



JOHN RANKINE GOODY

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John Rankine Goody

1919–2015

ONE OF THE MOST PRODUCTIVE THEMES addressed repeatedly by Jack Goody during his long and prolific career concerned the ‘mode of communication’, in particular the impact of literacy. The invention of writing, especially in alphabetic form, enabled a new kind of ‘knowledge society’ in which people could ‘look back’ and continuously rediscover the stored wisdom of their ancestors. Goody’s mature work reminds us that, in the early twenty-first century, this process is still regrettably segmented across the globe. Educated Europeans are familiar with the rediscovery of classical antiquity in the European renaissance, but few appreciate that Song dynasty intellectuals in China were able to look back in much the same way to Confucian as well as Buddhist classics.¹ The structural similarity of East and West in Eurasia eventually became Jack Goody’s dominant theme. But his starting point was the flexibility of oral communication in Africa, where the transmission of knowledge, of political offices and of property, all differed significantly from Eurasian patterns. A transition from Africa to Eurasia structures the central sections of this memoir. But Goody is not to be pigeon-holed geographically and to speak of a transition in his work is not to deny continuity and unity. There was no sudden intellectual shift, but rather a gradual reorientation that coincided roughly with his tenure of the William Wyse Chair in Social Anthropology at Cambridge between 1973 and 1984. The two sections in which I focus more on the professional accomplishments (in as much depth as a short memoir allows) are bracketed by sections in which I elaborate on the life

¹J. Goody, *Renaissances. The One or the Many?* (Cambridge, 2010).

and character of a man who was acknowledged, even by those unsympathetic to his intellectual positions and personality, as a ‘big man’ of the academic tribe of social anthropologists.

The apprentice

Jack Goody was conscious of the fact that his rather conventional Home Counties background made him an unusual recruit to a discipline in which middle-class Englishmen were outnumbered by South African Jews, Central European refugees, cosmopolitan aristocrats and ‘colonials’. He joked about this by emphasising his mother’s Scottish heritage.² He was born on 27 July 1919 in London and grew up in Welwyn Garden City and St Albans, where the Roman excavations of Mortimer Wheeler apparently made an impression on him as a schoolboy. St Albans School was almost as ancient and no doubt just as impressive in its own way.³ Jack’s father was a technical journalist and later an advertising manager in an electrical company. His mother worked as a civil servant for the Post Office before her marriage. Both parents valued education highly, and Jack dedicated his first monograph to them.⁴ More than half a century later, in the Acknowledgements to his final book, he looked back as follows:

above all I remember the earlier help of my mother, Lilian Rankine Goody of Turriff (she always retained her maiden name) and of my father, Harold Ernest Goody of Fulham, both of whom left school at sixteen but developed their own interests in work and education and were so pleased when their two sons obtained sizarships and later PhDs (without loans) at St John’s College, Cambridge, later becoming Fellows of the College, as they would also have been when they both subsequently became members of the National Academy of the USA.⁵

When Jack went up to Cambridge in 1938 to read English he encountered communists and radicals of diverse social backgrounds. Raymond

² Jack’s second Christian name was her family name. He and his younger brother Richard spent summers in the maternal home in Turriff, Aberdeenshire. Richard Goody is a distinguished atmospheric and planetary physicist and an Emeritus at Harvard University.

³ Colin Renfrew, the archaeologist who later became Jack’s jousting partner in Faculty Board meetings in Cambridge, was a pupil at St Albans School many years later. Ernest Gellner (who succeeded Goody as William Wyse Professor in 1984) completed his secondary education during the war at a different (less prestigious) grammar school in the same town.

⁴ J. Goody, *The Social Organisation of the LoWiili* (London, 1956).

⁵ J. Goody, *Metals, Culture and Capitalism: an Essay on the Origins of the Modern World* (Cambridge, 2012), p. xvii.

Williams was a contemporary at Trinity College, but Jack established a closer relationship with Eric Hobsbawm at King's.⁶ His undergraduate career was interrupted for six years by the Second World War. In several reminiscences, Jack attributed his decision to take up social anthropology to his experiences among Italian villagers in the Abruzzi, where he displayed great valour on the run from the Nazis, who had captured him at Tobruk in 1942.⁷ After twice escaping and being recaptured, the second time in Rome, he spent over a year in Eichstätt, a Bavarian prisoner-of-war camp, where he was able to read James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Gordon Childe's *What Happened in History*.

The war brought traumas, but it also extended social horizons. When looking back on his adventures in Italy, Jack stressed his encounters with the 'olive skinned peasants'. But the ensuing literary efforts of the young officer to render the vernacular of his fellow soldiers, including British army privates, suggest a revelatory discovery of the diversity of his own society and its class structure. This memoir of the war, the first half of which was written in the camp at Eichstätt, reveals a connoisseur of Joyce: the hero—aka Jack—is called Stephen. When finally demobbed, Stephen is troubled by 'the fuss of relatives' and requests a rail warrant to John O'Groats 'to do his own adjusting, sort out his own cards of identity and social relations'.⁸ I think it is possible that Jack Goody might have chosen to take up sociology or perhaps even social psychology, had such options existed in Cambridge at the time.

After completing Part I of the English Tripos in 1946, Jack took a one-year Diploma course in social anthropology, passing with a Distinction. His practical curiosity toward his own British society then deepened during a two-year stint as an Assistant Education Officer in Hertfordshire, with responsibilities for adult education. But research scholarships were not available for sociology. He returned to university in 1949 with the help of a Colonial Social Science Scholarship to study social anthropology, not at Cambridge but at the institute headed by Edward Evans-Pritchard (E-P) in Oxford. This was the year in which E-P delivered a famous lecture calling for a rapprochement between anthropology and

⁶Hobsbawm interviewed Goody in 1991 for Alan Macfarlane's digital archive: at <http://upload.sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1117872> (accessed 11 July 2017).

⁷In 1997 he revisited the cave where he had taken refuge, following publication of his memoir of these events in Italian translation (*Oltre I Muri*, Rome, Il Mondo). A French translation was published in 2004 (*Au-delà des murs*, Marseille, La Découverte). The English typescript *Beyond the Walls* was published privately by the Goody family in 2012.

⁸Goody, *Beyond the Walls*, p. 77.

history.⁹ However, this manifesto had little impact on the courses taught at Oxford. Goody accepted an offer to work on West Africa with Meyer Fortes, who was appointed at precisely this time to be William Wyse Professor in Cambridge. Formally Jack Goody spent the next few years as a Sociological Research Officer for the Gold Coast Government. The winds of change were already beginning to blow: though he still held a commission as an army officer, at his field site Jack promptly joined the local branch of Nkrumah's Convention People's Party. He spent a little over twelve months in 1950–1 among the acephalous, non-literate LoDagaa. This was his collective name for the inhabitants of the two settlements he studied, who he called the LoWiili and LoDagaba. He quickly realised that the old notion of a 'Lobi tribe' was a mirage, since no named groups existed on the ground in this region of north-western Ghana near the Black Volta River. Jack obtained a BLitt from Oxford in 1952 before returning to the district for a further nine months' field research. He was guided throughout this research by Fortes. Looking back, Jack sometimes spoke of the 'five years' he spent in Ghana at this time; but this was a form of amnesia that subsumed the writing-up process in Cambridge. For his wife Joan (née Wright), whom he had married in 1947, and their three young children Jeremy, Joanna and Jane, it perhaps did feel like a continuous five-year absence. The marriage collapsed.

