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THE HISTORY OF THE FAMILY IN AFRICA AND EUROPE: SOME COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES*

BY DAVID WARREN SABEAN

ONE of the problems with interdisciplinary work is that the outsider to a discipline so often tends to join its discourse at points which seem irrelevant to its practitioners. The experience is not unlike that of the foreign visitor who watches with amazement and not a little sadness as the 'natives' abandon those items of their culture which seem to him to be of most value. And the 'native' has only impatience for advice to slow down the pace of change.

African specialists on the history of the family seem to be entertaining a similar break with their past practices and present significant problems of orientation for the outside observer. The chief dissatisfaction appears to be with the legacy of the powerful generation of anthropologists who emerged in the 1930s and 1940s. They dealt with the organization of large corporate groups and interpreted action, belief and feeling in terms of a few principles derived from the structures of such groups.¹ It has become an everyday criticism that this great work suffers from its 'timelessness', and of course historians have a professional interest in reiterating the point. More serious is the fact that the older constructs no longer seem to assist in analysing either the new problems that excite the historian aware of what his colleagues elsewhere are doing or the actual findings of new research.

To the outside observer – in this case an historian of Europe, whose bedtime reading consists of ethnologies of Africa, Papua-New Guinea, and the like – a confrontation with current research on Africa helps focus issues and problems in his own work and suggests a few points where common discussion might be fruitful. The greatest resistance for him occurs where the tendency is most strongly nominalistic, i.e. where the analysis of lineage organization or class gives way to the notion of unbounded and unstructured networks.² The notion of the manipulative individual going from one

* My thanks to Richard Rathbone and Vanessa Maher for critical readings of the text.

¹ I am thinking here, of course, of such anthropologists as Meyer Fortes, Raymond Firth, and E. E. Evans-Pritchard. Their works are too well known to need citation, but there are a few texts that might usefully be recalled: Meyer Fortes, 'Malinowski and the study of kinship', in Raymond Firth (ed.), *Man and Culture* (London, 1957), 157–88; Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago, 1976), 4–18; J. A. Barnes, *Three Styles in the Study of Kinship* (Berkeley, 1972), ch. 3.

² Alan Macfarlane bases his interest in the computer and new forms of data on such notions as networks. In turn, he derives the usefulness of network analysis from a dissatisfaction with structures. See his 'History, anthropology and the study of communities', *Social History*, v (1977), 636–8. Variations in the text can be found in his *Reconstructing Historical Communities* (Cambridge, 1977), 17–22. Consult also his *Origins of English Individualism* (Oxford, 1978), 64 f., 127 f., 140. Among other authors that can be usefully consulted are: F. G. Bailey, *Stratagems and Spoils: a Social Anthropology of Politics* (New York, 1973); Jeremy Boissevain and J. Clyde Mitchell (eds.), *Network Analysis: Studies in Human Interaction* (Paris, 1973); Hildred Geertz, 'The Meaning of Family Ties', in Clifford Geertz *et al.*, *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society* (Cambridge, 1979), 315–79.

self-interested connexion to the next does not seem very helpful for analysing the regularities of culture, the commonalities of class, or the experiences of individuals in conflict over mutual expectations – in short the very processes of which history is composed.³ To the extent that the relationship of structure to strategy has become of central importance to both historians and anthropologists, an adequate handling of the issues needs all the more a firm analysis of the process of class and culture.⁴ The strength of the British school of social anthropology lies in the analysis of the rights, duties, claims and obligations which bound networks and structure relationships. Both conflict and exchange imply mediated relationships, whose dynamics are tied up closely with patterned expectations, property relations and power.⁵ A return to a reading, though critical, of the older literature along these lines would assist greatly in dealing with the new problems of the family and its role in productive relations, or individual choices in processes of historical transformation, or socialization to class and group values, or succession between generations who confront the realities of slavery, poverty or intergroup and state violence.⁶

The first problem in the re-evaluation of the history of the family in Africa is the fact that in many African societies there is no equivalent term to the English (and European) word 'family' at all.⁷ At the outset, then, the issue of comparative discussion is put into question. Interestingly enough, European historians also have found that in certain periods in the historical past the 'family' did not exist.⁸ The word in its current meaning is not very old. Most recently, historians have come to view the family rather loosely, pointing to a number of functions – reproduction, socialization, child-care, production – and a number of roles – wife, mother, father, cook, food producer, etc. – which may occur together or separately in different forms and groupings. It is not difficult to find examples where the 'family' does not seem to be of much analytical value. Take the situation of an illegitimate boy in an Austrian province living with his servant mother on an isolated farm together with twenty other servants hierarchically organized under the stern hand of the

³ A useful work to consult is Kate Young, Carol Wolkowitz and Roslyn McCullagh (eds.), *Of Marriage and the Market* (London, 1981).

