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AFRICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE IMPACT OF COLONIALISM

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ABSTRACT

Conventional wisdom proposes deep historical roots for authoritarianism in Africa: either colonial “decentralized despotism” or enduring structural features. We present a new theoretical perspective. Africans sought autonomous local communities, which constrained precolonial rulers. Colonizers largely left constrained institutions in place given budget limitations. Innovation, where it occurred, typically scaled up councils rather than invented despotic chiefs. To test these implications, we compiled two original datasets that measure precolonial institutions and British colonial administrations around 1950 in 463 local government units. Although colonial institutions were authoritarian at the national level, most Native Authorities were constrained by some type of council and many local institutions lacked a singular ruler entirely. The form of Native Authority institutions and the composition of councils are strongly correlated with precolonial institutional forms. The persistence of institutional constraints at the local level suggests alternative channels through which colonial rule fostered postcolonial authoritarian regimes.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Africa's economic volatility and relative poverty since independence have frequently been attributed to poor governance, in particular, the long-standing prevalence of authoritarian institutions. What is the source of these authoritarian political institutions? Existing research offers two broad perspectives.

Some attribute great importance to the colonial period. In *colonial-authoritarianism* accounts, colonizers created authoritarian structures by transforming local institutions, which formed the basis of large and decentralized colonial states. For example, according to Mamdani (1996), "Like all colonial powers, the British worked with a single model of customary authority in precolonial Africa. That model was monarchical, patriarchal, and authoritarian. It presumed a king at the center of every polity, a chief on every piece of administrative ground, and a patriarch in every homestead or kraal" (39). In his view and related accounts (for example, Ranger 2012; Baldwin 2015, 30–31; Stasavage 2020, 44), Britain and other colonizers routinely empowered despotic chiefs by eliminating checks on their authority that were pervasive in the precolonial period.

Others de-emphasize colonialism. In *precolonial-authoritarianism* accounts, European rule simply preserved existing local institutions, which they characterize as authoritarian. Most of precolonial Africa had low population densities, and the relative absence of written languages and heavy agricultural technologies prevented the development of strong states (Goody 1971; Diamond 1997; Herbst 2000). Consequently, the political and social dynamics that elsewhere empowered civil society organizations and made governments representative and accountable were never initiated (Levi 1989). Despite possessing more advanced technologies, Europeans also struggled to broadcast power over large, sparsely populated territories (Herbst 2000). Seeking to minimize colonial expenditures (Berry 1992), European colonisers governed Africa with only a "thin white line" of metropolitan officials (Kirk-Greene 1980). Therefore, European rule did not reverse the historical trends that promoted authoritarian governments.

The two leading accounts disagree about the transformative role of colonialism and differ in their

views of how democratic Africa's political institutions were prior to independence. In this paper, we propose a new account by demonstrating the *persistence of institutional constraints* at the local level within British Africa. Colonial institutions were authoritarian, unaccountable, and repressive at the national level. However, this was not generally true of *local* institutions under British colonialism, which look nothing like the characterization of autocratic chiefs everywhere. Instead, contrary to colonial-authoritarianism accounts, most Native Authorities were constrained by some type of council and many local institutions lacked a singular ruler entirely. These institutional constraints largely perpetuated precolonial traditions of constrained rulers. This finding revises the view from precolonial-authoritarianism accounts that authoritarian institutions had long-standing precedent in African history.

To produce these new insights, we confront two foundational questions in our theoretical account on which the literature lacks consensus. First, what was the typical form of precolonial institutions in Africa? We argue that rulers were typically unable to govern without the support of councils comprised of hereditary elites and, sometimes, broader elements of society. Many accounts of precolonial political centralization focus on how low population densities triggered fission at the expense of state formation (Kopytoff 1987; Herbst 2000). Yet this leaves unexplained the nature of political institutions in acephalous societies or, when they formed, in African states. We take seriously the central strain in traditional African political thought by which Africans sought to maintain the "internal autonomy of the local community" (Vansina 1990, 119; see also Hanson 2022), which prevented any single individual from accumulating too much power. Although the proliferation of guns in the nineteenth century upset this anti-authoritarian balance in some parts of the continent (Goody 1971; Reid 2012), the typical social contract entailed limited powers for the nominal ruler.

Second, how did British colonial administrators retain or alter the political institutions they encountered? Existing research often conceives of British indirect rule as a coherent ideology that imposed homogeneous and authoritarian local institutions. The reality was much different. Relying

on African elites to govern local areas was expedient for British administrators, who faced resource constraints imposed by a metropolitan government that struggled to convince voters about the value of African colonization (Gardner 2012). Where colonial officials encountered existing states, it was prudent to maintain local institutions, including councils and rules of succession. Cheap and effective administration was harder to achieve in areas with petty chiefdoms or acephalous governance. Yet contrary to existing characterizations, “inventing” tradition by arbitrarily granting authoritarian powers was rarely an effective solution because it prompted discontent and costly revolts. Instead, the more cost-effective solution was to scale up local political institutions by creating higher-level councils and to encourage participation by individuals literate in English. This process may have disrupted local customs in numerous ways but bears little resemblance to the conventional depiction that British rule created a system of “decentralized despotism.”

Empirically, we address a crucial gap in the literature: the absence of systematic evidence about historical political institutions at the local level. We use archival and anthropological sources to measure precolonial and colonial political institutions for 463 local political units across British Africa. For colonial-era institutions, we incorporated information from surveys of local administration across British Africa conducted in the late 1940s. The primary sources are the five volumes of Lord Hailey’s *Native Administration in the British African Territories* (Hailey 1950a,b, 1951a,b, 1953) and the extensive primary source material that Hailey used to construct these volumes, which we accessed from the UK National Archives in London. Our statistical sample includes eleven countries for which the Hailey books and archives provide extensive details on local institutions. In Appendix D, we provide qualitative details on three additional cases for which our source lacks any, or sufficiently detailed, information: South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and Sierra Leone. Collectively, we address almost every British colony in Africa. In our dataset, the unit of analysis is the “Native Treasury” (NT). This was the level at which local expenditures were decided. Given notions from European history that despotic rulers arise from unilateral control over finances, this is the most appropriate local unit for evaluating propositions about authoritarian governance. Each NT contained one or more “Native Authorities” (NAs), which were the basic

administrative units in British Africa and served as the “practical application . . . of indirect rule” (Cowan 1958, 23).

For the precolonial period, we consulted the thirty-eight relevant volumes of the *Ethnographic Survey of Africa* (edited by Daryll Forde), which cover close to 200 African societies. To cross-check, we also drew on dozens of historical and ethnographic monographs and articles. Using these sources, we constructed a three-valued variable for precolonial political institutions: state with an unconstrained ruler, state with a constrained ruler, or no political institutions above the local level.

We produce three main empirical findings, each of which support our theoretical propositions while contrasting with existing accounts. The first finding is descriptive: local colonial institutions were not homogeneous and usually did not consist of autocratic chiefs. Instead, Native Authorities exhibited *considerable heterogeneity* and were largely *not authoritarian*. Only 17% of NAs consisted solely of a chief. Instead, NAs that consisted of *only councils* were more prevalent (48%), and NA institutions that included both a chief and a council were common as well (35%). This variety suggests that broad generalizations about “indirect rule” provide almost no insight into the form of political institutions at the local level.

Second, the structure of precolonial institutions *strongly correlates* with the general form of local colonial political institutions. Areas with precolonial institutional constraints rarely had colonial institutions without executive constraints, as solo chiefs were mostly confined to the few areas with unconstrained states prior to colonial rule. The coefficient estimates are very large in magnitude and robust to controlling for various confounders, to assessing sensitivity to unobservables, and to measuring key variables in different ways. We also present evidence from individual cases to trace specific institutions over time. The general pattern is persistence. Where colonial officials intervened in the structure of institutions, it was by scaling up and expanding participation on local councils rather than by creating new autocratic chiefs.

Third, various pieces of evidence suggest that councils not only existed during the colonial period,

but were important. Hereditary elite title holders or popularly selected members dominated almost all councils. By contrast, council members were rarely appointed by the Native Authority chief or by British administrators. Moreover, the composition of councils was predictable based on the form of precolonial institutions, another piece of evidence supporting institutional continuity. Finally, councils are correlated with local spending patterns. Areas with a legally recognized council spent a lower fraction on administration (salaries for officials).

In sum, we revise the conventional wisdom on the historical origins of authoritarian institutions in Africa. Some accounts contend that colonialism promoted local authoritarian rule whereas other perspectives date authoritarian institutions farther back. We demonstrate instead that institutional constraints such as councils were prevalent in the precolonial period and that these institutions persisted at the local level during the colonial era.

Nonetheless, we concur with the general contention that the colonial period contributed to authoritarian rule in Africa after independence. Colonial rule set bad precedents of mass coercion (Young 1994), favoring resource extraction over public good provision (Cooper 2002), and reifying ethnic identities (Mamdani 1996; Pengl, Roessler and Rueda 2022). In the conclusion, we propose a specific alternative hypothesis for postcolonial authoritarianism: artificially constructed colonial states were too large to enable traditional constraints to “scale up” and prevent authoritarian rule. In this view, the problem was that colonialism enabled centralized, rather than decentralized, authoritarian regimes. Thus, in addition to rethinking long-standing debates about the impact of colonialism on political institutions, our findings promise to contribute to the large literature on institutions and authoritarianism in postcolonial Africa (see Hassan 2022 for a recent review).

Our large-N case study of the British empire is ideal for learning about African political institutions and colonial legacies. The most tangible advantage of our empirical setting is the availability of detailed colonial data at the local level, facilitated by the surveys conducted in the 1940s. We are unaware of a comparable source for other empires. This yields a comprehensive sample for British Africa. By contrast, many touchstone pieces on African colonialism sample their cases with

discretion, which leaves open key questions about how representative were these episodes (Young 1994; Mamdani 1996; Herbst 2000; Ranger 2012). Existing quantitative work avoids this problem, but often at the cost of analyzing highly aggregated units such as ethnic groups or entire countries. Exceptions that, like our analysis, use more fine-grained units include precolonial African states (Müller-Crepon 2020; Dasgupta and Johnson-Kanu 2021; Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet 2022), colonial districts (Huillery 2009; Ricart-Huguet 2022), Native Treasuries in four British African colonies (Bolt and Gardner 2020), and paramount chieftaincies in Sierra Leone (Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson 2014).

Our empirical setting also enables us to examine a vital question that has never previously been tested quantitatively. Many scholars analyze the directness of colonial rule, focusing primarily on colonizer identity (usually British versus French) and precolonial states in their statistical tests (Gerring et al. 2011; Archibong 2018; Letsa and Wilfahrt 2020; Müller-Crepon 2020). Yet these studies do not seek to explain whether local institutions were authoritarian—presumably in part because of the previously unquestioned convention that local rulers were, of course, authoritarian. By focusing on British Africa, we eliminate many possible sources of heterogeneity, making it all the more puzzling that local governance institutions were so heterogeneous. We follow existing research by contending that institutions in areas with precolonial states differed in important ways from institutions in places organized by villages, kinship, or age grades. However, we also open a new dimension by demonstrating that many local kings and chiefs did not govern as unconstrained despots. Thus, even without comparing across empires or world regions, we are able to document and provide a theoretical explanation for unrecognized sources of heterogeneity. In light of the present findings, inter-imperial comparisons (e.g., local institutions in British versus French Africa) or cross-regional comparisons (e.g., princely states in India versus local rulers in Africa) are a natural departure point for future research.

2 THEORY

We begin by developing a new theoretical framework for understanding precolonial and colonial institutions in Africa. The desire to safeguard the autonomy of the local community led to constraints on rulers throughout precolonial Africa. The high costs of ruling directly required British officials to delegate considerable decision-making authority to Africans, which preserved institutional constraints. We illustrate our theoretical contentions primarily with examples from Nigeria. Following the statistical analysis, we discuss cases from other areas.

2.1 CONSTRAINED AUTHORITY IN PRECOLONIAL AFRICA

How did political constraints emerge in precolonial Africa? Although little research in political science examines this question, the historical and ethnographic literature suggests that the preponderance of African societies had strong egalitarian norms and a desire to maintain the “internal autonomy of the local community” (Vansina 1990, 119). Vansina proposes that “Africans grappled in an original way with the question of how to maintain local autonomy paramount, even while enlarging the scale of society.” To square this circle, Africans innovated many types of non-state associations and organizations based on lineages, clans, and age grades. “The ability to refuse centralization while maintaining the necessary cohesion among a myriad of autonomous units has been the most original contribution of western Bantu tradition to the institutional history of the world” (237).

