workers engaged in newly collectivized agricultural enterprises, Luria wrote that "as the basic forms of activity change, as literacy is mastered, and a new stage of social and historical practice is reached, major shifts occur in human mental activity. These are not limited simply to an expanding of man's horizons, but radically affect the structure of cognitive processes" (p. 161). According to Luria's interpre-

tation, the fundamental changes between the contrasting populations were from "elementary graphic-functional" modes of thinking that were situationally bound up with practical activity to "theoretical," "abstract" modes of thought which he sums up as a "transition from the sensory to the rational." As a result of this transition, we see the creation of the rudiments of discursive thinking, whose inferences become as compelling as those from practical experience (p. 163).

Bruner and his colleagues (1966) reached similar conclusions on the basis of similarly organized research on categorization and reasoning that contrasted children of different ages who had or had not attended school in countries such as Senegal and Mexico, where schooling was not universal. For example, in a chapter by Greenfield, Reich, and Olver (1966) on classification, the authors conclude that schooling "forces on all pupils the ability to operate intellectually *in the absence of a concrete situational context*" (p. 288). When data collected by Greenfield using Piagetian tasks indicated children who fail to attend school also fail to achieve the concrete operational stage ordinarily associated with cognitive development in middle childhood, she and Bruner concluded that cultures that use writing systems and schooling "push cognitive growth better, earlier, and longer than others" (Greenfield & Bruner, 1966, p. 654). Based on comparison of preschoolers and elementary-age schoolchildren, David Olson (1975), a student of Bruner's, concluded that literacy biases individual children and the cultures they inhabit toward the development of formal reasoning systems.

What makes this line of research and interpretation relevant to understanding the way *Domestication* was interpreted with respect to its claims concerning cognitive processes is that Goody (1977) refers to these developmental psychologists in making the case for his arguments about the cognitive consequences of literacy. The parallels between changes in individual cognition and historical change are clear at many points in the text. For example, in his examination of Sumerian and Egyptian administrative lists, he discusses at some length how the list format undergoes historical changes analogous to the developmental changes reported in Bruner et al. (1966). Historically later lists shift from simple orderings to hierarchical orderings based on more abstract categories in the same manner as the categorizing behaviors of children shift from simple to hierarchical and abstract, if they go to school (see Lloyd, this volume). Or, to take an example from Luria cited by Goody (1977), syllogistic reasoning appears with schooling and not in its absence.

What makes the use of developmental-psychological data so damaging to Goody's efforts to avoid simple historical evolutionism with literacy as its motor is that nowhere in the developmental literature at that time was there a strong basis for incorporating all the caveats and reminders of the centrality of social context in determining whether, when, and to what extent the pre-

sumably higher levels of cognition would be developed and deployed in presumably more advanced social formations. Rather, to many readers, it appeared that the developmental psychological literature, despite the intentions of its practitioners, was leading rather directly to the 19th-century idea that primitives think like children. In fact, in 1979, anthropologist Christopher Hallpike (1979) reached exactly this conclusion drawing on developmental/cross-cultural literature. Nonliterate peoples, he argued, think pre-operationaly, like preschoolers in Geneva or Cambridge, "because the milieu of primitive societies is cognitively less demanding than our own, the cognitive development of its members will be correspondingly retarded" (pp. 31-32).

Once these connections to developmental psychology are made, and Goody (1977) himself makes the connections explicitly, it becomes pretty clear why *Domestication* evoked the notion that Goody is a great divide theorist as well as a technological determinist. When we add the fact that the 1960s and 1970s were a time of intense debate over the mental competence of the poor and those of African origin, and that formerly nonliterate/situation-bound thinkers were mounting successful revolutions against the (literate) regimes that dominated them in several parts of the world, the intense emotions evoked by this debate make the great divide interpretation, powered by literacy, seem almost inevitable.

TOWARD ACHIEVING THE INITIAL GOAL: A FOCUS ON CULTURAL PRACTICES

In 1987 Jack Goody wrote his last book focused on the relation of literacy and cognition. In the interim, we had the good fortune to have him as a visitor while the first author was doing fieldwork in Liberia among the Vai and the second author was learning her times tables. Working with Goody, Scribner and Cole (1981) were able to collect, and collectively analyze, the written corpus of a rural Vai villager, which contained a wide variety of written documents, including a family almanac, the constitution of a fraternal organization, and family and business records. This article was included in the 1987 volume. Goody also included a chapter in which he commented in detail on the psychological multiyear project carried out by Scribner and Cole focusing on the psychological consequences of various forms of literacy. He titled this chapter "The Interface Between the Sociological and the Psychological Analysis of Literacy." This chapter is the focus of the remainder of our chapter because it raises all the troubling problems of how literacy, in its manifold material forms and social contexts, should be conceived of in relation to human cognitive processes.

Scribner and Cole (1981) approached the study of literacy among the Vai as psychologists who found in the fact that Vai literacy is acquired independ-

ently of schooling an opportunity to test a variety of the theories about literacy's impact on cognition, which we review in this chapter. The work was carried out in three overlapping phases.

First, although mindful that Vai literacy was acquired outside of school and knowing that most people literate in Vai had never attended school, Scribner and Cole (1981) did not know how literacy in Vai related to other social experiences that might be expected to influence the way people think according to the psychological literature of the time. For example, involvement in wage labor in mines, or foreign travel, or knowledge of several languages might all have cognitive consequences in their own right. Moreover, Scribner and Cole knew that Islam had had a long-term effect on Vai society, and many Vai considered themselves practicing Muslims. This meant that Scribner and Cole were dealing not just with literacy in Vai but also literacy in Arabic acquired in Quaranic schools and, for some unknown part of the population, literacy in English acquired in missionary-sponsored or government-supported schools conducted on the model of European education. As a result, the study began with a comprehensive sociological-style survey that included questions on every aspect of people's lives that might have a relation to Vai literacy.

In addition, they administered a battery of psychological tests of cognitive performance based on experimental procedures that had manifested cognitive changes associated with literacy in prior research (Cole et al., 1971). The cognitive test battery included a memory task in which a list containing familiar categories of items was presented several times to see if people learned the list and categorized it, a set of logical syllogisms, and a sorting task using geometric figures that could be sorted in three different ways (size, form, and number). Crudely put, the purpose of this phase of the work was to see if the measurable cognitive consequences of schooling would also be found for one or more of the forms of literacy encountered in Vai country while also exploring which configurations of social experience were associated with which forms of literacy.

The results of this first phase of the work are easily summarized. Those who had attended school generally outperformed all other groups, and neither Vai literacy nor Quaranic literacy had any substantial influence on performance except for an increased ability to sort geometric figures by multiple criteria.² Scribner and Cole's (1981) conclusion was that in so far as schooling engendered cognitive consequences it was because of the way literacy was deployed in the cultural practices associated with schooling (a special

²Two forms of literacy associated with Islamic practices were found: Most people who professed to be literate in Arabic could recite from the Quran and recognize the text they were reciting but could not understand Arabic. A smaller proportion were functionally literate in Arabic as measured by the ability to answer simple written questions.

form of discourse, expansion of the range of knowledge about varieties of nonlocal knowledge, etc.), and not because people had learned to read or write *per se*. In the second phase of research, Scribner and Cole focused on hypotheses about the impact of literacy on linguistic knowledge itself (generally referred to as metalinguistic awareness). Although they found no general effects of Vai or Quaranic literacy on people's ability to analyze language, they did find some specific effects, such as the ability to specify what was ungrammatical about a particular or ungrammatical or just cut sentence. By this time they had accumulated enough experience in the field (assisted greatly by Michael Smith, a graduate student of Goody's, who conducted a traditional anthropological ethnography of literacy in a single Vai town) to be able to identify a variety of quite specific uses to which Vai literacy was put. Hence, the third phase of the work was based on a variety of experimental and quasiexperimental procedures modeled on local practices of literacy. These included a letter-writing task explaining an unfamiliar board game, rebus reading and writing tasks, and a memory experiment that modeled the forms of literacy instruction traditional in local Quaranic schools.