⁴ See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, 'Les stratégies matrimoniales dans le système de reproduction', *Annales*, xxvii (1972), 1105–27. See also Bernard Vernier, 'Émigration et dérèglement du marché matrimonial', *Actes de la Recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 15 (June 1977), 31–58, and 'La circulation des biens, de la main d'œuvre et des prénoms à Karpathos: du bon usage des parents et de la parenté', *ibid.* no. 31 (January 1980), 63–92. See also the introduction to Robert Berdahl *et al.* (eds.), *Klassen und Kultur* (Frankfurt, 1982).

⁵ See the argument of Hans Medick and David Sabeau, 'Interest and emotion in family and kinship studies: a critique of social history and anthropology', in Hans Medick and David Sabeau (eds.), *Emotion and Material Interest in Family and Kinship* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

⁶ Among works worth consulting see Philip Mayer, (ed.), *Socialization: the Approach from Social Anthropology* (London, 1973) and Meyer Fortes, *Time and Social Structure and Other Essays* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1970).

⁷ See, for example, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage Among the Nuer* (Oxford, 1951), 3; Meyer Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi* (London, 1949), 44 ff.

⁸ Otto Brunner, 'Das "ganze Haus" und die alteuropäische "Ökonomik"', in his *Neue Wege der Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte* (second ed., Göttingen, 1968), 110–11.

peasant household head. How is he socialized to male values? Can one say that the functions which a father would perform in another context are missing or on the other hand are efficiently divided among several different males? The issues which arise from this kind of analysis point to some of the most exciting work currently being done in the history of the family. On the one hand, a central problem has become the relation between production and demographic reproduction.⁹ On the other, analysis of the implications of child care and socialization for kin-networks and class formation has brought some significant results.¹⁰

Some interest is being shown in African research in such concepts as the 'house', 'household' and 'homestead'.¹¹ Likewise, in a number of disciplines and from different academic traditions, a great deal of attention has been focused on the 'house' recently in European (and American) research. It might be useful to recall three aspects in this conjuncture in order to point to several problems with the notion.

The first 'tradition' is that of European ethnology or *Volkskunde*. Firmly rooted in the work of the nineteenth-century ethnographers, Le Play and Wilhelm Riehl, on the sociology of the family, ethnologists have examined the internal workings of the family in terms of an ongoing functional whole, the house, with its head, wife, children, servants, retired people, and so on.¹² The ideal is firmly rooted in research on the large peasant and noble household, where the dynamics of inheritance, the patriarchal power of the father/manager, and the honour of the collectivity form the central moments of interest. Class endogamy, reproduction of the line, and marriage practices centred on female endowment form a cluster emphasizing the 'house'.¹³ In addition, early theorizing about the state saw the house as the irreducible unit of the political order.¹⁴ In practical reality, the state seldom penetrated the house directly to question the patriarch's treatment of children. This sometimes goes so far as to preclude altogether official knowledge of the internal workings of the family. For example, in 8,000 court records taken from a South German village between 1730 and 1870, I have found no case of child abuse.¹⁵ Recent important historical ethnography by Karl Siegfried Kramer, centred on the German Franconian region, has shown how the house in the eighteenth century presented a closed door to the state. In fact the state rested its power on the delegation of authority to the household head. The

⁹ David Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* (New York, 1977).

¹⁰ Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (Oxford, 1977).

¹¹ For example, Esther Goody, *Contexts of Kinship: an Essay in the Family Sociology of the Gonja of Northern Ghana* (Cambridge, 1973), 254-78. See also Jack Goody, 'The evolution of the family', in Peter Laslett, assisted by Richard Wall (ed.), *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972), 103-24.

¹² W. H. Riehl, *Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Sozial-Politik*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1854); P. G. F. Le Play, *La Réforme sociale* (third ed., Paris, 1901).

