Africa as a Success Story*

Soeren J. Henn† **James A. Robinson**‡

October 22, 2024

Abstract: We argue that pre-modern African institutions, including economic ones, were organized mostly to stop political centralization emerging. In this they were *successful*, since in 1880 there were probably 20,000 independent polities in Africa. This plausibly had negative economic effects since African societies were not organized to maximize economic growth, but other perfectly rational objectives. Moreover, the small political scale and nature of economic institutions made Africa very vulnerable to exploitation as a consequence of European commercial and colonial expansion. This created a series of path dependent events—such as the slave trade and colonialism, which have impoverished and destabilized the continent.

Keywords: Political centralization, state formation, economic institutions, international relations

JEL Classifications: D7, N47, O55, P5

*We thank Vicky Wang for her outstanding research assistance and for many ideas and suggestions. We are grateful to Jean-Paul Carvalho, Chima Korieh, Salikoko Mufwene, Francis Njoku, Chidi Ugwu and Noam Yuchtman and participants at the Arthur Lewis Lab Conference at Manchester and the political economy seminar at Oxford for very helpful discussions.

†Newcastle University Business School, 5 Barrack Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4SE, England. Email: soeren.henn@newcastle.ac.uk.

‡University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy and Department of Political Science, and Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria at Nsukka, 1307 E 60th St, Chicago, IL 60637; Email: jamesrobinson@uchicago.edu.

1 Introduction: Decentering the Great Divergence

Discussions of economic development in the past decades have been singularly focused on explaining what Pomeranz (2000) called the "Great Divergence". This phenomenon was initiated by the "Rise of the Western World" (North and Thomas, 1973) which began with the British industrial revolution of the 18th century. The fruits of this revolution spread to some parts of the world and not others creating the huge levels of inequality we see today (Acemoglu et al. (2002);Bourguignon and Morrisson (2002)).

It is well known that Africa was stuck on the bottom rung of the Great Divergence and many scholars have attempted to document why this might have been (Esterly and Levine, 1997; Acemoglu et al., 2001; Alsan, 2015). But in this essay we argue that this research has created a distorted perspective on African development. The main reason for this is that it presupposes that African societies were trying to achieve the same thing that Western societies were—sustained economic development—they just failed to do it. We propose, on the contrary, that the objectives of African societies were different, in particular they were focused much more on preserving the small scale nature of political society, or as Vansina (1990, 119) put it, safeguarding "the internal autonomy of each community". Indeed, Vansina concludes that "the ability to refuse centralization while maintaining the necessary cohesion among a myriad of autonomous communities has been the most original contribution of western Bantu tradition to the institutional history of the world" (Vansina, 1990, 237).

In this paper we document for the first time that Africans achieved what they set out to do—to keep the scale of political society small. Africa was not a failure, it was a *success*. In section 2 we provide what is to our knowledge the first attempt to calculate the number of *polities* in Africa at the time of the scramble for Africa. This number is distinct from the number of ethnic groups in Africa, since most of these were not politically unified. Though there is a great deal of uncertainty about this exact number, we find that there were around 20,000 independent polities in 1880.

In section 3 we discuss why Africans were so concerned to avoid political centralization. In section 4 we document some of the many different institutions and mechanisms that Africans innovated that made it hard to centralize power. This discussion makes salient an additional new fact about Africa—the extent to which many polities were able to co-exist in a relatively peaceful way, a sharp distinction to Eurasia. In section 5 we document this fact and argue that this was because the same forces that led to the decentralized structure of polities created a system of international relations which favored mutual respect and co-existence. To bolster

this argument in section 6 we present novel linguistic data on the fact that in a large number of African languages the words for stranger and guest are identical. We argue that this fact reflects the underlying equilibrium of co-existence and the acceptance of outsiders and foreigners. An important part of the mechanisms which helped stabilize these politically decentralized societies were economic. Indeed, in section 7 we argue that economic institutions were subordinated to the political objectives of societies. This plausibly was one of the reasons why at the start of the Great Divergence, African development levels were systematically lower and technologies less productive (Austen and Headrick, 1983), than elsewhere in the world. More important for explaining the subsequent divergence, however, was the way in which the structure of African institutions, perfectly rational given the collective objectives, made Africa highly vulnerable to external developments which we discuss in section 8. This led in particular to the slave trade and colonialism, all of which now have well documented adverse consequences (Nunn, 2008; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011; Lowes and Montero, 2021a).

2 Number of Polities in Pre-Colonial Africa

In Table 1 we estimate the number of polities in Africa in 1880. We begin with the list of ethnic groups compiled in Murdock (1967) and mapped and digitized by Nunn and Wantchekon (2011).

The data contains 487 groups that are distributed across five values of variable 33 in the Ethnographic Atlas, "Jurisdictional hierarchy beyond local community," as can be seen in Column (1).

Column (2) uses historical population density from HYDE (Historical Database of the Global Environment) project (Klein Goldewijk et al., 2017) to calculate the 1880 population that lived in each category of jurisdictional hierarchy as presented in Henn and Robinson (2023).

We then combine this information with ethnographic evidence of the average population per polity type (Column 3) to estimate the number of polities in 1880 (Column 4).

For categories 3 and 4 of jurisdictional hierarchy it is straightforward to estimate the number of polities. In these cases groups were organized into states or complex states and we are assuming that this means that an ethnic group was organized into one polity. Since there were 45 ethnic groups organized in states and four in complex states we obtain a total of 49 polities for these groups.

For groups falling under category 2, larger chiefdoms, we make use of early ethnographic accounts of such groups to obtain the average size of these chiefdoms. Table A1 in the Appendix provides an overview of the data from 10 ethnic groups and their corresponding chiefdom sizes.

For example, Yusuf (1974, p.206) writes about the Hausa:

> Famous among these are the traditional Seven City-States (Hausa Bakwai), each of which may have contained well above 50,000 inhabitants at the peak of its fame. [...] When Barth visited Katsina in 1851, he estimated that the town "must certainly have had a population of at least 100,000 souls" (Kirk-Greene 1962 : 93-94).

In the 19th century, Clapperton and Barth placed the size of Kano between 50,000 to 60,000 ((Barth, 1962, pp.93-94). In other cases the information available is quite imprecise, for example, in the case of the Sukuma, for which De Bruijn et al. (2001, p.33) states: "In the late 1800s, prior to the arrival of German forces, the people today known as Sukuma lived in a number of chiefdom states varying in size from fewer than 2,000 to as many as 90,000 people." By the time chiefdoms were abolished in the 1960s, the Sukuma numbered 1.25m people in 50 chiefdoms which would suggest an average size of 25,000 (Bukurura, 1995). Some groups had considerably lower population per chiefdom with the Bamileke, Ndembu, and Luapula all having an average size around 4,000.

Putting this evidence together we assume large chiefdoms to comprise on average about 22,500 (between the mean and median of the groups we found information for). With a population of 22 million people in 1880 living in large chiefdoms, this corresponds to 983 polities. Note that these ethnographic accounts are typically from the early twentieth century. Due to population growth between 1880 and the time of recording, the population size per polity is likely to be an upper bound leading the number of polities we obtain to be a lower bound.

We then turn to category 1, small chiefdoms, and again look at ethnographic evidence. A summary is presented in Table A5 in the Appendix. The range of the size of small chiefdoms is smaller than for large chiefdoms. For example, the Western Dinka have "tribes" ranging "from less than 1,000 to up to 25,000 members" (Lienhardt, 1958, p.102) while for the Ancholi, Atkinson (1994, pp.275–282) counts 64 chiefdoms and estimates a 1900 population of 125,000 which means 1,953 population per chiefdom. We use an average population of 7,000 per small chiefdom and obtain 2,927 polities.

For category "0" there is no jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local community. In other words, every village is its own polity. The Ethnographic Atlas has a question (v31) about the mean size of local communities, however it is missing for most groups that report no jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local community. Table A7 in the appendix presents the non-missing data for groups in category 0 of jurisdictional hierarchy. We use the small subset of communities for which there is data to interpolate an average community size. Using the mid-point in each

category (i.e., 25, 75, 150, 300, 700, 2,500, and 27,500) we get an average size of 1,730 and a median of 300. We use 1,000 as a estimate for community size (this is probably an overestimate since we would assume more missingness among smaller communities). Using this value we estimate the number of village polities in groups with no jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local community as 9,076.

Lastly, we can now make assumptions about the groups with missing categories. This is the largest category with 388 groups and an estimated population of 33.5m.[1] If jurisdictional hierarchy is distributed the same way as in the rest of the groups and we use the same assumptions than there are on average 6,000 population per polity (this is probably an overestimate since we would assume more missingness among non-states). This would yield an additional 5,589 polities.