At this point, Scribner and Cole (1981) routinely found what they considered cognitive consequences of literacy. Vai who wrote letters in Vai dictated more complex oral descriptions as letters to a friend about the unfamiliar game. They were more facile in rebus reading and writing tasks, and they showed a greater ability to segment text by syllables.

One further point is worth emphasizing in light of the issues surrounding the Goody myth. The effects of Western schooling were not uniformly superior to those of Vai or Quaranic literates. Western-style schooling did not facilitate analysis of the written language into syllables, for example, nor did it facilitate memory performance modeled on Quaranic recitation procedures.

Surveying these results, Goody offered a number of objections to Scribner and Cole's (1981) approach, which centered, as the title of the chapter suggests, on their use of psychological experiments as central sources of data, and he sought to formulate a more adequate account based on two central sets of ideas.

First, he sought to distinguish between the bias of psychological experiments to restrict their analysis to what he referred to as unmediated (short-term) consequences of literacy in place of sociohistorically mediated effects of literacy, in which its cognitive consequences accrue over a long period of time. At one point he makes this contrast equivalent to the idea that psychological tests assess the individual cognitive consequences of literacy, whereas the analysis of how literate devices come to be used reveal the cultural consequences.

Second, he offers a reformulation of psychological approaches to theorizing cognition based on a hierarchy that begins with physiological processes

(e.g., lateralization of brain processes), which generate cognitive abilities, which in turn generate cognitive skills. He then links these individual processes to a cultural progression that begins with the sounds of the language, cultural invention of a system for representing those sounds, production of written discourse, and, finally, propagation. The convergence of the psychological and cultural lines produces culturally relevant cognitive skills. The short-term, individual, unmediated and long-term, cultural, mediated effects of literacy are thus brought within a single framework.

For various reasons, however, the set of concepts he proposed to avoid destructive dichotomies (individual/social, short-term/long-term, etc.) has not found the resonance that its well-motivated considerations deserve. First, Goody's use of the term *mediated/unmediated*, where *unmediated* refers to the short-term effects of literacy on the individual, while *mediated* refers to literacy's long-term, cumulative effects, is problematic because, in taking as given the claims Vygotsky (1987) made for literacy, it failed to distinguish adequately between the effects of literacy and that of schooling. Vygotsky clearly was wrong about the consequences of writing for thought processes; he confused the cultural practices of his time and place (where literacy and schooling were tightly combined) for those that obtain across history more generally such that literacy and schooling were virtually synonymous. The same can be said of Luria (1976) and Bruner (1966). That literacy and schooling co-occur and that modern schooling would not exist without literacy is certainly true, but as Scribner and Cole (1981) clearly demonstrated, literacy is not entirely subsumed by schooling or even the many forms of schooling that share similar technologies of writing and reading.

Second, in using the terms *mediated* and *unmediated*, Goody was adopting the language of cultural historical psychology but using these terms in a way that was at odds with actual cultural-historical theory. According to Vygotsky, all human thinking is mediated by culture, and he took the notion of cultural-historical psychology quite seriously, even if his methods were not sufficient to his theory. The time scale and social distribution of various practices is what is at issue here, not direct versus indirect effects. Psychological tests are cultural practices, and in some societies (such as the ones in which Goody and we have grown up) they are very widely distributed. They are also closely connected, historically, to schooling. To refer to the behaviors displayed in such practices as *unmediated* is to invite unsought mischief because according to cultural historical psychology all human thought processes are shaped by mediating tools that are themselves historically produced and situated.

Interestingly, what Goody does not discuss in his 1987 chapter is the solution of the general to specific and short-term to long-term problems offered by Scribner and Cole (1981). The two approaches are clearly similar to each other, with the exception that Scribner and Cole do not venture into specu-

lations about physiological processes and do not draw on historical data from other societies and other times.

Scribner and Cole (1981) offer what they refer to as a "practice account of literacy." By a practice they mean the following:

a recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge. We refer to the term "skills" to refer to the coordinated sets of actions involved in applying this knowledge in particular settings. . . . All practices involve interrelated tasks that share common tools, knowledge base, and skills. . . . Whether defined in broad or narrow terms, practice always refers to socially developed and patterned ways of using technology and knowledge to accomplish tasks. Conversely, tasks that individuals engage in constitute a social practice when they are directed to socially organized goals and make use of a shared technology and knowledge system. (p. 237)

They then provide a summary of their findings quite compatible with Goody's own. They note the many factors that limit the spread of literate practices among the Vai, citing the approach taken in *Literacy in Traditional Societies* as an important model for identifying both practices and the factors that do or do not disseminate them widely. In this connection they note that the generality of any particular cognitive consequence will depend on the generality of the practices of which it is a constituent as well as a consequence. They take some pains to distinguish what appear to be the same practices (e.g., writing a letter) when they are a part of different socially organized institutional systems of activities (e.g., writing to a relative about the death of a kinsperson vs. writing a letter to demonstrate mastery of the form to a teacher). Different skills are involved in these different practices, which each link to different configurations of practices, hence cognitive commonalities among them should be modest at most and restricted to rather microlevel junctures of skills, technologies, and goals. Scribner and Cole (1981) comment:

If . . . the topic of inquiry is the configuration of practices, cultural and psychological approaches do not stand in relation to each other as concern with different sets of phenomena. We have seen that Vai culture is in Vai literacy practices: in the writing system, the means used to transmit it, the functions it serves and contexts of use, and the ideologies which confer significance on these functions. But literacy activities are carried out by individuals, and our research has shown that psychological skills are also in Vai literacy practices: in properties of the writing system, in its method of acquisition, and its uses. . . . we can look upon [the research] endeavor as a search for relationships among various sets of practices which can be analyzed in terms of both their cultural and psychological components. (p. 259)

Although Scribner and Cole (1981) were writing about a particular set of technologies relevant to literacy that mediate human activities, their general position that calls for the study of culture and mind by focusing on culturally situated practices is broadly applicable and one that we believe Goody might endorse and potentially make good use of.