Jack Goody's PhD dissertation was examined in 1954 by G. I. Jones (a veteran of the Colonial Service) and Max Gluckman from the University of Manchester. It secured its author immediate appointment as an Assistant Lecturer in the department that Fortes was consolidating. Jack was promoted to Lecturer in 1959 and elected to a Fellowship at St John's College in 1961. Meanwhile in 1956 he married Esther Newcomb, one of his first graduate students and the daughter of the distinguished American social psychologist Theodore Newcomb. Jack and Esther were a remarkable academic team, both in the field and in Cambridge. They wrote papers together and visited Ghana regularly throughout the first decade of independence, living there continuously from 1964 to 1966 with their daughters Mary and Rachel. Sabbaticals and many university vacations were spent mainly among the Gonja, a more stratified and centralised society than the LoDagaa. Esther also worked with West African migrants in London. While her focus remained firmly on kinship and interpersonal

⁹ This Marett Lecture modified (and in places contradicted) the thrust of E-P's inaugural lecture just two years before. See the memoir of E-P by John Barnes: J. A. Barnes, 'Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, 1902–1973', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 73 (1987), 447–89.

relations, Jack's interests began to diversify, to include precolonial history as well as the challenges of economic development and postcolonial statehood. Together they provided a stream of fresh empirical as well as theoretical insights to complement the Olympian overview of kinship theory provided by Fortes in his Morgan Lectures.¹⁰

Jack succeeded Audrey Richards as Director of Cambridge's African Studies Centre in 1966. He applied for and was awarded the ScD degree in 1969, and he was appointed Smuts Reader in Commonwealth Studies in 1972. But not everything was plain sailing. Before the Smuts elevation he had failed in an effort to obtain promotion to a personal Readership, and his appointment to succeed Fortes as William Wyse Professor in 1973 was not quite a foregone conclusion. Factional opposition inside Cambridge was one thing (more about this below), but Jack had managed to make a few enemies in Oxford and other places with a say in the matter. Eventually, the depth and breadth of his publications list was decisive. At this stage, Jack Goody was still very much an anthropologist's anthropologist; but his increasing engagement with other academic fields presumably counted in his favour at this moment of disciplinary transition in the wake of empire.¹¹ It had been a long apprenticeship. Jack paid appropriate homage to his mentor by editing the *Festschrift* for Fortes that appeared shortly afterwards.¹² His own contribution to this volume, 'Polygyny, economy and the role of women', gave a fair indication of his interests at the time; at this point few had any inkling of the scale of the changes to come.

The Africanist

The hallmark of the Cambridge department built up by Meyer Fortes was 'descent theory', grounded above all in West African ethnography. Critics of the descent theorists, influenced by the path-breaking work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, emphasised prescriptive marriage rules and inter-group

¹⁰ M. Fortes, *Kinship and the Social Order: the Legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan* (London, 1969).

¹¹ One criterion that did not weigh heavily in those days was pedagogical skill. Formal teaching (as distinct from informal supervision and guidance, in which he invested a great deal) was never a priority for Jack Goody. His lectures were often unprepared and his delivery was poor. Even when Prince Charles, the heir to the throne, was sitting in the lecture rooms at the Haddon Library in the late 1960s, it is said that Jack mumbled and rambled much as he always did. The contrast with his lucid and well-crafted books and articles was so strong that audiences sometimes wondered if the awkward lecturing style was a deliberate ploy to reinforce his arguments about the deficiencies of the oral mode of communication.

¹² J. Goody (ed.), *The Character of Kinship* (Cambridge, 1974).

alliances, rather than the character of the kin group (clan or lineage) as a corporation. The alliance theorists were instrumental in popularising structuralist anthropology more generally. They were championed in Cambridge by Edmund Leach, who was recruited by Fortes in 1953 from the London School of Economics (LSE). Leach had studied engineering at Cambridge and worked in China before participating in Bronislaw Malinowski's seminar at the LSE in the late 1930s. His horizons, too, had been greatly changed by the war, much of which he spent in remote regions of Burma. Leach was a born provocateur, ready to tangle with Lévi-Strauss himself on some points, and dismissive of virtually all his contemporaries in Britain. Some of those criticised felt that Leach's preference for rationalist logic was a case of *faute de mieux*. Having lost his Burma fieldnotes and written a well-received book that was not burdened with ethnographic facts, Leach went on to publish a second monograph that was full of them.¹³ But *Pul Eliya* was based on just seven months' field research in Ceylon (as it was still called), and Leach did not match the standards of his Africanist colleagues as an ethnographer. He concluded the Ceylon study with a sharp attack on the primacy attached to kinship by the Africanists around him. Leach declared that the institutions of the domestic domain and kinship itself had no autonomy but were constantly refashioned by economic realities, in particular through the system of land tenure.

This sounded like a manifesto for a materialist economic anthropology based on ethnographic data, but Edmund Leach was incapable of pursuing such an agenda and soon moved on to other matters (notably the analysis of biblical myth). In his more general theoretical statements, he disparaged ethnographic 'butterfly collecting' in favour of an eclectic adaptation of the structuralist analysis practiced by Lévi-Strauss, with its origins in Saussurian linguistics. In his much-quoted 1959 Malinowski Lecture titled 'Rethinking anthropology', Leach singled out Goody's early work in northern Ghana as an example of the kind of anthropology that had to be overcome:

My colleague Dr Goody has gone to great pains to distinguish as types two adjacent societies in the Northern Gold Coast which he calls LoWiili and LoDagaba. A careful reader of Dr Goody's works will discover, however, that these two 'societies' are simply the way that Dr Goody has chosen to describe the fact that his field notes from two neighbouring communities show some

¹³E. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: a Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London, 1954); *Pul Eliya: a Village in Ceylon; a Study of Land Tenure and Kinship* (Cambridge, 1961).

curious discrepancies. If Dr Goody's methods of analysis were pushed to the limit we should be able to show that every village community throughout the world constitutes a distinct society which is distinguishable as a type from any other.¹⁴

The Goody work in question here was his BLitt thesis, a revised version of which was published in 1956.¹⁵ One might doubt whether Leach was ever a 'careful reader' of the works of his Africanist colleagues. Be that as it may, by the time Goody published a much-revised version of his PhD in 1962 even the most superficial reader could see that his purpose was hardly sterile classification.¹⁶ Goody agreed with Leach that anthropologists should not limit themselves to writing 'impeccably detailed historical ethnographies of particular peoples'.¹⁷ But rather than generalisation via 'inspired guesswork', as advocated by Leach, Goody wanted the discipline to get back to addressing the big questions of human history, and to do so on the basis of careful analysis of empirical evidence, rather than intuition and logical patterns.