Table 1: Estimating the Number of Polities in Africa in 1880

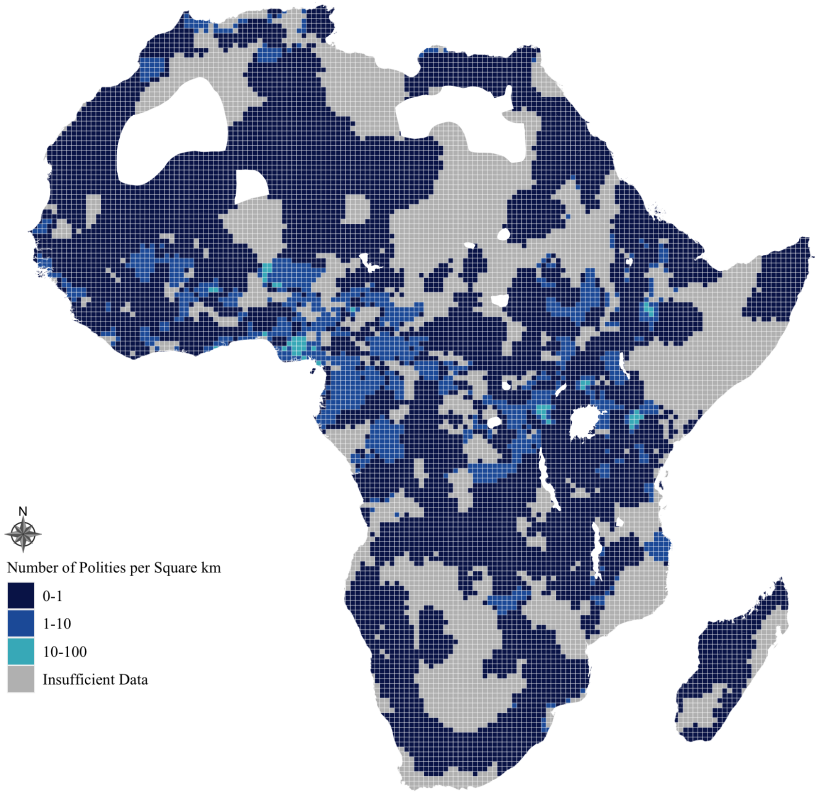
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Number of levels beyond local community	Type of polity	Number of groups	Population 1880	Population per polity	Number of polities
Missing data	Unknown	388	33,532,528	6,000*	5,589
None	Village	114	9,075,557	1,000	9,076
One	Small Chiefdom	173	20,489,696	7,000	2,927
Two	Larger Chiefdom	101	22,109,596	25,000	983
Three	State	45	21,521,027	500,000	45
Four	Complex State	4	3,784,628	1,000,000	4
All		825	110,513,032	6,000	18,623

Notes: This table estimates the total number of polities in Africa circa 1880. It does so by separately estimating the number of polities for societies with different levels of jurisdictional hierarchies as compiled by Murdock (1967) (Column 1). We overlay population density estimates from (Klein Goldewijk et al., 2017) to estimate the 1880 population in each category (Column 2). Next, we use ethnographic and anthropological sources, summarized in Section A, to estimate the population per type of polity (Column 3). Finally we divide the population by the population per polity to obtain a number of polities (Column 4).

In Figure 1 we combine the basic Ethnographic Map with our calculations of the number of polities associated with different ethnic groups to calculate for different parts of Africa the number of polities per square kilometer. This gives a sense of the variation. Light blue gives the highest density which occurs in southeastern Nigeria and around Lake Victoria in East Africa. Darker blue is less dense and such polities occur in a broad swathe across western and central Africa.

[1]Note that this number is higher than in Henn and Robinson (2023) as we are now including groups with missing data.

Figure 1: Number of Polities Across Africa



Notes: This figure maps the density of polities across Africa.

3 The Objectives Pre-Colonial African Societies

African polities likely stayed small for several different reasons some of which have been discussed in the literature.[2] Here we advance a different argument based on an overwhelming amount of ethnographic and historical evidence on the distinctiveness and rationale behind African institutions. In particular, a central way to provide microfoundations for the emphasis of Vansina (1990) on the preservation of the autonomy of the community is to note that "communalism" is a "core value" (Gyekye, 1987, p.43) in Africa. Kwame Gyekye notes "Communalism insists that the good of all determines the good of each or, put differently, the welfare of each is dependent on the welfare of all" (Gyekye, 1987, p.156). Perhaps the most famous articulation of this is in terms of *Ubuntu*—"I am because we are" (Ogude, 2018, p.1). The Belgian cleric Placide Tempels, whose 1945 book *Bantu Philosophy* was the first systematic exposition by a

[2]For example the relative abundance of land, see Goody (1971), Hopkins (1973), Herbst (2000), Austin (2008), and see Fenske (2013) and Osafo-Kwaako and Robinson (2013) for empirical problems with this view.

westerner of African philosophical ideas, grounded these values in metaphysics, arguing that the African (or the Bantu as he put it) has "an ontological duty to preserve the clan." Ontology is a branch of metaphysics which concerns itself with "what there is" and with peoples' conceptions about reality. Tempels argued that Africans have "a duty towards that force which is superior to them"—the community as institutionalized in the clan conceived of as a collection of extended kinship groups or lineages. He concludes "It is consequently impossible for them to will the destruction of the clan" (Tempels, 1959, pp.152–153). This feature is frequently noted. For example, in his study of why the Tiv peoples of Nigeria remained acephalous and lacked political hierarchy, Paul Bohannan noted that their goal was to preserve their "greater political institutions" which were "based on the lineage system and a principle of egalitarianism" (Bohannan, 1958, p.11). It also appears frequently in aphorisms and sayings. Amongst the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria, who were divided into around 200 different polities in 1880 (Forde and Jones, 1950) one saying is "Igbo enwe Eze"—"the Igbo have no King" or as Henderson (1972) has it, there is a "king in every man" (and a "queen in every woman").

What could threaten or destroy the community or clan? Clearly the creation of political hierarchy and states.

4 Mechanisms for Preserving Autonomy

Africans innovated a plethora of mechanisms to preserve the autonomy of the community. In the case of the Tiv, for example "Men who had acquired too much power ... were whittled down by means of witchcraft accusations" (Bohannan, 1958, p.11). The key concept here is *tsav* which means power, particularly power to influence other people. *Tsav* can be natural, but it can also be acquired illicitly through witchcraft and it was suspicion of this that led to accusations. This system of beliefs stopped political hierarchy emerging in Tiv society.

Many institutional mechanisms were also devised. The Igbo, for example, were governed by councils whose membership was composed of the lineage groups that made up a polity (Afigbo, 2005). Moreover, villages were typically divided into two halves which were in "balanced opposition" to each other. Margaret Green noted in her study how "The working village affairs was considerably bound up with the system of checks and balances and of institutionalized rivalry introduced by this dualism" (Green, 1947, p.16). Meek noted that "the dichotomy of the group is due to political rather than kinship causes" and "the Ibo find that a dual organization is a natural condition of society and an aid to its control" (Meek, 1937, p.94).

In East Africa the scale of political society was kept small by the use of age sets and age

grades as governing institutions. In a society like the Maasai, for instance, power was allocated according to age. Power was held by the most senior elders, but they inevitably passed away and were replaced by a new age set. As Bernardi put it "Age Class systems are unique, for not only do they regulate the attainment of individual maturity and autonomy, but they regulate the distribution and rotation of all forms of power" (Bernardi, 1985, p.9). He says of the Maasai that "their age class system shows how the distributive nature of the system is assured against possible individual attempts at personal power" (Bernardi, 1985, p.9). Elsewhere he notes that these systems made sure that "no clan and no class, or no party, [can] stay in the limelight too long" (p.107) and that "it is likely that the succession of classes to power served as a check impeding the formation of a centralized state" (p.107).

Of course states did form, though it is worth emphasizing that Table 1 implies that in 1880 only around 20% of Africans lived in states. When they did, however, they mostly took hybrid forms which could guarantee the preservation of the autonomy of the community. The most famous instance is the so called "segmentary state" studied by Southall. He investigated how a group of stateless and kinship based societies in the eastern Congo invited a more centralized people, the Alur, to come and rule them as kings. This solved some basic problems, particularly dispute resolution, but it did so in a system where there were "limited jurisdictions" (Southall, 1953, p.234). In particular the Alur kings had no claims to land, no rights to taxation and no monopoly of violence and thus little ability to threaten the community.

This pattern is extremely common. The construction of the pre-colonial Rwandan state, the Nyiginya kingdom, actually named after a clan, has been documented by Newbury (1992a). As with the Alur state, the Nyiginya kingdom expanded by integrating different localized kinship groups into its structures by appointing Nyiginya chiefs ontop of them. David Newbury titles his related book "Kings and Clans" Newbury (1992b), note "and" not "or". The type of state that emerged was not a canonical Weberian state which replaced patrimonial authority with bureaucratic-legal authority. For example, in Rwanda there "was no central administration in the country except for the ritualists. The administrative structure of the realm was formed only by the conscription of the whole population into armies, on the one hand, and by the chains of patron-client relations whose supreme patron was the king, on the other" (Vansina, 2005, p.95). Vansina concludes, comparing the Rwandan state to a European ideal "Not a typical centralized government this one" (Vansina, 2005, p.123). These segmentary states where outsiders came to rule, are examples of "stranger kings" Graeber and Sahlins (2017) and a species of "divine kingship" of which there are many in Africa even amongst the most apparently centralized

polities such as Asante (Busia, 1951) or the Kuba Kingdom ((Vansina, 1978); (Lowes et al., 2017)). The important point here is that these were systems where the executive was intrinsically weak and did not govern or challenge the basic structure or values of the community though of course there were always risks involved in creating more centralized systems.

These incentives, values and mechanisms are, we argue, a primary reason why Africa was divided into 20,000 polities in 1880.

5 Conflict Among Polities

Not only did African societies have strong internal mechanisms to ensure polities remained small scale, they also developed mechanisms to navigate conflict across societies. Small polities are inherently vulnerable to predation and absorption by larger ones. There would be little point ensuring domestic authority remains constrained to be then at the mercy of foreign authorities. In addition, warfare might create incentives to pursue centralization and state formation (Tilly, 1990; Besley and Persson, 2010) in itself. For African polities to be able to remain small and numerous, they must have been able to avoid large scale warfare or conflict must have been motivated by other goals than gaining territory.

Evidence on inter-polity conflict in Africa prior to colonialism is sparse. One of the only systematic tabulations of conflict events across the world has been compiled by Brecke (1999) which has been used to study African conflict (Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2014; Dincecco et al., 2019). In Figure 2 we use this data to plot conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa, removing conflict between African and European polities, from 1400 to 1800 and compare it to conflict in Europe and Asia. It reveals a stark difference between conflict incidence in Sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of the world with Africa exhibiting considerably lower conflict until the end of the 18th century.[3]

How did African polities avoid frequent conflict? We argue that the same forces that led to the decentralized structure of polities created a system of international relations which favored mutual respect and co-existence. These are manifested in the Igbo morning prayer that believers of the Igbo religion were meant to recite every day. The prayer finishes: "Let the kite perch, and let the eagle perch, Whichever says that the other must not perch, let its wing break off" (Arinze, 1970, pp.26–27). This is a vision of mutual respect and co-existence: the kite has its place, the eagle has its different place and if someone tries to disrupt this, let its wing break off!

