those audience activities, briefly noted above, that currently threaten our received notions of what indeed constitutes the text for today's television audience.

Reviewed by: David Crowley
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**The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society**
Jack Goody

Anthropologist Jack Goody has written much that relates to the discipline of communication. *The Logic of Writing* follows a journey that began with *Literacy in Traditional Societies* and continued in *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. It would not surprise me, having myself been trained in anthropology, to discover that Goody's name is now as well known in communication studies as in anthropology. If not, it should be. His work is relevant, original, and aware of major sources from which many of us draw-Innis, McLuhan, Einstein, Levi-Strauss, and Foucault, for example.

As in his earlier works dealing with communication, Goody attempts to account for some of the differences in social organization and world view between nonliterate and literate societies. Special emphasis is placed on what happens to societies in transition from one "mode of communication" (a fundamental Goody concept) to the next. Examples are drawn from the ancient near East, and West Africa in more recent times, where Goody has done extensive fieldwork. A major aspect of his analysis is the way connections, often plausible but at times tenuous, are made between archeological interpretation and contemporary ethnographic research.

The opening chapter tackles the question of religion. What is at stake when "the word", in for example, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, is written rather than being confined to the oral mode? Can certain core features of these religions be linked to the mode of communication proselytizing them? Goody answers in the affirmative. When religions become literate, a holy book helps define an autonomous boundary. Only literate religions, he argues, can be religions of conversion, persuading or forcing people to subscribe to a bounded set of beliefs. Examples of how this operates, and where it cannot (in oral traditions) are given. The assessment includes a consideration of ritual, cognition, and the role of specialists in an emerging priestly bureaucracy.

Goody then turns his attention to the interplay between economics and the emergence of early writing systems. How does literacy affect the division of labor? What new technological possibilities can be related to script? In dealing with these questions, considerable emphasis is placed on bookkeeping and ultimately the emergence of money. Here the primary case study is Mesopotamia. Goody draws heavily from the work of Denise Schmandt-Besserat, whose hypothesis on the evolution of Mesopotamia writing from archaic clay tokens has been getting wide consideration.
He manages to integrate several of her revealing discoveries into a wider social organizational framework than she provides. He then applies his analysis to temple accounts, the development of taxation and a census, and the rise of mercantile systems.

Moving into the realm of political organization Goody’s debt to Max Weber on bureaucracy is clear. As Goody shows, bureaucracies not only control people, they control information as well. When they are part of a literate tradition, new forms of administrative procedure are developed. Is writing then essential for the emergence of the state? Goody refuses to claim as much. In his opinion, it is necessary for a certain kind of state, the bureaucratic one. Nonliterate African states are discussed and shown to be deficient in certain facets of administrative operation from those of the ancient Near East. An interesting challenge to these formulations would be the Incas, which are mentioned only in passing. They lacked writing, but using only the system of knotted cards for numerical tally known as the quipu, administered an Empire that stretched for 3100 miles.

The last major topic Goody deals with is law. It is here, I believe, where his argument linking early statecraft to writing is most successful. He notes how in nonliterate societies there is no effective distinction between law and custom. Writing changes this. Legislation and precedent become crucial, as juridical courts eventually separate from the royal, or chief’s court. This gives rise to contracts, testament, evidence, and registration of land title. In considering these developments Goody moves from prehistory and ethnology, to effectively consider the situation in medieval England.

Although Goody has sometimes been seen as a determinist, evidence of it in this book is wanting. Almost always he speaks of tendencies, not causes. True, he does argue that literacy gave rise to new forms of thought and social organization, but usually by making explicit what was implicit in oral cultures. For Goody, although there are crucial agents of social-historical transformation, there are no prime movers. Writing is one such agent. Yet, there are times when he overemphasizes it at the expense of considering other modes of communication. For example, in archaic New World civilizations, number systems, rather than script per se, were a key to state formation. Finally there is the problem of his own writing: a succession of rich thoughts with little concession to potential readers. Nevertheless, this book is a major contribution, and deserves serious consideration by many disciplines. Like the work of Innis and Foucault, Goody’s project addresses important and far reaching aspects of historical and cultural theory.

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