Some in Leach's audience in 1959 and later readers of his lecture jumped to erroneous conclusions about the main protagonists in these Cambridge debates. Leach, the structuralist, was also marked by the Malinowski imprint, joking with his students that for half of the week he remained an old-fashioned functionalist. He upheld the same high standards of field research using local languages as those of the 'journeyman' (Fortes' ironic self-description) ethnographers in the other camp. Certainly there were vigorous debates and occasional misunderstandings between the leading personalities; affairs, and even religious heritage, might have been mischievously invoked on occasion. But looking back, one sees that the tensions between Fortes, Leach and Goody were intellectually productive. They did not impede significant collaborations across the departmental divide, such as a *Cambridge Papers* volume on bridewealth and dowry in which Jack and Stanley Tambiah (ostensibly a card-carrying member of the Leach faction and a rival of Jack's for the Chair in 1973) published complementary studies.¹⁸

¹⁴ E. Leach, 'Rethinking anthropology', in E. Leach (ed.) *Rethinking Anthropology* (London, 1961), p. 3.

¹⁵ Goody, *The Social Organisation of the LoWiili*.

¹⁶ J. Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors: a Study of Mortuary Customs of the LoDagaa of West Africa* (Stanford, CA, 1962).

¹⁷ Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, p. 1.

¹⁸ J. Goody and S. J. Tambiah, *Bridewealth and Dowry* (London, 1973). For further insight see the memoir of 'Tambi' by C. J. Fuller, 'Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah 1929–2014', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy, XIV* (London, 2015), 599–619.

Just as Edmund Leach never questioned the accomplishments of the Malinowskian tradition, so Jack Goody respected the impulses coming from Paris, where expertise on West Africa was as strong as that in Britain for some topics. His French was better than that of his colleagues and he was a frequent visitor as Directeur d'Études Associé at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales throughout the 1970s.¹⁹ Yet Jack Goody was never seduced by the central precepts of French structuralist anthropology. Of course, for some hard-nosed Anglo-Saxon empiricists the entire Lévi-Straussian school was an unfortunate consequence of the continental preference for armchair philosophising and reluctance to suffer the discomforts of the field. In Jack's case there were more serious intellectual reasons behind the critique. In his formative years he had come under the influence of 'three visiting Professors of Social Theory at Cambridge in 1953–56, Talcott Parsons, Lloyd Warner and George Homans'.²⁰ All three were primarily sociologists (though Warner also made important contributions to anthropology). Jack was not overwhelmed by Parsonian theory. He was more impressed by Homans' bold ambition to develop a comprehensive science of human groups. If an American sociologist could publish a perceptive overview of medieval English villagers,²¹ surely a social anthropologist could make equally valuable contributions from a somewhat different angle? This had some affinity to the 'natural science of society' programme of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, a Cambridge anthropologist of an earlier generation who had interacted with Warner in Chicago. Jack Goody, though not uncritical of Radcliffe-Brown, always preferred an explicitly comparative, sociological vision of the discipline to that offered by the later Evans-Pritchard. He may also have preferred the politics of a man known in his Cambridge years as 'Anarchy Brown' to the Catholic conservatism of E-P.

These key elements, assembled in Cambridge and cemented during a sabbatical year at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto (1959–60), were firmly in place by the time Goody published *Death, Property and the Ancestors* in 1962. This work meets the highest Malinowskian-Fortesian standards in terms of presenting field-work data. The comparative anthropologist recalls his earlier academic identity by punctuating his work with epigraphs and quotations from English literature. It is also instructive to note early signs of an engage-

¹⁹ He also spent many summers in the vicinity of Figeac, in the department of the Lot, returning each year to the same gîte in a tiny hamlet, and later to the house he and Esther bought nearby.

²⁰ Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors*, p. vii.

²¹ G. C. Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1941).

ment with English and European history as he draws on Henry Maine and other classical European sources to understand the transmission of property in northern Ghana. His analysis of the dual inheritance system of the LoDagaba showed that it allowed for greater *choice* than that of the LoWiili, the people with whom he spent most of his first stint in the field. The differences had implications both for the corporateness of descent groups and interpersonal relations. All this was new grist to the Fortesian mill, but at the same time it opened up original paths for comparison, of a kind not envisaged by the master. The significant differences between LoDagaba and LoWiili turned on inheritance, but how did the difference in property transmission come about? It could not be explained with reference to the regional ecology, and Goody was not disposed to give credit to speculative evolutionary theories about 'uterine inheritance' as an earlier stage in human evolution; the trend in the savannah of the Niger bend in recent centuries seemed to be in the opposite direction.

To the best of my knowledge, Goody never resolved this question pertaining to the entanglements of regional migration histories. Instead, perhaps piqued by the teasing remarks of Leach, he turned his attention ever more ambitiously to the bigger picture, always with the archaeology of Gordon Childe in the back of his mind and influenced also by the Danish economic historian Ester Boserup. He argued that most of Africa south of the Sahara was characterised by rudimentary technology (the digging stick rather than the plough) and by the relative abundance of land. This was the deeper explanation for an intercontinental contrast with Europe and Asia, where fertile land tended to be scarce, surpluses were larger and property was transmitted to individual heirs, female as well as male, rather than collectively through kin groups. A series of publications elaborated this contrast, culminating in *Production and Reproduction*.²² By now, both the emphasis on materialist causation and the historical orientation distinguished Goody clearly from Fortes.

This emerging interest in modes of production did not lead Jack Goody to embrace the neo-Marxist paradigms that became fashionable in these years (also largely derivative of developments in Paris in particular the work of Louis Althusser). He did not take kindly to accusations of economic or technological determinism. The idealism of the neo-Marxist stress on the relations of production was little better than Leach's *trompe l'œil* at the end of his Ceylon monograph. Contributing to a symposium

²²J. Goody, *Production and Reproduction: a Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain* (Cambridge, 1976).

on slavery organised by his friend Woody Watson, Jack elaborated a more general suspicion of ‘theory’:

... in rural economy slavery has different implications in the simpler agricultural systems of Africa than in the more advanced ones of the Eurasian continent, under industrial than under craft production. To make such an assertion is viewed by some Althusserians as ‘technological determinism’ or ‘vulgar Marxism’. However the obverse is an equally ‘vulgar’ form of ‘idealism’, which can be maintained only by those who have little concern with the interplay of ‘theory’ and ‘research’, and who view ‘theory’ as a body of ready-made constructs insulated from the realm of empirical systems. Such a binary approach to social theory and research has a long tradition in the decontextualized discussion of philosophers. It has little relevance to the dialectical process involved in the study of human society.²³

One counter move (also a favourite ploy of Ernest Gellner) was to insist on paying as much attention to the means of destruction as to the means of production. You could not understand political formations in West Africa without appreciating the different implications of horses and guns as military weapons (not all regional experts were convinced by Jack’s generalisations about this contrast). But the move which had greater significance for Goody’s oeuvre concerned the mode of communication and the importance of literacy as a ‘technology of the intellect’. This too emerged from his original field research, during which he wrote down a very long myth of the LoDagaba. The Bagre was a secret association and the way in which Jack first gained access and published his materials might not pass muster for the more restrictive ethics committees of our age. This was nevertheless work that gave him the satisfaction of being able to give back something of value pertaining to the past of the societies he had studied so intensively, while the LoDagaba themselves were now firmly focused on constructing new futures. *The Myth of the Bagre* was particularly well received in France, where it appeared in translation.²⁴ Later recordings of the myth revealed that substantial changes could take place in little more than a decade. Gradually, Goody recognised the deeper implications of oral transmission when compared with writing systems, such as the alphabet invented by the Greeks, which permitted systematisation and scientific procedures. The strong version of this contrast was first outlined in a paper written with his close friend at St John’s, the literature scholar Ian Watt. This paper dominated the

²³ J. Goody, ‘Slavery in time and space’, in J. L. Watson (ed.), *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford, 1980), p. 17.