Such a practice-based approach to the study of the relation of culture, history, and mind sets questions of cognitive functioning in their cultural and historical context and applies across a broad range of technologies, as Goody would wish it to. It extends, for example, not just to maps (an example Goody uses) but to memorial tombs and the practices of remembering that they mediate (J. Cole, 2001). Any specific occasion of the mediation of human activities by recourse to the involvement of memorial tombs is simultaneously a short-term event in which members of a clan are remembered and a whole cascade of longer term forms of remembering that begin with particular individuals who initiate the event, to the local kinship group they are affiliated with to the tribal group of which that kinship group is said to be a part to the history of that group's relationship to the nation-state and its tangled colonial history. In so far as a focus on practices requires one to understand the larger social and economic configurations in which a practice takes place, it provides a way of thinking about the relationship of culture and mind that attends both to the affordances of specific technologies and the wider social and economic context in which technologies are embedded. Moreover, by focusing on cultural practices as a unit of analysis, anthropologists and psychologists alike can escape from the widely used, mistaken view that culture and history can be treated as an antecedent variable to individual psychological functioning. Interpreted in this general way, the approach to cultural practices, situated within larger historical contexts as the unit of analysis for the study of culture and psychological processes, has quite general value as both a strategy of empirical research and a means of theorizing the difficult relationship between the social and individual processes.

A FINAL THOUGHT

It will come as no surprise to any reader of this chapter that interdisciplinary work that crosses such vast expanses as does the work of Jack Goody is fertile ground for misunderstanding. Goody quite rightly objects to having his ideas about the consequences/implications of literacy lumped together with those of Havelock, Bruner, Vygotsky, Luria, and others we have not taken the space to mention (after all, we left McLuhan out of our narrative!). It is understandable that he objects to the characterization of his views as "technological determinism." But, as we hope we have shown, both the scholarly and social contexts within which he developed his ideas invited such interpreta-

tions, and he himself contributed from time to time by using concepts and examples in ambiguous ways.

Herein lies an important caution. The social sciences were created to bring analytic rigor to the increasingly inchoate claims of people who had yet to distinguish anthropology, psychology, sociology, and so on. In their search for rigor, concepts that had common (if vague) meanings became more precise, but also more disjointed, allowing honest scholars to confuse and conflate ideas in new ways, an error hidden by the use of a common vocabulary, which now had a systematically different meaning depending on the discipline with which it is associated. It is the great virtue of Jack Goody's contribution to the human sciences that he has dared to cross those 20th-century boundaries and try to render whole again the complex web of human nature that the "advances" of 20th-century social sciences had torn asunder. We are in his debt for his efforts and accomplishments.

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Author Index

A

- Ackerman, B., 185, 187
Ahern, E. M., 5, 20
Ahern, L., 306, 323
Alegria, J., 297, 303
Alexander, R. D., 131, 132, 138
Anderson, G., 12, 21
Astle, T., 272, 285
Atran, S., 142n, 144, 145n, 146, 148,
 148n, 162–163
Aynsley, J., 280n, 282n, 287

B

- Baines, J., 15, 21
Bakhtin, M., 227, 237
Barabasi, A.-L., 46, 47
Barnes, J., 131, 138
Barth, F., 123n, 138
Barthes, R., 177, 184, 187
Bauman, R., 279, 285
Bazerman, C., 225, 226, 226n, 228, 229,
 230, 232, 237–238
Beebe, T. O., 231, 238
Bergmann, J. R., 219, 238
Berlin, B., 142n, 143n, 144, 145, 146n, 163
- Bernal, M., 38, 47
Bernhardt, K., 11, 21
Besnier, N., 218, 219, 238
Biddle, J. L., 281n, 282n, 285
Bielenstein, H., 52n, 69
Birge, B., 11, 21
Biskupski, R., 83n, 87, 98
Blackmore, S., 125n, 138
Bloch, M., 15n, 20, 21, 121n, 122, 133,
 136, 138–139, 190, 211, 212
Bloom, D., 6, 21
Bodde, D., 19, 21
Bodenhorn, B., 249, 263
Boesch, C., 76, 98
Boon, J. A., 122, 139
Boone, E. H., 281, 281n, 286
Borofsky, R., 77, 98
Bowersock, G. W., 14n, 21
Boyarin, J., 294, 301
Bray, F., 9, 21
Breedlove, D. E., 142n, 143n, 144, 145,
 163
Breen, R., 11, 21
Breward, C., 280n, 282n, 287
Briggs, C. L., 279, 285
Brockmeier, J., 17, 21, 293, 301
Brown, C. H., 142n, 144, 145, 163

Brown, M. P., 282, 286
 Brown, P., 247, 263
 Bruner, J. S., 315, 316, 320, 323
 Bulmer, R., 149, 163
 Burke, P., 280n, 286
 Burkert, W., 4, 18, 21
 Byres, T. J., 9, 21

C

Caplan, J., 193n, 203n, 211, 212
 Carey, S., 144, 145, 145n, 163
 Carruthers, M., 293, 301
 Chafe, W., 292, 301
 Chaffee, J. W., 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 69
 Chan, H.-L., 52n, 69
 Chang, B., 54, 57n, 69
 Chang, C. C., 69
 Charnier, E., 105, 114
 Chartier, R., xi-xii, xvii, 292, 301
 Chavkin, T., 232, 238
 Chen, C., 19n, 23
 Chen, J., 57n, 69
 Cheng, W. K., 20, 21
 Childe, V. G., 37, 40-41, 47
 Clark, H. H., 279n, 286
 Classen, C., 280n, 286
 Coe, R., 221n, 238
 Cohen, R., 253, 263
 Cole, J., 322, 323
 Cole, M., 235, 239, 292, 294, 297, 300,
 303, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321,
 322, 323, 324

Collier, J., 119, 139
 Comaroff, J., 11, 21
 Conklin, H. C., 146n, 163
 Content, A., 297, 303
 Corbier, M., 12, 21
 Coser, L., 7n, 21
 Cosmides, L., 130, 140
 Coulmas, F., 292, 301

D

Damerow, P., 295, 301
 Davidson, A., 12, 21
 Davis, N. Z., 12, 21
 Dawkins, R., 125n, 139
 de Frances, J., 15, 19, 21
 De los Santos, R. A., 232, 238
 Derrida, J., 189, 190, 212

Dery, G., 196n, 200, 206, 207, 212
 Detienne, M., 151, 163
 Devitt, A., 226, 238
 Dickey, S., 11, 23
 Diringer, D., 281-282, 286
 Doronila, M. L. C., 292, 301
 Douglas, M., 149, 163
 Downing, J., 300, 301
 Duby, G., 12, 13, 21
 Duchesne, R., 8n, 21
 Duerr, H. P., 169, 172
 Duranti, A., 279, 279n, 286
 Durkheim, É., 141, 163

E

Ebrey, P., 11, 21
 Eibl-Eibelsfeld, I., 132, 139
 Eisenberg, A., 51n, 69
 Ekelund, R. B., 12, 21
 Ellen, R., 159, 163
 Elphick, M. J., 131, 139
 Elwert, G., 293, 302
 Engels, F., 41, 47
 Entwistle, J., 280n, 286

F

Falk, H., 15, 22
 Featherstone, M., 280n, 286
 Feldman, C., 292, 296, 301, 302
 Feldstein, L., 185, 188
 Ferreiro, E., 297, 303
 Finnegan, R., 278n, 282n, 286
 Fisher, C. T., 55, 55n, 69
 Fishkin, J., 185, 187
 Fletcher, J., 51n, 70
 Fortes, M., 117, 129, 139, 198, 201, 212
 Frazer, J., 40, 47
 Freud, S., 104
 Fuller, C. J., 15, 22

G

Gandah, S. W. D. K., 242, 264, 267, 275,
 275n, 278, 286
 Gare, A. E., 7n, 22
 Gates, H., 11, 13, 22
 Gaur, A., 295, 302
 Gay, J., 318, 323
 Gee, J. P., 306, 314, 323