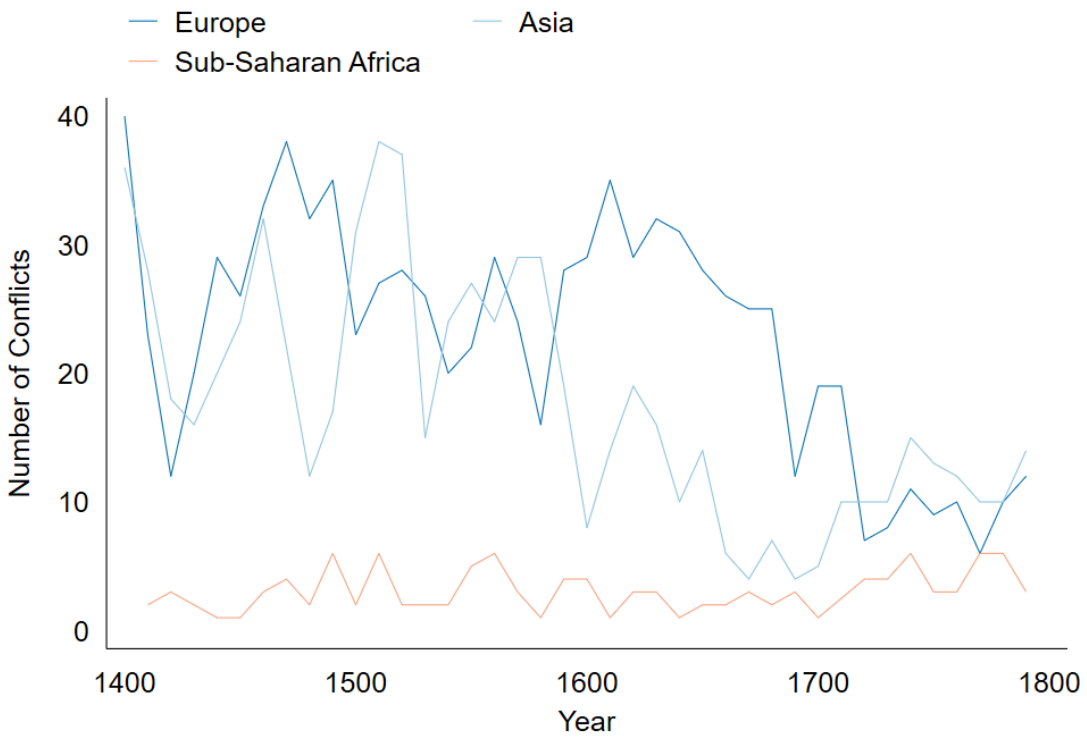
Furthermore, when conflict arose between polities, it was typically not about gaining territory

[3]This data source has its limitations and coverage is certainly worse for societies without written records. To our knowledge it is the best source of precolonial conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa.

and subjugating the other polity as was common in Eurasian conflicts. For example, Smith (1976, p.30) finds that "in West Africa territorial aggrandizement was by no means the necessary or normal sequel to victory in . . . wars." Thus, while other issues may have sparked conflict between African polities, warfare did not by and large change the configuration of polities and did not lead to the emergence of larger states. While notable examples exists, such as the Asante, the Nyiginya kingdom, and the Zulu state in the 19th century, overall the evidence suggests that historical warfare in Africa did not have the same centralizing effects as in the rest of the world (Dincecco et al., 2019).

These facts have been observed by several scholars of Africa but never studied systematically. Diop for examples notes how in a conflict "the annexation of a city or a neighboring territory was unthinkable" attributing it to the decentralized nature of African religion since "one could not govern a conquered city because one was a foreigner in the eyes of its gods" (Diop, 1987, p.22). Turnbull (1976).

Figure 2: Conflict Over Time



Notes: This figure plots conflict across in Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and Asia from 1400 to 1800 as documented by Brecke (1999). Conflict between African and European polities is removed from the Africa category.

6 Stranger-Guest

This culture of mutual respect and co-existence goes beyond reduced conflict, but also leads to an acceptance of outsiders and an openness to "others" (Henn and Robinson, 2023). Language can be an useful indicator of cultural tendencies (CITE). Fourshey et al. (2018) point to a telling feature of many African languages: they use the same word for a "guest" and a "stranger." We provide the first systematic evidence of this fact.

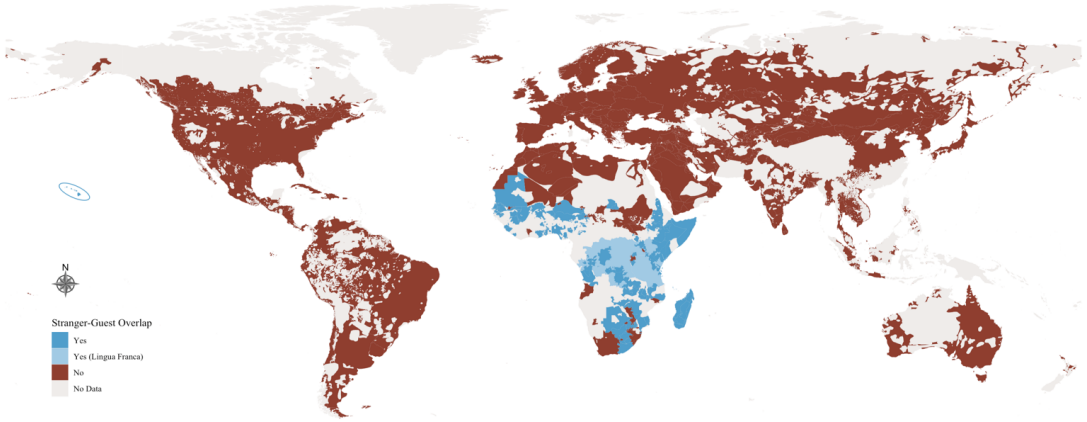
Using dictionaries and GoogleTranslate, we establish whether languages around the world have one word that can be used to mean "guest" and "stranger."[4] We collected information on 144 languages outside of Africa and 114 African languages, covering at least one language in all but three countries in Africa. Figures 3 and 4 plot the resulting variation. Figure 3 maps all languages for which we have data across the world. Across all languages 93 out of 258 languages or 36% uses the same word for "guest" and "stranger". However, there is a stark difference between Africa and the rest of the world. Outside of Africa, only one language, Hawaiian, uses the same word for the two concepts. Figure 4 zooms in on the African continent. In Africa, 92 out of 114 (82%) languages for which we were able to find dictionaries use the same word.

In Africa our data covers 72% of the continent's population, based on Ethnologue data. In addition, we consider three countrywide lingua franca, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Kituba. This increases our coverage of population to 81%. By population, 61% of our African data have the same word for "guest" and "stranger" which increases to 65% when including lingua francas. When only looking at Sub-Saharan Africa these percentages increase to 84% and 86% respectively.

We believe that the connection between stranger and guest, the willingness to accept stranger kings and the existence of mutual respect and lack of territorial aggrandizement emerged from a historic equilibrium of mobility and migration. Kopytoff, argued that African societies were "frontier societies" and "African social groups ... show consistently a tendency to fisson and segment" (Kopytoff, 1987, p.18). The focus on "wealth in people" rather than wealth in things (Guyer, 1993) naturally led to mobility. As Paul and Laura Bohannan noted in the context of property rights in land amongst the Tiv "Association of the genealogical map with specific pieces of ground is of brief duration only; a man or woman has ... "farm tenure", that is, precise rights to farm during the time it is in cultivation ... However, a man always has rights in his "genealogical map" of his ... lineage, wherever that lineage may happen to be on the terrain" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.80).

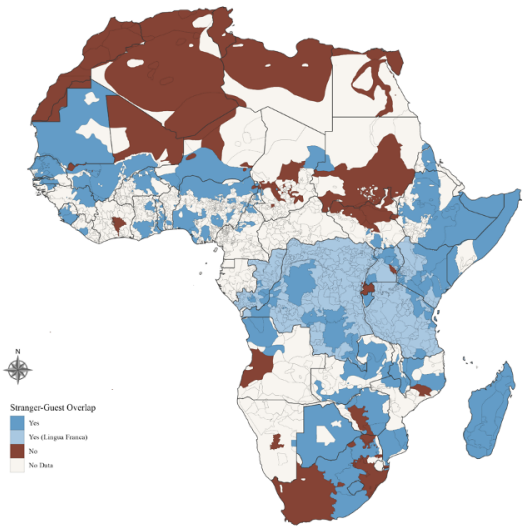
[4] We also consider whether the word for "guest" is the same as the word for "foreigner".

Figure 3: Stranger-Guest Across the World



Notes: This figure maps languages around the world using information from the Ethnologue. Languages that use the same word for "guest" and "stranger" are marked in dark blue, those that do not in dark red. Lingua franca, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Kituba, are marked in lighter colours in the areas where they are spoken if there is no data for the local language.

Figure 4: Stranger-Guest Across Africa



Notes: This figure maps languages in Africa using information from the Ethnologue. Languages that use the same word for "guest" and "stranger" are marked in dark blue, those that do not in dark red. Lingua franca, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Kituba, are marked in lighter colours in the areas where they are spoken if there is no data for the local language.

Apart from the language used to refer to strangers, Africans innovated many types of institutions which allowed them to integrate peoples into their societies. A powerful example of this comes from Botswana, from the Ngwato people, the largest of the pre-colonial Tswana polities. Amongst social scientists the Tswana are currently renown for being "ethnically homogeneous".

Table 2: The Ethnic Composition of the Ngwato Polity

Ethnic Group	Population
Ngwato	17,850
Kalaka	22,777
Tswapong	11,237
Birwa	9,636
Sarwa	9,587
Khurutshe	5,441
Kgalagdi	3,693
Talaote	3,538
Kaa	3,055
Pedi	2,572
Phaleng	2,409
Herero	1,013
Rotse	1,006
Kwena	892
Seleka	889
Nabya	844
Koba	724
Teti	435
Subia	274
Malete	240
Rolong	155
Tlôkwa	141

Notes: Data from the 1946 Census tabulated in Schapera (1952).