²⁴ J. Goody, *The Myth of the Bagre* (Oxford, 1972); J. Goody (with S. W. D. K. Gandah), *Une Récitation du Bagré* (Paris, 1980).

subject for years and was republished in a volume edited by Jack in 1968.²⁵ He returned to the theme repeatedly, retracting some of his stronger propositions and the excessive concentration on the case of Greece, which (from his later standpoint) reflected a Euro-centric bias and underestimated the potential of logographic representation.

But the core of the argument was retained and it was central to his answer to the structuralist challenge. Lévi-Strauss seduced his readers into a world of binary oppositions, all predicated on an opposition between 'hot' societies endowed with history (notably those of Europe) and the 'cold' societies which lacked such a past and formed the traditional terrain of anthropology (ethnology). To Jack Goody this always seemed feeble as a philosophy of history. The binary it implied was contradicted by the speed with which a new generation in Africa was adapting to modern systems of education and science. Jack called instead for a renewal of collaboration with historians and archaeologists to understand the multiple paths of human history. In *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (his most comprehensive riposte to the structuralists—the very title evokes a key concept of Lévi-Strauss), it sometimes seems as if Goody is positing the invention of writing as the key moment in a 'great divide' theory of his own.²⁶ Translated into at least six major languages by the end of the century, this was probably the book that had most impact during his lifetime.

While these long-term historical interests were beginning to bear fruit, throughout the 1950s and 1960s Goody was also paying his dues to the Malinowskian-Fortesian tribe with publications in quite different genres. His standing as a kinship specialist was first established with a rigorously argued paper on conceptions of incest and adultery (1956).²⁷ This was published (strange though it seems today) in the *British Journal of Sociology*, as was a later paper on religion and ritual (1961).²⁸ Further papers in leading anthropological journals dealt with 'the mother's brother and the sister's son' (1959),²⁹ 'double descent systems' (1961)³⁰ and 'the

²⁵ J. Goody and I. Watt, 'The consequences of literacy', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5 (1963), 304–45; J. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 27–68.

²⁶ J. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1977).

²⁷ J. Goody, 'A comparative approach to incest and adultery', *British Journal of Sociology*, 7 (1956), 286–305.

²⁸ J. Goody, 'Religion and ritual: the definitional problem', *British Journal of Sociology*, 12 (1961), 142–63.

²⁹ J. Goody, 'The mother's brother and the sister's son in West Africa' (Curl Prize essay), *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 89 (1959), 61–88.

³⁰ J. Goody, 'The classification of double descent systems', *Current Anthropology*, 2 (1961), 3–12, 21–4.

circulation of women and children in Northern Ghana' (1967, with Esther Newcomb Goody).³¹ During these years, Jack also published papers in a variety of historical journals as well as the social sciences and regional studies outlets. The journal best suited to his growing ambitions was *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, which in addition to the above-mentioned seminal paper on literacy (1963, with Ian Watt) also published wide-ranging surveys of adoption (1969)³² and 'strategies of heirship' (1973).³³ Seemingly 'arid' exercises to demonstrate that specialist terms could serve a useful purpose if rigorously defined and applied cross-culturally were complemented by the trenchant dismissal of terms that might have taken firm root, but which upon closer scrutiny were too imprecise to be saved for science. His objections to 'ritual' were no doubt prompted by the loose usage of Leach; they were repeated in the 1962 monograph and reformulated in his contribution to an influential volume devoted to 'secular ritual'.³⁴ Jack's reservations concerning the applicability of 'feudalism' on the African continent prefigured later elaborations of his critique of Eurocentric bias in the historical social sciences.³⁵ This essay was republished in a wide-ranging collection which showed how far he had come by the end of his apprenticeship. Africa was still at the centre of his work, but the agendas were expanding rapidly.³⁶

The world historian

I have stressed that there were no abrupt transitions in Jack Goody's work: the seeds of just about everything he wrote after 1973 can be found in the years preceding his appointment to the William Wyse chair. But along with a shift in the spatial focus from Africa to Eurasia, he strikes out ever more adventurously beyond anthropology and the social sciences in order to address the agendas of historians and archaeologists. Publications in exclusively anthropological journals become increasingly rare. There is an acceleration following his retirement in 1984 when, freed of managerial

³¹ J. Goody and E. N. Goody, 'The circulation of women and children in northern Ghana', *Man*, 2 (1967), 226–48.

³² J. Goody, 'Adoption in cross-cultural perspective', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 11 (1969), 55–78.

³³ J. Goody, 'Strategies of heirship', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1 (1973), 3–20.

³⁴ J. Goody, 'Against "ritual": loosely structured thoughts on a loosely defined topic', in S. Falk-Moore and B. Myerhoff (eds.), *Secular Ritual* (Assen, 1977), pp. 25–35.

³⁵ J. Goody, 'Feudalism in Africa?', *Journal of African History* 4 (1963), 1–18.

³⁶ J. Goody, *Technology Tradition and the State in Africa* (Cambridge, 1971).

responsibilities, the emeritus is able to concentrate fully on his writing. Jack Goody produced some eighteen new works between 1984 and 2012. Almost all were published in Cambridge. There was a falling-out with Cambridge University Press when it opted to change the name and governance of the monographs series for which he had long served as sole General Editor.³⁷ Yet he continued to publish his most substantial books with CUP. Several shorter works for wider audiences were commissioned by Cambridge sociologist John Thompson for Polity Press. Rich essay collections appeared in 1997 with Blackwell and 1998 with Verso.³⁸ The titles of these latter volumes are indicative of another slow shift over the years: from a comparative social scientist who engages with the very latest results of historical demographers, and who supports his generalisations with reference to Murdock's *Ethnographic Atlas* and statistical path analysis, to a historian of culture who is more concerned to provide narrative descriptions of patterns and associations than to measure causal flows. Throughout these decades Jack read incessantly in broad fields of world history; but whenever there was a danger of losing his way in details, he would pull up sharply and reconnect with his Childean master narrative of similarity and difference on the continental scale.

The 1980s brought fresh syntheses of his research into orality and the importance of writing as a technique with far-reaching implications for the organisation of society.³⁹ But the main area in which Jack continued to break new ground in this decade was property transmission. Not all of his historian colleagues were ready to accept scholarly trespassing of the kind which peaked in his book about the impact of the Roman Catholic Church on family and kin relations in medieval Europe.⁴⁰ Yet this was quickly

³⁷The series *Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology* published sixty-nine volumes between 1967 (when it was founded by Goody together with Fortes and Leach) and 1990 (when for marketing reasons the title was changed to include 'and Cultural'). In addition, CUP published eleven volumes of *Cambridge Papers* between 1958 and 1982—volumes which served almost exclusively to disseminate the research of department members. These two series did much to project the department's worldwide reputation in its golden age. At CUP, Jack worked especially closely with Patricia Williams (wife of the philosopher). His editorial inputs declined in the 1990s and ceased altogether when he condemned the Press's failure to stand up to political pressure in dropping a monograph on Macedonia (A. N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*, Chicago, 1997). The main series was terminated in 2003.