- Geertz, C., 77, 98, 122, 139
 Geisler, C., 224n, 238
 Gellner, E., 7n, 16, 22, 43, 47, 75n, 98
 Gelman, S. A., 163
 Gibson, T., 131, 139
 Giddens, A., 219, 238
 Gillison, 116
 Ginsburg, M., 296, 302
 Glick, J. A., 318, 323
 Gluckman, M., 136, 139
 Gombrich, L. C., 16, 22
 Goodrich, L. C., 13, 22
 Goodwin, C., 279, 286
 Goody, E. N., 200, 212, 243, 247, 248, 249,
 250, 253, 259, 262, 263
 Goody, J. R., x, xiii–xv, xvii, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,
 10, 10n, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17,
 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 29, 31, 36–37,
 38, 39, 40, 42, 47–48, 49, 50–51,
 65, 66, 67, 70, 73, 74, 76, 78, 82,
 82n, 89, 96, 98, 101, 114, 117,
 129, 139, 141, 150n, 163, 165,
 166, 172–173, 177, 186, 187,
 190, 191, 194, 196, 197, 198,
 199, 200, 201, 207n, 209,
 210–211, 212, 216–217, 229,
 234, 238, 241–242, 247, 252,
 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269,
 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275,
 275n, 277, 278, 281, 282n, 286,
 289, 290, 291, 292, 294, 301,
 302, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309,
 310, 311, 312, 313–314, 317,
 323
 Gough, K., 14, 23, 131, 139, 312, 323
 Graham, A. C., 152, 163
 Graves-Brown, P. M., 280n, 286
 Greenfield, P. M., 315, 316, 323
 Grene, D., 181, 187
 Grimm, T., 52n, 70
 Guest, E. A., 289, 302
 Guisso, R. W. L., 52n, 70
 Gustafsson, U., 306, 323
 Guyer, J., 198, 199, 212
- Halverson, J., 18, 23, 306, 324
 Hamilton, W. D., 129, 139
 Hanks, W. F., 279n, 287
 Hann, C., 43, 48
 Hann, C. M., 81n, 98
 Harlow, P. S., 131, 139
 Harrell, S., 11, 23
 Harris, M., 13, 23
 Harris, R., 6, 23, 281n, 287, 292, 302
 Harrison, L. E., 77–78, 98
 Hart, K., 43, 44, 45, 46, 48
 Hartman, G. H., 78, 98
 Hatano, G., 145, 163
 Havelock, E. A., 290, 302, 310, 324
 Haviland, J. B., 279, 287
 Hawkins, S., 5, 23, 192n, 194, 195, 196n,
 197, 198, 199, 200, 202, 204,
 205, 208, 209, 212
 Heath, S. B., 292, 302
 Hebert, R., 12, 21
 Hemphill, L., 296, 302
 Herbst, J., 7, 23
 Herlihy, D., 12, 23
 Hirschfeld, L. A., 132n, 139, 163
 Hoebel, E. A., 11, 23
 Holmgren, J., 51n, 70
 Homer, B., 297, 302
 Hopkins, K., 5n, 23
 Hordynskyj, S., 80, 98
 Howes, D., 280n, 287
 Hsu, C., 19n, 25
 Huang, R., 9, 13, 19, 24
 Hull, D. L., 149, 163
 Hunn, E. S., 143n, 163
 Huntington, S. P., 75, 77–78, 81–82, 98
 Huth, A. H., 12, 23
 Hyden, G., 7, 23

I

- Iliffe, J., 6, 23
 Inagaki, K., 145, 163
 Innis, H. A., 15, 23, 290, 302
- J
- Jacob, P., 123, 139
 Jamous, 116
 Janocha, M., 93, 98
 Jardine, N., 149, 163
 Jeypious, S., 145n, 163

H

- Hajnal, J., 74, 98
 Hall, J., 9, 23
 Hallpike, C. R., 317, 324
 Halsey, A. H., 114

- Ji, X.-B., 54, 55, 70
 Johns, A., 295, 302
 Jones, E. L., 9, 23, 74n, 96, 98
 Junod, H., 116, 139
- K**
- Kamawar, D., 299, 302
 Kant, I., 31, 48
 Kaufmann, F.-X., 74n, 98
 Kawatoko, Y., 306, 314, 324
 Kay, P., 145, 146n, 163
 Keddie, N. R., 9, 23
 Keesing, H., 4, 23
 Keesing, R., 77, 99
 Kessler, H. L., 83n, 99
 Kim-Cho, S. Y., 15, 23
 Kissinger, H., 185, 187
 Kitamura, S., 19n, 25
 Knapp, M. L., 279, 287
 Knight, D. R., 102, 114
 Knoblock, J., 156n, 163
 Kohn, H., 75n, 99
 Korbieh, F. G., 203, 213
 Kpiebaya, G., 196n, 200, 213
 Kraft, R., 257, 264
 Kress, G., 281n, 287
 Kroeber, A. L., 76n, 99
 Ktosinska, J., 79, 83n, 99
 Kuckhohn, C., 76n, 99
 Kuper, A., 76n, 99, 119, 139
 Kuukure, E., 196n, 200, 213
 Kwint, M., 280n, 282n, 287
 Kyzlasova, I., 83, 94n, 99
- L**
- Landes, D., 74n, 99
 Langlois, R., 13, 23
 Lanjouw, J., 149, 164
 Larsen, M. T., 15, 23
 Latour, B., 46, 48
 Lau, N.-Y., 63, 70
 Law, R., 6, 7, 23
 Le Pan, D., 17, 23
 Lea, H. C., 12, 23
 Leach, E., 73, 99, 118, 122, 139, 190, 213
 Lebaron, A., 9, 23
 Lebow, R. N., 183, 188
 Lee, J. Z., 7, 23
 Lee, S., 19n, 25
- Lee, S. Y., 19n, 23
 Lennox, J. G., 154, 164
 Lenski, G., 9, 24
 Lentz, C., 209, 213
 Lerner, D., 309, 324
 Lévi-Strauss, C., 39, 42, 48, 141, 149, 150n, 164, 189, 213, 311, 324
 Levinson, S. C., 247, 263
 Levy, P., 107, 114
 Levy-Bruhl, 16, 24
 Lewis, D., 183, 188
 Lewis, W. A., 44, 48
 Lingard, L., 221n, 238
 Little, J., 232, 238
 Lloyd, G. E. R., 19, 24, 151n, 155n, 157n, 159n, 164, 291, 302
 Lloyd-Jones, H., 15, 24
 Lopez, D. S., 15, 24
 Lord, A., 280, 287, 309–310, 324
 Lovejoy, A. O., 160n, 164
 Lucke, G., 19n, 25
 Luckmann, T., 219, 238, 239
 Lukes, S., 10n, 24
 Luria, A. R., 300, 302, 315–316, 320, 324
 Lynch, J. H., 12, 24
 Lyons, J., 146n, 164
- M**
- MacFarlane, A., 13, 24, 74n, 99
 Macleod, C., 178, 188
 Magocsi, P. R., 79n, 99
 Mair, V., 15, 20, 24
 Major, J. S., 153, 164
 Marsh, D. C., 106, 114
 Martin, H.-J., xvii
 Marx, K., 44, 48, 219, 238
 Mattingly, I., 291, 302
 Mauss, M., 141, 163
 May, E. R., 179, 180, 188
 Maynard Smith, J., 246, 264
 Mayr, E., 149, 164
 McCloskey, D., 226n, 238
 McCreery, J. L., 11, 24
 McKinnon, S., 190n, 213
 McKnight, J. D., 4, 24
 McLennan, G., 20n, 24
 McLuhan, M., 290, 302–303
 McNeill, D., 279, 287
 McNeill, W. H., 7, 24
 Merton, R. K., 229, 239

