

A Gendered Perspective

Economics, Politics, and African Societies: TA 04

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Discussion Section

We discussed many concepts this week

- Ethnicity and identity
- Salience
- Peace in the feud
- **Gender**
- **Estrangement in the family**
- **Bates' redistribution argument**
- **Collective action**

1. Discussion Section

2. **Bates' *Markets and States in Tropical Africa***

Bautista-Robinson: Where are women in Bates' arguments?

3. **Gluckman's "Estrangement in the Family"**

“A System of Spoils”: Bates’ arguments in *Markets and States*

- Public monopsonies (marketing boards, legacy of colonialism) bought crops much below world prices (Bates, 1981).
- Why tax the farmers (70%)? Governments located in cities faced potential unrest, thus appeasing urban constituents with cheaper cost of living (food).
- This policy led to agriculture collapse. Poorer countries have comparative advantage in agriculture, this caused (–) growth.
- Why not increase crop prices? Public goods (prices) are under-supplied because elite find it politically irrational to redistribute income on goods that cannot be targeted towards supporters and withheld from opponents.
- “The conferral of benefits in the form of public works projects, such as state farms, has the political advantage of allowing the benefits to be **selectively apportioned**” (p. 114).

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Public Goods Apportionment (Lizzeri and Persico, 2001)

- Politicians may not offer socially desirable goods because the benefits of public goods cannot be easily targeted to voters.
- In equilibrium, redistribution is more extreme when public good needs to be provided. Targeted voters must receive transfers that exceed the value of public goods.
- No candidates will offer private transfer infinitesimally less than public good value $G - \varepsilon$ because (1) they can only win these votes only if opponent didn't provide public goods, and (2) Increasing transfer by 2ε has small marginal cost and can win votes even if opponent provided public goods.
- Model goes on to show this private-public transfer tradeoffs are different between proportional representation and winner-take-all political systems.

How could African governments pursue anti-farmer policies?

1. Collective action problem from free-riding: all cocoa farmers want price increase, but an individual farmer does not want to be the only one to do so! The cost of an individual action outweighs the shared benefit.
2. Coordination problem from many small farmers in Ghana.
3. States punish organization/uprising, although rural dwellers have alternative private choice to “punish the states” back. They exit areas where economies had declined (“product market”) and migrated to areas of more opportunity (“labor market”).
4. Non-democratic political structure and rural location, so the repercussion of farmers organization was less salient than an urban unrest.

Bates vs Bautista-Robinson: Collective action or Gender?

1. If Boserup's hypothesis of capital division by gender leads to the decline of women's status were right, women might fight back and make it harder to coordinate among cocoa farmers.
 2. Women are very important and a backbone to African agricultural and market economy. While women want higher cocoa prices like men, they also make money by selling goods to the subsidized urban constituencies, so would be fine with not having price increase.
 3. Furthermore, cocoa growing societies are Akan people, who are matrilineal, prone to "estrangement in the family" and spousal conflict (Gluckman, 1963).
- * How about household sharing of income?