³⁸J. Goody, *Representations and Contradictions: Ambivalence towards Images, Theatre, Fiction, Relics and Sexuality* (Oxford, 1997); J. Goody, *Food and Love: a Cultural History of East and West* (London, 1998).

³⁹J. Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge, 1986); J. Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge, 1987).

⁴⁰J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983).

translated into French and contributed significantly to his reputation there. It was followed in 1990 by a work that pushed back in the direction of Eurasian commonalities.⁴¹ Having shown that Western Christianity did indeed have distinctive features that impacted on kinship and marriage, Jack Goody did not wish to be classified as yet another theorist of the 'European miracle'. All of his African experience, in combination with what he knew of Europe and Asia through reading and travelling, led him to emphasise similarities and comparability across Eurasia. He was critical of the teleological tendency of so many Europeans to search for deep, long-term clues to the global domination exercised by Western Eurasia in recent centuries.

This argument was pursued both inside and outside the sphere of domestic institutions and driven home in several major works with meticulous critiques of the most influential Eurocentric thinkers.⁴² These were significant contributions to a larger wave that was taking the discipline of history beyond traditional nation-state and imperial paradigms. Jack's message was clear: the Western passage from antiquity to feudalism had to be placed in a wider Eurasian context. Ideas such as that of renaissance are not relevant only to Europe, and the industrial and scientific revolutions can only be appreciated in the light of earlier contributions in the Near East, and South and East Asia. Jack Goody's world history emphasised oscillation between East and West, 'alternating domination' as he called it.⁴³

Most Western scholars continue to think of capitalism and modernity as a product of the last 500 years or so, following European voyages of discovery and the concomitant expansion of global markets. This was followed by two further ruptures: scientific revolution and then (intimately related to the new scientific technologies) the transformation wrought by industrial capitalism, which created a proletariat obliged to sell its labour as a commodity. This basic narrative is common to Weberians and

⁴¹ J. Goody, *The Oriental, the Ancient and the Primitive: Systems of Marriage and the Family in the Pre-industrial Societies of Eurasia* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁴² The most important are J. Goody, *The East in the West* (Cambridge, 1996), in which he takes aim at Karl Marx and (especially) Max Weber; and J. Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge, 2006), in which Joseph Needham, Norbert Elias and Fernand Braudel are singled out for penetrating critique.

⁴³ A short synthesis can be found in J. Goody, *The Eurasian Miracle* (Cambridge, 2010); see also the article published in the month of his passing, J. Goody, 'Asia and Europe', *History and Anthropology*, 26 (2015), 263–307. Keith Hart has written an incisive review article encompassing all the major works of the new century: 'Jack Goody: the anthropology of unequal society', *Reviews in Anthropology*, 43 (2014), 199–220.

Marxists alike. Even the Marxist anthropologist Eric Wolf, whose notion of a tributary mode of production is welcomed by Goody as an improvement on the Eurocentric category 'feudalism', privileges the last 500 years and neglects the three millennia which preceded this phase of European domination. But Jack Goody disagreed with neo-Marxist anthropologists (and also historians such as the young Chris Wickham) who thought they could escape the Eurocentric straitjacket by adapting the concept of 'mode of production', and who then compounded their error by privileging the 'relations of production' ahead of the 'forces' (technologies). Instead Jack drew attention to much earlier forms of dispossession. Capital was deployed 'rationally' in earlier millennia by merchants who traded overland as well as by sea, when the economy of western Eurasia (i.e. Europe) was backward in comparison with the east. Rather than focus on antagonistic relations at the point of production, Jack Goody drew attention to increasingly stratified societies and the emergence of 'connoisseurship' in various realms of culture, to complement his earlier analysis of how inequalities were reproduced through property transmission and domestic institutions.

Jack's alternative to the Eurocentric narratives did not change significantly over the years. The argument of his last, most archaeological monograph, which demonstrated the centrality of metal to the 'origins of the modern world', still followed the contours that he had imbibed from Childe in the library of his prisoner-of-war camp.⁴⁴ Most of the historical works of the last decades are high-level syntheses packed with empirical data. It is futile to search for innovative causal hypotheses, or specific theoretical foundations. Jack was impatient with crude classifications such as 'structural-functionalist' or 'descent school', and consistently eschewed jargon. Confronted with the abstract texts of non-anthropologists such as Parsons in the 1950s or Althusser in the 1960s, or Foucault in the 1970s and 1980s, he seems to have made a conscious decision to ignore them, no matter how popular they became with other anthropologists. How else would he have found the time to work through several different versions of the Bagre myth? Jack Goody certainly invested a lot of energy in studying the ethnography and languages of Ghana, and in enabling

⁴⁴Goody, *Metals*. Although he rejected Childe's unilineal evolutionism (for which he also criticised Marx and Freud), Jack repeatedly adapted the prehistorian's perspective to his own topics; for a notable late instance, see J. Goody, 'Gordon Childe, the urban revolution, and the Haute Cuisine: an anthropo-archaeological view of modern history', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 48 (2006), 503–19.

Ghanaians themselves to continue such work.⁴⁵ This empiricist disposition persisted in later decades: when postmodern, postcolonial theories became *de rigueur* in anthropological writings, Jack preferred to read ever more widely in world history. Colleagues and students struggled to put a label on his historical books, and on him; the absence of a theoretical framework was perceived to be a drawback. For example, in an otherwise positive review of his last major work, archaeologist Stephen Shennan suggests that the narrative might have been strengthened by an explicit adoption of neo-institutionalist economic history.⁴⁶ The suggestion is not at all unreasonable, but in this respect Jack tended to disappoint; theory was either left implicit or it was altogether invisible. Not that he was an intellectual philistine: Durkheim, Marx and Freud were permanent benchmarks (though he was critical of them all). He paid surprisingly little attention to Marcel Mauss. One French contemporary for whom he had great respect was Pierre Bourdieu: Jack arranged for a translation of *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* soon after its publication and it became a bestseller in the Cambridge Studies series.⁴⁷

As I have noted, because Jack Goody placed much emphasis on surplus production and technology in some of his best known works, he was sometimes accused of economic determinism. But in his later books there is nothing deterministic about the way in which technologies of communication and of violence interact with the realm of production. In the end, he was content to leave 'economic anthropology' in the hands of Raymond Firth and the neo-Marxists. What mattered most in the first phase of his career was not the mode of production per se, but the property system and transmission mechanisms in the domestic domain. Having exhausted this theme by 1990, Jack then preferred to explore how the Africa–Eurasia contrast played out in various cultural realms, rather than dig further into the political economy that made the 'Eurasian miracle' possible. Numerous works on food,⁴⁸ a massive study of flowers⁴⁹ as well as the last book on metals, are all rooted in the basic economic contrasts between Africa and Eurasia. All play down the significance of East–West

⁴⁵ Jack once calculated that he had spent over a year of his life in painstaking transcription and (re)translation of different versions of the Bage myth. See S. Grelet, E. Guichard and A. Lalande, 'La matière des idées; entretien avec Jack Goody', *Vacarne*, 49 (Autumn 2009), 12.