These basic norms and values in African societies made it very difficult to create centralized political authority, leading to a proliferation of diverse political units. As Southall (1970, 231) highlights, “before they were cut short by the nineteenth century onslaught of the Western imperial powers, the indigenous societies and autonomous polities of Africa had to be counted in the thousands.” For example, politics was organized at the village level throughout Igboland in Eastern Nigeria, yet political institutions were nonetheless highly complex (McIntosh 1999). Each village had an elaborate structure of councils, in addition to other types of societies such as lineage groups and secret societies (Afigbo 1981). Villages tended to be divided into two halves that existed in

“balanced opposition” to each other. For example, the Abaja village group was divided between Ama and Owerri, where Green (1947, 16) noted, “the working of village affairs was considerably bound up with the system of checks and balances and of institutionalized rivalry introduced by this dualism.” Farther north in Nigeria, the Tiv were organized through descent groups and lineages. Cults and diviners often used witchcraft allegations to prevent any individual from becoming too powerful, which would disrupt the lineage system and the principle of egalitarianism (Bohannan 1958, 3). In East Africa, a large number of societies were organized around a rotating sequence of age grades where power was diffused and continually rotating. Bernardi (1985) argues that such societies were organized precisely to ensure that centralized authority did not emerge.

The general desire to safeguard local autonomy also meant that more centralized polities, when they did in fact emerge, typically constrained those in power. This was true of the major states of Yorubaland in Western Nigeria (Benin, Egba, Ife, Ijebu, Oyo). Although the obas of each state claimed divine powers, in practice they made all important decisions in consultation with a council of elders (Usman and Falola 2019, 25; Ogundiran 2021, 191-192). Of course, despite safeguards against concentrating power, rulers did sometimes amass authoritarian powers. Increased access to European guns in the nineteenth century upset the balance of power in areas such as Northern Nigeria and the kingdoms of the Great Lakes (Goody 1971; Reid 2012). In the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, councils existed but most exerted little influence (Johnston 1970, 172). However, as we document below with our original data on precolonial institutions, authoritarian cases were the exception rather than the rule.

2.2 BRITISH NATIVE AUTHORITY INSTITUTIONS

To what extent did European colonial rule affect African political institutions? Existing political science research takes one of two perspectives on this question. Some argue that colonizers routinely interfered with local practices and arbitrarily created authoritarian rulers (Young 1994; Mamdani 1996; Ranger 2012). Yet others argue that European presence on the ground was too light to discernibly impact African institutions (Kirk-Greene 1980; Berry 1992; Herbst 2000). We

propose a distinct argument. Colonial governments across Africa were faced with significant constraints in the financial resources they could access. In the beginning, the sheer pace of territorial claims during the Scramble for Africa made effective governance impossible without local consultation (Berry 1992, 329). Furthermore, the salaries of European officials were set in metropolitan capitals and were thus extremely high relative to local incomes (Cogneau, Dupraz and Mesple-Soms 2021). As a result, few Europeans were on the ground, which increased the necessity of local collaboration (Kirk-Greene 1980). Iliffe (2007, 193) argues that colonial states were “mere skeletons fleshed out and vitalized by African political forces.”

Different empires dealt with these constraints in financial and human resources in distinct ways. France organized its African colonies into federations and used revenue from trade taxes in more commercialized areas to subsidize the administration of poorer landlocked areas (Manning 1982). In the British empire, the delegation of power had long been central to the administration of far-flung territories. In Africa, British officials delegated considerable authority to Africans from the beginning.¹ Early laws passed by new colonial administrations in Africa outlined the terms of this delegation. In Northern Nigeria, for example, the newly established British colonial administration recognized the broad jurisdiction of existing Emirates over “‘natives’ and matters of customary law.” In other areas, such as the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Kenya and Nyasaland, gazetted Native Authorities (i.e., those named as such in the official *Gazette*) were given specific responsibilities for maintaining law and order, constructing and maintaining roads, and regulating local markets and access to land (Bolt and Gardner 2020).

Nor was this tendency to delegate authority merely a product of the early colonial period. Economic volatility caused by fluctuations in demand for commodity exports (Broadberry and Gardner 2022) generated increasingly vocal demands from Africans for increased government services in exchange for the taxes they paid (Gardner 2012). Colonial governments responded to this by expanding the scope of local government activity and powers of taxation in the hope of channelling

¹The main exceptions were the large white settlement cases of South Africa and Zimbabwe, which we address in Appendix D.

political opposition to local levels of government. This included, from the interwar period, the creation of Native Treasuries. According to Perham (1935, 14), a scholar of colonial administration and frequent advisor to the Colonial Office, “the treasury system has enabled the native administrations to make all kinds of new activity their own.” The types of services provided included council halls, schools, roads, bridges, model farms, medical dispensaries, and local market management.

The need to delegate authority over local governance raised the question—to whom? It was generally easier to construct effective systems of Native Administration in areas with precolonial states because British officials could delegate to pre-existing ruling dynasties (Hailey 1951*b*). In the many areas where precolonial rulers were constrained, this approach yielded Native Authority institutions with influential councils. For example, all five of the aforementioned states in Yorubaland gained their own Native Authority and Treasury. These cases are instructive because their legal structures were altered over time to better match on-the-ground realities. As of 1939, the oba of each state was recognized as the sole Native Authority in their Treasury unit, that is, without official mention of their council. However, colonial administrators became aware of the mismatch between this arrangement and how policymaking decisions were made in practice. “The term ‘Sole Native Authority’ has an autocratic sound that was in fact divorced from the realities of the situation [in Yorubaland]. No action which was going to affect the local community would normally have been taken by a Sole Native Authority without full consultation with the council” (Brown 1950, 17). Extensive reorganization occurred in the late 1940s. The traditional council was legally attached to the Native Authority in all these cases, each of which featured a large element of popularly selected counselors.

The same incentives encouraged British officials to keep autocratic institutions in place when doing so reflected the precolonial status quo. The former emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate inspired the specific framework of Native Administration developed by Frederick Lugard. Emirs from traditional dynasties became solo-chief Native Authorities. Their councils were purely advisory and

many council members were selected by the emir. Overall, these arrangements perpetuated the precolonial status quo of strong rulers and weak councils in Northern Nigeria. However, emirs within the Caliphate nonetheless lost some important autocratic privileges under colonialism, in particular over armies; most emirs previously had a permanent corps of titled officers that commanded enslaved persons and had discretion to call up reserves to pursue war (Smaldone 1977, 39–41).

By contrast, small-scale political organizations such as village councils, kinship systems, or age grades impeded the creation of cost-effective colonial administrations. In such areas, the need to delegate fiscal powers to Native Authorities raised pressing questions about how to balance two considerations for the scale of local government. The small scale of political organization mitigated against making Native Treasury areas too large. Hailey (1944) argued that “it is an essential feature of the Native Treasury system that it should be sufficiently ‘local’ to give proof to the ordinary man that some of his tax-money is coming back to him in the form of local services.” Yet Native Treasury areas needed to be large enough to sustain a minimal level of services. When Native Treasuries were established in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), for example, officials warned that some of the original Native Authorities “controlled so few people that they were unable to support independent treasuries and could never become effective units of local government.”²

To maintain order and to raise revenue over larger areas, British officials created new institutions. However, this did not necessitate creating the types of authoritarian structures suggested by Mamdani (1996) and others. Authoritarian rulers tended to be ineffective where they lacked a traditional basis. Colonial authorities “were forced realise that to rule indirectly, one had to use an indigenous person or group of persons with real traditional claims to rule rather than a man who seemed capable of it” (Crowder and Ikime 1970, xix). Therefore, “the instances of chiefs being appointed to thrones to which they had no traditional claims . . . were rare” (xii).

The early Warrant Chief system in Eastern Nigeria highlights the drawbacks of inventing authori-

²“Notes on African local government in Northern Rhodesia,” in UK National Archives CO 1015/524.

tarian rulers, which prompted reforms. For several decades, the primary African agents in Igboland and neighboring areas were individuals with warrants (hence called “warrant chiefs”) to serve on the Native Court (Afigbo 1972). However, the Warrant Chief system was ineffective at raising taxes because the chiefs were perceived as illegitimate. Britain abandoned the system after the 1929 Women’s War, in which hostility was principally directed against the Warrant Chiefs and the Native Courts. Fearing another costly conflict, British officials collected hundreds of Intelligence Reports throughout Nigeria to learn more about traditional institutions (Hailey 1950a, 159). In the 1930s, clan councils replaced the Warrant Chiefs throughout Eastern Nigeria.³ Each clan council combined numerous villages that were autonomous prior to British rule. For example, the Ndoki Clan Council in Rivers Province included members of numerous individual villages that had historically coalesced into seven different groups, and the Village Councils and Group Councils comprised lower-tier elements of the Native Administration.⁴ In practice, the effective authority of the higher-level councils was often limited because the “real seat of indigenous authority . . . lay in the heads of kindred or family groups or Village Councils” (Hailey 1951a, 165). However, the key observation is that this colonial “innovation” embedded constraints into the new political institutions. Thus, it diverged starkly in form from the preceding Warrant Chief system, which is often suggested to be emblematic of despotic colonial innovations. By the 1940s, the explicit policy became to promote popularly elected councils in areas where traditional authority structures were weak, including Eastern Nigeria, Kenya, and Eastern Uganda (African Studies Branch 1949, 18).

Coupling the discussion of precolonial institutions with the objectives of and constraints faced by colonial officials yields three main hypotheses. First, political institutions such as councils should be prevalent during the colonial period. Second, the presence of councils should be highly predictable depending on the nature of precolonial institutions in an area. Third, the councils that existed during the colonial period should exert meaningful constraints on local rulers.

³In our data reflecting conditions in the late 1940s, which we describe below, ninety-one of ninety-five NTs in Eastern Nigeria consisted of council-only NAs.

⁴Intelligence report CSE 1/85/5128. Collected by the authors from the archives in Enugu, Nigeria.

3 POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS IN AFRICA: DATA AND SUMMARY STATISTICS

In this section, we introduce and present summary statistics from our original data on political institutions in precolonial and colonial Africa. Most precolonial political polities in our sample exhibited constraints on the executive through institutions such as councils. Under colonial rule, Native Authority institutions were heterogeneous and frequently contained councils that could influence policies. Both findings contrast with the conventional depiction of authoritarian rule in Africa prior to independence.

3.1 STATES AND COUNCILS IN PRECOLONIAL AFRICA

We compiled extensive original data on political institutions in precolonial Africa. Despotic polities were rare. Many areas had rulers constrained by influential councils or lacked state-like institutions entirely. Appendix B provides supporting details for the measurement procedures discussed here.

We base our conceptualization of precolonial African states on Fortes and Evans-Pritchard’s (1940, 5) criteria of “Group A” societies, meaning they have “centralized authority, administrative machinery, and judicial institutions—in short, a government.” To operationalize this concept and generate a list of states, we built upon a recent dataset of precolonial African states from Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2022), which draws in large part from the work of eminent historians of Africa, J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder.

Our precolonial institutions variable takes three values: (1) state with an unconstrained ruler, (2) state with a ruler constrained by an influential council, and (3) no state. For each state, we consulted extensive historical and anthropological sources to code political constraints. We coded a binary variable for whether precolonial rulers were institutionally constrained by an effective council. Did the chief regularly consult a council? Did a council regularly influence policy decisions? Was the chief unable to regularly override the desires of the council? The scholarly literature suggests many ways in which rulers could be constrained and made accountable, but we chose

this definition because it is concrete and relatively straightforward to measure.⁵ We consulted the relevant volumes of the *Ethnographic Survey of Africa* (edited by Daryll Forde), which we cross-checked using dozens of additional books and articles about individual cases.⁶

The unit of analysis throughout the paper is the Native Treasury (NT). Thus, we matched our list of precolonial states with NTs. While doing so, we compiled three pieces of evidence that demonstrate the high degree of persistence in historical state institutions: names, royal lines, and general territorial integrity. Although these institutions differ from our main focus on political constraints, these additional findings complement the broader findings of colonial persistence. First, of the sixty-three states in our list, *all but two had a treasury named after the historical state*. Almost every case exhibits a one-to-one mapping between precolonial state and NT.⁷ Second, not only the names, but also the traditional ruling dynasties, persisted. The royal line survived until independence *in every case*. The only partial exceptions are the gaps in Asante (1900–26) and Benin (1897–1914), when British officials temporarily deposed each ruling dynasty before restoring them to facilitate native administration. Third, we assessed continuities in territory. In each case, the (last) capital was located within the area of the NT and the overall overlap between the area of the historical state and of the NT administrative unit was high. Appendix Table B.1 lists every precolonial state and the corresponding treasury, and provides details on the aforementioned patterns. In Appendix B, we discuss why our new data are uniquely suited to assessing hypotheses about institutional persistence between the precolonial and colonial eras.

Table 1 provides summary statistics. Overall, 20% of NTs corresponded with precolonial states. A bare majority of states in our data set (thirty-two of sixty-three) lacked institutionalized constraints on the ruler, but this understates the prevalence of constraints. Our list of states includes

⁵We lacked sufficient information to measure accurately the extent of participation in precolonial polities across our sample. However, in some—for example, the Tswana states of Botswana—it was clearly high (Schapera 1940).

⁶We discuss concerns about using colonial-era anthropological accounts in Appendix B.3.

