

Course Introduction

Economics, Politics, and African Societies: TA 01

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Spring 2021

University of Chicago

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Welcome!

- **Name**
- **Program**
- **2-3 sentences about experience with “development” and/or Africa**

What do we mean by “development”?

1. **Economic (What, How?):** growth, GDPpc, HH income, happiness
Human: health, education, imagination, emotions, affiliation, play, etc. Read Martha Nussbaum’s **capability approach**.
2. **Political (Who, How):** distribution of power, ability and willingness to enforce property rights, provide public goods, and redistribute, centralization, delegation, legal formalization and bureaucratization (legacy of **modernization theory**).
3. **Social (Who, How):** collective action, kinship, social capital.
 - Note the “we” (who decides/implements/assesses) paradigm.
 - While development outcomes can be complementary, some can be substitutes and present real tradeoffs under scarcity.

Expectations

- “More inter-disciplinary” and “less parochial” social science.
- Readings introduce and question conventional worldviews.
- Goals: understand presuppositions and undo/redo the learning.
- My role tour guide, interpreter regardless academic/practitioner
- Email me before Thursday for explanation of specific concepts.

For Master's students:

- Proactive participation is mandatory (40%).
- Participation = Discussion + Answers + Emails + Questions.
- Come prepared with answers to discussion Q's and more Q's.
- Email me half-page summary from readings of class you missed.

Section: 30' Discussion (MA only) + 40' Interpretation (All welcome)

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How to approach the readings?

- The class is reading intensive. Read intelligently before lectures.
- Discuss practices that solve fundamental Eco/Pol/Soc problems
- A running list on how these institutions function:
Name/description/society or country/logic of institutions
 - Note about final exam (60%): essay-based.
 - You will have options and pick from amongst them.
 - My favorite example: Pre-colonial African societies were organized in ways which made it very difficult to create centralized political authority. Illustrate with examples from the course so far.
- Read strategically. “Exotics” OK, but don’t get bogged down.
- Read critically. Bring a social scientific mindset.

Bringing a social scientific mindset to read critically

- How does this work: what makes, how? Conceptual architecture.
- Are the theories internally consistent?
- **Program eval:** Identification, Significance, Measurement.
- How might it have developed evolutionarily?
- What are the equilibrium consequences? Multiple equilibria?
- How do findings shift prior?
- Referee report criticisms apply.

[*http://macartan.nyc/teaching/how-to-critique/*](http://macartan.nyc/teaching/how-to-critique/)

1. Course Logistics

Expectations

Reading Tips

2. Discussion Section

3. Political Centralization and An Alternative Political Tradition

4. The Consequences of Slave Trade

Discussion Section

Q1: Why did Tuungane “fail”?

Pay particular attention to:

1. Theory of change vs Reality
2. Advantages and disadvantages of measurements
3. Social organization

Q2: How did the slave trade affect Africa's "development"?

Discuss in regards to:

1. Destruction of African institutions
2. Economic impact and re-organization
3. Social fragmentation

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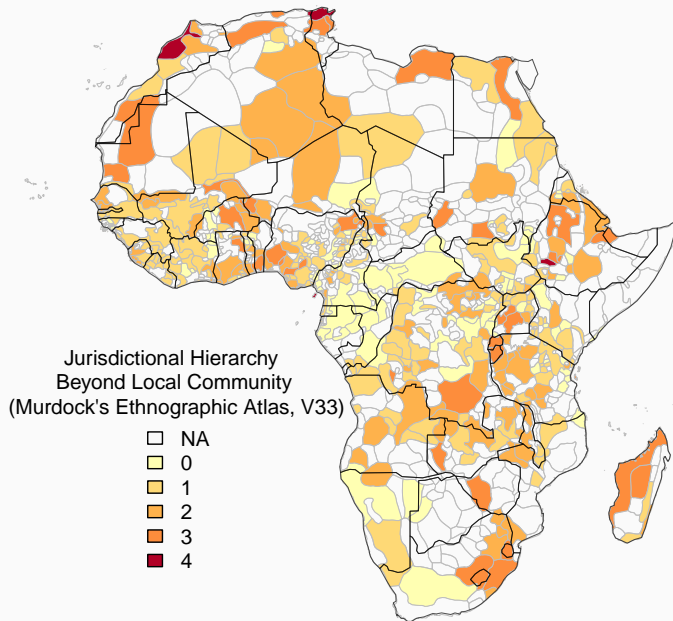
2. Discussion Section

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**Political centralization as an outcome of
institutional development?**

The frequently used Murdock's Ethnographic Atlas



Stylized fact: Why did Africa lag Eurasia in centralization?