⁴⁶ S. Shennan, 'Refuting Western uniqueness', *European Journal of Sociology*, 54 (2013), 508–12.

⁴⁷ P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977). (Goody arranged for numerous other translations for this CUP series, from Augé and Godelier to Segalen and Zonabend.)

⁴⁸ The manifesto was laid out in J. Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: a Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge, 1982).

⁴⁹ J. Goody, *The Culture of Flowers* (Cambridge, 1993).

differences within Eurasia. In some contexts, however, none of the axes for opposition suffice. A reluctance to represent the High God figuratively is a recurring feature of the 'world religions' of Eurasia, but it is also to be found in sub-Saharan Africa.⁵⁰ At this point Jack Goody acknowledges that historical accounts of divergent pathways must yield to recognition of cognitive universals: for example, concerning ambivalences (a favourite word) in domains of aesthetics and religion. At some level we are all the same, and binary models of otherness are simply false. However, Jack Goody's attitude to the emergence of a new 'cognitive anthropology' was itself ambivalent. He appreciated the work of scholars such as Dan Sperber and Pascal Boyer, as well as Stephen Levinson in linguistic anthropology; but he was unsympathetic to the emergence of named sub-fields in which conversations with biologists and psychologists would supersede those with other social scientists and historians.

Within Jack Goody's vast compass it is inevitable that some aspects receive more careful attention than others. Labour and exploitation are neglected in his insistence on pushing the origins of capitalism back to the 'merchant cultures' of the Bronze Age. Missing too, especially in the Eurasian context, is the messy business of politics. Perhaps neither production nor politics were particularly interesting phenomena among the LoDagaba, but the development of new forms of market exchange in the Eurasian civilisations was embedded in new forms of polity. Embeddedness was the key term of Karl Polanyi's substantivist economic anthropology, but Jack considered this approach to be flawed by a romantic anti-market ideology. He was influenced by Cambridge historian Moses Finley's account of the 'ancient economy' but in the end he judged Finley's position to be still too close to that of Polanyi (despite Finley's criticisms of the models of his mentor in 1950s New York).⁵¹

Religion was even more complicated terrain.⁵² Jack was initially directed by Fortes to focus on the religion of the LoDagaba and he spent most of his time in the field documenting mortuary rituals. In his definitive 1962 monograph he concluded (against Fustel de Coulanges and Durkheim) that, although religion was certainly embedded in this case, it had no causal priority. This conclusion was echoed decades later when he

⁵⁰ Goody, *Representations and Contradictions*, Chapter 2.

⁵¹ M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley, CA, 1973).

⁵² As far as I am aware, Jack Goody's writings about religion (unlike those of several other influential British social anthropologists of Africa) were not coloured by any personal religious faith. It took him some time and effort to accept that three of his children took up Buddhism in a serious way.

discounted the significance of religious beliefs for the emergence of stratified Eurasian society and divergent histories within the landmass.⁵³ His criticism of the Weberian thesis of a unique 'Protestant ethic' underpinning the capitalist spirit is undoubtedly justified. But to discount the significance of belief and the institutions of religion altogether is another matter; after all, Jack himself had drawn attention to distinctive features of Latin Christianity and their impact on marriage and the family, as well as outside the domestic domain.⁵⁴ He did not engage with the debates about 'multiple modernities' which flourished in the early twenty-first century, nor with their possible roots in the philosophies of the 'Axial Age'. Jack cast the onset of the 'transcendental' rather simplistically as a *hindrance* to the scientific quest. But upholding a basic distinction between Eurasia and Africa, based in economy and technology, need not impede recognition of more complex civilisational histories, both in Africa and in Eurasia, in which a decisive role is played by the 'religio-political nexus'; this nexus receives scant attention in Jack Goody's historical analyses.⁵⁵

The big man

When Jack Goody succeeded Meyer Fortes in 1973, the discipline of social anthropology, in Cambridge as everywhere else, faced an uncertain future. With the end of the colonial empires and the retirements of E-P in Oxford, Firth at the LSE and Gluckman at Manchester, it seemed obvious that an epoch had come to an end. That Cambridge proceeded to reinvent itself as the pre-eminent department in the country owed much to Jack's own prodigious activities in these years (as well as to the above-mentioned creative rivalry with Edmund Leach, who was Provost of King's College between 1966 and 1979 and attracted excellent students with his own unique magnetism). It was clear to us in the 1970s that social anthropology had entered a new era of expansion. The graduate students who turned up in Pembroke Street were admitted to an intimate scholarly community, but their field projects diverged more and more from the kind of face-to-face community of a few thousand inhabitants that Goody

⁵³ Goody, *The Eurasian Miracle*; Goody, *Metals*.

⁵⁴ Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage*.

⁵⁵ I borrow this phrase from Johann Arnason. See J. P. Arnason and C. Hann, *Anthropology and Civilizational Analysis. Eurasian Explorations*. (New York, forthcoming).

himself had studied in his own apprenticeship.⁵⁶ The physical move to new premises around the corner in Free School Lane brought the social anthropologists into the immediate proximity of a similarly expansive sociology. Cambridge's first professor of sociology was John Barnes, an old friend of Jack's, for whom the notion of an intellectual boundary between anthropology and sociology made even less sense than it did for him. Jack was also close to Geoffrey Hawthorn, appreciative of his efforts to push the new department of Social and Political Sciences beyond the narrow paradigms of textbook sociology.

Links to historians had long been important and Jack greatly enjoyed working for many years as a member of the editorial board of *Past & Present*.⁵⁷ He was on good terms with Munir Postan as well as Moses Finley, and he was an early supporter of the historical demography developed in Cambridge by Peter Laslett and others. Ties to history took a significant new twist with the arrival of Peter Burke in 1979 to pioneer new styles of cultural history in Cambridge. Jack admired Alan Macfarlane's efforts to bring anthropology and history together, and was instrumental in recruiting him to the Cambridge department. Macfarlane's work, however, later took him in quite different directions.⁵⁸ The two men remained close, despite their obvious intellectual differences. For Jack, it was misleading to highlight distinctive features of the English case; even the evidence for East–West differences in marriage patterns within continental Europe (the much debated 'Hajnal line') paled into insignificance when one considered commonalities in the 'woman's property complex' stretching all the way to East Asia.

The upshot was that, far from fading away as some had feared in the aftermath of empire, social anthropology in Cambridge boomed (even if

⁵⁶ Keith Hart, whose doctoral project in the late 1960s on urban migrants in Accra was supervised by Goody and examined by Fortes, summed up the transformation as follows: 'Jack was in many ways Meyer Fortes' opposite, bringing to his headship the spirit of his own research and writing. He had no respect for disciplinary boundaries, telling us "You must find a question and follow it wherever it takes you". As a result, Cambridge social anthropology became an assemblage of solipsists, with PhD students often pursuing topics unknown to their supervisors.' (K. Hart, 'Professor Sir John Rankine Goody FBA (aka Jack), 1919–2015', *Anthropology Today*, 31, 6 (2015), 27–8.)

