M. I. Finley (1912–1986) was the most famous ancient historian of his generation. He was admired by his peers (Professor of Ancient History at the University of Cambridge, Fellow of the British Academy), his unmistakable voice was familiar to tens of thousands of radio listeners, his polemical reviews and other journalism were found all over the broadsheets and weeklies, and his scholarly as well as his popular works sold in very large numbers as Penguin paperbacks. Yet this was also a man dismissed from his job at Rutgers University when he refused to answer the question of whether he was or had ever been a member of the Communist Party. This pioneering volume assesses Finley’s achievements and analyses the nature of the impact of this charismatic individual and the means by which he changed the world of Ancient History.

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M. I. FINLEY
An Ancient Historian and his Impact

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PREFACE

The papers in this volume derive from a conference held in the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge during 29–31 May 2012. This was one of several events held in the USA, UK and France to mark the centenary of the birth of Moses Finley (see Harris 2013, Naiden and Talbert 2014 and the nine papers forming a section on ‘Moses I. Finley et sa réception en France’ in Anabases 19 (2014) 11–129). Distinctively, the Cambridge conference set out not simply to remember and to celebrate Finley but to assess his impact. The conference was certainly rich in memories of Finley, and we hope that this volume too does something to recall the man to mind for those who knew him, and to conjure up something of his qualities for those who did not. But it is interested above all in the lasting impact that Finley has made on the field, and what about the man and his work achieved that impact.

For the success of the conference, we are grateful to the Faculty of Classics, whose Laurence Fund paid for the conference, and to Darwin College, which mounted an exhibition in conjunction with the conference and hosted the conference dinner. We are grateful to the readers for Cambridge University Press and the editors of Cambridge Classical Studies for their advice on turning the conference papers into a book.
Preface

Fig. 1 Photograph of Moses and Mary Finley.
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FIG. 2 Photograph of Sir Moses Finley.
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Fig. 3 Portrait of Sir Moses Finley as Master of Darwin College by Michael Noakes.