



## The Theft of History

*Jack Goody*

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# The Theft of History

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## **The Theft of History** Jack Goody

Professor Jack Goody builds on his own previous work to extend further his highly influential critique of what he sees as the pervasive eurocentric or occidentalist biases of so much western historical writing. Goody also examines the consequent 'theft' by the West of the achievements of other cultures in the invention of (notably) democracy, capitalism, individualism, and love. *The Theft of History* discusses a number of theorists in detail, including Marx, Weber and Norbert Elias, and engages with critical admiration western historians like Fernand Braudel, Moses Finlay and Perry Anderson. Major questions of method are raised, and Goody proposes a new comparative methodology for cross-cultural analysis, one that gives a much more sophisticated basis for assessing divergent historical outcomes, and replaces outmoded simple differences between East and West. *The Theft of History* will be read by an unusually wide audience of historians, anthropologists and social theorists.

## **The Theft of History Details**

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Author : Jack Goody

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## Cem Yüksel says

Tarih yazmamın Avrupa-merkezci, hatta üstün Avrupa bakın? irdeleyen ve Batının icat etti?ini iddia etti?i y??nla kavram?n , Asya ve Do?u'daki paralel, benzer örnekleri ile bu tarih h?rs?zl??na meydan okuyan bir kitap. Jack Goody Rönesanslar kitab?nda da , Avrupa Rönesans?'n tek olmad??n? , Hint,Çin ,Arap, ?ran örnekleri ile gösteriyordu . Bu kitab?nda da Weber'den Marx'a genel kabul gören antik ç?dan feodalizme ve oradan kapitalizme gelen süreç tan?mlamas?n?, Marx?'n 'n ortaya koydu?u Asya ?stisnac?l??? yorumunu , paralel geli?imler ile kar?la?t?r?p , bunun Avrupa merkezli , amaca yönelik bir görü? oldu?unu savunuyor. Grek Roma kültür zincirinin k?r?l??? sonrası? karanl?k bir ç?a?a gömülen Avrupa'n?n benzer y?k?m? ya?amayan Çin ,Hint ve ?slam kültürlerinden h?zl? intihal ile ?talyan ?ehirlerinin kat?ld??? Akdeniz ticareti sayesinde , nas?l bilgi ile tekrar bulu?tu?unu anlat?yor. Özgürlük, demokrasi , bireycilik, hümanizma, sanat ,üniversite,kent kavram? ve hatta a?k?n icad?n? sahiplenilen Avrupa'n?n (romantik a?k?n 12.yy trubadurlar? ile ç?kt??n? savunan seçkin ortaça? tarihçilerinin oldu?unu görmek ilginç) , asl?nda bunlar?n ba?ka yerlerdeki örneklerini görmek yerine , kendini merkeze koymak amac? ile hareket etti?ini söylüyor. Kitab?n bir bölümünde bu akademik grubun önde gelenlerinden Needham, Elias ve Braudel'i ele?tiriyor. Tarihi , bilim,kültür ve medeniyetin geli?imini klasik ö?reti ile okuyanlar için okunmas? zaruri bir kitap. Özellikle di?er kitab? Rönesanslar ile birlikte ve özellikle kendini bir kültürün ezici bask?s? alt?nda hissedip , hamasi savunmalara s??nma ihtiyac? hissedeler için. Bununla ilgili kitab?n 'Çal?nan A?k ' bölümündeki kapan?? cümlesi güzel. :" A?k sözcü?ün gerçek anlam?yla , i?galci bir ordunun elindeyken herkesi fetheder " Bilgi da?arc??n?z? ba?ka fatihlerin de?il , kendi fetihlerinizin kontrolüne alman?z için okunmal?.

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## Malcolm says

This is quite simply astounding, but not perfect (but even so it will get 5/5). It is a rich and complex book with a sophisticated analysis and simple, direct argument. History has been stolen from the 'east' by Europe. Of course Goody does not mean this literally – that Europe has deprived the east of its past in any actual sense of depriving people of their existences. His point is summed up on the penultimate page – this is not so much a book about world history, he says, as about the way that European authors have perceived it.