⁵⁷ He collaborated with Edward Thompson and Joan Thirsk in a comparative volume which emerged from a conference of the Past & Present Society: J. Goody, E. P. Thompson and J. Thirsk (eds.), *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200–1800* (Cambridge, 1976). This collaboration was doubtless facilitated by the editors' common left-wing political proclivities.

⁵⁸ A. Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism* (Oxford, 1978). In a generous memoir available at his website, Macfarlane concludes by describing Jack as 'the man who has shaped my life most ... a constant inspiration'. See <http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/> (accessed 11 July 2017).

a price was paid in terms of coherence). The well-established ethnographic focus on Africa was extended with the appointment of specialists on regions such as Amazonia and Melanesia, but work on Europe was also encouraged, including ‘anthropology at home’ (as it was called by the 1980s). My own case was not so unusual. I wanted initially to go to New Guinea, like many others in the 1970s. But Cambridge had already invested significantly in Melanesia, and Jack Goody urged me to go back to my undergraduate specialisation in the economics and politics of socialist Eastern Europe. Since no one among the core staff, or even in the penumbra of the colleges and other affiliated institutions, had the necessary regional or thematic expertise, Jack took me on himself.

In those days it was taken for granted that the William Wyse Professor was the Head of Department, who would promote its interests at meetings of the Faculty Board (vis-à-vis colleagues in archaeology and physical/biological anthropology) and beyond in the labyrinthine structures of the university. Jack invested much energy at multiple levels, beginning inside the department, where from the very beginning he had to fight his corner if appointments were not to be dominated by Leach.⁵⁹ Positions were always scarce: not every Certificate (later MPhil) student could secure PhD funding, not every PhD would become a Junior Research Fellow, not every JRF could be taken on as an Assistant Lecturer, and not every Assistant Lecturer could be awarded tenure. Some of those who missed out saw a typical academic patriarch, scheming and sometimes bullying to get his way. Nor did the unfairness end with tenure: some Cambridge colleges were rich enough to look after their Fellows very well, but the support available to Esther Goody at New Hall was very limited in comparison to that available to Jack at St John’s. It was the college system which allowed him to make time for reading and writing. Mornings were generally taken up with teaching and administration in the vicinity of Downing Street and Free School Lane, but after lunch in John’s (if no meetings were scheduled) he was usually able to retreat to his famously untidy college room in the New Court block popularly known as the ‘wedding cake’, where he would work without disturbance through to dinner.

⁵⁹The department only took shape as such after his appointment to the chair. Prior to 1973 bureaucracy was minimal and the anthropologists were an informal cluster in a Faculty where archaeologists formed a majority. See J. Goody, ‘Anthropology and bureaucracy’, *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 28 (2008–9), 20–2.

Appointments and political battles outside Cambridge did not have the same significance. Jack declined to join the Association of Social Anthropologists and considered its annual conferences too introverted (because they lacked interdisciplinary stimulus). He was a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute (and was awarded its highest honour, the Huxley Memorial Medal, in 1995), but he avoided office-holding. It was the same story in St John's College and also in the British Academy, where he remained loyal to the sociology section that elected him in 1976, after the majority of social anthropologists fissioned to form a new section with geographers. Jack also shunned the American Anthropological Association. The importance of his year in California in 1959–60 was noted above, and he visited the country often enough. But he never became close to the likes of Clifford Geertz, David Schneider or other influential figures in a similarly expansive US cultural anthropology. Like Geertz, Jack Goody started out as a student of English literature. But he was convinced that a British school focused on social relations and emphasising links to a more general comparative sociology and to history had more to offer than the North American predilection for cultural particulars. Geertz visited Cambridge in 1983 to deliver an early version of the argument later published as 'Anti-anti-relativism',⁶⁰ but this was at the invitation of Anthony Giddens (who succeeded John Barnes as Professor of Sociology at this time). The lecture was not even advertised in the Department of Social Anthropology, situated next door in Free School Lane.

I think this disdain and lack of hospitality towards Geertz were altogether exceptional. When Marshall Sahlins visited from Chicago at about the same time (invited by Peter Gathercole, the Curator of the Haddon Museum, to present a version of his celebrated Frazer Lecture on the death of Captain James Cook), he was welcomed according to the local cultural script, which included being entertained by Jack and Esther at 8 Adams Road. By the time Jack retired, Esther was securely established as a senior member of the department (given the conventions of that era, she had been obliged to resign her post after his appointment to the Chair; but having provided abundant evidence of her independent scholarly creativity, especially at the interface between anthropology and psychology, she was reappointed to a Lectureship in 1978). The Goodys lived in a large house in Adams Road which they acquired from St John's College (initially leasehold and later freehold). It was ideally suited to the

⁶⁰C. Geertz, 'Distinguished lecture: anti-anti-relativism', *American Anthropologist*, 86 (1984), 263–78.

sort of informal suppers and Sunday lunches that Jack and Esther liked to host.⁶¹ Numerous more or less penurious young scholars lodged here over the years. When Jack retired in 1984 he insisted on hosting his own rite of passage (not without morbid jokes about having to endure yet another funeral: hadn't he sat through enough of them during his first field research in Ghana?). House and garden were full to overflowing. Maurice Godelier came over from France, Alan Macfarlane brought his guitar from the Fens, Keith Hart adapted a well-known folk song from Yorkshire to provide a satirical salute, Cesare Poppi and Paul Sant Cassia added Mediterranean accents to the conversations and the cuisine, Stephen Hugh-Jones demonstrated yet again that reports of a continuing feud with the Leach camp at King's were, to say the least, exaggerated, and Gilbert Lewis embodied the continued vitality of anthropology within John's. All of these men were close to Jack, and there were many more. However, to the very end of his life the patriarch liked to stress that women had exerted a greater influence.⁶²

Jack continued to value his room at St John's and his summer holidays in France throughout the peripatetic decades of his retirement. He accepted invitations from all over the world, seemingly indifferent to whether the occasion was a Distinguished Lecture or a run-of-the-mill doctoral examination or consultancy. Though he never warmed to Germany as he did to France (hardly surprising in view of the war), he was a regular guest of the Max Planck Society. On a memorable December evening in 1997 in Berlin, after drinking some decent red wine at the Wissenschaftskolleg, Jack, Eric Hobsbawm and Perry Anderson (three quite different hues of the British academic left) regaled their companions with revolutionary songs. Alas Jack tripped on the way back to his room and was hospitalised for several weeks with a broken hip. He was thus unable to attend a meeting the next day charged with taking the decision

⁶¹ Food was also a central theme of his writing for decades. In addition to the 1982 monograph noted above, several chapters and articles are staples in the interdisciplinary field of Food Studies.