⁷The exceptions are the Asante state, which we link to every treasury in the Crown Colony of Ashanti; and Borgu, which we link to the two NTs in the Borgu district of Northern Nigeria. These two NTs are Bussa and Kaiama, which most likely were independent political entities within the constellation of precolonial Borgu states (Crowder 1973).

Table 1: Summary Statistics for Precolonial Institutions

Colony	# NTs	Unconstrained state	Constrained state	No state
Nigeria	203	0.11	0.08	0.81
Eastern	95	0.00	0.00	1.00
Northern	59	0.49	0.17	0.34
Western	39	0.00	0.15	0.85
Colony	10	0.00	0.00	1.00
Gold Coast	87	0.00	0.34	0.66
Tanganyika	52	0.00	0.00	1.00
N Rhodesia	42	0.00	0.07	0.93
Kenya	26	0.00	0.00	1.00
Nyasaland	16	0.00	0.00	1.00
Uganda	13	0.23	0.00	0.77
Gambia	13	0.00	0.00	1.00
High Commission*	11	0.00	0.91	0.09
Averages	463	0.07	0.13	0.80

Notes: The cells in the table present the fraction of NTs for each colony with each of the three types of precolonial political institutions: unconstrained state, constrained state, or no state.

*The High Commission territories included nine NTs for Bechuanaland and one for each of Basutoland and Swaziland.

twenty-six distinct emirates within the Sokoto Caliphate, most of which had similar authoritarian institutions. Beyond these cases, almost all rulers of precolonial states were constrained. Yet the vast majority of NT units did not contain a precolonial state. This group of societies includes the aforementioned Tiv and Igbo of Nigeria. In these areas, institutional constraints took many forms, as discussed above. Although we do not directly measure institutions in the non-state areas, extensive anthropological and historical evidence catalogs the prevalence of political constraints on rulers and of village governance entirely through councils.

3.2 NATIVE AUTHORITIES AND COUNCILS IN COLONIAL AFRICA

To measure characteristics of colonial Native Authority institutions, we incorporated information from surveys of local administration in British colonies around 1950. The patterns we document contrast sharply with the general characterization in the literature that institutions of indirect rule were homogeneous and authoritarian. Using a broad sample from British colonies, we instead establish that these local institutions were highly heterogeneous and, frequently, empowered coun-

cils alongside, or instead of, individual chiefs. Appendix C provides additional coding notes, a summary of the role of women in Native Authorities, and excerpts from our codebook for Native Authority institutions.

Each Native Treasury (NT), our unit of analysis, contained one or multiple Native Authorities (NAs). We coded each NA as one of three institutional types: solo chief, chief and council, or council only.⁸ To compute institutional values at the level of the NT, we calculated the fraction of NAs within the NT that had each type of institution.⁹ Our primary sources are the five volumes of Lord Hailey's *Native Administration in the British African Territories* (Hailey 1950a,b, 1951a,b, 1953) and the extensive primary source material that Hailey used to construct these volumes, which we accessed from the UK National Archives in London (see also Bolt and Gardner 2020).¹⁰

The three institutional types differ in whether a chief and/or council is gazetted (that is, legally recognized in the colonial *Gazettes*) as part of the Native Authority. In most cases, the distinction is easily discerned from the name of the NA. For example, the Emir of Kano was a solo-chief NA in Northern Nigeria (despite having an advisory council), the Ada Manche and the State Council was a chief-and-council NA in the Gold Coast, and the Ndoki Clan Council was a council-only NA in Eastern Nigeria. Other cases were more complicated because they featured double-decker systems in which a district contained numerous minor chiefs or headmen that were legally recognized as NAs, but the highest-level NA was a council. We code these cases as council only for the same reason that we use NTs as the unit of analysis: the higher-level council corresponded with the jurisdiction of the NT, and thus councils rather than individual chiefs more directly participated

⁸Note that in many cases there were also Subordinate Native Authorities and other councils below the level of the Native Authority, which we do not use to code any variables.

⁹In 444 of 463 NTs (96%), every NA within the NT had the same type of institution. Thus, the fractions presented in Table 2 can be roughly interpreted as the percentage of NTs that had each type of institution; for the ease of interpretation, this is how we convey this information in the text.

¹⁰The surveys are from the TNA CO/1018 series. Using colonial sources raises natural questions about bias. However, available evidence suggests that Hailey wrote truthful reports that attempted to accurately characterize local political institutions—even where such characterizations were inconvenient to local officials, some of whom complained about the reports. See Memorandum on “Lord Hailey’s Report on Native Administration and Political Development,” 7 November 1944, in Kenya National Archives BW1/1/559.

in the Treasury.¹¹ For example, in nearly every district in Kenya (and parts of Eastern Uganda), numerous local headmen were recognized as NAs but a Local Native Council represented the entire district, which overlapped with the jurisdiction of the NT. In Tanganyika, the analog of the Local Native Councils were federal councils comprised of lower-level NA chiefs. For example, in the Bukoba District, eight bakama (chiefs) were recognized as NAs. They were joined in a federation, the Council of Bukoba Chiefs, and the only NT in Bukoba was the Treasury of the Council of Bukoba Chiefs.¹²

Table 2 summarizes institutions by colony. Across the entire sample, solo chiefs were rare: only 17% of cases. The remaining NAs included councils, either chief and council (35%) or council only (48%). Yet the prevalence of each type of institution varies by region. Building on the earlier discussion of Nigeria, later we present quantitative and qualitative evidence linking this heterogeneity to precolonial state structures.

3.3 COMPOSITION OF COUNCILS

Moving beyond the mere presence of councils and their legal status, we also compiled information on their membership. We demonstrate that members of local councils had independent bases of power and were not mere mouthpieces of either Native Authority chiefs or the British administration.

For each council in our dataset, we classified members based on who selected the counselor: elites, popularly selected, chief-appointed, or appointed by a British District Officer (DO) or District Commissioner. To do so, we used the descriptions of the councils from the Hailey volumes and surveys, from which we present excerpts in Appendix C. In some cases, the sources provide sufficient information to calculate the precise fraction of seats held by each type of member. However, we are usually only able to code which type of member comprised the plurality on the council, and this is the variable we use in the regressions reported later. We also recorded whether each council

¹¹However, we also present a robustness check in which we recode these cases as chief-and-council NAs.

¹²A small number of NAs were a confederacy of chiefs, which we code as council-only NAs because no chief was individually recognized as an NA.

Table 2: Summary Statistics for Native Authority Institutions

Colony	# NTs	Solo chief	Chief & council	Council only
Nigeria	203	0.24	0.15	0.61
Eastern	95	0.02	0.02	0.96
Northern	59	0.78	0.11	0.11
Western	39	0.00	0.56	0.44
Colony	10	0.00	0.00	0.98
Gold Coast	87	0.01	0.83	0.16
Tanganyika	52	0.36	0.04	0.60
N. Rhodesia	42	0.00	0.76	0.24
Kenya	26	0.12	0.00	0.88
Nyasaland	16	0.54	0.00	0.45
Uganda	13	0.00	0.31	0.62
Gambia	13	0.00	0.92	0.08
High Commission	11	0.00	1.00	0.00
Averages	463	0.17	0.35	0.48

Notes: For each NT, we calculate the fraction of NAs with each of the three types of institutional arrangements (solo chief, chief and council, council only); and each cell reports the average of these scores by colony. Four NAs in the dataset consist of a British District Officer or District Commissioner gazetted as the Native Authority. This was the only NA in the Kigezi District/Treasury of the Western Province of Uganda; and in the three other instances, the District Officer NA was one of several NAs within an NT in Northern Nigeria, the Colony area of Nigeria, and Nyasaland. This is why the fractions do not sum to 1 (even after accounting for rounding error) in these rows.

has any members of each type.

A typical elite member on a council was an individual who (a) gained a local title by hereditary means and (b) held an *ex officio* seat on the council, that is, the traditional title automatically qualified them for a seat on the council. For example, the State Council in the Ada NT in the Gold Coast included the Asafoatse-ngwa (army captain) for each of nine recognized sub-groups (referred to in the sources as “tribes”). However, we code counselors meeting either condition as elite members, as we discuss in Appendix C.1, and we also evaluate a robustness check in which we require elite members to hold a hereditary title.

Elite council members contrasted with individuals who gained their seats by a popular selection process. Some popularly selected members gained their seats through direct means, typically a local election. Others gained their positions indirectly, often via selection by a lower-level council. The Egba Central Council included elites as well as both types of popularly selected members. Af-

ter reorganization in 1948, the council “consist[ed] of 13 ex-officio titled members and 73 elected members, including four women. The elected members, originally appointed by their respective towns and villages, were in June 1949 elected by taxpayers, at elections supervised by Administrative Officers, voting being by show of hands. The four women were elected by the Councils of the four Sections into which the Egba Native Authority is divided” (Hailey 1951a, 113–14).¹³

The final two types of members are those appointed by the Native Authority chief and those appointed by British administrators such as the District Officer. These members were straightforward to code and involved minimal coder discretion. In general, we would assume that such council members lacked independence from authoritarian figures such as chiefs and colonial officers. However, chiefs and colonial officials sometimes followed formal or informal guidelines to choose members with specific traits, for example, a NA chief selecting “progressive” members educated in English. For example, in the Kawambwa district of Northern Rhodesia, “The Chief has the power of appointment though many of the old appointments were traditional or hereditary. Chiefs have, however, in recent years been pressed by Government to modernize their Councils and a certain proportion of the chiefs’ appointments today consist of progressive, educated and non-hereditary Africans.”¹⁴

Table 3 summarizes the patterns. Councils were typically dominated by either elites (56% of all councils) or popularly selected members (30%). By contrast, councils were rarely dominated by members appointed by either the NA chief (12%) or British officials (3%). Furthermore, councils dominated by NA chief-appointed members were mostly confined to areas with solo-chief NAs, where councils served only in an advisory capacity to the NA chief without formal discretion over policy decisions. Therefore, these summary statistics also establish that whether a council was gazetted as part of the NA correlates with the composition of the council. Where an NA included a council, the NA chief (if there was one) rarely appointed the plurality of members (8% of cases). By contrast, such appointments were more common in councils that lacked the legal distinction as

¹³Appendix C.2 discusses the limited role of women in the full sample of Native Authorities.

¹⁴Survey CO 1018/54. Because our coding criterion is based on who selects the members, rather than who is selected, we code these “progressive” members as NA chief-appointed rather than as popularly selected.

a NA (22%).

Table 3: Summary Statistics for Composition of Councils

Colony	# NTs	Elite		Popular		Chief appointed		DO appointed	
		Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality
Nigeria	185	0.72	0.49	0.74	0.41	0.09	0.09	0.02	0.01
Eastern	85	0.71	0.34	1.00	0.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Northern	51	0.61	0.61	0.20	0.06	0.33	0.33	0.02	0.00
Western	39	0.92	0.79	0.79	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00
Colony	10	0.70	0.00	1.00	0.90	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.10
Gold Coast	86	0.99	0.98	0.09	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.00
Tanganyika	32	0.63	0.56	0.28	0.19	0.19	0.13	0.19	0.13
N. Rhodesia	40	0.80	0.45	0.15	0.08	0.78	0.48	0.00	0.00
Kenya	23	0.00	0.00	0.91	0.70	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.30
Nyasaland	13	0.69	0.69	0.08	0.00	0.46	0.31	0.00	0.00
Uganda	13	1.00	0.23	0.92	0.69	0.31	0.08	0.69	0.00
High Comm.	11	0.18	0.09	1.00	0.82	0.09	0.09	0.00	0.00
Solo-chief NA	107	0.54	0.47	0.36	0.23	0.24	0.22	0.32	0.07
Other NA	296	0.80	0.59	0.56	0.32	0.14	0.08	0.03	0.01
Averages	403	0.73	0.56	0.51	0.30	0.17	0.12	0.11	0.03

Notes: The table presents the frequency of each type of council member, averaged across NTs. The top rows disaggregate by colony and the bottom rows by whether the NA was a solo chief or not. To calculate the composition of the council for each NT, we first coded whether each Native Authority had any and/or a plurality of such members, and then averaged these scores for any NT that contained multiple NAs. The sample size for each colony is smaller than in Table 2 either because some NTs lacked a council or we lack information about its composition. We lack information about any of the councils in the Gambia.