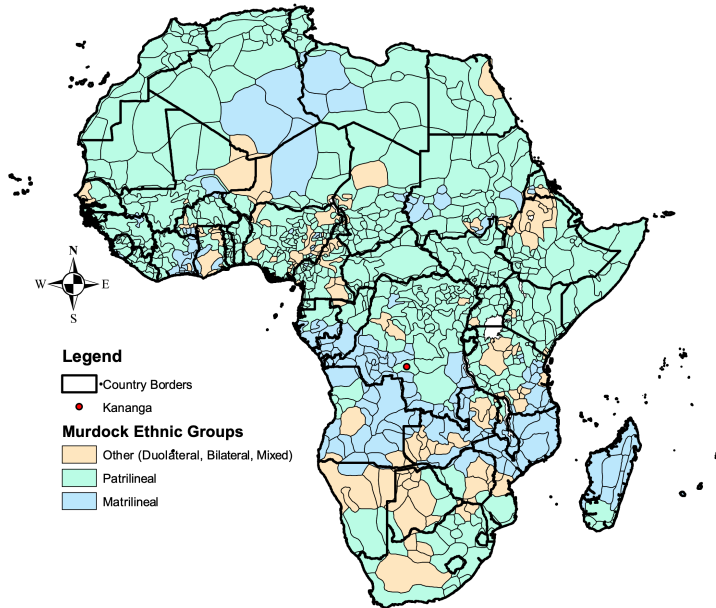


Figure 1 from (Lowes, 2017)

Estrangement in the Family

Akan lineage structure (Triangle = Woman)

J. MOSCONA, N. NUNN, AND J. A. ROBINSON

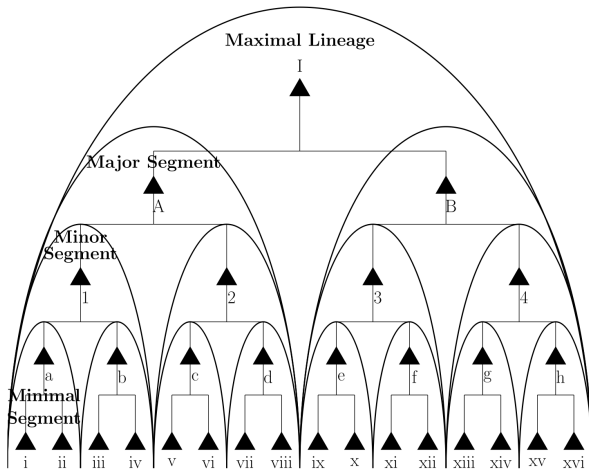


FIGURE 1.—A representation of a hypothetical segmentary lineage society.

Division over women's rights lead to estrangement

- “... as the organic fact of **mating** and **procreation** are *socialized* within an extended kinship system, a fundamental conflict centres on the position of the woman” (p. 73).
- Gluckman notes in **patrilineal systems**, “these rights are held by men. The two main rights in a woman are: firstly rights in her as a wife; and secondly, rights in her as a child-bearer.” (p. 73)
- In **matrilineal systems**, however, these two rights are held by two separate men: husband and women plus their brothers.
- “... in this extreme form of the matrilineal system, where sisters did not leave their brothers' houses, something typical of all matrilineal systems. In these systems the bond of a woman to her brother, whose heir she will produce, is strong. On the other hand, her bond to the man with whom she cohabits and who begets her children is weak” (p. 69).

Consequence of Gluckman's matrilineal theory

- Gluckman's economic constrained optimization: "I don't want you to think that African spouses do not have strong attachments, companionship, passion, and love. They do indeed. But the attachment between spouses, with its potentially high emotional involvement, has to compete in the individual's sentimental life with wider attachments to other kin" (p. 77)
- "Hence in matrilineal societies where [a wife] bears children mainly for her own blood-kin, her wifely bond is weak. Divorce is frequent; women are liable to side with their brothers against their husbands. A man trusts his sister, and not his wife: Your sister is always your sister; tomorrow your wife may be another man's wife" (p. 74).
- [Lowes \(2017\)](#) test spousal cooperation and found that spousal conflicts ensued but children had better welfare. Mechanisms?

- Bates, Robert.** 1981. *Markets and states in tropical Africa : the political basis of agricultural policies*. Berkeley:University of California Press.
- Gluckman, Max.** 1963. *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Basil Blackwell.
- Lizzeri, Alessandro, and Nicola Persico.** 2001. "The provision of public goods under alternative electoral incentives." *American Economic Review*, 91(1): 225-239.
- Lowes, Sara.** 2017. "Matrilineal kinship and spousal cooperation: Evidence from the matrilineal belt." *Unpublished manuscript*. URL: https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/slowes/files/lowes_matrilineal.pdf.