- **State capacity** matters for economic outcomes (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Besley and Persson, 2011; Acemoglu, García-Jimeno and Robinson, 2015).
- State formation and centralization is essential for capacity.
- Why? Power-holders want to monopolize power (North, 1981).
- The empirical “conventional” wisdom pointed out to lack of socio-economic determinants of state formation: population density, warfare, trade (gosh!)
- Alternative 1: Willingness (Acemoglu, Robinson and Torvik, 2020)
- Alternative 2: Eurasian model is inapplicable to Africa.

OLS of density on centralization tells nothing about causality

- “Population spikes tend to occur after state development, not before. The areas where states first developed have the greatest capacity for sustained demographic increase and the intensification of production.” (Stanish, 2001)
- Pop density precedes state formation in Africa (Vansina, 1990)

Table 6

Instrumental variable results.

	Full sample		Africa subsample	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Panel A: Second stage regression</i>				
	Dependent variable: jurisdictional hierarchy beyond local community			
Population density	0.461*** (0.117)	0.590*** (0.156)	0.337 (0.294)	0.503 (0.451)
<i>Panel B: First stage regression</i>				
	Dependent variable: population density (SCCS §64)			
Agricultural potential	0.168*** (0.0353)	0.147*** (0.0397)	0.231** (0.0995)	0.176* (0.0928)
F-stat	22.63	13.67	5.39	3.60
Geographic controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Disease environment control	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	184	184	40	40

“Political centralization in pre-colonial Africa” (Osafo-Kwaako and Robinson, 2013)

An alternative political tradition: Autonomy preservation

- “Africans grappled in an original way with the question of how to maintain local autonomy paramount, even while enlarging the scale of society.” (Vansina (1990), p. 101)
- Stability of ancestral system is founded on different competing districts being in political equilibrium. (p. 193)
- Villages’ reliance on each other’s resources for common defense, trade, and intermarriage confers egalitarian standing. (p. 81)
- The least decentralized example comes from the “esombe” rituals of healing brotherhoods in Maniema. (p. 188)

Bwami: A Rule of Wealth and Wisdom

- Two types of “voluntary associations” in pre-colonial Maniema.
- “Brotherhood”: rites of normal life cycle, e.g. circumcision, maturehood induction, curing divination.
- “Association”: rites giving access to special status in overarching governing socio-political association. (p. 180)
- Social hierarchy based on male, circumcision, marital status, \$
- Wealth accumulation and proportional expenditure to move up.
- “Elevated status, fame, ... moral qualities and wisdom as they become privy to deeper truths and secrets.” (p. 184)
- Leadership is achieved, “not an inherited right” (p. 174).

Example 2: Congolese inner basin: “trail of the leopard”



Example 2: Congolese inner basin, trail of the leopards

- Appearance of the term “noko” (mother’s brother/sister’s son) signified an alliance among patrilineal Omaha kinship. In some languages, “noko” means intermediary/alliance, hypothesized to indicate inter-village centralization. (p. 107)
- There is a social hierarchy of “elder” and “younger” brother.
- “A sign of persistent autonomy of each village was the practice of all villages rallying to a common cause only in times of war, if they were attacked from the outside.” (p. 109)
- How do we think about the political philosophy foundation for this preference formation?
- Whether it is contractarian or predatory, there is legitimacy.

My interpretation of Vansina's theory of African Political Dev.

- Does not deny a socioeconomic determinant of centralization.
- Competing big men, equally strong, but equilibrium disruption from unequal distribution of resources, population density, trade access.
- “The only defensible generalization is that centralizing societies began in areas of rich resources. Even so, not all areas with rich resources provoked centralization. ... resources exist only in the eye of the beholder. Culture thus becomes crucial here, both as knowledge and technique and as a value system. Nothing dictates a priori that metal rings, anvils, or spears are to be good for social payments and matrimonial compensation.” (p. 194)
- Emphasizes diffusion and institutional **creative destruction**.