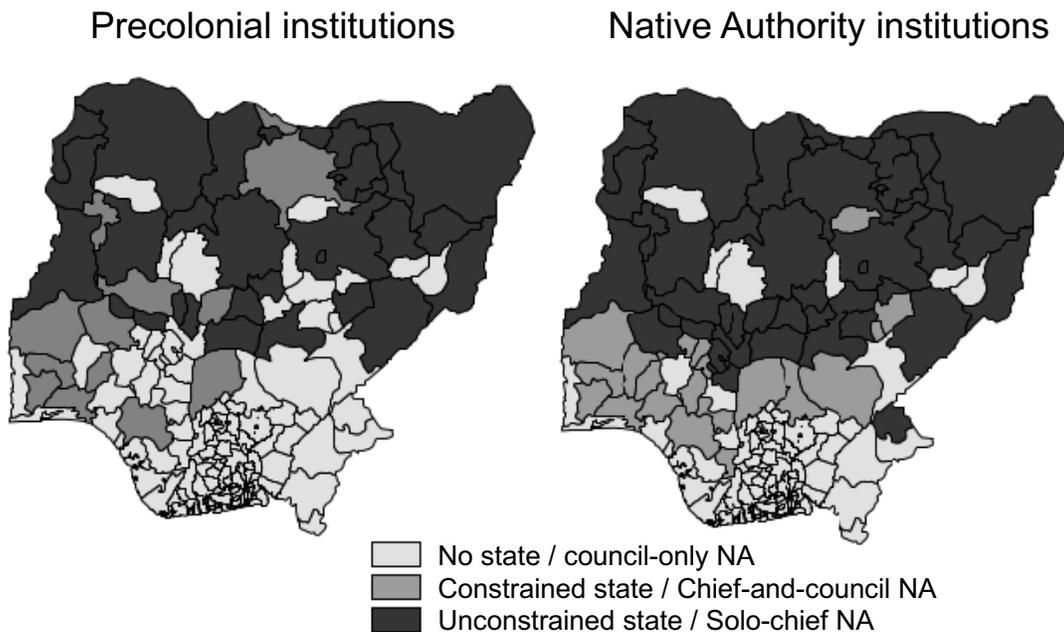
4 QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL PERSISTENCE

So far, we have established three descriptive patterns: (a) rulers were constrained in many parts of precolonial Africa, (b) colonial Native Authority institutions often included legally recognized councils, and (c) councils consisted mainly of traditional elites and popularly selected members. We now examine the relationship between the precolonial and colonial eras. The general form of local political institutions was highly persistent in British colonies. This finding contrasts with the conventional characterization that British administrators frequently “invented” authoritarian local rulers.

Simple visual evidence from Nigeria, shown in Figure 1, depicts the high degree of persistence

in institutional form at the level of Native Treasuries. As discussed earlier, the Sokoto Caliphate was the predominant political influence in precolonial Northern Nigeria. Authoritarian governance persisted under colonial rule, as every constituent emirate in the Caliphate had a solo chief as its NA.¹⁵ Western Nigeria contained several constrained precolonial states, which yielded chief-and-council NAs under colonialism. Eastern Nigeria largely lacked states before colonialism. Under British rule in the 1940s, Eastern Nigeria consisted almost entirely of council-only NAs, after replacing the older and ineffective Warrant Chief system.

Figure 1: Comparing Institutions Over Time in Nigeria



We provide regression evidence to establish these patterns more systematically and to show that they hold across the broader sample. Specifically, we regress our Native Authority institutional

¹⁵Our theory also accounts for some heterogeneity in de facto practice within Northern Nigeria. Several Sokoto emirates displaced traditional Hausa states, which exhibited stronger constraints on the ruler. In Kano, for example, the emir was a solo-chief NA, but in practice, “The Native Authority is influenced to a great extent by the opinions of his council members and their opinion is sounded before any major action is taken. In the whole, the Native Authority is dependent on the support and the cooperation of the council for this is the basis of his efficiently ruling the community.” Survey CO 1018/38.

variables on our precolonial institutional variables to demonstrate the persistence of political constraints (councils) and of executives. We also provide additional evidence about councils. The composition of councils is predictable based on precolonial political institutions. Furthermore, councils had concrete impacts. Using data on expenditures, we show that Native Authorities that included councils spent less on administrative costs such as wages. Appendix A contains supporting details and various robustness checks.

4.1 PERSISTENCE OF PRECOLONIAL COUNCILS

We examine correlates of NA councils in Table 4. In Columns 1–3, the dependent variable is the fraction of NAs that included a council (that is, either a chief-and-council or council-only NA) in each NT. In Columns 4–6, we examine correlates of council-only NAs. The estimating equation, which we estimate with OLS, is:

$$\text{NA COUNCIL}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_N \cdot \text{NO PCS}_i + \beta_C \cdot \text{CONSTRAINED PCS}_i + \beta_X \cdot X_i + \epsilon_i.$$

The main explanatory variables are CONSTRAINED PCS and NO PCS, where PCS stands for “precolonial state.” We thus compare the two types of precolonial areas with meaningful councils and executive constraints to the type without, as UNCONSTRAINED PCS is the omitted reference category. Columns 1 and 4 are the baseline specifications that contain only these variables. We add different covariates, X_i , in the subsequent models. In Columns 2 and 5, we control for colony fixed effects to account for idiosyncratic differences in the implementation of Native Administration ordinances across colonies. In Columns 3 and 6, we add various substantive covariates (see Appendix A.2 for details on measurement, sources, and missing observations). Colonial administrators took many considerations into account when deciding what type of Native Authority institutions to create in particular areas. Economies of scale could have made certain types of institutions more efficient, which motivates controlling for population and population density. We also control for numerous variables that pick up the major sources of colonial economic activity, which in turn could have influenced the importance of each Native Treasury and perhaps the form of local

institutions: total value of cash crops (the source of export revenue); fraction of land alienated for Europeans (Europeans, where they settled, were major economic and political actors); and distance from the center of each Native Treasury area to the nearest railroad, coastline, and colonial capital (all sites of major economic activities). Finally, we control for whether a Christian mission was located within the area of the NT.¹⁶ For each specification, we present robust standard error estimates in parentheses.

Table 4: Persistence of Precolonial Councils

	DV: NA includes a council			DV: Council-only NA		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constrained PCS	0.722*** (0.0751)	0.610*** (0.0809)	0.561*** (0.0902)	-0.00438 (0.00432)	0.307*** (0.0509)	0.117** (0.0512)
No PCS	0.776*** (0.0607)	0.802*** (0.0524)	0.677*** (0.0672)	0.584*** (0.0256)	0.756*** (0.0305)	0.655*** (0.0438)
Population			-0.0808*** (0.0189)			0.0567** (0.0224)
Population density			0.0450*** (0.0160)			0.00520 (0.0184)
Value of cash crops			0.0537*** (0.0155)			-0.0115 (0.0207)
% alienated land			0.0170* (0.0103)			-0.0531** (0.0214)
Distance from rail line			0.00399 (0.0147)			-0.130*** (0.0197)
Distance from capital			-0.0445** (0.0179)			0.0917*** (0.0316)
Distance from coastline			0.0232 (0.0155)			-0.0378* (0.0211)
Missionary station			-0.00353 (0.0323)			0.0702 (0.0430)
Intercept	0.125** (0.0587)	0.368*** (0.0795)	1.028*** (0.211)	0.00438 (0.00432)	-0.357*** (0.0717)	-0.489* (0.271)
NTs	463	463	422	463	463	422
Provinces	61	61	60	61	61	60
R-squared	0.285	0.423	0.371	0.223	0.412	0.348
Colony FE		✓			✓	

Column 1 demonstrates that NT units containing either an constrained PCS or no state were much more likely than NTs with an unconstrained PCS to have a council as part of their Native Authorities. Because every covariate is binary in Column 1, we can directly read off the percentages for each type of case. The intercept reports that 12.5% of NTs with unconstrained PCS had a coun-

¹⁶All covariates are logged except the mission indicator.

cil within the NA. Adding the intercept to the coefficient estimates for each precolonial indicator demonstrates that 84.7% of units with a constrained PCS had a legally recognized council as did 90.1% of areas lacking a state. Thus, the coefficient estimate is not only statistically significant, but huge in substantive magnitude. This conclusion is unaltered in Columns 2 and 3.

In Column 4, we analyze council-only NAs. Only one NT with a PCS contained any council-only NAs, which accounts for the near-zero estimates for the intercept and for CONSTRAINED PCS. The corresponding frequency of council-only NAs in no-state areas is 58.8%. This estimate is statistically significant in every specification.¹⁷

4.2 PERSISTENCE OF CHIEF EXECUTIVES

We examine the persistence in the form of chief executives in Table 5. In Columns 1–3, the dependent variable is the fraction of NAs that included a chief (that is, either solo-chief or chief-and-council NA) in each NT. In Columns 4–6, we examine correlates of solo-chief NAs. The estimating equation is qualitatively similar to that presented above except here the main explanatory variables are CONSTRAINED PCS and UNCONSTRAINED PCS. We thus compare the two types of precolonial areas with states to the type without, as NO PCS is the omitted reference category. The order of specifications is identical to those in Table 4.

Once again, we find strong evidence of persistence in the form of local political institutions. Treasury units containing a PCS (either constrained or unconstrained) were significantly more likely than NTs without a PCS to have a chief as part of the Native Authority. In Column 1, the intercept shows that 42.5% of NTs without a PCS had a chief as part of their NA. Adding each coefficient estimate shows that this predicted probability rises to 100% for constrained PCS and 99.6% for unconstrained states, which is the flipside of the near-absence of council-only NAs in these areas (discussed earlier). Yet only NTs with an unconstrained PCS were distinguished with regard to having solo-chief NAs. The coefficient estimates in Column 4 show that areas with an unconstrained PCS had a solo-chief NA nearly eight times more frequently than no-state areas, 88.9%

¹⁷The statistical significance of CONSTRAINED PCS in Columns 5 and 6 is a statistical artifact of fitting a linear model—there are no council-only NAs in a NT with a constrained PCS.

Table 5: Persistence of Precolonial Chief Executives

	DV: NA includes a chief			DV: Solo-chief NA		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constrained PCS	0.575*** (0.0257)	0.439*** (0.0472)	0.529*** (0.0428)	0.0407 (0.0496)	0.181*** (0.0580)	0.105* (0.0563)
Unconstrained PCS	0.571*** (0.0261)	0.740*** (0.0323)	0.627*** (0.0458)	0.777*** (0.0559)	0.810*** (0.0420)	0.674*** (0.0621)
Population			-0.0497** (0.0229)			0.0888*** (0.0193)
Population density			-0.0121 (0.0188)			-0.0487*** (0.0161)
Value of cash crops			0.00973 (0.0215)			-0.0588*** (0.0153)
% alienated land			0.0506** (0.0214)			-0.0196* (0.0104)
Distance from rail line			0.129*** (0.0212)			-0.000293 (0.0146)
Distance from capital			-0.0714** (0.0322)			0.0415** (0.0189)
Distance from coastline			0.0282 (0.0215)			-0.0268* (0.0153)
Missionary station			-0.0681 (0.0443)			-0.00191 (0.0320)
Intercept	0.425*** (0.0257)	0.610*** (0.0682)	0.738*** (0.253)	0.112*** (0.0158)	-0.161*** (0.0561)	-0.739*** (0.172)
NTs	463	463	422	463	463	422
Provinces	61	61	60	61	61	60
R-squared	0.209	0.386	0.324	0.284	0.449	0.379
Colony FE		✓			✓	

Notes: The DV in columns 1–3 of this table is the inverse of the DV in columns 4–6 of Table 4. The DV in columns 4–6 of this table is the inverse of the DV in columns 1–3 of Table 4.

versus 11.2%. Only 15.3% of constrained PCS areas had a solo-chief NA, and thus the corresponding coefficient estimate is small in magnitude and not robustly statistically significant.

4.3 ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

In Appendix A.4, we present various robustness checks for Tables 4 and 5. In Table A.3, we demonstrate that our results are not sensitive to unobserved covariates, using a metric from Altonji, Elder and Taber (2005). In Table A.4, we recode certain council-only NAs as chief-and-council NAs, following the earlier discussion about double-decker systems of councils in colonies such as Kenya and Tanganyika. We address the possible non-independence of NA institutions within provinces in two ways. First, in unreported regressions, we re-ran every specification from the

original tables with robust standard errors clustered at the province level; the results are qualitatively identical. Second, in Table A.5, we take the average of each variable at the province level and re-estimate the models using provinces as the unit of analysis. We also ran specifications in which we replaced the total value of cash crop exports with fixed effects for the type of crops produced, and the results are qualitatively unchanged (not reported).

4.4 COMPOSITION OF COUNCILS

Earlier, in Table 3, we summarized how members of councils were selected. Most were either elites or popularly selected members (sometimes directly elected). By contrast, only a small minority of council members across Africa were appointed by either the NA chief or the District Officer. Yet colonies varied greatly in the composition of their councils, which leads us to examine the systematic components of this heterogeneity. Consider the variation present in Nigeria, Gold Coast, and Kenya. Elites dominated councils in areas where many NTs coincided with a precolonial state: the Gold Coast (plurality on councils in 98% of NTs), Western Nigeria (79%), and Northern Nigeria (61%). By contrast, popularly selected members pervaded councils in stateless areas: Kenya (70%) and Eastern Nigeria (66%). Only in Northern Nigeria, which had many authoritarian emirates, did chiefs dominate a large number of councils (33%). Finally, only in Kenya did British officials routinely influence the composition of the councils. Due to the nature of traditional authority structures, every Local Native Council contained at least one member appointed by the administration, and such members constituted the plurality on 30% of councils.¹⁸ Even in this case, however, the councils often acted independently despite the presence of administration-appointed members. Most appointed members were local chiefs and council members frequently criticized official policy (Hailey 1950a, 95).

