

At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on November 1, 2022, the following tribute to the life and service of the late Sally Falk Moore was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.

SALLY FALK MOORE

BORN: January 18, 1924

DIED: May 2, 2021

The first woman tenured in social anthropology and appointed Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard, Sally Falk Moore, a pioneer of legal anthropology, was an intellectual, administrative, and pedagogical pragmatist. Daughter of a surgeon father and an artist mother in New York, she translated her cosmopolitan upbringing, her childhood schooling at the interactionist Lincoln School of Columbia University's Teachers College, and her early professional experience in law into a distinctive treatment of legality as always embedded in, and shaped by, social reality.

As a student at Barnard College, which she entered at age 15, Moore rebelliously mobilized students and some faculty to transform its stilted pedagogy (although, she ruefully recalled, to little effect). She graduated in three years and then, at Columbia Law School, was one of the few women in her class and the youngest student. At age 21, she became an associate attorney in a Wall Street firm but soon thereafter seized the opportunity to escape that uninspiring environment by joining a group of young lawyers serving as prosecutors in the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals. That brief (six-month) engagement proved formative of her intellectual vision. Tasked with investigating a company that produced chemicals used by the Nazis to carry out their genocidal policies but frustrated by her German assistants' willful obstruction of her investigation, she gained deep insight into political conflict and its management; the legal effects of larger economic, social, and political processes; and the assessment of guilt and responsibility.

Back home and hoping to work at the United Nations, Moore pursued her interests in political conflict and the messy processes of conflict resolution, this time on an international stage. Keen to understand the role of culture, she entered Columbia's Department of Anthropology, the premier U.S. anthropology department at the time. Unlike her male fellow students, she faced family pressure to avoid the dangers and discomforts of fieldwork and wrote a library-based thesis on power and property in Inca Peru; defended in 1957, the thesis, which won the Ansley Prize, became her first book the following year.

Moore began her teaching career at the University of Southern California (1963–1977). As American anthropologists were then doing little work in legal anthropology, which remained her passion, she took a sabbatical to join Max Gluckman at the University of Manchester in England. British anthropology's emphasis on practice rather than culture attracted her and tallied more closely with her processual view of law—a perspective explicated in her first, and highly influential, theoretical treatment of legal matters (*Law as Process*, 1978). Critical of Gluckman's failure to account for the impact of colonial management on so-called “native” law courts, she sought the opportunity to do an ethnography of indigenous law and found it among the Chagga people on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in what is now Tanzania. Her *Social Facts and Fabrications: “Customary” Law on Kilimanjaro, 1880–1980* (1986) proved a methodologically innovative game-changer. Locating the indigenous legal system in its broader historical context, she showed how “customary” law—which much of legal anthropology had treated as ahistorical—developed as a complex and changing fusion of vernacular practice, colonial rule, and Tanzania's engagement with African socialism. Empirically rich, the study not only historicized African indigenous law and tackled the impact of colonialism but also pioneered a “processual approach” to legal anthropology consonant with other realist positions in legal theory. Her work thus enlarged the conceptual repertoire of legal anthropology, making her one of the most important figures in the field, while her coinage of “diagnostic events” proved highly durable. She simultaneously revitalized the links between social anthropology and her chosen ethnographic area, as she demonstrated in *Anthropology and Africa* (1994). At Harvard, her post-retirement appointment at the Law School attests to her work's significance for legal scholarship.

Moore's leadership in anthropology, moreover, led to her election as president of two influential academic bodies, the American Ethnological Society and the Association for Political and Legal Anthropology. Among her significant honors were the 1999 Huxley Memorial Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Kalven Prize of the Law and Society Association. She delivered numerous important named lectures, including the Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures at the University of Rochester (1981, subsequently published as *Social Facts and Fabrications*) and the Charles Homer Haskins Prize Lecture of the American Council of Learned Societies (2018).

Moore has left a lasting legacy at Harvard, where she formally joined the Faculty in 1981, after stints at Yale (1975–1976) and UCLA (1977–1981) and a brief visiting position at Harvard in 1978. Quickly recruited to the Standing Committee on Women, she resigned from that position when her appointment as Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1985, a position she held for four years, promised to become all-consuming. While dean, she was unable to curb some perennial problems (such as the difficulty of finding sufficient funding for teaching fellows) but undertook important administrative reforms. She and her husband, Cresap Moore, also served as Master and Co-Master of Dunster House but resigned in 1989—to the reported consternation of student residents—in part to allow Sally to return to fieldwork while Cresap planned historical research in England. Her passion for

empirical field research, frustrated in her doctoral phase and again deferred by her decanal responsibilities, continued through research trips until she was well into her eighties (and on at least one occasion at considerable risk to her life from a rare tropical disease).

A strong supporter of recruiting excellent women faculty to Harvard, Moore remained uncompromising in her insistence, with students as much as with colleagues, that gender would not be a sufficient basis for professional recognition. Occasionally scathing where she sensed shirking or irresponsibility, she remained a compassionate pragmatist in dealing with ordinary human foibles and genuine adversity and offered shelter and generous counsel without necessarily expecting to see it followed. She brought exacting but realistic standards of humanity to her scholarship and her daily interactions alike.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jean Comaroff
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