¹³ See, e.g., Bourdieu, 'Stratégies'.

¹⁴ Brunner, 'Das "ganze Haus"'.
¹⁵ I am currently investigating the village of Neckarhausen in Württemberg. The evidence is taken from the protocols of the village court, the church consistory, and the regional court in the town of Nürtingen. A forthcoming book on kinship and family in Neckarhausen will present the evidence in detail.

most striking detail which emphasizes the house is the way crimes against it (i.e. the physical building) were punished. They were taken far more seriously than crimes against the person. Breaking a window carried a higher fine than breaking an arm.¹⁶

The second tradition emphasizes the autarky of the house as a unit of production/consumption. The economic arguments of Karl Bücher (incidentally read with great interest by anthropologists in the first thirty years of the twentieth century) have been taken up by Otto Brunner and by Karl Polanyi.¹⁷ The term of currency picked up from eighteenth-century writers by Brunner is 'das ganze Haus'.¹⁸ It emphasizes, in Hans Medick's phrase, 'the functional and organizational unity of production, generative reproduction and consumption within [its] social formation'.¹⁹ It is this functional dependence between production and demographic reproduction which lies at the basis of the arguments of Levine and Medick.²⁰ Brunner, and perhaps more centrally Medick, is also important for the reception of Chayanov in German historical work, particularly in the notions of self-exploitation by the proto-industrial producer, the sexual division of labour, and the schedule of expenditures.²¹ The work of Bourdieu on the French Pyrenean region also figures here. Strategies of inheritance and marriage follow the logic of the interest of the *ménage*, its inviolable continuity. Individual choice cannot be analysed apart from the household's centrality as a unit of production and the dynamics of its social reproduction. Bourdieu is useful reading for those who tend to break down structures into a myriad of personal choices.²²

The third concentration on the house or the 'household' comes from the direction of historical demography. This interest has links, of course, with the other two traditions. After all, Laslett's work was based on a questioning of *Le Play*.²³ His genius was to call a halt to the purely demographic research on 'families' well under way in France by asking about meaningful sociological units. In this, his association with the Cambridge anthropologists had fruitful results. If the 'household' has remained a unit largely abstracted from social process, it is because a central aspect of social anthropology was missing, namely the 'relational', and the notion of functional interdependence of particular aspects of household life, developed by Chayanov, Brunner and Bücher, was not taken up.²⁴

Certain critical points should be noted if one is going to take up the notion of 'house' instead of that of the 'family'. The concepts of '*Haus*', 'house',

¹⁶ See especially the discussion in Karl S. Kramer, *Volksleben im Hochstift Bamberg und im Fürstentum Coburg (1500-1800)* (Würzburg, 1967), 212-15.

¹⁷ Karl Buecher, *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft. Vorträge und Versuche* (seventh ed., Tübingen, 1910); Brunner, 'Das "ganze Haus"'; Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley, 1973); Karl Polanyi *et al.* (eds.), *Trade and Markets in the Early Empires* (Chicago, 1971).

¹⁸ Brunner, 'Das "ganze Haus"'.
¹⁹ Hans Medick, 'The proto-industrial family economy: the structural function of household and family during the transition from peasant society to industrial capitalism', *Social History*, 1 (1976), 291-315, at p. 297.

²⁰ Levine, *Family Formation*; Medick, 'Proto-industrial family'.

²¹ Brunner, 'Das "ganze Haus"'; Medick, 'Proto-industrial family'.

²² Bourdieu, 'Stratégies'.

²³ Peter Laslett, 'Introduction: the history of the family', in Laslett (ed.), *Household and Family*, 1-73.

²⁴ See the criticism in Medick, 'Proto-industrial family' and the notions of Jack Goody, 'Evolution'.