Replacing the proper nouns with variables and using our entire sample, we show in Table 6 that differences in precolonial institutions correlate highly with the composition of councils. In each

¹⁸In four cases, there were an equal number of DO-appointed and popularly elected members, and we coded DO appointments as the plurality because our sources suggest that elections were held to be of low importance in these areas.

column, the dependent variable indicates whether a plurality of members on a council belonged to a specified category.¹⁹ For most outcomes, our clearest expectations are for non-state areas. The weakness of traditional authority figures in such areas should lead to fewer chief-appointed and elite members and more popularly selected and DO-appointed members. Thus, most columns estimate NO PCS, leaving NTs with either type of state as the omitted reference category. The exception is that for chief-appointed members, we anticipate a difference between unconstrained and constrained states. The stronger prerogatives of chiefs in unconstrained PCS areas should yield more chief-appointed members in these areas compared to each of the other categories. Hence in Column 3, we estimate UNCONSTRAINED PCS.

We confirm these expectations in the table, in which we present a series of bivariate regressions. In Appendix Table A.6, we present the same sequence of specifications as in the preceding tables: controlling for colony fixed effects or controlling for various covariates. In Table A.7, we use an alternative procedure for distinguishing between elite and popular council members. The estimates are largely similar in the robustness tables.

Table 6: Precolonial Correlates of Council Members

	DV: Elite	DV: Popular	DV: Chief appoint	DV: DO appoint (any)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
No PCS	-0.121** (0.0587)	0.201*** (0.0460)		0.109*** (0.0251)
Unconstrained PCS			0.312*** (0.0960)	
Intercept	0.651*** (0.0515)	0.140*** (0.0375)	0.0957*** (0.0152)	0.0233 (0.0163)
NTs	403	403	403	403
Provinces	57	57	57	57
R-squared	0.010	0.032	0.059	0.021

4.5 PUBLIC EXPENDITURES

Finally, we provide evidence that differences in local institutions actually affected political outcomes: NAs that included councils spent a lower fraction of their budget on salaries for officials.

¹⁹Except in Column 4. There are so few cases of DO-appointed plurality councils that we instead use the variable for any DO-appointed members.

To assess this, we compiled data on the public expenditures of NTs. Budgets recorded in colonial archives distinguish between expenditures on administration (which included the salaries of chiefs, counselors, and lower-level officials) and on public goods such as education, medical services, and road maintenance. Spending data for individual NTs is only sporadically available, and thus we can test this only for a single year for a subset of colonies (see Appendix A for details). As a result, local spending has been neglected by research on the history of colonial fiscal systems.²⁰ This paper is one of the first to use data on the allocation of spending by individual Native Treasuries.

We expect NTs that lacked councils to spend a higher fraction of expenditures on administration, given the greater discretion for chiefs to reward themselves. Conversely, we expect lower expenditures on public goods. The role of councils in budgetary considerations was not a formal power laid out in the Native Authority Ordinances. However, the information from Hailey's surveys suggest that councils often influenced the budgeting process. In the Gold Coast, we have information on the budget-setting process for thirty-three of the eighty-seven NTs. The vast majority of these, thirty-one, report some form of council involvement in setting budget estimates. For example, in the Mampong district, "Preparatory drafts are now, in most cases, drawn up by Finance Boards and Area Committees. These are then discussed with the District Commissioner before being placed before the Chiefs. The final draft is approved at a full meeting of the Divisional or Sub-Divisional Council."²¹

To assess these expectations, we compare NT units composed primarily of solo-chief NAs to those whose NAs included councils.²² Table 7 contains six columns. The fraction of expenditures on administration is the dependent variable in the first three, and the fraction of total expenditures on education, medical care, and roads is the dependent variable in the last three. The sequence of columns for each outcome mirror those in Tables 4 and 5.

We confirm our expectation about expenditures on administration, but not for public good spend-

²⁰As exceptions, Bolt and Gardner (2020) use revenue per capita as a measure of local government capacity and Gardner (2012) reports spending by Native Treasuries for select years in Kenya and Zambia.

²¹Survey CO 1018/7.

²²Specifically, we include an indicator for whether at least half of the NAs in a NT were solo chiefs.

Table 7: Public Expenditures

	DV: Administration %			DV: Public goods %		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Solo-chief NA	0.211*** (0.0158)	0.122*** (0.0165)	0.167*** (0.0240)	-0.00334 (0.0155)	-0.0349** (0.0163)	-0.00340 (0.0195)
Population			0.0265*** (0.00854)			-0.00584 (0.00873)
Population density			-0.0319*** (0.00847)			0.0136* (0.00807)
Value of cash crops			0.00491 (0.00794)			0.00260 (0.00647)
% alienated land			-0.00436 (0.00328)			0.00724** (0.00286)
Distance from rail line			0.00375 (0.00941)			0.00625 (0.00811)
Distance from capital			0.0152 (0.0144)			-0.0333** (0.0158)
Distance from coastline			-0.0163* (0.00936)			0.0214** (0.00870)
Missionary station			0.0132 (0.0147)			0.0194 (0.0141)
Intercept	0.178*** (0.00912)	0.140*** (0.00719)	-0.0607 (0.0790)	0.329*** (0.00840)	0.352*** (0.0137)	0.456*** (0.0916)
NTs	325	325	309	309	309	293
R-squared	0.370	0.620	0.434	0.000	0.178	0.084
Colony FE		✓			✓	

ing. In Column 1, we show that the fraction of the budget spent on administration was more than twice as high in NTs with solo chief-NAs, and this correlation is statistically significant in all specifications. However, the findings are null for public-good expenditures (except the specification with colony fixed effects). We speculate that administration is measured with less error than public goods. In addition to the expenditure categories included in the data we present, the colonial budget reports also include categories for agriculture and forestry that are not easy to interpret. For example, we do not know if investment in a borehole is public or on the chief's land. We also exclude extraordinary expenditures because they are lumpy, although anecdotal evidence suggests that Native Authorities often saved up across years for big projects like the construction of schools or clinics that, when realized, would constitute public goods.

5 QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL PERSISTENCE

The regression evidence establishes persistence in the general form of precolonial political institutions, including the presence of a singular ruler, constraints on rulers, and elite influence on councils. Yet this evidence does not rule out the possibility that the colonial period represented an intercept shift whereby all rulers became more despotic, even if the exact form of Native Authority institutions was predictable. This is doubtful given the evidence we have presented about colonial councils, but a closer look at individual cases enables us to more directly track institutional changes in specific areas. The evidence does not support the colonial authoritarianism thesis; if anything, the needle for local institutions seems to point in the less despotic direction.

Buganda was an unconstrained state in Uganda, like the emirates in the Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria. The precolonial ruler remained powerful under the Native Authority system. However, he lost his control over armies and enslaved persons and the popular element on the traditional council broadened. Asante was a constrained state in the Gold Coast, like the Yoruba polities in Western Nigeria, and councils remained important throughout the colonial era. Finally, Kenya and Tanganyika lacked large states, like Igbo polities in Eastern Nigeria. Colonial rule undoubtedly created artificial territorial divisions. However, the institutional form was scaled-up councils, not the image of “decentralized despotism” proposed in existing research.

Buganda. Buganda is an exceptional case that supports the precolonial authoritarianism thesis. The Kabaka of Buganda exercised an absolute rule, which was the product of the upheavals of the nineteenth century. Previously there had been “many checks” on his authority, such as the *bataka* (clan, sub-clan, and lineage heads), who “could suggest and advise, and were expected to do so” (Fallers 1960, 64). However, Kabakas in the nineteenth century were able to exercise greater discretion and to remove *bataka* chiefs whom they opposed, even from posts that historically had been hereditary. Consequently, “the balance of the political power had shifted more into the royal hands than it had ever done before” (Kiwauka 1971, 101–2).

As with emirs in Northern Nigeria, the Kabaka remained influential throughout the colonial era.

However, institutional changes during colonialism strengthened the council and broadened popular participation, which rejects the colonial authoritarianism thesis. In 1900, British officials signed a treaty with the Kabaka of Buganda that distinguished the polity in the constitution of the new colony. Yet they conferred power on local councils as well, and we code the NA as chief and council. The Agreement of 1900 “was to be interpreted as conferring on the Kabaka *and Lukiko* [the historical council] the power to make, with the consent of the Governor, laws which were to be binding on natives in Buganda” (Hailey 1950a, 6; our emphasis). After 1945, British administrators in consultation with demands from Africans added thirty-six popularly selected members to the Lukiko (out of ninety-four total members). Despite the traditional clout of the Kabaka, some degree of greater constraints and popular participation emerged within the NA system. This rejects the idea that colonial “innovation” necessarily implied more authoritarian political institutions. Also, like emirs within the Sokoto Caliphate and the rulers in precolonial Temnland and Mendeland in Sierra Leone (see Appendix D), the Kabaka lost control over the army he had possessed prior to colonial rule. Overall, local institutions in Buganda bore many similarities to their precolonial antecedents. To the extent they differed, it was mainly to reduce the despotic powers of the Kabaka and to broaden popular participation in local government.

Asante. In the Asante region of the Gold Coast, effective political constraints emerged prior to and persisted throughout British rule. For these reasons, this case rejects both precolonial and colonial authoritarianism accounts. The precolonial council (Mpayimfo) was a group of elders who were “the successors of the senior members of the kindred group who had always acted as advisers of the ‘house-father.’” Chiefs regularly consulted their council: “In reality every move and command which appeared to emanate from his mouth had been discussed in private and had been previously agreed upon by his councillors, to whom every one in the tribe had access and to whom popular opinion on any subject was thus made known” (Rattray 1929, 77). The sanction for deviating from this norm was dethroning, known as destoolment (Busia 1951, 21). The council also played a role in selecting a new chief, who was nominated by the Queen-Mother and

then subsequently approved by the Elders and Commoners (Manoukian 1950, 36; Busia 1951, 11).

During colonialism, Native Authorities in Asante consisted of chiefs and their State Councils, and the practice of destoolment persisted in many areas as well. Individuals with traditional (and often hereditary) titles dominated the councils in the Gold Coast. The Kwahu Native Authority was a typical elite-dominated council in the Gold Coast. As the Hailey surveys describe, “The chiefs within the Native Authority are traditional rulers inheriting their position in the matrilineal line.” This survey lists every member of the council, which is “mainly composed of traditional members of the State Council but is leavened by a number of selected intelligentsia from various walks of life.” The surveys also emphasize the degree to which the council and other popular elements constrained chiefs: “In practice the President has only one vote and though his personal influence and hereditary position go a long way towards producing decisions, these factors can only be exercised in a direction in which he considers his councillors likely to follow.”²³

Kenya and Tanganyika. Other cases illustrate how colonial innovation often scaled up consultative institutions, rather than invented despotic chiefs. Kenya and Tanganyika lacked large states before colonialism. Thus, any territorial division of peoples would inevitably be artificial and exist at a larger scale than precolonial political communities. As noted earlier, the British created a series of Local Native Councils throughout Kenya and double-decker federal councils in most of Tanganyika. The Local Native Councils were established explicitly to increase the scale of local government and to expand representation in a context of widening local fiscal powers.²⁴ According to Hicks (1961), the councils were intended to move beyond “attempts to build solely on the traditional elders’ councils.” Rather, membership was extended “so as to represent as large a range of relevant interests as possible.” These new members joined a council of headmen who themselves were selected through informal election processes known as “barazas.” Similarly, in Tanganyika,

²³Survey CO 1018/10.

²⁴Among the fourteen cases in Kenya in which the NA participated in the treasury and we have information on exactly who participated, only in one instance did a chief, but not a council, operate the treasury.

the Native Treasuries corresponded with the federal councils rather than the lower-level Native Authority chiefs. In both cases, colonial institutions were undoubtedly artificial relative to precolonial patterns. Yet they did not take the despotic form expounded in the literature.

Additional cases. In Appendix D, we discuss three cases not in our statistical sample. European governance was more direct in the major white settler colonies of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), which disrupted local institutions. However, these cases do not support either the precolonial or colonial authoritarianism accounts, at least not until the onset of apartheid. Alexander (2006, 22) concludes that governance in Southern Rhodesia was “a far cry from a system of ‘indirect rule’ on the model propounded by Mahmood Mamdani.” In the third case, Sierra Leone, the Paramount Chieftaincy institutions under colonialism closely resemble the institutions of precolonial “country” chiefs.

6 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we provided a new perspective on the nature of African political institutions and the impact of colonialism that emphasizes the persistence of institutional constraints at the local level. We documented two new facts about political institutions in former British colonies in Africa. First, contrary to the impression given by much of contemporary social science, institutions of British “indirect rule” were extremely heterogeneous. Second, these institutions overwhelmingly featured executive constraints in the form of various types of councils. We also showed that this heterogeneity covaries with the form of precolonial political institutions.