But the data gleaned from the 1946 census by the anthropologist Isaac Schapera belies this. Table 2 shows that in fact less than 20% of the people were Ngwato. The others came from all over southern Africa. Some, like the Kwena or Rolong are from other Tswana tribes. But the Kalaka straddle the Botswana-Zimbabwe border, the Pedi do the same with South Africa while the Herero are from Namibia. In fact the Tswana integrated many other peoples into their tribes and they did this via the structure of their political institutions which were not based on origin but rather whether or not they accepted the political authority of a particular Tswana chief. The Tswapong, for example, which appear as the third largest group by population were a heterogeneous group of peoples who acquired their name by being settled in the Tswapong hills by the Ngwato state Motzafi-Haller (1993). Parsons (1973) estimates that the Ngwato were made up historically of as many as 50 different groups (see Colson (1970) for a Zambian example). As Schapera put it "membership of a tribe is defined not so much in terms of birth as of allegiance to the chief. People become members of a tribe by submitting to the rule of its Chief" (Schapera, 1938, p.5).

Other evidence supports our arguments here. Habyarimana et al. (2007)'s data shows that at least in anonymous situations, Ugandans show no tendency to favor those more proximate socially to those further away. This is also what Cappelen et al. (2024) find, something which leads to the arresting conclusion that many Africans, including Ethiopians, Nigerians and Zambians are more universal, moralistically, than North Americans.

7 Economic Consequences

It wasn't just political institutions that were designed to limit political scale. Economic institutions were often designed with this end in mind as well. They were not necessarily intended to maximize the efficiency of resource allocation, but to stop power being accumulated or centralized. Though there is a lot of heterogeneity, a broad generalization is that there were no factor markets in pre-colonial Africa. Moreover, property rights to land, the most important asset, were not individualized and typically land was owned by kinship groups.[5] One got access to land via one's kinship group and the same group was mobilized to provide labor. These institutional facts were kept in place by many norms, practices and values. Forde for example, discussing the absence of land markets in pre-colonial Nigeria notes "Land had no market price and the question of sale did not arise. It was held to be a gift of nature and it would have been considered morally wrong to take payment for land which had been obtained for nothing. On the other hand it was a prime duty of a group of kinsmen to preserve their land for the use of their successors" (Forde and Scott, 1945, pp.88–89). This point emphasizes that the "community" often included ancestors and the yet to be born.

The main principles and mechanisms at work are best communicated with one very well documented ethnographic example. We discussed earlier how Tiv social norms were designed to stop anyone accumulating power and threatening the organization of the community. They were extremely successful in this and by the time the Tiv were colonized by the British they had no state institutions at all. Rather the society was organized politically by descent groups and lineages.

The Tiv word for a territory occupied by the descendants of a single ancestor is a tar. Within the tar there were elders who exercise what little authority there was in Tiv society. The tar was a specific piece of land, but as we noted in our discussion of the mobility of African people, individuals identified more with other people than specific pieces of land. Members of a tar's genealogical map gave them rights to use the land controlled by the tar. But there were "no

[5]There were some exceptions to this, such as Ethiopia and Rwanda, Meek (1946) is useful for an overview of former British African colonies.

factor markets—that is to say, land, labor and capital" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.7) and while individuals had user rights to land, nobody could buy or sell land.

There were limits however on how much land someone could ask to use within a tar. The Bohannans documented that one has the right to a sufficiently large piece of land to provide a livelihood for oneself and one's family. Sufficient, but not too much. They noted that if a man

> wants to plant many more yams than his wives and children need, so that he can sell them to get more money and goods than others in the compound, he is likely to be refused (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.42).

This was for two reasons. First, that such a person might then shirk on the communal work of the tar, but also if someone "has a great deal of money the compound spoils" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.44). By this they meant that the resulting inequality potentially disrupted the status quo. The allocation of land within the lineage system made it easy to directly preserve the egalitarian nature of the society.

If you had access to a piece of land how did you farm it? The basic unit of production was a married couple and their unmarried children who formed a part of the tar so that "the people of a compound form a basic work group" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.70). If additional work was needed then one called on "the men of the lineage or an age-set who are accustomed to working together" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.70). We encountered age sets earlier when we described the political institutions of some East African peoples.

In Tiv society though both men and women farmed, they each farmed specific crops and only women farmed the main staple yams. Husbands were required to provide land for their wives to farm but had no automatic claim on what they produced. Once a family or tar had produced and harvested crops, yams for instance, they could still sell excess production of yams (over own consumption). The Tiv did this, but they did so in very specific ways. Indeed, broadly the Bohannans concluded that

> Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the Tiv market is that it is extraordinarily constrained and shows little tendency to invade the other institutions of society (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, pp.240-241).

The Tiv didn't have free markets, they had *constrained markets*. These were organized into different spheres. Within a sphere one could trade and sometimes even haggle and barter, but this was not possible across spheres. The three most fundamental spheres were those of subsistence goods, prestige goods and "rights in human beings other than slaves" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.228) especially women.

The subsistence sphere was the most flexible. It allowed for the exchange of foodstuffs and subsistence goods that included chickens, goats, sheep, household utensils and other craft products (mortars, grindstones, calabashes, pots and baskets) as well as raw materials used to produce any of these items. These were traded on local markets that opened periodically and prices were flexible and subject to haggling. It looked just like a regular market. Trading in such markets was also adapted to the availability of modern money which came into Tivland in the colonial period.

The subsistence sphere was however completely separate from the prestige sphere. Prestige goods could not be exchanged in a market. These goods included cattle, horses, a special type of white cloth known as tugudu, medicines, magic and brass rods. Formerly slaves were also included in this category of goods. Money was not used in this sphere and prices were fixed and not flexible but there were "equivalences" between these different goods. For example, historically the price of slaves was quoted in cows and brass rods, the price of cattle in terms of brass rods and tugudu cloth. Evidence on this comes from Akiga a Tiv elder whose life history was transcribed in the 1930s. He reported some specific and fixed ways in which various prestige items could be traded

> You could buy one iron bar for a tugudu cloth. In those days five tugudu cloths were equivalent to a bull. A cow was worth ten tugudu. One brass rod was worth about the same as one tugudu cloth; thus five brass rods were worth a bull (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.229).

To the extent that something like modern looking exchange happened in the prestige sphere, it only happened within the sphere, did not involve money and the terms of trade were strictly fixed and unchanging. The Bohannans called such activities not exchange but conveyances to emphasize that the nature of the "exchange" was very ritualized.

An interesting question arises: how do you acquire prestige goods if you don't have them already? Though prestige items might be conveyed this did not mean they were freely bought or sold, as the Bohannans put it

> Tiv will not buy cows or horses in a market (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.231).

They describe how an Igbo trader brought two horses to Tivland to sell them but had to take them back home. So how do you get prestige goods if you can't, or won't, buy them?

Moving from subsistence goods to prestige goods was even more controversial. The Bohannans dubbed this process not exchange but "conversion" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968,

p.234). How did you "convert up" into prestige goods? Conversion up, from subsistence to prestige goods, may become possible when someone who has prestige goods has to get rid of them through necessity and is therefore willing to convert down. This can be a legitimate process. Some sequences of conversion were also regarded as socially desirable, especially those which led to the third sphere. The Bohannans repeat a Tiv autobiographical story to emphasize this point: "When I was a very small child my kinsmen gave me a baby chicken. I tended it carefully and when it grew up it laid eggs and hatched out more chickens; I exchanged these chickens for a young nanny goat, who bore kids which I put out with various kinsmen until I could exchange them for a cow. The cow bore calves, and eventually I was able to sell the calves and procure a wife" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.237). This story tells of an acceptable sequence of conversion starting with the subsistence sphere (chickens and goats), moving to the prestige sphere (cows) and finally to the third sphere (wives). The Tiv recognized that acquiring subsistence goods could be the fruit of hard work, but the acquisition of prestige goods was something different, it took, as the Bohannans explained, "more than hard work, it takes a "strong heart", by which Tiv mean both courage and attractiveness" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.xxx).

On the one hand acquiring prestige goods is respected, because if you can manage this you have a "strong heart". On the other hand, Tiv admit that "they try to keep a man from making conversions" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.236) this is because such a man "is both feared and respected. If he is strong enough to resist excessive demands of his kinsmen ... he is feared as a man of special, potentially evil, talents (tsav)" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.237).

Here we have returned to tsav and one of the key political concepts in Tiv society we met earlier. There we showed how the concept of tsav, talent and charisma, was key to stabilizing the social and political structure of the society. If someone became too successful if they tried to exercise power or assert authority they might have tsav. This might be natural, but it might also be illicitly accumulated through witchcraft. Hence someone with tsav was suspicious. Attempting to acquire prestige goods then becomes another incidence where tsav was on display and potentially suspicious. This made people hesitant to try to convert from on sphere to another lest they be accused of witchcraft.

The complete situation is well summed up by the Bohannans when they state "To the Tiv a market is not merely ... a place to buy and sell ... It is a political institution of major importance because in a society that is dominated by the lineage principle it is a means of overriding that principle" (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, pp.146–147). This is the reason that markets had to be constrained.

Our main point here is that the economic institutions of the Tiv were subservient to the broader collective goal of maintaining the small scale political structure. The Tiv of course were somewhat extreme. They were an acephalous society completely lacking political centralization and our argument is that part of the explanation for this is the organization of economic institutions. But there were many other types of polities in Africa (Osafo-Kwaako and Robinson (2013) show that economic institutions varied systematically with political centralization in Africa). Gyekye, for example, using the far more centralized Asante case to make generalizations in his chapter on "Economic Values" argues that African society "evolved and practised capitalist values and attitudes; acquisitive elements were nurtured in the African character" (Gyekye, 1996, p.100) (contrast with Bohannan (1955)). Other "acquisitive" societies would include the Igbo or the Kikuyu. Moreover, there are well documented examples of more specialized production, for example in textiles Kriger (2017). Moreover, some types of long-distance trade took place even before the expansion of European commerce in the 16th century (see Gray and Birmingham (1970)). These include the Hausa merchants (Lovejoy (1980)) and most-obviously the trans-Saharan trade (Austen (2010)).