'household', 'ménage' are all related to the way dominating powers – the authorities, magistrates, lords, state – viewed the workings of the family. They were part of the system of domination, and this fact creates problems whenever we want to use the notion of 'house' analytically. For example, 'household' in the more purely demographic sense – the Laslett one – is derived from lists generated for tax purposes or for the poor-law settlement and so forth.²⁵ Their 'reality', their meaning, is hard to dissociate from the fact that lists served the interest of the tax collector, the ratepayer, the State, the Church and so on. They were generated in the peculiar contexts of surplus extraction which may not have existed in pre-colonial Africa in the same way.²⁶ Just as in Europe, any lists created by colonial authorities are 'frames' imposed on social reality from outside. If one does not subject them to radical query, family history becomes that of the household rather than of kinship.²⁷ It fails to deal with the relational aspects of family life – mutual claims and conflicts – and remains a statistical artefact. Along slightly different lines, Gutman's stress on kinship and mutual obligation is a thoroughgoing critique of a notion of the family or household as isolated and as fulfilling a set of ideal functions.²⁸ If one fails to grasp the difference, one is left with the history of the lower-class family as the history of a pathology – that is, if one is able to get beyond the purely statistical stage.

It might be useful to enlarge on two points in order to make the argument more precise. Recent research on the self-sufficiency of the peasant family in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany has shown that, given the amount of land available for cultivation by a 'house', it is clear that in no part of Germany was the independent, self-sufficient, autarkic household more than 40 per cent of the population.²⁹ Often the percentage was a good deal less. (This 60 per cent or more of the households does not involve people who were on year-round contracts as household servants.) The members of such households had to find work from others. Remuneration for male work or for female harvesters, for example, often involved the payment of a meal, which means that at least in part the household was not a unit of consumption. One or other adult member could be absent on seasonal employment, migratory labour, or begging. I have seen a man listed as *Bürger* of a village during two different periods when he had joined the army, the point being that the village was his 'tax home', place of refuge, and residence of his neglected wife.³⁰ Here the intimate relationship between ownership of land or house and state or landlord income *defined* the nature of the list.

²⁵ See Laslett (ed.), *Household and Family*.

²⁶ On the character of lists see Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1977), 74–128. Goody's distinction between plough and hoe cultures and the different modes of surplus extraction contains an implicit foundation for the point I am making here.

²⁷ See the remarks by Miranda Chaytor, 'Household and kinship: Ryton in the late 16th and early 17th centuries', *History Workshop*, no. 10 (Autumn, 1980), 25–60.

²⁸ Gutman, *Black Family*.

²⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Henning, 'Die Betriebsgrößenstruktur der mitteleuropäischen Landwirtschaft im 18. Jahrhundert und ihr Einfluß auf die ländlichen Einkommensverhältnisse', *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie*, xvii (1969), 171–93.

³⁰ Johann Georg Riempp is discussed in David Sabeau, 'Young bees in an empty hive: relations between brothers-in-law in a Württemberg village around 1800', in Medick and Sabeau, *Emotion and Material Interest*.

A second part of the element of state definition of house has to do with the nature of law codes. The research by Kramer and his associates on the house mentioned above is restricted to only one region.³¹ A contrasting study of court records of one Württemberg village between 1730 and 1870 shows that the house was simply never an issue.³² Injuries to persons were paramount, and roles in the house were seldom brought into play. Whatever way the state defined the house and its patriarchal structure, people in fact acted according to other categories. Personal honour was at stake, never the honour of the 'house'. In short, the state drew up its law codes through its own perception of its articulation with the household head. Whenever the state referred to the people of the village, it was concerned with such people as the *Hausväter*, i.e. the representatives it chose to deal with. But the villagers never used the word. Terms which emphasized reciprocal obligation and exchange were chosen. Still, one must recognize that the 'house' was introduced as part of the discourse between rulers and ruled and was not simply rejected by the dominated. It played a role in the formation of village ideology, and it is necessary to understand the way in which perception of the 'house' or 'family' was the outcome not just of the internal processes of production and reproduction but also those of domination. This perception also became a class-structured variable from time to time.

The notion of the 'house', with production and reproduction as functions of each other, also breaks down at certain moments as a matter of historical reality. In addition, the issue of the house has to be viewed from two sides, male and female, and one should ask if the notion of the house, producing and consuming together, is at certain times the outcome of male bias. An example is the issue of illegitimacy. David Levine and Keith Wrightson have analysed it in terms of failed marital expectations.³³ This may well do for certain periods and places, and in the village I am studying perhaps this is true for the early eighteenth century. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, single mothers there increasingly testified before the court that marriage was never discussed or intended.³⁴ Reproductive strategies during that period (1780–1840) were often *female* reproductive strategies and were not tied to family formation. The women may eventually have married the fathers of their children but often did not. They were increasingly apt to have more than one illegitimate child. Early care fell to the woman's parents, foster parents, or the village. A woman simply faced many years alone, yet began her reproductive activity at the standard age for bearing children.