Our conclusions challenge a great deal of conventional wisdom in political science. For example, Mamdani’s influential book argues that British colonialism “presumed a king at the center of every polity, a chief on every piece of administrative ground” (Mamdani 1996, 39). In fact, our data suggests that solo councils were far more common than solo chiefs. He further suggests that “there is no question of any internal check and balance on the exercise of authority, let alone a check that is popular and democratic . . . the person of the chiefs signifies power that is total and

absolute, unchecked and unrestrained” (Mamdani 1996, 54). Our evidence shows instead that the vast majority of chiefs had councils. Although one could argue that these were a powerless facade, this seems unlikely to be the case. Neither chiefs nor British administrators were able to appoint a majority (or, often, any) of council members, who often had independent political legitimacy and authority over the Treasury. Additionally, when councils existed, NAs spent less of their revenues on salaries. Where innovation occurred, it was typically to scale up councils to facilitate economies of scale in administration rather than to invent despotic chiefs. The Warrant Chiefs in Eastern Nigeria were an exception that proved the rule: chiefs that lacked traditional authority were unpopular and ineffective, and prompted reforms.

The thesis of Herbst (2000) is also not consistent with our data. Although our evidence does not speak directly to the capacity of the state, his main explanation for postcolonial authoritarian regimes is that African rulers never engaged in a process of bargaining over tax revenues akin to that in Western Europe (p. 131; see also Stasavage 2020, 69). But in fact both precolonial and colonial rulers were constrained, and thus the empirical premise of his argument lacks support. Our argument for why this was so emphasizes that the existence of constraints was based not on tax bargaining, which was unimportant in precolonial Africa (Robinson 2022), but instead reflected the egalitarian nature of African society and the concern for local autonomy. By focusing on the cost-benefit calculation of rulers, Herbst missed this crucial mechanism. More generally, studies such as his that emphasize the historical impediments to state formation in Africa say little about the form of historical political institutions, either in the many cases in which states did not emerge or in the exceptions where they did.

We conclude by suggesting an alternative hypothesis for postcolonial authoritarianism that is consistent with our data and deserves more scrutiny in future research. Changes at the national, rather than local, level constituted the most important transformation of and perversion of political institutions in Africa during colonial rule. Traditional constraints on local chiefs that worked effectively could not usually be scaled up successfully to the national level in new, artificially created, states.

This was particularly so given how heterogeneous they were. For example, in the Nigerian case we have discussed, the methods of accountability differed among the Yoruba, Tiv, and Igbo. Indeed, different parts of Igboland had different mechanisms of accountability and constraint. At the same time, these societies were merged with those of Northern Nigeria which had few constraints on rulers. We conjecture that the sheer difficulty of forging a social contract over new institutions which would impose accountability and constraints at the national level enabled postcolonial rulers to act despotically.²⁵ They exploited internationally created ideas about sovereignty and the colonial centralization of institutions, such as the fiscal system and the army, which local institutions could not discipline. Thus, we speculate that the roots of modern African authoritarianism are largely centralized rather than decentralized.

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²⁵This argument is related to other work that discusses how colonialism created arbitrary nation states (Englebert 2002; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2016). However, this research emphasizes distinct mechanisms, such as conflict induced by the partitioning of ethnic groups.

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Main Appendix

We split our appendix into two sections. The main appendix (25 pages) contains supplemental information for the statistical results presented in the text. Appendix [A](#) describes our spatial data and covariates as well as presents additional regression results. Appendix [B](#) describes our coding procedures for precolonial states and institutional constraints as well as provides excerpts from our codebook. Appendix [C](#) provides excerpts from our codebook for Native Authority institutions. We present Appendix [D](#) (14 pages) as a supplemental appendix that provides details on three cases excluded from our statistical sample: South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Sierra Leone. All references appear at the end of the appendix.

A DATA AND REGRESSION APPENDIX

A.1 SPATIAL DATA

We have digitized a map at the Native Treasury level for all colonies in our sample except Botswana and Gambia. Given the small geographical size of the Gambia, we assume that the covariates are identical for each NT in the colony. However, we are missing every spatial covariate for Botswana (9 NTs). We are also missing maps for 10 NTs in the Gold Coast and 42 NTs in Nigeria. For the missing cases, we used district maps where possible and assume that all covariates take the same value for every NT in the district; Carl Müller-Crepon graciously shared the shapefiles for colonial districts that he used in Müller-Crepon (2020). Ultimately, given the broad coverage of our maps, we lose only 9% of observations when we control for substantive covariates (e.g., Table 4, Column 3).

Bolt and Gardner (2020) digitized maps at the NT level for Gold Coast, Kenya, Nigeria, and Nyasaland, which we use here. Lesotho and Swaziland are straightforward because each had one NT that covered the entire colony. The maps for Tanganyika and Northern Rhodesia came from several sources, which we then digitized. To illustrate the digitization, Figure [A.1](#) depicts the original map for the Gold Coast and the digitized polygons.

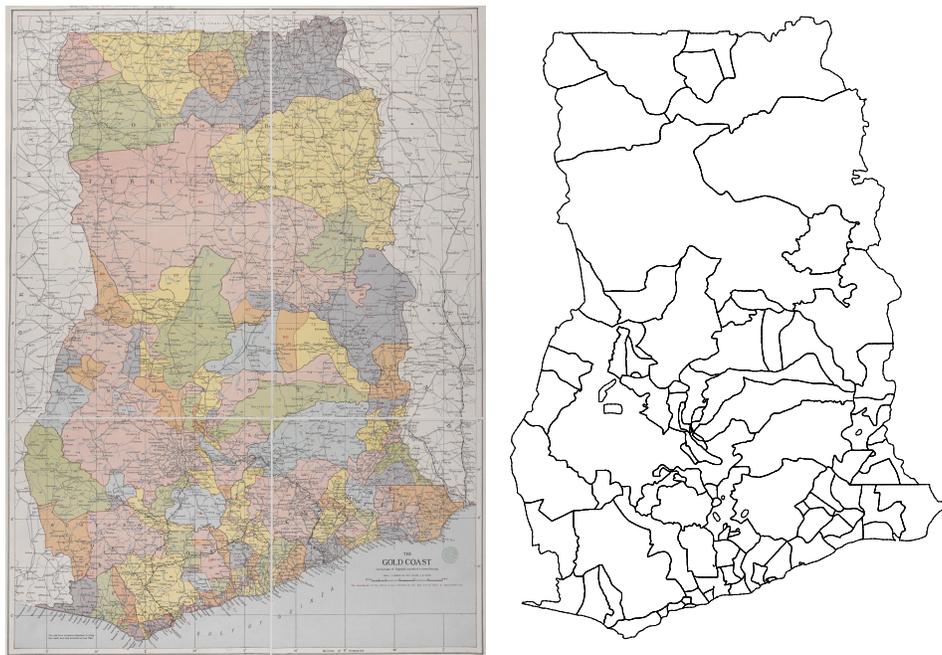
Tanganyika:

- “Provinces and districts,” in Atlas of the Tanganyika Territory (Survey Division, 1948), p. 15
- Tribal and ethnographic map 1950, Royal Geographic Society archives Tanzania VFS/G1

Northern Rhodesia:

- “Population Map,” in Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Federal Atlas (Salisbury: Federal Department of Trig and Topo Surveys, 1960), map no. 9
- Tribal Areas 1933, Royal Geographical Society, Zambia Gan VFS 3.
- Gardner (2012), map 5.2.

Figure A.1: Digitizing NTs in the Gold Coast



A.2 DETAILS ON COVARIATES

- **Population.** We used two sources. First, Bolt and Gardner (2020) collected census data at the NT level in the 1950s that covers most NTs in Nigeria, Gold Coast, Kenya, and Nyasaland. Second, the Hailey books provide nearly complete coverage of population data in the late 1940s, although measured at a higher level of aggregation: usually at the district level, but in a few cases only at the province level. We use the most disaggregated data point available for each unit. For observations in which population is measured at a more aggregate level than the NT, we assume that the population was distributed evenly across the NTs covered at the given census unit; with “evenly” meaning that we assume population density was constant across NTs.
- **Population density.** In addition to the population data just described, we compiled data on area in square kilometers from our spatial polygons.
- **Value of cash crops.** We first digitized a map from Hance, Kotschar and Peterec (1961). They measure the value of crops in 1957, but it is unlikely that the distribution of values over areas is very different than in the late 1940s. One dot on the map represents \$289,270 of exports by value. We use the sum of these dots within each NT as the variable. When taking the log, we add 1 to each observation because of the many NTs with zero points. The only missing observations are for Bechuanaland because we lack NT maps.
- **European alienated land.** For districts with a substantial European presence, the Hailey books provide information on the percentage of land area alienated for European use. We assume this percentage is the same for every NT within the district. We assume this percentage is 0 in areas where Hailey does not discuss land alienation. When taking the log, we add 1 to the percentages.
- **Distance variables.** We used ArcGIS to calculate the distance between the centroid of the NT and the specified feature, either rail lines, capital city, or coastline. Data on capital cities from colonial Blue Books, and data on railroads from Jedwab, Kerby and Moradi (2017).
- **Mission station.** The variable indicates whether a mission was located within the area of the NT. Spatial data on the location of missions from Nunn (2010).

Table A.1: Summary Statistics for Covariates

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Population (log)	441	10.97	1.20	7.37	14.87
Population density (log)	440	3.01	1.45	-1.53	6.74
Value of cash crops (log)	454	0.92	1.19	0.00	5.41
European alienated land (log)	463	0.58	1.22	0.00	4.52
Distance from rail line (log)	446	4.19	1.21	0.00	6.71
Distance from capital (log)	446	5.67	0.89	0.00	7.15
Distance from coastline (log)	446	5.18	1.40	0.00	7.27
Missionary station (binary)	446	0.50	0.50	0	1

A.3 EXPENDITURE DATA

Data on spending by Native Treasuries was not reported consistently or in the same format across all colonial governments. Often, as in the Hailey reports (Hailey 1950*a,b*, 1951*a,b*, 1953), data are reported at a higher level of aggregation, either by district or province. We compiled estimates at the NT level from various sources listed below. Data were collected as close as possible to 1948, the year the Hailey surveys were conducted, but due to data constraints we were not able to obtain data for the same years for all colonies.

Categorizations of Native Treasury spending varied by colony. The most common categories were those used in the Gold Coast: Administration, Medical, Education, Works, Extraordinary, and Agriculture. The main items of spending under Administration were the salaries of chiefs, councillors, and other local officials. Nigeria had a more detailed disaggregation scheme that distinguished between central Native Treasury administration, district heads and village heads, as well as categories like Police, Judicial, Surveys, and Forestry. To make consistent comparisons across colonies, we collected data on administration as a share of total spending. For Nigeria, we included central administration, district heads, and village heads. We also added together works, medical, and education spending to create a combined measure of the share of expenditures on public goods.

Not all colonies reported spending in a format which we could use. Northern Rhodesia, for example, only distinguished personal emoluments from other spending. While this would have allowed us to measure the amount spent on salaries as opposed to other forms of spending, we did not use it because the categorization was inconsistent with the others.

Sources:

Ghana: Gold Coast, *Report on Local Government Finance* (Accra, 1952).

Kenya: Kenya, *Report on Native Affairs 1946-7* (Nairobi, 1947).

Malawi: Nyasaland, *Report on Native Affairs and Administration* (Lilongwe, 1951).

Nigeria: Eastern Provinces, *Native Financial Statements* (Lagos, 1940); Northern Provinces, *Native Treasury Estimates* (Lagos, 1940); Western Provinces, *Native Financial Statements* (Lagos, 1940).

Tanzania: Hailey Surveys CO 1018/68-75.

Table A.2: Summary Statistics for NT Expenditures

Colony	# NTs	Administration	Medical/education/roads
Nigeria	155	0.22	0.30
Eastern	64	0.15	0.32
Northern	59	0.31	0.26
Western	32	0.22	0.32
Gold Coast	82	0.14	0.35
Tanganyika	47	0.52	0.30
Kenya	25	0.24	0.48
Nyasaland	16	0.48	n/a
Averages	325	0.26	0.33

Notes: The cells in the table present the average fraction of expenditures on either administration or medical/education/roads by NT, disaggregated by colony.