- Messick, B., 294, 303
 Mignolo, W. D., 281, 281n, 286
 Miller, C., 221, 239
 Mills, E., 233, 239
 Mitterauer, M., 13, 24
 Mohr, J., 236n, 239
 Mollin, H., 233, 239
 Molnár, D. I., 86, 99
 Moore, R. I., 13, 24
 Moore, S. F., 5n, 24
 Morais, J., 297, 303
 Morgan, L. H., 41, 48
 Müller-Armack, A., 94, 99
 Murdock, G. P., 36, 48
 Murphy, J. J., 224, 239
 Murray, A., 165, 173
 Murray, O., 15, 19, 24

N

- Nadel, S. F., 253, 264
 Needham, J., 7n, 9, 13, 19, 24, 155, 164
 Needham, R., 118, 139, 190, 213
 Nissen, H. J., 295, 303
 Niezen, R. W., 15, 24
 Nisbet, R., 12, 24
 Nolan, P., 9, 24
 North, D., 294, 303

O

- Ocaya-Lakidi, D., 7, 24
 Okpewho, I., 280, 287
 Oliver, R., 6–7, 24
 Olson, D. R., 17, 21, 24, 192, 213, 272n,
 287, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296,
 297, 299, 301, 302, 303, 306,
 316, 324
 Olver, R. R., 315, 316, 323
 Ong, W. J., 290, 303, 311, 324
 Oppong, C., 250, 262, 264
 O'Roark, D., 12, 24

P

- Pallares-Burke, M. L. G., ix, xvii
 Park, J., 102, 106, 114
 Parry, J., 14n, 25
 Pelikan, J., 74n, 99
 Pellegrin, P., 152n, 164
 Perelman, L., 224–225, 239

- Perri, A., 281n, 282n, 283, 287
 Poe, X., 52n, 70
 Pomeranz, K., 7, 8n, 25
 Popper, K., 3, 25
 Pratt, M. L., 196n, 213
 Premack, A. J., 164
 Premack, D., 164
 Putnam, R. D., 185, 188

Q

- Quian Baocong, 156n, 164

R

- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R., 116–117, 139,
 196, 213, 247, 264
 Ratray, R. S., 197, 200, 208–209, 213
 Raven, P. H., 142n, 143n, 144, 145, 163
 Rawski, E. S., 51n, 70
 Reich, L. C., 316, 323
 Reid, J. F., 300, 303
 Riegel, J., 156n, 163
 Rivers, 116
 Rosaldo, M., 119, 139
 Ross, M. C., 11, 25
 Rousseau, J.-J., xi, xvii, 41–42, 48
 Rumsey, A., 282n, 287
 Russell, D. R., 221n, 238, 239

S

- Saberwal, S., 9, 25
 Sachs, J. D., 6, 21
 Sahlin, M., 77, 99, 129, 139
 Saller, R., 12, 25
 Saussure, F. de, xii, xvii
 Sawyer, K., 290, 303
 Sayre, A., 105, 114
 Schiffer, M. B., 280n, 287
 Schlegel, A., 11, 25
 Schlicht, E., 295, 303
 Schmitt, J.-C., 165, 166, 168, 170, 171,
 172, 173
 Schneider, D. M., 119, 139
 Schopen, G., 16, 25
 Schutz, A., 219, 239
 Scollon, R., 280n, 287
 Scott, J. C., 192–193, 213

- Scribner, S., 235, 239, 292, 294, 297, 300, 303, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 324
 Sharpe, D., 318, 323
 Shaw, B. D., 12, 25
 Shaw, R., 81, 99
 Sheehan, M., 13, 25
 Sheldon, A., 279, 287
 Shields, C., 289, 303
 Shine, R., 131, 139
 Shore, C., 75, 99
 Sibson, R., 149, 163
 Sidky, H., 7n, 25
 Silverstein, M., 291, 292, 303
 Silverstone, R., 280n, 287
 Simpson, G. G., 149, 164
 Skidelsky, R., 107, 109, 114
 Skinner, E. P., 253, 264
 Smart, G., 226, 239
 Smith, D., 291, 293, 303
 Smith, M. G., 253, 264
 Snow, C., 296, 302
 Spelke, E. S., 144, 145n, 163
 Sperber, D., 122, 123, 139, 164, 190, 211, 212
 Spittler, G., 292, 303
 Staal, F., 15, 18, 25
 Stack, C., 131, 140
 Stanford, P. K., 149, 164
 Steinberg, L., 169, 173
 Stern, S. M., 179, 188
 Stevenson, H., 19n, 25
 Stewart, C., 81, 99
 Stigler, J., 19n, 25
 Stock, B., 17, 25
 Stocking, G. W., 76n, 99, 197, 213
 Stolcke, V., 77, 99
 Stone, R. M., 280, 287
 Streeck, J., 279, 283, 287
 Street, B. V., 15, 25, 292, 294, 303, 306, 314
 Szanter, Z., 87, 99
- T
- Tahir, I., 255, 264
 Tambiah, S., 37, 48, 199, 212
 Tambiah, S. J., 11, 25, 141, 149, 164, 198–199, 213
 Tao, J.-S., 62, 70
 Tao, T.-Y., 67, 70
- Taylor, I., 295, 303
 Taylor, M., 295, 303
 Tengan, E., 196n, 200, 213
 Teslenko, T., 221n, 238
 Thomas, R., 18, 25, 291, 303
 Tillion, G., 11, 25
 Tollison, R., 12, 21
 Tönnies, F., 294, 303
 Tonomura, H., 11, 25
 Tooby, J., 130, 140
 Torpey, J., 193n, 203n, 211, 212
 Torrance, N., 272n, 287
 Tracy, K., 279n, 287
 Triebel, A., 292, 303
 Tuo, T., 55, 70
 Turner, V., 136, 140
 Tuurey, G., 206–207, 213
 Twitchett, D., 52n, 55n, 66n, 70
 Tylor, E. B., ix–x, xvii, 40, 48, 76, 99
- U
- Uttal, D., 19n, 23
- V
- van Wees, H., 184, 188
 Verdry, K., 12, 25
 Vernant, J.-P., 18, 25, 151, 164, 169, 173
 Vernon, S., 297, 303
 Vicinus, M., 105, 114
 Vico, G., xi, xvii
 Viveiros de Castro, 116
 Vogel, U., 10n, 25
 Volosinov, V. N., 221, 231, 239
 von Holthoorn, F., 293, 296, 304
 Vygotsky, L. S., 300, 304, 310, 311, 320, 324
- W
- Wade, R., 5, 25
 Wallacker, B. E., 65, 70
 Wang, 61
 Watson, J., 5n, 6n, 11, 25
 Watt, I., x, xvii, 13, 14, 14n, 16, 18, 19–20, 23, 25, 39, 48, 216, 238, 266, 269, 272, 286, 290, 292, 302, 305, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 323
 Weber, E., 296, 304