Our emphasis on the Tiv is because key elements of their economic organization were typical in Africa, particularly the absence of factor markets and the existence of separate spheres and many of the related practices and norms in African economies is extremely well documented (see the essays in Bohannan and Dalton (1962) for many examples). Two recent seminal studies are that by Ferguson in Lesotho. He showed that "There exists what one might call a one-way barrier: cash can always be converted into cattle through purchase; cattle however, cannot be converted to cash through sale except under certain conditions" (Ferguson, 1994, 146–147). In Lesotho, and in fact in much of southern and eastern Africa, cattle are in a sphere of their own. Also relevant is Shipton's 1989 detailed study of the separate spheres of the economy of the Luo in western Kenya where there were also fixed patterns of admissible exchanges: "cultivation to chickens, chickens to goats, goats to cows, cows to women" (Shipton, 1989, p.19). This sequence is closely related to the one described in (Bohannan and Bohannan, 1968, p.237) we noted above. Converting down, to use Bohannan's terminology, was a source of "bitter money" which brought bad luck and illness. Particularly bad was selling land.

It is good to observe that the four polities in Table 1 that are counted as complex states in Murdock include the small Kingdom of Kaffa in Ethiopia and the Bubi of Equatorial Guinea. The category is dominated quantitatively by Morocco and Tunisia. If we restrict our attention to sub-Saharan Africa less than 20% of the population were living in states

Labor was not only mobilized via kin groups but via other institutions too.[6] "African societies were receptive to all opportunities for bringing outsiders into their midst as dependents and retainers" (Miers and Kopytoff, 1977, p.14). A phenomenon we have documented in Botswana. These came in many forms, from wardship, where a child was given to another person to bring up, pawnship, where people served as security for debt, and slavery. Nevertheless, since the work of Miers and Kopytoff the basic view of scholars of African slavery is that "In African, then, the kinsmen, the adopted, the dependent, the client, and the 'slave' abutted on one another and could merge into one another" (Miers and Kopytoff, 1977, p.23). Basically, "Slavery was one of many types of dependency" (Lovejoy, 2000, p.13). Stilwell notes important differences between "slave societies", typically states like in the Sahel where slaves often dominated production and military activities and other "societies with slaves" (Stilwell, 2014, p.31). Everywhere, however, "most slaves were used and conceptualized within the overarching structures of kinship, which often encouraged the incorporation of slaves, sometimes quite rapidly and sometimes over the course of generations" (Stilwell, 2014, p.62).

8 African Vulnerabilities and the Great Divergence

It seems plausible that the organization of the economy along the lines of separate spheres and the absence of factor markets reduced the efficiency of resource allocation. Even more striking are instances of the active discouragement of accumulation. This can help explain why at the beginning of the Great Divergence income per-capita in Africa might already have been one quarter that of western Europe and, as we noted, technology was clearly far less productive. That Africa is relatively much poorer today, however, can mostly be explained by what happened subsequently.

8.1 The Slave Trade

Research has now documented the significant adverse effects of the slave trade on African development and institutions in addition to the path breaking work of Nathan Nunn see also Teso (2019).

Why did Africa get so involved in the export of slaves, especially if people were valuable? Why were they so vulnerable to colonial expansion? Why has it been so difficult to establish post-colonial order and political stability? We now argue that our analysis of pre-colonial African society provides a new and unified way of thinking about all these questions.

[6] In a few states, such as Ethiopia and Rwanda, this included feudal institutions (Crummey and Stewart (1981)).

First, the slave trade. As we pointed out there were already many institutionalized means for creating dependents and integrating them into social networks and (fictive) kinship groups. Though people were valuable the influx of new goods which Africans got in exchange were also highly valued and because of the fragmented political geography of Africa, it was reasonable for any one polity to image that it would be relatively easy for them to acquire, attract or capture, replacement people. Collectively, of course, this logic was disastrous. The fact that society was already organized around social networks and personal relationships made it very easy to shift into supplying ones' "people" to European slavers. This is very well documented by historians and is easy to understand from the discussion so far. The first Africans who were sold into slavery were the dependents, and institutions such as pawnship, became distorted into supplying slaves. These connections vividly emerge in the diary of Antera Duke, an African slave trader from Old Calabar in eastern Nigeria. Part of the entry for July 27 1785 reports

> I went on board Cooper's ship to deliver pawns and I gave him some goods... Before night Captain Tatem went away with 395 slaves (Forde, 1956, p.35).

The German missionary Sigismund Koelle who worked in Sierra Leone in the nineteenth century collected information from freed slaves on how they had been enslaved. He found that around 34% were captured in warfare; another 30% were "kidnapped"; but the final 36% were "sold by relatives or superiors", enslaved for unpaid debts (usually incurred by a relative), or enslaved as a result of judicial processes (see Hair (1965)). Similarly, discussing the ramping up of the slave trade in the Kingdom of the Kongo, Vansina argues "Slaves at first came from the sale of ... local dependents" (Vansina, 1990, p.200). The initial organization of African society therefore led it to select into the slave trade on the supply side with many perverse consequences.

8.2 Colonialism

Analogous mechanisms were at play in the colonial period - colonialism was facilitated by the organization of African societies. When the scramble for Africa is usually discussed the argument is that it was the superiority of European weapons that determined the outcomes. Or in the famous words of Hillaire Belloc "Whatever happens, we have got, the Maxim, and they have not". Most people just take it for granted that Africans didn't invent the Maxim gun because they were not technologically sophisticated enough to produce such a weapon. That may be part of the story, but another part is that Africans were not interested in creating a machine gun to massacre the enemy. In fact, when they could, they were able to abolish firearms because of the damage they saw it doing to their societies Macola (2016). Unfortunately, this was made

difficult by exactly the same logic that created the collective havoc of the slave trade. It was hard for one polity to abolish firearms when others had them.

There were other mechanisms too. The equilibrium of guest=stranger obviously created a particular attitude towards Europeans when they appeared on the coast. They were welcomed and not initially see as a threat. Also relevant here is the incidence of stranger kings – situations like with the Alur where Africans were ruled by outsiders. Africans were used to being ruled by outsiders and the evidence suggests that at least in some cases, Europeans were initially simply regarded as the latest reincarnation of such outsiders. This was the case with the Alur. When Southall investigated the consolidation of British colonial rule his informants made a direct analogy between the coming of the Alur and the British. As one put it

> Amatho came like you Government people came and found us in this country ...
> The Alur came slowly, slowly, like you British (Southall, 1953, p.201).

At the least this history made acknowledging European rule seem relatively riskless. Another interesting case is the Lozi of Zambia where the initiative for soliciting British protection came from their king Lewanika. In 1886 he approached a deputation of missionaries and "said he wished to place his country under Queen Victoria's Protection as Khama had done" continuing that "he had nothing to fear being under the protection of the Queen" (Mainga, 1973, pp.172-173). Unfortunately, this turned out to be a severe misapprehension of British intentions or their potential role. The mention of Khama reveals other mechanisms. He requested that Britain declare a protectorate in Bechuanaland to avoid it being annexed by Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company, see Parsons (1998). African rulers also tried to engage in personal relations with Europeans by signing treaties, attempting to incorporate them into their networks. They acted as if they were just a new elements in the system. They weren't.

Several studies have shown the adverse negative economic effects of colonialism. This work has studied specific colonial institutions, such as indirect rule Goldtsein and Udry (2008), Acemoglu et al. (2014), commodity marketing boards Bates (1981), coercive health interventions Lowes and Montero (2021b) and commercial concessions Lowes and Montero (2021a).

Ironically, colonialism actually provides an interesting lens on the relationship between economic organization and political institutions in Africa. Colonial rule severed the connection between economic and political institutions, freeing up the economy to be re-organized without a political impact. In most cases, other aspects of colonial rule stopped this leading to economic progress, but in a few well documented cases Africans obtained the freedom to take advantage of new economic opportunities leading to sustained economic growth (see Hill (1963), Parsons

(1975), Bundy (1979)).

Finally, it was the larger non-western states like China, Japan or Thailand that were able to resist European colonialism. In Africa Ethiopia and the Zulu kingdom were the most successful because they could put large armies into the field to defeat the Italians at Adwa in 1896 or Isandlwana in 1879, respectively. The 20,000 small polities were easy to defeat militarily and to be played off one against another by colonial powers (a famous example was how the British used Buganda to help them conquer other groups in Uganda, in return allowing them to expand territorially).

8.3 The Post-Colonial Period

The small scale nature of African political society had profound effects in the post colonial world as well. It implied that the independent nation states which were the fruits of colonialism were made up of many historic polities with many different types of political institutions.[7] Our discussion above shows that while some peoples, like the Igbo or Tiv, remained highly localized and lacked state institutions, others like the Alur, Rwanda or Tswana had managed to create types of more centralized states. Moreover, there was no one way to be decentralized, the Tiv lacked the councils of the Igbo, and while both had age sets they did not become the dominant method of organizing authority like they did with the Masaai. State institutions also differed greatly. Thus the main political problem of the post colonial world, as first identified by Ekeh (1975), was how to aggregate all of these micro social contracts into a national one. The diffculty in this was pointed out as early as 1965 by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe when he said in his great novel about post-independence politics *Man of the People*:

> The owner was the village, and the village had a mind; it could say no to sacrilege. But in the affairs of the nation there was no owner, the laws of the village become powerless (Achebe, 1966, p.149).

The problem of creating a social contract was easier in places like Botswana, Rwanda and Somaliland where the post-colonial state mapped quite well onto the scope of pre-colonial societies. Already in 1940 in their introduction of their book on *African Political Systems*, Evans-Pritchard and Fortes had observed that the Ngwato were a people "whose political system resembles the pattern with which we are familiar in the modern nation-state" (Evans-Pricthard and Fortes, 1940, p.6). While the situation in Somaliland was completely different, since unlike the Ngwato,

[7] Empirical evidence is consistent with the negative economy legacies of arbitrary colonial states, see for example Engelbert (2000), Alesina et al. (2011) and Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2016).

the Somalis had never constructed any state, the political culture did allow it in the post-colonial context. Lewis emphasized the important of contract, or heer in Somali society;

> Its closest equivalents in English are compact, contract, agreement or treaty ... The majority of heer agreements binding groups relate principally to collective defense and security and to political cohesion in general. (Lewis, 1961, pp. 161-162)

In the 1990s in Somaliland, in a series of constitutional conferences beginning at Borama, "a new political system built upon Somali cultural values ... which elevated the Somali concept of heer or inter-family social contract in which no man exercised political power over another except according to established law and custom" (Bradbury, 2008, pp. 63-64).