A.4 SUPPLEMENTAL REGRESSIONS

Table A.3 shows that the coefficient estimates from Tables 4 and 5 are relatively insensitive to unobserved covariates. Therefore, although it is impossible to control for every possible confounder, if the covariates included in these tables are substantively relevant, then there is less reason to believe that omitted covariates would overturn the results. We analyze a commonly used metric from Altonji, Elder and Taber (2005) that estimates how large the bias from unobserved covariates would need to be for the true coefficient to be 0 in a statistical model, given the degree by which adding observable covariates changes the estimates from a baseline model without covariates. Table A.3 compares the coefficient estimates for the precolonial indicators in specifications without covariates (Columns 1 and 4 in both tables; the baseline specifications) and with covariates (Columns 2, 3, 5, and 6). Negative numbers in Table A.3 (marked by “neg.”) express that the coefficient estimate in the specification with covariates exceeds in magnitude the coefficient estimate in the baseline specification. This indicates an estimate highly robust to omitted covariates because, to drive the coefficient estimate to 0, the magnitude of the bias from unobserved covariates would need to go in the opposite direction as the bias from omitting observables. This is the case for six of the twelve estimates presented in Table A.3. In the other specifications, the estimates are positive but large in magnitude. For example, for CONSTRAINED PCS in Table 4, we can see that the coefficient estimate in Column 2 (with covariates) is only slightly smaller in magnitude than that in Column 1 (the baseline specification). The Altonji et al. metric formalizes this intuition by expressing that, to eliminate the positive coefficient estimate, the bias from unobservables would need to be 5.4 times larger in magnitude than the bias from omitting the covariates contained in this specification. For comparison, Altonji, Elder and Taber (2005) calculate a corresponding figure of 3.55 for their own analysis, which they interpret as large in magnitude.

Table A.3: Sensitivity to Unobserved Covariates

	Column in Table 4				Column in Table 5			
	(2)	(3)	(5)	(6)	(2)	(3)	(5)	(6)
No PCS	neg.	6.9	neg.	neg.				
Constrained PCS	5.4	4.2			3.2	25.4		
Unconstrained PCS					neg.	neg.	neg.	6.7

Notes: Columns 3 and 6 in each table contain the set of substantive covariates. The sample is smaller in these specifications because of some missing data in the covariates (only 422 of 463 NTs). To calculate the Altonji et al. metric for these models, we re-ran the baseline specifications (Columns 1 and 4) on the restricted sample and used those coefficient estimates (unreported) as the basis for comparison.

Table A.4: Alternative Council Measure for Tables 4 and 5

	DV: Council-only NA (alt.)			DV: NA includes a chief (alt.)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constrained PCS	0.722*** (0.0751)	0.640*** (0.104)	0.408*** (0.101)	0.368*** (0.0251)	0.321*** (0.0465)	0.331*** (0.0412)
No PCS	0.569*** (0.0634)	0.713*** (0.0767)	0.325*** (0.0822)			
Population			-0.187*** (0.0243)			0.0565** (0.0219)
Population density			0.0888*** (0.0205)			-0.0558*** (0.0182)
Value of cash crops			0.0445** (0.0215)			0.0186 (0.0197)
% alienated land			-0.0397** (0.0171)			0.107*** (0.0173)
Distance from rail line			0.0666*** (0.0225)			0.0661*** (0.0213)
Distance from capital			-0.0248 (0.0305)			-0.0910*** (0.0296)
Distance from coastline			-0.0273 (0.0222)			0.0786*** (0.0214)
Missionary station			0.0297 (0.0426)			-0.100** (0.0391)
Unconstrained PCS				0.368*** (0.0251)	0.656*** (0.0394)	0.280*** (0.0429)
Intercept	0.125** (0.0587)	0.352*** (0.0991)	2.098*** (0.268)	0.632*** (0.0251)	0.715*** (0.0570)	0.0176 (0.237)
NTs	463	463	422	463	463	422
Provinces	61	61	60	61	61	60
R-squared	0.114	0.563	0.310	0.103	0.474	0.324
Colony FE		✓			✓	

Notes: When discussing how we coded Native Authority institutions, we mentioned that council-only NAs came in two main varieties: (1) a clan council was the NA and no chief was recognized as a NA at any level, (2) double-decker systems in which a district contained numerous minor chiefs or headmen that were legally recognized as NAs, but the highest-level NA was a council. In this table, we recode all cases in the second category as chief-and-council NAs, which acknowledges the existence of lower-level NA chiefs. We re-estimate the specifications for which this recoding alters values of the DV: Columns 4–6 of Table 4 and Columns 1–3 of Table 5.

Table A.5: Province as Unit of Analysis for Tables 4 and 5

Panel A. Table 4						
	DV: NA includes a council			DV: Council-only NA		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constrained PCS	0.836*** (0.232)	0.737*** (0.242)	0.660*** (0.217)	-0.0391 (0.0585)	0.0531 (0.179)	0.103 (0.147)
No PCS	0.859*** (0.211)	0.863*** (0.194)	0.745*** (0.152)	0.627*** (0.0654)	0.689*** (0.114)	0.662*** (0.105)
Population			-0.0681 (0.0806)			0.0756 (0.0666)
Population density			0.0156 (0.0453)			0.0485 (0.0493)
Value of cash crops			0.0684 (0.0615)			-0.104** (0.0501)
% alienated land			-0.0213 (0.0323)			-0.000299 (0.0756)
Distance from rail line			-0.00324 (0.0373)			-0.142*** (0.0435)
Distance from capital			-0.118** (0.0535)			-0.0252 (0.0660)
Distance from coastline			0.0195 (0.0359)			0.00713 (0.0529)
Missionary station			0.0720 (0.115)			-0.0189 (0.191)
Intercept	0.0187 (0.203)	0.251 (0.233)	1.322 (0.839)	-0.0329 (0.0329)	-0.111 (0.169)	-0.226 (0.526)
Provinces	61	61	61	61	61	61
R-squared	0.505	0.600	0.645	0.482	0.607	0.625
Colony FE		✓			✓	

Panel B. Table 5						
	DV: NA includes a chief			DV: Solo-chief NA		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constrained PCS	0.646*** (0.0687)	0.597*** (0.133)	0.548*** (0.103)	0.00440 (0.0965)	0.0968 (0.162)	0.0656 (0.139)
Unconstrained PCS	0.639*** (0.0723)	0.681*** (0.117)	0.658*** (0.117)	0.872*** (0.216)	0.870*** (0.201)	0.751*** (0.154)
Population			-0.0616 (0.0691)			0.0771 (0.0850)
Population density			-0.0406 (0.0527)			-0.0103 (0.0478)
Value of cash crops			0.0870 (0.0559)			-0.0799 (0.0631)
% alienated land			0.000128 (0.0747)			0.0189 (0.0332)
Distance from rail line			0.140*** (0.0452)			0.00378 (0.0374)
Distance from capital			0.0357 (0.0657)			0.117** (0.0543)
Distance from coastline			-0.00987 (0.0553)			-0.0176 (0.0387)
Missionary station			0.0231 (0.196)			-0.0706 (0.115)
Intercept	0.419*** (0.0494)	0.457*** (0.121)	0.376 (0.520)	0.136*** (0.0321)	-0.0880 (0.148)	-1.165 (0.745)
Provinces	61	61	61	61	61	61
R-squared	0.468	0.585	0.602	0.492	0.585	0.635

Notes: We change the unit of analysis from NTs to provinces. Each variable is an average over the values for every NT within the province. The specifications are otherwise identical to those in Tables 4 and 5.

Table A.6: Adding Covariates to Table 6

Panel A. Colony FE				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	<u>DV: Elite</u>	<u>DV: Popular</u>	<u>DV: Chief appoint</u>	<u>DV: DO appoint</u>
No PCS	-0.0700 (0.0540)	0.265*** (0.0397)		0.0288 (0.0278)
Unconstrained PCS			0.369*** (0.0970)	
Intercept	0.00778 (0.00948)	0.971*** (0.0281)	0.000 -	-0.00320 (0.00432)
NTs	403	403	403	403
Provinces	61	61	61	61
R-squared	0.289	0.323	0.267	0.656
Colony FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Panel B. Covariates				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	<u>DV: Elite</u>	<u>DV: Popular</u>	<u>DV: Chief appoint</u>	<u>DV: DO appoint</u>
No PCS	-0.206*** (0.0605)	0.295*** (0.0417)		0.139*** (0.0322)
Unconstrained PCS			0.256** (0.103)	
Population	-0.0837*** (0.0278)	0.0349 (0.0217)	0.0138 (0.0189)	0.0697*** (0.0183)
Population density	0.00159 (0.0253)	0.0762*** (0.0218)	-0.0411*** (0.0144)	-0.0206 (0.0184)
Value of cash crops	0.0716*** (0.0240)	-0.0151 (0.0190)	-0.0391** (0.0166)	0.00526 (0.0156)
% alienated land	0.0460** (0.0213)	-0.0783*** (0.0200)	0.0186 (0.0135)	0.0230 (0.0166)
Distance from rail line	0.0877*** (0.0276)	-0.0667*** (0.0222)	0.000697 (0.0161)	-0.0370** (0.0182)
Distance from capital	0.0353 (0.0397)	-0.0645* (0.0351)	-0.00530 (0.0224)	-0.0523** (0.0264)
Distance from coastline	-0.0519* (0.0265)	0.0267 (0.0253)	0.0423*** (0.0135)	0.0452** (0.0224)
Missionary station	-0.0715 (0.0545)	0.0406 (0.0441)	0.0750** (0.0360)	-0.0347 (0.0327)
Intercept	1.299*** (0.266)	-0.0383 (0.227)	-0.120 (0.177)	-0.488*** (0.147)
NTs	367	367	367	367
Provinces	56	56	56	56
R-squared	0.118	0.231	0.178	0.155

Notes: Table 6 presents the baseline models. In Panel A, we add colony fixed effects to every specification. In Panel B, we add the set of covariates to every specification.

Table A.7: Alternative Coding of Elite/Popular Council Members

	DV: Elite (alt.)			DV: Popular (alt.)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
No PCS	-0.252*** (0.0587)	-0.224*** (0.0522)	-0.310*** (0.0619)	0.331*** (0.0479)	0.420*** (0.0440)	0.399*** (0.0451)
Population			-0.0732*** (0.0274)			0.0244 (0.0223)
Population density			-0.00370 (0.0242)			0.0815*** (0.0214)
Value of cash crops			0.0354 (0.0251)			0.0211 (0.0210)
% alienated land			0.0977*** (0.0221)			-0.130*** (0.0209)
Distance from rail line			0.0484* (0.0274)			-0.0274 (0.0229)
Distance from capital			-0.0105 (0.0369)			-0.0186 (0.0331)
Distance from coastline			0.0237 (0.0247)			-0.0490** (0.0249)
Missionary station			-0.113** (0.0536)			0.0817* (0.0445)
Intercept	0.640*** (0.0519)	0.0249 (0.0242)	1.239*** (0.258)	0.151*** (0.0387)	0.953*** (0.0442)	0.0220 (0.220)
NTs	403	403	367	403	403	367
Provinces	57	57	56	57	57	56
R-squared	0.043	0.439	0.156	0.076	0.511	0.333
Colony FE		✓			✓	

Notes: For our main measure, either of the following two characteristics were sufficient to code a council member as an elite: the individual (a) gained a local title by hereditary means or (b) held an *ex officio* seat on the council, that is, the traditional title automatically qualified them for a seat on the council. We also coded an alternative version in which elite members must have gained their titles by hereditary means, and otherwise they are coded as popular members. In this table, we re-run the models from Tables 6 and A.6 using these alternative versions of the elite and popular counselor variables.

B CODING NOTES ON PRECOLONIAL STATES

Here we present our list of precolonial states, provide additional pieces of evidence about how Native Treasuries perpetuated historical states, explain why our data improve upon existing measures, and present excerpts from the detailed coding notes we compiled for each case. The coding notes will be available in full upon publication. Table B.1 lists every precolonial state and other pieces of information discussed here.

B.1 CODING PRECOLONIAL STATES

To generate a list of states, we built upon a recent data set of precolonial African states from Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2022), which draws in large part from the work of two eminent historians of Africa, J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder. Specifically, Ajayi and Crowder (1985) present a series of detailed regional maps of the location of major African polities in the nineteenth century. Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2022) consulted various sources to verify which polities in these maps met the basic criteria for a state laid out in Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940, 5), who define “Group A” societies as those with “centralized authority, administrative machinery, and judicial institutions—in short, a government.” The main sources they used were Stewart (2006), Butcher and Griffiths (2020), and Paine (2019), in addition to numerous country-specific monographs. Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2022) also provide detail on how their data set differs from and improves upon the widely used set of ethnic groups from Murdock (1959, 1967).

We include every state from the list in Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2022). We also add states in two regions for which the maps in Ajayi and Crowder (1985) are not sufficiently precise.

1. Ajayi and Crowder (1985) depict the entire Sokoto Caliphate as a single state, yet in reality the Caliphate was governed as numerous largely independent emirates, allied states, and hostile enclaves. We include all twenty-six emirates plus eleven additional states (four of which were traditional Hausa states) that survived within the broad domain of the Sokoto Caliphate. We identified these states using detailed maps of the Sokoto Caliphate from Johnston (1970, Map 2) and Smaldone (1977, 55) as well as the list of emirates in Northern Nigeria from Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1966).
2. Ajayi and Crowder (1985) provide a large and less detailed map of all of Africa in which they depict several Tswana states: Kwena, Ngwato, and Rolong. However, their detailed regional map for southern Africa does not depict any Tswana states. Following Schapera (1940, 1955), we distinguish the eight main Tswana states and include each in our data set.