- Weber, M., 8, 11, 26, 94, 99, 293, 294, 304
Wechsler, H. J., 52n, 59, 70
Wiebe, D., 16, 16n, 17, 26
Winch, R. F., 11, 26
Wink, A., 9, 26
Wittfogel, K., 75n, 100
Wolf, G., 83n, 99
Wolff, L., 74, 100
Wong, R. Bin., 9, 26
Woodburn, J., 5, 26
- X**
- Xu, M., 61, 62, 71
- Y**
- Yanagisako, S., 119, 139
Yang, Z., 60, 71
Yunis, H., 178, 181, 188
- Z**
- Zammito, J. H., 76n, 100
Zeldin, T., 109, 114
Zelikow, P. D., 179, 180, 188
Zeng, B., 56–57, 58–59, 71
Zhang, B., 57n, 71
Zwernemann, J., 82n, 100

Subject Index

A

- Abstraction
 emergence of abstracted meaning systems, 225–227
 of situations and situated actions, 223–225
- Africa and Eurasia
 compared, 33–40, 45
 eco-technological basis of state development in, 6–9
- Agent, agency and the influence of literacy, 220–221
- Agrarian civilization, *see also* Gonja and the machine revolution, 43–47 and modern world society, x, 29–31, 289, *see also* Africa and Eurasia
 formation of world society 1945–2000, 32–34
- Alphabet, Greek, 14
- Alphabetic literacy, 16, 18–20, 297, 307
- Ambivalence, 168–170
- Ancestral cults, 5
- Animal metamorphosis, 155
- Animals, classes of, 151–158

Anthropology, ix, 120, 121, *see also specific topics*

- of unequal society, 38–46
"Apology to the East, An" (Goody), 19
Apprenticeship, 254–256, 259, 262, *see also* Fostering
Aristotle, 152, 154, 157, 160n, 161

Asia, *see* Africa and Eurasia

Athens, 178–181, 307

B

- Bagre myth, 266–267, 269, 274–278
Ben Bonkan Isang v. Dennis Puauiu, 202
Biological disposition and cultural norms, 134, *see also* Genetics
Birrifor, 243–245
Botany, *see* Flowers; Plants
Boundaries, 159–160, *see also* Classification problem of implicit, 95, *see also under* Europe
Bridewealth and Dowry (Goody & Tambiah), 37
British, 106–107, 109–110, *see also* Gender and culture, in European and

- bourgeois society 1870–1914; Ghana; LoDagaa
- Built symbolic environment, the literate accomplishment and the, 237
- Bureaucratic institutions, *see* Institutions, bureaucratic
- C**
- Capitalism, 33, 42–45
extended families and, 8
- Capitalism and Modernity* (Goody), 7
- Carpathians, 78–81
- Categories, *see* Classification
- Catholic Church, 75, *see also* Greek Catholics
marriage restrictions, 12, 13
- Change, 155–156
- Chávez, Hugo, 186
- Child custody, *see under* LoDagaa
- Child labor, 259, *see also* Child rearing
- Child rearing, *see also* Fostering
in the context of formal education in
Ghana, 257, 261–262
literacy and class status and parental
response to Western
schools, 260
- schooling strategies of literate elite
parents, 257–258
- schooling strategies of nonelite par-
ents, 258–260
- Chinese centralization, 13
- Chinese dynasties, 50–65, *see also under*
Succession systems
- Christ Pantocrator, 83, 86, 87, 90, 93
- Christianity, 75, *see also* Catholic Church;
Greek Catholics; Jesus Christ
- Chronotope, 227
- Civil society, 8–9, *see also* Domestication of
the Savage Mind
- Class systems, 38, *see also* Anthropology, of
unequal society
- Classification (systems), 315, 316
- Chinese vs. Greek methods of, 153–155,
159, 159n, 161, 162
and construction of worldviews, 141
of living beings, 151–158
of natural kinds, 141–143
uses and abuses of, 141–162
varieties and exaggerations, 159
of vital faculties, 151–152
- Cleon, 181–184
- Cognition
from culture to, 95–97
literacy and, 16–18, 39, 296–301, 318,
see also Cognitive conse-
quences of literacy
universal similarities in, 16
- Cognitive consequences of literacy, 16–18,
215–216, 319, *see also* Cognition;
“Consequences of Literacy”
rethinking, 235–236
- Cognitive contradictions, 83, 168–171
- Cognitive development, 144–145,
315–316, *see also* Developmental
psychology
- Cognitive modules, 149, *see also* Classification
- Cole, Michael, xii
- Colonialism, 4
- Color terms and identifications, 145, 146
- Communication, *see also* specific topics
technologies of, x, 229–230, 289
- Communications revolution, 44
- Comparative method, xii, 268
- Comparativism, 169, 172
- Conjugal payments, *see under* LoDagaa
“Consequences of Literacy, The” (Goody
& Watt), 13–14, 39, 216, 305,
307–308
context of, 308
political-historical, 308–309
scholarly, 309–312
- purposes, 14, 16
- Contradictions, cognitive, 83, 168–171
- Cooking, Cuisine and Class* (Goody), 38
- Craftsman and learning craft skills, 253–254
- Cross-cultural universalism, 158, *see also*
Cultural relativism
- Cuban Missile crisis, 179–180
- Cultural differences and universalized so-
cial systems, ix
- Cultural explanations, 96
- Cultural norms, 134–136
- Cultural opposition in Central Europe,
Manichean theories of
- Greek Catholic Church and, 78–82
- Cultural phenomena
mind-internal and -external factors in,
126–128
- stabilization and destabilization,
124–129, 133–134, 136–138
- Cultural practices, 317–322, *see also*
Sociocultural institutional practices

- influences on, 73–74
 Cultural relativism, 143, 144, 149–151, 158, 162
 Cultural transmission, 124
 Culture, 73, 77–78, *see also specific topics*
 the cultural as the social from another perspective, 96
 definitions and meanings, 76–78, 96–97
 duality of the concept of, 78
 Culture area, 95
Culture of Flowers, The (Goody), 38, 50–51
 Cultures, *see also specific topics*
 evolution of, ix–x
 traditional *vs.* modern, x
 Culturology, 38
- D**
- Daboya, 253–254
 Dagarti, 208–209, *see also LoDagaa*
 Dagomba, 250, 252
Death, Property and the Ancestors (Goody), 5, 31, 35
Death, social arrangements surrounding, xi
 Democracy, Athenian, 178–179, 183, *see also Athens*
Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe (Goody), 11, 13, 37
 Developmental psychology, 144–145, *see also Cognitive development*
 and the literacy thesis, 315–317
 Dichotomies, avoiding destructive, 320
 Dictatorship, 42
 Diodorus, 181–182, 184
 "Disenchantment of the world," 8
 Distinctive vitalist conceptions, 145
 Documentary practices, xi, xvi, 293, 294
 Documentary tradition, 295, 297
 Documentation, 293, 295
 Documents, 291–296, 298–301
Domestication of the Savage Mind, The (Goody), 17, 39, 165, 217, 267, 313–314
 reception of, 314–315
 Dreams, 170–171
 Duan, Prince, 56–58
 Duzong, 64
- E**
- East in the West, The* (Goody), 7, 13, 31, 39, 43
- East-West contrast (Europe), 74–76, 90, *see under Europe*
 Economics, 32–33, 43, 231, *see also Capitalism; Financial instruments; Social class*
 Edison, Thomas, 230–231
 Education, *see under Child rearing*
 Emperors, *see Succession*
 Endogamy, 10
 Epidemiological approach, 121–129, 132–133, 136
 Ethnography, 30
 Europe, *see also Africa and Eurasia*
 cultural boundary between Eastern and Western, 74–76, 79, 80, 90,
 see also Cultural opposition in Central Europe; Icons and iconoclasm
 cognition and, 95–97
 dichotomous models (local and external), 92–97
 Greek Catholic Church and Manichean theories of, 78–82
 Events, *see Representations*
 Evolutionism, 117
Expansive Moment, The (Goody), 40
- F**
- Families, extended, 8
Family in European History, The (Goody), 101
 Farming, *see Agrarian civilization*
 Feminist movement, 106
 "Feudalism in Africa?" (Goody), 35
 Financial information, 231, *see also Economics*
 Financial instruments, and emergence of abstracted meaning systems, 225–227
 Flowers, 38
 images in, 166–169
Food and Love (Goody), 38, 101
 Fortes, Meyer, 40
 Fosterling, 248–249, 260–262
 comparison of, across African societies, 249–250
 children reared by kin, 251–253
 children reared by their own parents, 250–251
 children reared by unrelated adults, 253–255