While the complicated construction of post-colonial social contracts in Africa led to a lot of genuine innovation and experimentation (see Robinson (2023) for examples), these models were mostly unsuccessful and associated with economic decline, massive corruption and often autocracy and repression. As we write this paper institution building task is still a work in progress in most parts of Africa. Our objective here is to paint it as a path dependent outcomes of decisions Africans made historically in the ways they constructed their societies. They largely achieved what they set out to do. Unfortunately, they were living in a predatory world.

9 Conclusion

In this essay we have argued that seen in its own terms, until recently, Africa was a success. Africans achieved, at least until the late nineteenth century, what they set out to achieve. Historically a systems of values and beliefs emerged which cherished the community and small scale political organization and saw in the emergence of centralized political authority a threat to these values. In consequence Africans innovated sets of norms, practices and institutions that made it very hard to centralize power. Even when this did happen, it did so in ways which preserved these basic values. The few despotic pre-colonial regimes that emerged did so because as de Heusch pointed out "kingship ... always introduces a threat of tyranny ... The African societies that adjusted to sacred kingship in the Utopian hope of increasing their control over the forces of nature, remained ... always dimly conscious of the fact that they were playing with fire" (de Heusch, 1981, p.25), see also Wrigley (1996).

In this historical process the organization of the economy was made subservient to the wider collective goals. This meant that economic institutions were not organized to maximize the efficiency of resource allocation or to foster accumulation. Africans prioritized other goals than

economic development. Nevertheless, the costs of this in a pre-modern world before the industrial revolution were relatively small. The extreme comparative under-development of Africa today is mostly accounted for by the fact that the historical organization of Africa turned out to make it very vulnerable to the pernicious effects of the expansion of European capitalism and political projects in the form of the slave trade and colonialism. These have had path dependent effects with which Africans are still grappling.

Our framework has a lot of novel implications for Africa today. For example the "puzzle" of why post-colonial African countries have engaged in so little inter-state warfare. While the usual explanation is that this is because of the role of international institutions (Herbst, 2000), our theory suggests that it also reflects the deeper political culture of Africa which rejected territorial aggrandizement.

References

Acemoglu, D., S. Johnson, and J. A. Robinson (2001). Colonial origins of comparative development. *American Economic Review 91*(5), 1369–1401.

Acemoglu, D., S. Johnson, and J. A. Robinson (2002). Reversal of fortune: Geography and institutions in the making of the modern world income distribution. *Quarterly Journal Economics 117*(2), 1231–1294.

Acemoglu, D., T. Reed, and J. A. Robinson (2014). Chiefs: Economic development and elite control of civil society in sierra leone. *Journal of Political Economy 122*(2), 319–368.

Achebe, C. (1966). *Man of the People*. London: Heineman.

Afigbo, A. (2005). The indigenous political systems of the igbo. In T. Falola (Ed.), *Igbo History and Society: The Essays of Adiele Afigbo*, Trenton. Africa World Press.

Alesina, A., J. Matuszeski, and W. Easterly (2011). Artificial states. *Journal of the European Economic Association 9*(2), 246–277.

Alsan, M. (2015). The effect of the tsetse fly on african development. *American Economic Review 105*(1), 382–410.

Arinze, F. A. (1970). *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion*. Ibandan: University of Ibadan Press.

Atkinson, R. R. (1994). *The roots of ethnicity: The origins of the Acholi of Uganda before 1800*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Austen, R. A. (2010). *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Austen, R. A. and D. Headrick (1983). The role of technology in the african past. *African Studies Review 26*(3/4), 163–184.

Austin, G. (2008). Resources, techniques, and strategies south of the sahara: Revising the factor endowments perspective on african economic development, 1500–2000. *Economic History Review 61*(3), 587–624.

Barth, F. (1962). Barth's travels in nigeria, 1850-1855. London: Oxford University Press.

Bates, R. H. (1981). *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bernardi, B. (1985). *Age, Class and Systems: Social Institutions and Polities Based on Age*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Besley, T. and T. Persson (2010). State capacity, conflict, and development. *Econometrica 78*(1), 1–34.

Besley, T. and M. Reynal-Querol (2014). The legacy of historical conflict: Evidence from africa. *American Political Science Review 108*(2), 319–336.

Bohannan, P. (1955). Some principles of exchange and investment among the tiv. *American Anthropologist 57*, 60–69.

Bohannan, P. (1958). Extra-processual events in tiv political institutions. *American Anthropologist 60*, 1–12.

Bohannan, P. and L. Bohannan (1968). *Tiv Economy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Bohannan, P. and G. H. Dalton (1962). *Markets in Africa*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Bourguignon, F. and C. Morrisson (2002). Inequality among world citizens: 1820–1992. *American Economic Review 92*, 727–744.

Bradbury, M. (2008). *Becoming Somaliland*. Oxford: James Currey.

Brecke, P. (1999). Violent conflicts 1400 a.d. to the present in different regions of the world. In *Paper presented at 1999 Meeting of Peace Science Society*.

Bukurura, S. H. (1995). Indigenous communication systems: Lessons and experience from among the sukuma and nyamwezi of west-central africa. *Nordic Journal of African Studies 4*(2), 16–16.

Bundy, C. (1979). *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Busia, K. A. (1951). *The position of the chief in the modern political system of the Ashanti: a study of the influence of contemporary social change on Ashanti political institutions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cappelen, A., B. Enke, and B. Tungodden (2024). Universalism: Global evidence. *American Economic Review Forthcoming*.

Colson, E. (1970). Assimilation of aliens among zambian tonga. In R. Cohen and J. Middleton (Eds.), *From Tribe to Nation in Africa; Studies in Incorporation Processes*. Scranton: Chandler Pub. Co.

Crummey, D. E. and C. C. Stewart (1981). Modes of production in africa: The precolonial era. In *Modes of Production in Africa: The Precolonial Era*. Sage Publications.

De Bruijn, M., R. A. van Dijk, and D. Foeken (2001). *Mobile Africa: changing patterns of movement in Africa and beyond*, Volume 1. Brill.

de Heusch, L. (1981). *Why Marry Her?: Society and Symbolic Structures*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dincecco, M., J. Fenske, and M. G. Onorato (2019). Is africa different? historical conflict and state development. *Economic History of Developing Regions 34*(2), 209–250.

Diop, C. A. (1987). *Precolonial Black Africa*. Lawrence Hill Books.

Ekeh, P. P. (1975). Colonialism and the two publics in africa: A theoretical statement. *Comparative Studies in Society and History 17*(1), 91–112.

Engelbert, P. (2000). Solving the mystery of the africa dummy. *World Development 28*(10), 1821–1835.

Esterly, W. and R. Levine (1997). Africa's growth tragedy: Policies and ethnic divisions. *Quarterly Journal of Economics 112*(4), 1203–1250.

Evans-Pricthard, E. and M. Fortes (1940). Introduction. In *African Political Systems*. Oxford University Press.

Fenske, J. (2013). Does land abundance explain african institutions? *The Economic Journal 123*(573), 1363–1390.

Ferguson, J. (1994). *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Forde, D. (1956). *Efik traders of Old Calabar*. London: Oxford University Press.

Forde, D. and G. Jones (1950). *The Ibo and Ibibio Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria*. London: International Africa Institute.

Forde, D. and R. Scott (1945). *The Native Economies of Nigeria*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.

Fourshey, C. C., R. M. Gonzales, and C. Saidi (2018). *Bantu Africa: 3500 BC to Present*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Goldtsein, M. and C. Udry (2008). The profits of power: Land rights and agricultural investment in ghana. *Journal of Political Economy 116*(6), 981–1022.

Goody, J. (1971). *Technology, Tradition, and the State in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Graeber, D. and M. Sahlins (2017). *On Kings*. Chicago: HAU Press.

Gray, R. and D. Birmingham (1970). Introduction. In *Pre-Colonial African Trade: essays on trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900*. Oxford University Press.

Green, M. M. (1947). *Ibo Village Affairs*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.

Guyer, J. I. (1993). Wealth in people and self-realization in equatorial africa. *Man 28*(2), 243–265.

Gyekye, K. (1987). *African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Concetual Scheme*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gyekye, K. (1996). *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*. Philadelphia: Sankofa Publishing Company.

Habyarimana, J., M. Humphreys, D. N. Posner, and J. M. Weinstein (2007). Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision? *American Political Science Review 101*(4), 709–725.

Hair, P. (1965). The enslavement of koelle's informants. *The Journal of African History 6*(2), 193–203.

Henderson, R. N. (1972). *The King in Every Man: Evolutionary Trends in Onitsha Ibo Society and Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Henn, S. J. and J. A. Robinson (2023). Africa's latent assets. *Journal of African Economies 32*(Supplement_1), i9–i32.

Herbst, J. I. (2000). *States and Power in Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hill, P. (1963). *The Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana: a Study in Rural Capitalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hopkins, A. G. (1973). *An Economic History of West Africa*. London: Longman.

Klein Goldewijk, K., A. Beusen, J. Doelman, and E. Stehfest (2017). Anthropogenic land-use estimates for the holocene; hyde 3.2. *Earth System Science Data 9*, 927–953.

Kopytoff, I. (1987). *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Kriger, C. E. (2017). *Making Money: Life, Death, and Early Modern Trade on Africa's Guinea Coast*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Lewis, I. M. (1961). *A Pastoral Democracy: Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lienhardt, G. (1958). The western dinka. In J. Middleton and D. Tait (Eds.), *Tribes without rulers: Studies in african segmentary systems*, pp. 97–135. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Lovejoy, P. E. (1980). *Caravans of kola: The Hausa kola trade, 1700-1900*. Kano: Ahmadu Bello University Press.