He has two principal targets in his case: teleological history, as in histories that attempt to how and why Europe came to be, and Eurocentric history. He argues that our categories for understanding European history (Antiquity, feudalism, capitalism) and so forth have been generalised to the whole world in such a way they are then imposed on the rest of the world at the expense of the evidence, and then used to explain European exceptionalism (which we call, ironically, Asian exceptionalism). That is, the claimed distinctiveness of Europe is used in such a way that the only outcome can be a justification for the distinctiveness of Europe. Along the way, there are respectful but blistering critiques of Elias as stealing civilisation, Braudel (who finishes up getting off most lightly) as stealing capitalism, Needham as the thief of science.

Goody argues for a different view of world history as centred on the post-Bronze Age civilisations of the urban revolution's societies in west Asia (what we, and oddly he, still call the Near or Middle East – in our pervasive Eurocentrism). He demands we take a long view, and recognise the biases in our sources (for instance, our principal source for the claim that the ancient Greek city states invented democracy are the ancient Greek city states and the Romans who modelled their republic on Greek democracy – not similarly democratic Carthage, a rival for power in the Mediterranean basin).

Goody's breadth of scholarship is breath-taking, in his ability to discuss medieval Islamic humanism and its accompanying science, the migration of the invention of paper and the water wheel from China to Europe, and the iconoclasm (in its literal meaning) of the Abrahamic religions. It is quite hard going, but bear with it – it is a potent case and a compelling dissection of modern European historiography. Fabulous!

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### **!Tæmbu?u says**

KOBOBOOKS

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### **Dima Jai says**

Amazing.

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### **Mike Orszag says**

It is difficult to evaluate this book. The narrative is broad, covering history in all regions of the world and on topics ranging from love to politics. The overall thesis, though, that Western historians look at global history through a European lens and periodisation, is somewhat obvious. Chinese historians look at global history or even that of North and Inner Asia through the lens of Chinese history and its concepts. For while Goody is surely right that European historians have a Eurocentric bias in their focus and periodisation, he does not present alternative periodisations. The author is clearly widely read and I found the book fascinating -- but for someone so critical of history for being Eurocentric, almost all the sources are European. For Chinese history there is Elvin (I am not a fan of Elvin's work) and Needham rather than Chinese historians themselves.

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### **Alejandra says**

It's taken me about three months to read this book, and even if I found it slow at times, or too difficult to read on a daily basis, I did enjoy it. It could be better, because at times it feels like Goody dwells too much on some stuff and leaves other barely touched when I'd have liked to read more about it. He also assumes the reader knows about topics that he mentions but leaves unexplained, which greatly frustrated me.

However, it was an interesting read and I want to pitch some of these ideas to my students to see how they react or if we can start a discussion in class.

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### **B?kfeyes-Rákossy Zsombor says**

1-25 page

286-306 page

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### **Grof says**

A great and intuitive book that confronts a lot of the Eurocentristic ideas that historians tend to go with and completely disregard many other, much more role defining historical circles/non-European civilizations that actually helped to contribute to the development of the very same civilization they research on. Goody has his own problems and I tend to catch up easily with the criticisms he received when writing this book. Some examples would be nondefined or not well explained enough processes that he compares with lack of consistency; also he puts emphasis too much on some really nondefining historical events. But nevertheless, it's an eyeopener worthy of the time to read it.

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### **Namik Kasumov says**

The author was right under 100 years old when he wrote the book, but you would have never guessed unless I told you. I wish I have such a lucid mind at that age.

It is translated into many languages (I read it in French). If the volume is too thick for you, but you are still interested in how and why Europeans distort/-ed the history of the world, I suggest you read the last chapter, then the last but one and so on until you got what you wanted.

The main thesis (distortion of history) is correct beyond doubt, but the ideas are too much revolutionary... Which historian would write such subversive ideas? How can he publish it? How can he be sure there is market for such a book?

All three questions resolve if you are a 100-year old well-established historian. In that case, you do not care about anything but truth.

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### **Zachary Moore says**

Goody's book provides a solid corrective to some of the more egregious aspects of eurocentric history, largely by focusing on a historiography of different "unique" aspects of European history for which he can present evidence of similar trends existing elsewhere. The book could possibly have been better had the author been more thorough in some places as parts of the work seem a bit rushed.

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