There are even more complicated examples of the relationship of reproduction to the house. In the Pinzgau in Austria, over 80 per cent of the

³¹ Kramer, *Volksleben*.

³² This material will be discussed in my forthcoming book on kinship and family in Neckarhausen.

³³ David Levine and Keith Wrightson, 'The social context of illegitimacy in early modern England', in Peter Laslett *et al.* (eds.), *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (London, 1980), 158–76.

³⁴ David Sabeau, 'Unehelichkeit: Ein Aspekt sozialer Reproduktion kleinbäuerlicher Produzenten. Zu einer Analyse dörflicher Quellen um 1800', in Berdahl *et al.* (eds.), *Klassen und Kultur*, 54–76.

children born in the period were illegitimate.³⁵ This helps remind us that there is and was no single European family experience to contrast with the many African ones. There was a wide range of European kinship *systems*.

Along with the increasing tendency for single mothers to delay marriage or not marry at all, there was a significant rise in divorce, separation, or demands for separation in the village. In almost all cases, the *women* brought suit and asked the court to intervene. If they did not receive satisfaction, they walked out. Men almost always wanted the women to stay.³⁶ It is clear from all of the evidence that women felt that they had a better chance to make a living if they were not encumbered with husbands. Both the increasing inclination to have illegitimate children with no marriage in sight and to break up households which already existed are related to two factors. In production, particularly in agricultural production, women came to play an ever more important role.³⁷ (Agricultural intensification brought in its wake more hoeing and care of young animals – women's work.) There was also an increase in the numbers of the semi-proletarianized small producers, who were caught up in what Olwen Huften calls the 'economy of makeshift'.³⁸ Scratching together a living through a complex round of temporary labour, begging, stealing, gathering, and so forth called into question the 'house' as a productive and reproductive unit.

Medick's work on consumption and expenditure among proto-industrial producers raises important questions about male and female views of the household. He called attention to the pattern of conspicuous expenditure and lack of saving.³⁹ Radical changes in drinking culture are also to be found in the period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴⁰ The question that arises is how males and females viewed the production process and the use of earnings. If theory argues that proto-industrial production involved increasing degrees of self-exploitation, it does not tell whether the burden fell equally on the husband and the wife. In any event this kind of analysis raises questions for Africa about the differing perceptions of men and women of the exchanges which take place inside the family whether females produced and reproduced for a household economy or for some other end or whether their own strategies were more complex than we are used to thinking.

These reflexions prompt the following comments.

(1) A great deal of thought has to be given to the question of different ways of 'mapping' a society. Here it is not simply or even primarily a

³⁵ Michael Mitterauer, 'Familienformen und Illegitimität in ländlichen Gebieten Österreichs', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, xix (1979), 123–88.

³⁶ First thoughts on divorce in the village are contained in David Sabeau, 'Small peasant agriculture in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century: changing work patterns', *Peasant Studies*, vii (1978), 218–24. The matter will be handled at length in the book on kinship and family in Neckarhausen.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Olwen Huften, *The Poor of Eighteenth-century France, 1750–1789* (Oxford, 1974).

³⁹ Medick, 'Proto-industrial family'.

⁴⁰ Hans Medick, 'Plebejische Kultur, plebejische Öffentlichkeit, plebejische Ökonomie. Über Erfahrungen und Verhaltensweisen Besitzarmer und Besitzloser in der Übergangsphase zum Kapitalismus', in Robert Berdahl *et al.* (eds.), *Klassen und Kultur*, 157–204.

question of seeing through the 'mystification'. There is nothing unreal about domination, and mapping on both sides, from above and from below, is the outcome of a two-sided process. It is important to look at the way the categories/'non-categories' of the dominated reveal attempts at, or possibilities for, resistance. If the wives in the village I study refuse to use the word *Hausvater* but instead employ other compounds of *Hausen* ('I will not *hausen*' [live together, work together] with him'. 'He *haust* badly') such as *Haushalter/Haushälterin*, *Lumpenhauser* (male housekeeper/female housekeeper, trashy manager) they are defending an ideology of mutual exchange and implicitly denying the state ideology of patriarchy.