Lovejoy, P. E. (2000). *Transformations in Slavery* (2 ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lowes, S. and E. Montero (2021a). Concessions, violence, and indirect rule: Evidence from the congo free state. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics 136*(4), 2047–2091.

Lowes, S. and E. Montero (2021b). The legacy of colonial medicine in central africa. *The American Economic Review 111*(4), 1284–1314.

Lowes, S., N. Nunn, J. A. Robinson, and J. L. Weigel (2017). The evolution of culture and institutions: Evidence from the kuba kingdom. *Econometrica 85*(4), 1065–1091.

Macola, G. (2016). *The Gun in Central Africa: A History of Technology and Politics*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Mainga, M. (1973). *Bulozi under the Lyuana Kings*. London: Longman.

Meek, C. K. (1937). *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe*. London: Oxford University Press.

Meek, C. K. (1946). *Land Law and Custom in the Colonies*. London: Oxford University Press.

Michalopoulos, S. and E. Papaioannou (2016). The long-run effects of the scramble for africa. *American Economic Review 106*(7), 1802–1848.

Miers, S. and I. Kopytoff (Eds.) (1977). *Slavery in Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Motzafi-Haller, P. (1993). The duiker and the hare: Tswapong subjects and ngwato rulers in pre-colonial botswana. *Botswana Notes and Records 25*, 59–71.

Murdock, G. P. (1967). *Ethnographic Atlas: A Summary*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Newbury, C. (1992a). *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860–1960*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Newbury, D. S. (1992b). *Kings and Clans: Ijwi Island and the Lake Kivu Rift, 1780–1840*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

North, D. C. and R. P. Thomas (1973). *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Nunn, N. (2008). The long term effects of africa's slave trades. *Quarterly Journal of Economics 123*(1), 139–176.

Nunn, N. and L. Wantchekon (2011). The slave trade and the origins of mistrust in africa. *American Economic Review 101*(7), 3221–3252.

Ogude, J. (2018). *Ubuntu and Personhood*. Trenton: Africa World Press Press.

Osafo-Kwaako, P. and J. A. Robinson (2013). Political centralization in pre-colonial africa. *Journal of Comparative Economics 41*(1), 6–21.

Parsons, Q. (1973). On the origins of the bamangwato. *Botswana Notes and Records 5*, 82–103.

Parsons, Q. N. (1975). 'khama & co.' and the jousse trouble, 1910–1916. *Journal of African History 16*(3), 383–408.

Parsons, Q. N. (1998). *King Khama, Emperor Joe, and the Great White Queen: Victorian Britain through African Eyes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pomeranz, K. (2000). *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Robinson, J. A. (2023). Taxation aversion and the social contract in africa. *Journal of African Economies 32*(Supplement_1), i33–i56.

Schapera, I. (1938). *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*. London: Oxford University Press.

Schapera, I. (1952). *The Ethnic Composition of Tswana Tribes*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Shipton, P. M. (1989). *Bitter Money: Cultural Economy and Some African Meanings of Forbidden Commodities*. Washington: American Anthropological Association.

Smith, R. (1976). *Warfare and diplomacy in pre-colonial West Africa*. New York: Harper & Row.

Southall, A. (1953). *Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination*. Cambridge: W.W. Heffer and Co.

Stilwell, S. (2014). *Slavery and Slaving in African History*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tempels, P. (1959). *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Présence Africaine.

Teso, E. (2019). The long-term effect of demographic shocks on the evolution of gender roles: Evidence from the transatlantic slave trade. *Journal of the European Economic Association 17*(2), 497–534.

Tilly, C. (1990). *Coercion, Capital, and European States AD 990–1990*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Turnbull, C. M. (Ed.) (1976). *Man in Africa*. New York: Anchor Press.

Vansina, J. (1978). *The Children of Woot*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Vansina, J. (1990). *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Vansina, J. (2005). *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom*. Univ of Wisconsin Press.

Wrigley, C. (1996). *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Yusuf, A. B. (1974). A reconsideration of urban conceptions: Hausa urbanization and the hausa rural-urban continuum. *Urban Anthropology 3*(2), 200–221.

Appendix

A Information About Data Construction

A.1 Anthropological Evidence on the Size of Large Chiefdoms

In this section we go through various groups listed as having large chiefdoms in Murdock's (1967) Ethnographic Atlas. We will provide quotes from historians and anthropologists about chiefdom sizes or total population and the number of chiefdoms. The data is summarized in Table A1.

Table A1: Size of Large Chiefdoms

Ethnic Group	Chiefdom Size	Total Population	Number of Chiefdoms	Year of Data	Source
Sukuma	25,000	1,529,917	50	1957	Bukurura (1995)
Hausa	75,000	525,000	7	1851	Yusuf (1974)
Tswana	25,950	259,500	10	1946	Schapera (1952, p.1)
Akyem	22,500	270,000	12	1901–1948	Simensen (2000, p.2)
Azande	75,000	50,000–100,000	1	1929	Evans-Pritchard (1971, p.137)
Bamileke	4,099	438,641	107	1950s	Tardits (1960, pp.111–113)
Ndembu	3,669	18,346	5	1950–54	Turner (1957, p.17)
Thonga	15,185	91,108	6	1904	Junod (1905, p.224)
Luapula	3,910	58,648	15	1940–1950	Cunnison (1959, p.22)
Nyamwezi	14,598	452,523	31	1957	Abrahams (1967, pp.1–3)
Average	26,491				
Median	18,842				

Sukuma

Prior to German arrival information is sparse with De Bruijn et al. (2001, p.33) writing:

> In the late 1800s, prior to the arrival of German forces, the people today known as Sukuma lived in a number of chiefdom states varying in size from fewer than 2,000 to as many as 90,000 people.

Bukurura (1995) writes:

> In 1957 the Sukuma featured as the largest group with 1,245,908 people living in the districts of Kwimba, Maswa, Mwanza, Geita and Shinyanga. In 1967 the Sukuma numbered 1,529,917 while the Nyamwezi were 405,976.
>
> Before chiefdoms were officially abolished in 1963, there were some 30 chiefdoms in Nyamweziland and some 50 in Sukumaland.

We will use the latter information of 1,245,908 people living in 50 chiefdoms to obtain an average size of 25,000. Note that this is likely an overestimate of the population per chiefdom in the late 19th century as population has likely increased since then.

Hausa

Yusuf (1974, p.206) writes:

> Famous among these are the traditional Seven City-States (Hausa Bakwai), each of which may have contained well above 50,000 inhabitants at the peak of its fame. [...] When Barth visited Katsina in 1851, he estimated that the town "must certainly have had a population of at least 100,000 souls" (Kirk-Greene 1962 : 93-94). In the 19th century, Clapperton and Barth placed the size of Kano between 50,000 to 60,000

We will use 75,000—the midpoint between 50,000 and 100,000—as our estimate.

Tswana

Schapera (1952, p.1) describes the Tswana tribes as

> Before the establishment of the Protectorate in 1885, the tribe could be defined for all practical purposes as a group of people managing their own affairs under the leadership of a chief who was independent of any higher authority.

He provides the following population estimates for the Tswana Tribes in 1946:

Table A2: Population of Tswana Tribes

Tribe	Population (1946)
Ngwato	101,000
Kwena	40,000
Tawana	38,700
Ngwaketse	38,600
Kgatla	20,100
Malete	9,500
Tshidi-Rolong	5,300
Khurutshe	2,900
Tlokwa	2,300
Seleka-Rolong	1,100
Total	259,500
Average	25,950

Source: Schapera (1952, p.1)

We will use the average of 25,950 as our estimate. Again this is likely to be an overestimate since the data stems from 1947.

Akyem

Simensen (2000, p.2) writes:

> The population in 1948 was about 270,000. Before the British took formal control of the inland districts in 1901, Akyem was an independent kingdom with 12–13 divisional chiefs under the Paramount Chief, Omanhene, in Kyebbi.

We divide the 1948 population by 12 to obtain an average chiefdom size of 22,500.

Azande

Using census data from 1929–30, Evans-Pritchard (1971, p.137) discusses the size of the Gbudwe kingdom which ruled the Azande people prior to European arrival:

> It is impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy the size of its population. One can only suggest, on the basis of such censuses as we have, that it was somewhere between 50,000 and 100,000.

We use the midpoint of 75,000 as our estimate.

Bamileke

Tardits (1960, pp.111–113) in 1960 lists 107 Bamileke chiefdom with a total population of 438,641 living in them. This gives an average population of 4,100 per chiefdom.

Ndembu

In 1957 Turner (1957, p.17) uses data from the early 1950s to show the population in 5 Ndembu chiefdoms to be 18,346 as listed in Table A3. This gives an average population of 3,669 per chiefdom.

Table A3: Population of Ndembu Chiefdoms

Chiefdom	Population
Ikelenge	6,972
Nyakaseya	3,614
Mwininyilamba	978
Kanonghesha	3,476
Chibwika	3,351
Total	18,346
Average	3,669

Source: Turner (1957, p.17)

Thonga

Writing in 1905 Junod (1905, p.224) says the Thonga can be divided into 6 groups: Ba-Ronga, Ba-Hlanganu, Ba-Djonga, Ba-Nwalungu, Ba-Hlengwe, and Nwanati. He estimates 91,108[8] Thonga in the Transvaal which leads to an estimate of 15,185

Luapula

In 1959 Cunnison (1959, p.22) lists 15 Luapula chiefdoms in Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo with a total population of 58,648 (we use the 1946 population for the Belgian Congo to be comparable to Northern Rhodesia and we drop Nshimba chiefdom). This gives us an average chiefdom size of 3,910.

[8]He says 82,825 Thonga live in Transvaal and estimates that 10% needs to be added for young men that are away.