The Consequences of Slave Trade

How did the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade work?

- European merchants at ports exchanging with African traders. Europeans rarely directly involved in slave raiding.
- Slaves were acquired through warfare, kidnapping, coerced through existing social relationship, dispute settlement.
- Gun-slave nexus: prolonged series of small-scale military actions/wars. Captives turned into slave-soldiers or exchanged.
- Selling to intermediaries and merchants. Elaborate systems of credit/institutions to maintain long-distance trade (within Africa, between Europe and Africa, etc)
- Development of predatory “gunpowder states.” Little evidence of centralization and “good” state formation accompanying intensification of slave trade.
- Incredible levels of violence and brutality. Stylized fact: ~ one slave dying along routes to coast for each captured.

Firm's preference for capital and order from guns

150 *Inikori*

Appendix I (continued)

<i>Men</i>	Slave purchases				Firearms expended	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>No. guns</i>	<i>Kgs powder</i>
3	—	2	—	5	30	100
—	2	—	—	2	12	40
1	—	2	—	3	18	81
1	—	—	—	1	6	27
—	—	1	—	1	6	27
—	1	1	—	2	11	54
—	—	1	—	1	6	27
1	1	—	—	2	11	54
—	2	—	—	2	10	54
1	—	—	—	1	6	27
1	—	—	—	1	6	27
1	—	—	—	1	6	27
1	—	—	—	1	6	27
<i>Total</i>						
143	110	50	76	379	1942	10,514

Source and note: PRO. C.107/59, Ship *Jupiter's* Old Wages Book. This ship was owned by James Rogers & Co of Bristol. The names of the African traders at Bonny from whom the slaves were purchased are stated. The guns and gunpowder extracted form only a part of a long list of goods expended in each purchase. The quantity of the other goods is carefully itemized in each purchase. The total number of slaves purchased was 389, including three 'dash slaves'. But complete information is available only for the purchase of 379. The voyage lasted from 19 October 1792, to 19 July 1793.

Societal Reorganization around the Slave Trade

- State centralization occurred co-terminously with economic conditions provided by slave trade (Inikori, 1982b).
- Often these are coastal societies, mainly engaged in the sale of slaves: middlemen or retailer who sold straight to the Europeans (van Dantzig, 1982).
- Within-state: further reinforced by the militaristic character, conferring the warrior class much power in state affairs.
- Across-state in decline: war, inflation, and economic collapse, e.g. Kongo from moving activities to Luanda.
- State centralization, e.g. Kuba Kingdom? Rulers capitalized on slave trade opportunity but relied on pre-existing local traditions. They exported ivory and imported slaves.
- Demand for slave foodstuff sparked agricultural (economic) specialization among rainforest societies, often planting with high-yielding American crop, e.g. cassava, groundnuts, bananas.

How Decentralized Communities were affected

- 2 additional societies: slave-raiding and slave-producing.
- Structural change as the Congo river became a significant mode of transportation of raffia, iron, copper, from fishing to trading.
- Social status became fluid, economically conferred. Wealth for its own sake had never previously acquired followers.
- Fighting, onerous living conditions, women preferred to abort.
- Often firms settled and formed an agglomeration to centralize defense, with large population around 5-10 thousands by 1880s (Vansina, 1990).
- Tradeoff between economic organization and political order, due to the nature of the former.
- Conceivable that Slave Trade destroyed what would be strong, centralized states in Murdock's map.

Summary: Is Africa simply different?

- Maybe. But lack of centralization shows how conventional wisdom in social science is inadequate in explaining basic patterns of human organization.
- The social preference for local autonomy, regardless of social origins or political philosophy, proves pernicious during Trade.
- Many examples of institutional adaptability, despite unleashing bad social equilibrium, e.g. trust?
- The diversity of political centralization (Kuba, Nyiginya, Zulu, etc.) remains a puzzle. Task: find that X, and Z.

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