(2) Another issue is the dynamics of appropriation and the point of articulation of exchange/appropriation.⁴¹ It is not just a question of who carries on labour and when, although part of the issue might be to ask how the *routines* of labour are established and the degree of interference in them. It is important to know inside the family economy how much autonomy any one member has to set the pace of his labour. But the point here is to describe the product of labour and to ask what happens to it. An example is offered by the Stratherns for highland New Guinea, where women raise pigs which are in turn used by their husbands to exchange in a purely male political sphere.⁴² It is not so much a question of drawing up a balance sheet of reciprocities, but rather to analyse where inside the family/household transfers take place between men and women, young and old. A good deal in the history of the family can be clarified by analysing changes in the family dynamics of appropriation. This might be one way that the history of violence and coercion inside the family could be brought centrally into the consideration of the processes of change. It is also important to take up the problem of the way the household/family is caught within wider spheres of exploitation, which in turn operate on the internal dynamics of the household.

(3) The next point is to reappraise the question of the relationship of reproduction to production and to embed the question of generative reproduction in that of the social reproduction of class or lineage. The recent work on proto-industrialization has argued for a close relationship between the logic of household production and the particular logic of market and class relations and human reproduction.⁴³ The same kind of analysis can be done fruitfully for a settled, employed industrial proletariat or for the autonomous, self-sufficient agricultural producer. However, large areas of the non-Western world as well as long periods of Western history have worker/labourer situations where under-employment and 'scrambling' for a living is the issue, where a multiplicity of sources of income is necessary. 'Work' in the common way that we have defined it since the beginning of the nineteenth century in terms of steady occupations and careers may not be an applicable category in such situations.⁴⁴ Our categories of 'production' and 'reproduction' no longer suffice for such situations as those where teen-age

⁴¹ In contrast to the argument here, see the forthcoming book on gender by Ivan Illich.

⁴² See Marilyn Strathern, *Women in Between: Female Roles in a Male World, Mount Hagen, New Guinea* (London, 1972); Andrew Strathern, 'Work processes and social change in highland New Guinea', paper presented to the Anthropology and History Round Table I (Göttingen, 1978).

⁴³ Medick, 'Proto-industrial family' and Levine, *Family Formation*, for example.

⁴⁴ See Huften, *Poor of Eighteenth-century France*.

illegitimate girls give birth to a new generation of illegitimates. But beyond such difficulties, notions such as 'reproduction' tend often to focus attention on the structures of class and lineage without considering the different situations specific to gender: conflicts, domination, property ownership, expropriation, working process.⁴⁵

(4) A final point: relationships within the family are, by and large, mediated relationships. Sentiment and emotion and the factors of dependence, interest, and exploitation cannot be analysed separately.⁴⁶ Here is a point where the older school of social anthropology with its concepts of rights and obligations can be helpful. To some degree claims and duties are summed up in the property relations internal to the family. With marriage, certain rights are exchanged. The composition and management of the marital fund tells a great deal about the form of exchanges between family members. The challenge here is to begin to analyse the dynamics of property systematically and comparatively, to see in what way they give shape to the range of relationships.⁴⁷ In this it is important not to reify property but to see it as a relationship between individuals.⁴⁸ This should help analyse endemic conflict, the basis for help to the individual, the forces which throw people together, and the limits of attachment. A systematic approach here should help in the analysis of the rules of exchange, the patterns of negotiation, and the terms of disagreement – the way people bend and shape and redefine relationships between each other in common activity regarding things.

⁴⁵ For example, Vanessa Maher, *Women and Property in Morocco: Their Changing Relation to the Process of Social Stratification in the Middle Atlas* (Cambridge, 1974); Jack Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors* (Stanford, 1962); *idem*, *Production and Reproduction* (Cambridge, 1976); *idem*, 'Inheritance, property and women: some comparative considerations', in J. Goody *et al.* (eds.), *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200–1800* (Cambridge, 1976), 10–36; David Sabeau, 'Aspects of kinship behaviour and property in rural Western Europe before 1800', *ibid.* 96–111.

⁴⁶ See Medick and Sabeau, 'Interest and Emotion'.

⁴⁷ Medick and Sabeau, 'Interest and Emotion'.

⁴⁸ Jack Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors*.