- comparison of parental rearing strategies, 255–257
 kinship fostering in Gonja, 248–249,
 254, *see also* Gonja
 France, 296
 Freud, Sigmund, x
 Functionalism, 125–126, *see also* Structural functionalism

G

- Gaozang, 62–63
Gemeinschaft vs. gesellschaft societies, 294
 Gender and culture, 119, *see also* Women in European and bourgeois society
 1870–1914, 101–114
 Genealogy, writing and, 189–191, *see also under* LoDagaa
 Genetics, 130–134
 Genre, 221
 giving shape to literate interactions, 220–223
 Ghana, 29–30, *see also* Child rearing; LoDagaa
 kinship organization, 35
 social organization, 73
 Global warming, 232–233
 Globalization, 33–34
 Gongzong, 64–65
 Gonja, 243–245, 248–254, 262
 Goody, Esther N., 40
 Goody, Jack R., *see also specific topics; specific writings*
 criticisms of, 290–291
 divide theories, 96, 317, *see also* Europe, cultural boundary between Eastern and Western
 geopolitical approach, 7
 impact of his literacy studies, 305
 Goody myth, 305–306, 309, 319
 Greece, ancient, 307, 309, *see also* Athens
 Greek alphabet, 14
 Greek Catholics, 75, 78–82, 95–97, *see also* Icons and iconoclasm
 Greek miracle, 16
 downsizing of the, 18–20
 Group identities and personal identification, 211
 Guangzong, 63

H

- Hierarchy of beings, 151–153
 Hindu Vedas, 15–16
 Historical anthropology, xii, 3–4, 20, *see also specific topics*
 of literacy, 13–16
 Huainanzi, 152–156, 161
 Huizong, 58–63

I

- Icons and iconoclasm, 82–97, *see also* Europe, cultural boundary between Eastern and Western
 Images, 171–172, *see also* Flowers, images in; Representations
Imago, 172
 Incestuous marriages, *see* Marriage, close-kin
 India, 15
 Industrial revolution, *see* Agrarian civilization, and the machine revolution
 Information age, *see also* Financial instruments
 as literate phenomenon, 231–232
 Information flow in society, 122–123
 Informationalizing the environment, 232–234
 Inheritance, 11, 36, *see also* LoDagaa; Property
 Inheritance-guilt-fear hypothesis, 5
 Institutional change, literacy as factor in managing, 294
 Institutional isomorphism, 294
 Institutions, bureaucratic, x, 294–295
Interface Between the Oral and the Written, The (Goody), 17–19, 39
 Islam, 251, 318–319

J

- Jesus Christ, 83–85, 88, 92, 170, *see also* Christ Pantocrator
 Joking relationships, 247

K

- Kano, 254–255
 Kennedy, John F., 180
 Kin altruism, 130

- Kinship, 42–43, 118–119, *see also LoDagaa; Mother's brother controversy; Property*
 bilaterality, 129
 "Gonja," 243–245, 248–249, *see also Gonja writing and, 189–191*
 Kinship fostering, *see Fostering*
 Kocylovsky, Josef, 85, 91
Kuuluo Panyanti v. Timbiile Dazuuri, 201
- L**
- Labor, cultural division of, 113, *see also under Women*
 Language, xi, *see also specific topics*
 learning, 127–128
 perspectives on speech, writing, and, 278–283, 292, *see also Speech*
Language and Thought (Vygotsky), 310
 Language-rationality association, 279
 Linguistic theory, xii, 279
 Literacy, 13–16, *see also specific topics*
 agent, agency and the influence of, 220–221
 as autonomous causal agent in history, 306
 consequences of, *see also Cognitive consequences of literacy; Consequences of Literacy*
 psychological, 317–322
 social, 217–218, 237, *see also Social implications of writing*
 definitions, 290
 historical anthropology of, 13–16
 as metalinguistic, 297
 restricted vs. mass, 14, 15, 211
 rethinking restriction, 234–235
 as "technology of the intellect," 301
 Literacy hypothesis, 292, *see also Literacy thesis*
Literacy in Traditional Societies (Goody), 39, 217, 265, 312, 321
 Literacy thesis, 14, 17, 306
 developmental psychology and the, 315–317
 Lizong, 64
 Lobi/Dagarti dichotomy, 208–209
 LoDagaa, 4, 172, 191, 266, 269, 275
 kinship, marriage, and inheritance among, 210–212
- "Fifty Pesewa Has No Child," 200–206
 paper paternity and District Magistrate's Court, 191–195
 textual anxieties, 206–210
 Victorian attitudes and colonial interventions, 196–200
 kinship organization, 35
 LoDagaa marriage, 191–196, *see also under LoDagaa*
 Lodagaba, 5
 Logic, *see under Rationality*
Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society, The (Goody), 39, 217, 291
 LoWiili, 5
- M**
- Maanyugr, Andrew, 191–196
 Magic, 8
 Mahayana Buddhism, 15–16
 Maine, Henry, 4
 Mandylion, 83, 84
 Marriage, 36, 197–200, *see also LoDagaa; Mother's brother controversy*
 close-kin, 10–12
 paper paternity and District Magistrate's Court, 191–195
 Marx, Karl, x
 Marxism, 3–4
 Mary Virgin, 87, 88, 92, 95
 Materialism, 3
 Matrilineal inheritance, 117–118, 131–132, *see also Mother's brother controversy; Property*
 Matthew, Saint, 83, 85, 90
 Mediated/unmediated, 320
 "Mention" vs. "use," 298
 Metalinguistics and metacognition, 297–298
 Metamorphosis, 155–156
 Michael, Archangel, 83, 90
 Microevents and microinteractions, used to explain cultural phenomena, 123–124
 Migration, 32–33
 Mind–internal and -external factors, relation between, 126–128
 Monogamy, 36
 Mother's brother controversy