Table A4: Population of Luapula Chiefdoms

Chiefdom	Population
Kazembe	10,242
Kambwali	3,766
Kanyembo	5,006
Lukwesa	7,571
Lubunda	5,340
Kashiba	4,001
Mulundu	3,869
Katuta	2,454
Nkuba	1,979
Kashobwe	1,664
Kabimbi	926
Nkambo	2,593
Kampombwe	1,764
Chikungu	3,208
Chisamamba	4,265
Total	58,648
Average	3,910

Source: Cunnison (1959, p.22)

Nyamwezi

Abrahams (1967, p.1) writes about "Unyamwezi" as the :

> area of the Western Province in which the Nyamwezi are, for the most part, both the politically dominant and the numerically preponderant tribe. This area consists of the Tabora and Nzega Districts and the eastern half of Kahama District (see Fig. 1). It is divided into thirty-one mutually independent chiefdoms under the control of Nyamwezi ruling families, and it is in this sense that the Nyamwezi may be said to be politically dominant in the area.

and on page 3:

> According to official census figures, the total African population of Unyamwezi numbered 452,523 in 1957.

Dividing the total population of 452,523 by the number of chiefdoms (31) gives an average chiefdom size of 14,598.

A.2 Anthropological Evidence on the Size of Small Chiefdoms

In this section we go through various groups listed as having small chiefdoms in Murdock's (1967) Ethnographic Atlas. We will provide quotes from historians and anthropologists about chiefdom sizes or total population and the number of chiefdoms. The data is summarized in Table A5.

Dinka

Lienhardt (1958, p.102) writes about the Western Dinka

Table A5: Size of Small Chiefdoms

Ethnic Group	Chiefdom Size	Total Population	Number of Chiefdoms	Year of Data	Source
Western Dinka	13,000			1958	Lienhardt et al. (1958, p.103)
Yao	12,448	205,755	11	1945	Mitchell (1956, p.13)
Kpelle	4,222	211,081	50	1960	Fulton (1972, p.1220)
Mende	8,286	580,000	70	1931	Little (1947, p.8)
Yalunka	10,000			1890	Elliot (1894, p.82)
Ila	1,500	34,135	80	1915	Smith and Dale (1920, p.299)
Gogo	4,500	150,000		1914-1918	Rigby (1969, p.396)
Lugbara	4,000	240,000	60	1968	Middleton (1963, p.82)
Angas	12,200			Est.1880	Temple (1919, p.8)
Ancholi	1,953	125,000	64	1900	Atkinson (1994, pp.275–282)
Average	7,211				
Median	6,393				

> The largest divisions of the Dinka people are some 25 named tribal groups, each with its own well-defined territory. . . tribal groups occupy continuous stretches of Dinkland which tend to be distinctly separated from each other by natural boundaries. . . their total populations of the tribal groups vary from under 3,000 people in the smallest to well over 150,000 in the Rek group, which is much the largest. The tribal groups I have here called the "Western" Dinka are the western Luac, estimated at some 14,000 people, the Rek (156,000), Abiem (13,800), Paliet (4,370), Malwal (37,640) and the Palioupiny (8,530).

and on page 103:

> Tribes vary much in size, from less than 1,000 to up to 25,000 members.

We will take the midpoint of this range, 13,000 as our estimate.

Yao

Mitchell (1956, p.13) writes about Yao chiefdoms in 1946:

> From the 1945 Census. These areas are Kawinga, Liwonde, Nyambi, Jalasi and Malemia. Other Machinga chiefdoms are Mponda (18,701), Kalembo (11,260), Nsamala (11,582), and Ntumanje (17,467), but in these I have spent only a few days and I do not include them in the main analysis. I also spent some time in Katuli area (12,245) in Fort Johnston district, and Ntaja arca (17,195) in Blantyre district, but these are not Machinga Yao, and only refer to them to illustrate points.

We use the median population of the chiefdoms provided which is 12,448. Note that Mitchell notes considerable population growth from 1931 to 1945, therefore this is likely to be an overestimate.

Kpelle

Fulton (1972, p.1220) writes:

Table A6: Population of Yao Chiefdoms

Chiefdom	Population
Jalasi	40,287
Katuli	12,245
Kalembo	11,260
Nyambi	7,335
Liwonde	12,176
Malemia	12,448
Ntaja	17,195
Mponda	18,701
Nsamala	11,852
Ntumanje	17,467
Kawinga	44,789
Total	205,755
Median	12,448

Source: Mitchell (1956, p.13)

> Each of the several Kpelle chiefdoms (there were between thirty and fifty in the late nineteenth century) is largely pyramidal in internal organization (Apter 1965:92-93), denoting a decentralization of powers with similar functions being performed at each level.

And on page 1219:

> They are the largest tribe in Liberia, the most recent and accurate estimate being that of the 1962 government census which places their number at 211,081.

Due to the late date of the population estimate we will divide it by the upper bound of the number of chiefdoms which results in an average size estimate of 4,222.

Kapsiki/Higi

Mende

Little (1947, p.8) writes:

> The Mende people occupy an area of something like 10,000 square miles in the central and south-eastern part of the Sierra Leone Protectorate. Comprising nearly 70 chiefdoms, they numbered, at the time of the last official census (1931), some 580,000 persons, including about 10,000 resident in the Colony.

Dividing the total population by 70 leads to an average chiefdom size of 8,286.

Yalunka

Elliot (1894, p.82) writes:

> The Yalunka people at Falaba and the various villages from this place to Farana on the Niger, are the remnants of a tribe which appear to have once been both numerous and powerful. The villages above referred to appear to have been before

> the advent of the Sofas large and populous town; the ruins of some are at least a mile in diameter, and at least four must have been once inhabited by 10,000 people each.

We will use 10,000 as the estimate.

Ila

Smith and Dale (1920, p.299) write:

> The whole of the Ila country is distributed among these communities, which number about eighty. They vary in size and population, the largest being Kasenga with about 3000 people ; others have no more than 100, some even less.
>
> The rule of the communities is in the hands of chiefs and headmen, all of whom have the name bami (sing, mwami). The tendency now is to call the latter bankoshi, a foreign term, and so distinguish between them, but the Bvila usage is to put them more or less on an equality ; the chief is more primus inter pares. Each chishi has its chief, and each village, or each segment of the large villages, has its headman. The chief and headmen form a council which settles disputes and judges cases. There are evidences that in former times many of the mashi were grouped under one supreme chief (see Chap. XXII.), but to-day there are no chiefs with the authority that Munyama and Malumbe wielded. Each chishi is entirely independent. Where, as at Kasenga, there is a chief over a number of small communities, his authority outside his own village is little more than nominal.

We will use the midpoint here at 1,550.

Gogo

Rigby (1969, p.396) writes:

> the population of any Gogo ritual area seldom exceed 4,000 to 5,000 persons.

Lugbara

Middleton (1963, p.82) writes:

> A sub-tribe averages about 4,000 people, living in a territory of some twenty-five square miles. There are some sixty sub-tribes in Lugbara.

Additionally, the text notes that each sub-tribe has one rain-maker. "In the traditional system, before the creation of chiefs by the European administration, there were no authorities higher than the elders except for rainmaker." Hence, it can be assumed that the sub-tribes are the highest level of social organization analogous to chiefdoms.

Angas

Temple (1919, p.8) gives only the population of one tribe of the Angas:

> Tal, who are a tribe of Angas with a population of 12,200.

Ancholi

For the Ancholi, Atkinson (1994, 275–282) counts 64 chiefdoms and estimates a 1900 population of 125,000 which means 1,953 population per chiefdom.

B Additional Tables and Figure

Table A7: Ethnographic Atlas v31: Mean Size of Local Communities

Mean Size of Local Communities	Number of groups
Missing	76
Fewer than 50	5
50-99	9
100-199	6
200-399	11
400-1,000	4
1,000 w/o towns over 5,000	1
Towns of 5,000-50,000	2

References

Abrahams, R. (1967). *The Political Organization of Unyamwezi*. Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Atkinson, R. R. (1994). *The roots of ethnicity: The origins of the Acholi of Uganda before 1800*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bukurura, S. H. (1995). Indigenous communication systems: Lessons and experience from among the sukuma and nyamwezi of west-central africa. *Nordic Journal of African Studies 4*(2), 16–16.

Cunnison, I. (1959). *The Luapula peoples of Northern Rhodesia: custom and history in tribal politics*. Manchester University Press.

De Bruijn, M., R. A. van Dijk, and D. Foeken (2001). *Mobile Africa: changing patterns of movement in Africa and beyond*, Volume 1. Brill.

Elliot, G. S. (1894). Some notes on native west african customs. *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland 23*, 80–83.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1971). *The Azande: History and political institutions*. Clarendon Press.

Fulton, R. M. (1972). The political structures and functions of poro in kpelle society. *American Anthropologist 74*(5), 1218–1233.

Junod, H. A. (1905). The ba-thonga of the transvaal. *South African Journal of Science 3*(1), 222–262.

Lienhardt, G. (1958). The western dinka. In J. Middleton and D. Tait (Eds.), *Tribes without rulers: Studies in african segmentary systems*, pp. 97–135. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Little, K. L. (1947). Mende political institutions in transition. *Africa 17*(1), 8–23.

Middleton, J. (1963). The yakan or allah water cult among the lugbara. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland 93*(1), 80–108.

Mitchell, J. (1956). *The Yao Village: A Study in the Social Structure of a Nyasaland Tribe*. The Yao Village: A Study in the Social Structure of a Nyasaland Tribe. Rhodes-Livingstone Institute by Manchester University Press.

Murdock, G. P. (1967). *Ethnographic Atlas: A Summary*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Rigby, P. (1969). Politics and modern leadership roles in ugogo. *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960 1*, 393.

Schapera, I. (1952). *The Ethnic Composition of Tswana Tribes*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Simensen, J. (2000). Christian church,'native state'and african culture: The presbyterian mission in akyem abuakwa, ghana. In *19th International Congress of Historical Sciences*, pp. 6–13.

Smith, E. W. and A. M. Dale (1920). *The Ila-speaking peoples of northern Rhodesia*, Volume 1. Macmillan and Company, limited.

Tardits, C. (1960). *Les Bamiléké de l'Ouest Cameroun*. Paris: Éditions Berger-Levrault.

Temple, O. (1919). *Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria*. Cape Town: Argus.

Turner, V. (1957). *Schism and continuity in an African society: A study of Ndembu village life*. Routledge.

Yusuf, A. B. (1974). A reconsideration of urban conceptions: Hausa urbanization and the hausa rural-urban continuum. *Urban Anthropology 3*(2), 200–221.