⁶² A small example: I think he cited the work of Q. D. Leavis on the emergence of the English novel more often than he mentioned the impact of her equally distinguished husband on generations of literature scholars in Cambridge. It is worth bearing in mind that from his school years onwards, Jack Goody spent the greater part of his life as a member of exclusively male or male-dominated institutions. (The two years he spent working for Hertfordshire County Council between 1947 and 1949 were the main exception.) Even after his retirement, High Table at St John's was often an all-male gathering. This is the social context in which to place not only his enduring intellectual fascination with the 'woman's property complex' but also his energetic campaigning for the admission of women to his beloved college (accomplished in 1981). Privately, he was unstinting in the support he gave his daughters to realise their potential.

whether or not to establish a Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.⁶³

Jack Goody received numerous honorary degrees, medals, prizes and a belated Festschrift.⁶⁴ He also responded to a symposium in *Theory, Culture and Society* in which his work was addressed mainly by historians and cultural sociologists.⁶⁵ More formal international recognition came as early as 1980 in the USA, when he was elected an Honorary Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; in 2004 he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences. In France, he was appointed Chevalier (later Officier, and in 2006 Commandeur) of the Ordre des Arts et Lettres. In 2005 he was elevated to a Knighthood by the Queen ‘for services to anthropology’.

Lectures and extended stays in prestigious academic bolt-holes equipped with good libraries all functioned to hone Jack’s ability to generate texts for staff at St John’s to process back in Cambridge. But so did long train journeys, or even airport stopovers where he had only the back of an envelope at his disposal. Mrs Susan Mansfield, Fellows’ Secretary at John’s, had an almost unique ability to decipher his handwriting. (Fittingly, she was the only non-family invitee when he went to Buckingham Palace to be knighted.) Jack made some use of research assistants for his later books. These writings were shaped not only by promiscuous encounters in seminars and conferences around the world but also by the contingencies of High Table interaction in Cambridge, especially within his own College—and by whatever he happened to have been reading lately.

Jack met the psychoanalyst and feminist Juliet Mitchell in the early 1990s at Yale University. In 2000 Juliet became his wife and her daughter Polly his step-daughter. Summers in France continued, but now at her base at Bouzigues (Herauld). When Jack’s health deteriorated in the new century, in addition to providing practical help with his writing and editing his texts, Juliet cared for him. Her professional background enabled her to trace the origin of his most intemperate moods to his wartime experiences and she accompanied him on visits to key sites in the Mediterranean. Jack’s third family opened new horizons on feminism and changes in British society, while at the same time rekindling his interest in Freud and

⁶³ Fortunately, a second distinguished foreign consultant had been invited: Marilyn Strathern remained sober throughout her stay in Berlin.

⁶⁴ D. R. Olson and M. Cole (eds.), *Technology, Literacy, and the Evolution of Society: Implications of the Work of Jack Goody* (Mahwah, NJ, 2006).

⁶⁵ M. Featherstone, P. Burke and S. Mennell (eds.), ‘Occidentalism: Jack Goody and comparative history’, Special Issue of *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26 (2009), 7–8.

his love of English literature. In addition to looking over each other's latest texts, Juliet and Jack read poetry to each other. His unique gravelly voice fell silent on 16 July 2015 in a Cambridge care home.

Conclusion

I have tried to provide a sketch of Jack Goody the human being as well as an indication of the significance of his work. In both respects, my effort is necessarily preliminary. He undoubtedly warrants a full biographical study. In one way or another, Jack Goody's gruff charisma touched just about everyone who came into contact with social anthropology in Cambridge in the second half of the twentieth century. Although I have identified a gradual shift of focus during the 1970s, his work has a high degree of unity. It was rigorously materialist, and at the same time holistic in its embracing of art, literature and science. While reaching out to the humanities, especially in his later books, Jack never abandoned the view that anthropology should contribute to a cumulative social science. Long before the advent of postmodernism made things much worse, he deplored the fact that many sociocultural anthropologists were forgetting their discipline's history and losing their way in 'soggy' jargon.

Jack was one of the last of the colonial ethnographers. His fieldwork was excellent and the touchstone for everything that followed. Ghana never ceased to matter (he visited for the last time with Juliet Mitchell in the new century). But Ghana and Africa were never enough. In terms of intellectual ambition, Jack Goody had more in common with predecessors such as James Frazer and 'Anarchy' Brown than with most of his contemporaries and successors in anthropology. His scholarship was also shaped by sociologists such as George Homans, whose aspiration to construct a science of human society he shared. If, in addition, such a social anthropologist can make connections with archaeologists like Gordon Childe and cultural historians of the calibre of Peter Burke, he is well qualified to transcend the conventional boundaries of his discipline—to lead the way in revising dominant European narratives, through comparative investigations of the social relations of Africa, Eurasia and the entire planet.

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Note: Goody was my PhD supervisor in Cambridge between 1975 and 1979. Everyone seemed to call him Jack, so I did too, from the beginning. He retired in the year that I was appointed to the staff of the Department and I was not particularly close to him personally; but we kept in touch over the years and he gave the keynote lecture at the first conference in the permanent buildings of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in December 2001. When he visited again in 2004 he delivered a more personal talk about the development of his thinking. I have a transcription and hope to publish it in due course, together with a collection of the Goody Lectures which we have organised in Halle every year since 2011: http://www.eth.mpg.de/3789573/Goody_Lectures.

Since his passing I have been made aware of the existence of a large number of boxes of field notes and research papers deposited at St John's College, Cambridge. The Special Collections Librarian will welcome enquiries. I have not probed into unpublished materials for this memoir. I thank Peter Brown, former Secretary of the British Academy, for supplying practical guidelines and a copy of a CV prepared by Goody himself. A tidier bibliography running to 2004 is provided at the end of D. R. Olson and M. Cole (eds.), *Technology, Literacy, and the Evolution of Society* (Mahwah, NJ, 2006), pp. 325–42. The most complete bibliography, maintained by Susan Mansfield until 2015, can be consulted at St John's College.

Jack Goody looked back on his life and work quite frequently. He paints a particularly harmonious picture of the Cambridge social anthropology department in its heyday in 'Towards a room with a view: a personal account of contributions to local knowledge, theory, and research in fieldwork and comparative studies', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 20 (1991), 1–23. Some personal detail can also be gleaned from his foray into disciplinary history (which includes wistful restatements of his philosophy of anthropology as a cumulative science, composed at a time when this was singularly unfashionable): J. Goody, *The Expansive Moment. Anthropology in Britain and Africa, 1918–1970* (Cambridge, 1995).

Jack would be the first to appreciate that elements of orality have intruded throughout this text. Numerous friends have helped me, either in person, or through informal communications in the latest digital media, or both. Special thanks to Ray Abrahams, Keith Hart, Gilbert Lewis and Alan Macfarlane for sharing their perceptions of a teacher and colleague; to Martine Segalen for the reception in France; and to Peter Burke, one of Jack's closest intellectual confidants from the 1980s onwards, who shares his determination to combat excessive specialisation in the humanities and social sciences, and to reunite these realms. I also wish to thank Jeremy Goody (Lokamitra), Esther Newcomb Goody, Mary Goody, Rachel Goody and Juliet Mitchell. The more information I received from family members, the clearer it became that, to cite the words of Ludwig Wittgenstein in a quite different context, 'whereof one cannot speak, thereof one should be silent'.