- epidemiological approach and, 121–129, 132–133, 136
 extension of sentiment hypothesis, 117
 genetic explanation, 130–131
 history, 115–121
 kin altruism and, 130
 reasons for ritualized transgression, 135–138
 structural functionalism and, 117, 119–120, 129–130
 theoretical explanations, 129–134
M
Mourning, 5n
Myth of the Bagre, The (Goody), 39, 270
Myths, 278, *see also* Bagre myth
- N**
- Natural kinds, as cross-cultural universals, 142, 148
 Naturalism, 134
 Nicholas, Saint, 83, 88, 89
 Nicias, 182, 183
 Ningzong, 63, 64
 Nukulaelae, 218, 220
- O**
- Oral (culture), 265, 267, 284, *see also* Speech
 ambiguities of the term, 284
 boundaries of the term, 284
 as counterpart of "written," 267–274
 as dissolved *vs.* reclothed, 283–285
 interface where literacy comes to intrude on, 15–16
 perspectives on language, speech, and writing, 278–283, 292
 putting the "oral" in context, 274–278
 uncovering the, 265–267
 "Oral-literate" continuum, 282–283, 285, *see also* Oral (culture)
Oriental, the Ancient, and the Primitive, The (Goody), 10, 38, 50
- P**
- Parenthood and Social Reproduction* (E. N. Goody), 250
 Paternity, *see under* Marriage
 Patrilineal norms, *see Mother's brother controversy; Property*
- Pericles, 181
Pieta, 83, 85
 Plants, *see also* Flowers
 classification of, 157–158
 Plato, 177
 Poland, 81, 92–95, *see also* Icons and iconoclasm
 Politics, *see Speech (in politics)*
 Pollution, 232–233
 Polygyny, royal, 50
 Population growth and distribution, 32
 Power, 229–231
Power of the Written Tradition, The (Goody), 19, 271
 "Practice account of literacy," 321
 Prince Hal complex, 4
 Production, cycle of, 156
Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain (Goody), 5, 29, 31, 36, 39
 Property
 ancestors and, 4–5
 kinship, family, and, 9–13, 36–38, 65, *see also* Mother's brother controversy; Succession systems
 Przemysl, 81, 92, *see also* Icons and iconoclasm
 Psychological consequences of various forms of literacy, 317–322, *see also* "Consequences of Literacy"
 Psychological development, *see Developmental psychology*
 Public representations, *see Representations*
- Q**
- Qinzong, 60–62
 Quranic literacy, 318–319
- R**
- Racism, 38
 Rationality
 language and, 279
vs. logic, 300
 Relativism, *see also* Cultural relativism
 "sentimental," 19
 Religion, 15–16, 167, 170–172, 318–319, *see also* Catholic Church; Greek Catholics; Icons and iconoclasm
 Renzong, 55

- Representations, 170, *see also* Images
epidemiological approach to, 121–129
Representations and Contradictions (Goody),
168, 274
- Restricted literacy, *see* Literacy, restricted
vs. mass
- Rituals, *see* Bagre myth
- S**
- Saaluh Kpinibo v. Motogo Peter Muinpuo*,
203–204
- "School fosterage," 259
- Schooling, *see under* Child rearing
- Scientific articles, transition from letters
to, 227–228
- Scientific meaning, 147–149
and emergence of scientific literature
and community, 227–229
- Scripts, 14–15, 281, *see also* Alphabetic liter-
acy
- Sex roles, *see* Gender and culture; Women
- Sexuality, 167, 169–170, 198
women's, 107–108
- Shenzong, 55, 57–58
- Situations and situated actions, *see also* So-
cial actions
abstraction of, 223–225
- Slavery, 6n
- Social actions, x–xi, *see also* Situations and
situated actions
- Social class and women's penetration into
public sphere, 103–114
- Social consequences of literacy, 217–218,
237
- Social evolution, Morgan's three-stage the-
ory of, 42
- Social implications of writing, 215–217, *see*
also Abstraction; Genre; Infor-
mation age; Scientific meaning
agent, agency and the influence of liter-
acy, 220–221
remembering the, 217–218
- Social isolation, end of, 32
- Social reciprocity, 42
- Social structure and social change
factors in, x, 289–290
literacy and, 294–295
- Societal literacy, 293
- Sociobiological approach, 125, 126,
129–131, 133, 134, 137
- Sociocultural institutional practices, *see*
also Cultural practices
dynamics of the emergence of,
241–242, 260–262
- Socioculturally located literate practices
and sensibilities, example of,
218–220
- Socioculturally stable strategies (SCSS),
244–248, 261
for child rearing, 248–249, *see also* Fos-
tering
how local emergent patterns come to be
similar across societies,
247–248
unique adaptations and emergence of,
242–247
- Song dynasty, 52–62, 66, 67
- Species, boundaries and classification of,
151–158
- Speech (in politics), *see also* Oral (culture)
to be consumed, 177–179
now, 183–186
to reason with, 179–183
thought and, 186–187
- Stabilization and destabilization of cultural
phenomena, 124–129, 133–134,
136–138
- Structural functionalism, 117, 119–120,
129–130, *see also* Functionalism
- Succession, pre- vs. postmortem, 50, 51
- Succession systems, 68–69
in China, 50, 58–69
vs. Goody's analysis, 65–67
imperial dynasties, 50–69
examples, 49
variables among, 49–50
- Succession to High Office* (Goody), 49
- Symbolic systems, *see also* Built symbolic
environment
ambivalence of, 168–170
- T**
- Taijong, 53–54
- Taizu, 53–54, 62
- Tallensi, 210–211
- Technological determinism, 219, 322
- Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa*
(Goody), 6, 7, 31
- Technology(ies)
of communication, x, 229–230, 289

- and social change, ix–xii
of writing, 280–283, 290
Text as discourse *vs.* document, 298–300
“Text” *vs.* “utterance,” 293, 298
Theophrastus, 157–158
Thucydides, 178, 181, 183, 184
Timbile Dazuuri, 201
Transformation, 155–156
Transportation technology, 44
Tributarian mode of production, 9

U

- Ukraine, 79–82, 92
Urbanization, x, 289
“Use” *vs.* “mention,” 298
“Utterance” *vs.* “text,” 293, 298

V

- Vai, 317–319, 321
Vedas, 15–16
Victorians, 38

W

- Wealth
accumulation of, xi
West Africa, 29, 250, 256, 262
hierarchical states of, 254–255
White Bagre, *see* Bagre myth
Women, *see also* Gender and culture
education and professions, 104–106
entry into center of cultural life,
109–112
inclusion in biographical references
books, 101–102, 104, 106,
111
new public recognition of famous,
101–103, 112
penetration into public sphere,
103–114

- property rights, 11, 36
role as bearers of culture, 108–109
sexuality, 107–108
Word-based models of writing, 282, 283
Writing, xi, xii
forms of
social change and, xi
genealogical anxiety and, 189–191,
196, *see also under* Genealogy
perspectives on language, speech, and,
278–283
problem with claims regarding the significance of, 292
relation to speaking, 281, 292
social organization and, 39, 294–296,
see also Social implications of writing
technology of, 280–283, 290
Writing systems, 281–283
terminologies for, 281n
“Written cultures,” 270, 291–293, *see also*
Oral (culture)

X

- Xiaozong, 62–63

Y

- Yingzong, 55

Z

- Zeng Bu, 56–59
Zhang Dun, 56–58
Zhenzong, 54–55
Zhezong, 55–59
Zoology, 151–158

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