Table B.1: Matching Precolonial States with Native Treasuries

State	IC*	Colony	Province	District	NT	% NT in PCS	% PCS in NT
Adamawa**		Nigeria (N)	Adamawa	Adamawa	Adamawa	97%	32%
Muri**		Nigeria (N)	Adamawa	Muri	Muri	90%	78%
Bauchi**		Nigeria (N)	Bauchi	Bauchi	Bauchi	80%	73%
Gombe**		Nigeria (N)	Bauchi	Gombe	Gombe	76%	73%
Jemaari**		Nigeria (N)	Bauchi	Katagum	Jamari	86%	48%
Katagum**		Nigeria (N)	Bauchi	Katagum	Katagum	86%	87%
Misau**		Nigeria (N)	Bauchi	Katagum	Misau	80%	49%
Lafia**		Nigeria (N)	Benue	Lafia	Lafia	89%	74%
Keffi**		Nigeria (N)	Benue	Nasarawa	Keffi	71%	80%
Nasarawa**		Nigeria (N)	Benue	Nasarawa	Nasarawa	87%	78%
Bedde		Nigeria (N)	Bornu	Bedde	Bedde		
Biu		Nigeria (N)	Bornu	Biu	Biu		
Bornu		Nigeria (N)	Bornu	Bornu	Bornu	81%	80%
Dikwa		Nigeria (N)	Bornu	Dikwa	Dikwa		
Fika		Nigeria (N)	Bornu	Potiskum	Fika		
Borgu	✓	Nigeria (N)	Ilorin	Borgu	Bussa/Kaiama	77%	80%
Ilorin**	✓	Nigeria (N)	Ilorin	Ilorin	Ilorin	89%	82%
Lafiagi**		Nigeria (N)	Ilorin	Pategi-Lafiagi	Lafiagi	79%	62%
Pategi**		Nigeria (N)	Ilorin	Pategi-Lafiagi	Pategi	63%	78%
Igala	✓	Nigeria (N)	Kabba	Igala	Igala	41%	76%
Kano**	✓	Nigeria (N)	Kano	Kano	Kano	93%	90%
Gumel		Nigeria (N)	Kano	Northern	Gumel		
Kazaure**		Nigeria (N)	Kano	Kano	Kazaure		
Hadejia**		Nigeria (N)	Kano	Northern	Hadejia	76%	93%
Daura**	✓	Nigeria (N)	Katsina	Katsina	Daura	63%	74%
Katsina**		Nigeria (N)	Katsina	Katsina	Katsina	94%	91%
Abuja	✓	Nigeria (N)	Niger	Abuja	Abuja	75%	59%
Lapai**		Nigeria (N)	Niger	Abuja	Lapai	90%	57%
Agai**		Nigeria (N)	Niger	Bida	Agai	64%	73%
Nupe (Bida)**	✓	Nigeria (N)	Niger	Bida	Bida	80%	89%
Kontagora**		Nigeria (N)	Niger	Kontagora	Kontagora		
Jema'a**		Nigeria (N)	Plateau	Jemaa	Jemaa	74%	77%
Wase		Nigeria (N)	Plateau	Shendam	Shendam		
Argungu (Kebbi)	✓	Nigeria (N)	Sokoto	Argungu	Argungu		
Gwandu**		Nigeria (N)	Sokoto	Gwandu	Gwandu	71%	42%
Yauri	✓	Nigeria (N)	Sokoto	Gwandu	Yauri		
Sokoto**		Nigeria (N)	Sokoto	Sokoto	Sokoto	95%	90%
Zamfara	✓	Nigeria (N)	Sokoto	Sokoto	Sokoto	-	-
Zaria**		Nigeria (N)	Zaria	Zaria	Zaria	93%	79%

*IC: institutional constraints

**Emirate within the Sokoto Caliphate

Table B.1, continued

State	IC*	Colony	Province	District	NT	% NT in PCS	% PCS in NT
Basuto	✓	Basutoland			National	88%	68%
Malete	✓	Bechuanaland		Gaberones	Malete		
Tlokwa	✓	Bechuanaland		Gaberones	Tlokwa		
Kgatla	✓	Bechuanaland		Kgatlang	Kgatla		
Kwena	✓	Bechuanaland		Kweneng	Kwena		
Rolong	✓	Bechuanaland		Lobatsi	Barolong		
Tawana	✓	Bechuanaland		Ngamiland	Tawana		
Ngwaketse	✓	Bechuanaland		Ngwaketse	Ngwaketse		
Ngwato	✓	Bechuanaland		Ngwato	Ngwato		
Asante	✓	Gold Coast	Asante		29 NTs in Ashanti Colony		
Dagomba	✓	Gold Coast	Northern	Dagomba	Dagomba	75%	74%
Barotse	✓	N. Rhodesia	Barotse	Barotse	Barotse	40%	89%
Bemba	✓	N. Rhodesia	Northern	Kasama	Chitimukulu & Bemba	83%	36%
Kazembe	✓	N. Rhodesia	Western	Kawambwa	Kasembe & Lunda		
Egba (Abeokuta)	✓	Nigeria (W)	Abeokuta	Egba	Egba	24%	41%
Benin	✓	Nigeria (W)	Benin	Benin	Benin	46%	51%
Ijebu	✓	Nigeria (W)	Ijebu	Ijebu	Ijebu	34%	81%
Ibadan	✓	Nigeria (W)	Oyo	Ibadan	Ibadan	81%	25%
Ife	✓	Nigeria (W)	Oyo	Ife	Ife		
Oyo	✓	Nigeria (W)	Oyo	Oyo	Oyo	59%	89%
Swaziland	✓	Swaziland			National	87%	67%
Buganda		Uganda	Buganda	Buganda	Buganda	72%	83%
Nkore		Uganda	Western	Ankole	Ankole	37%	46%
Bunyoro		Uganda	Western	Bunyoro	Bunyoro	91%	69%

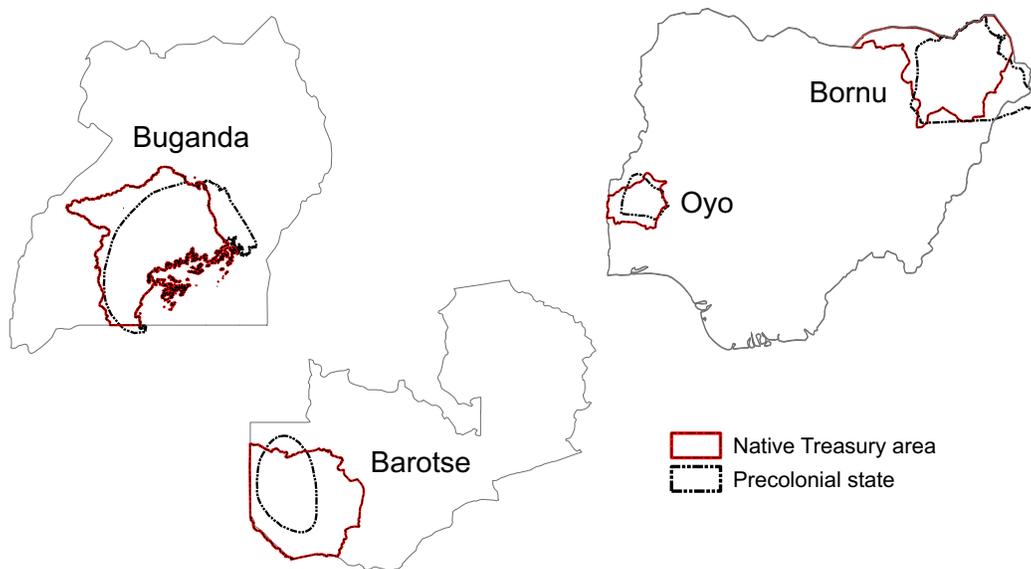
*IC: institutional constraints

B.2 INSTITUTIONAL PERSISTENCE WITH NATIVE TREASURIES

In the text, we discussed three further pieces of evidence of colonial persistence that emerged from matching precolonial states and Native Treasuries: (1) names, (2) royal lines, and (3) territories.

1. The names were straightforward to match, as Table B.1 shows by presenting the names of both the precolonial state and NT.
2. For the persistence of royal lines, we followed the approach of Müller-Crepon (2020) in using data from Stewart (2006), who presents information on rulers in the precolonial, colonial, and postindependence areas. We additionally consulted Cahoon (n.d.), who presents similar although seemingly more comprehensive information. Using this additional source enabled us to verify that numerous royal lines about which Stewart is ambiguous did indeed persist until independence, which yields differences in some of our coding relative to Müller-Crepon (2020).
3. For territorial continuity, we used our shapefiles for NTs to verify that the historical capital cities were located within, primarily using data on precolonial capitals from Stewart (2006). We also merged our NT shapefiles with spatial polygons of precolonial states from Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2022) to assess the overlap between the areas governed by states on the eve of colonialism and the areas of NTs. We have shapefiles for most, but not all, states in our data set (but none for the Tswana states in Bechuanaland). On average, 70% of the area covered by a precolonial state lay within the area covered by the corresponding NT, and 75% of the area covered by an NT lay within the area covered by the precolonial state. We interpret these percentages as very high, especially considering the inevitable error associated with measuring the reach of historical states. Appendix Figure B.1 depicts several typical cases of high overlap: Bornu and Oyo in Nigeria, Buganda in Uganda, and Barotse in Northern Rhodesia.

Figure B.1: Comparing Areas of Precolonial States and Native Treasuries



B.3 ADVANTAGES OVER EXISTING DATA SETS

By measuring precolonial institutions at the level of the colonial NT, our data are uniquely suited to assessing hypotheses about institutional persistence between the precolonial and colonial eras. Existing datasets that measure aspects of precolonial institutional constraints use the ethnic group units from anthropologist George Murdock, either the *Ethnographic Atlas* for Africa or the Standard Cross-Cultural Survey (SCCS). Several scholars have amended the SCCS to code constraints on the powers of precolonial rulers and the influence of councils (Murdock and Wilson 1972; Tuden and Marshall 1972; Ross 1983; Ember, Russett and Ember 1993; see Baldwin 2015 and Ahmed and Stasavage 2020 for recent uses in political science of these council variables). However, these data are not suitable for our purposes. The SCCS contains only 186 polities across the world, and only six located within the eleven African colonies in our dataset. By contrast, our data set incorporates 463 NTs in these colonies. Furthermore, the ethnic units from Murdock (1959) exhibit little overlap with colonial district and Treasury boundaries. Therefore, using this source to measure precolonial institutions would induce an unacceptable amount of measurement error for our units, despite its broad coverage of Africa.

As indicated by the aforementioned references, the use of anthropological accounts compiled during the colonial era has become standard in social scientific work on precolonial states in Africa. However, the use of anthropological data has been criticized on the basis that many of the dates of observation occurred after significant economic change and European intervention had taken place (Henderson and Whatley 2014). Although this undoubtedly created challenges to constructing accurate accounts, we believe that if anything, the bias induced by inaccuracies would tend to go against our characterization of widespread institutional constraints. Qualitative histories of Africa in the late nineteenth century suggest that there was a tendency for African states to become increasingly autocratic over this period. For example, in our discussion of Buganda, anthropologists highlight that governance had become more autocratic over time prior to colonization. This is not an isolated case, as the drift towards increasingly authoritarian rule in the nineteenth century was observed in several regions of Africa. Given the difficulty of constructing oral histories farther back in time, it is natural that anthropologists would attempt to characterize the most accurate snapshot of precolonial politics possible, which would be on the eve of colonization. Yet to the extent that the late nineteenth century was an unusually autocratic period in African governance, this would make it more difficult to find evidence of institutional constraints.

B.4 CODING RULES FOR INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

The following provides coding notes on our dichotomous variable for whether rulers of each precolonial state were unconstrained autocrats or constrained by a council. We collected information on three criteria. The first is the most important and provides the primary basis for our coding decisions. The last two were supplementary. We did not use either as the sole basis for coding any cases as constrained absent any evidence suggestive of the first criterion.

1. **Relationship vis-a-vis council.** Did the ruler regularly consult a council? Did a council regularly influence policy decisions? Was the ruler unable to regularly override the desires of the council?
2. **Choosing and deposing chiefs.** Did the council play a role in selecting new rulers? Did a council have the formal right to depose rulers who committed transgressions or were otherwise deemed unworthy? If so, did they use those powers frequently?
3. **Selecting counselors.** Did any influential counselors gain their positions independent of the ruler?

Additional important distinctions that inform our coding decisions are:

- **Despotic vs. infrastructural power.** We are interested in constraints on despotic power, that is, the presence of elites organized at the center that could influence the rulers’s decisions. Another source of constraints arises from the generic difficulty for any pre-modern ruler to project authority over space, hence limiting infrastructural power. There is no variation in the latter source of constraints for any precolonial African polity with political organization above the village level, as all were severely constrained on this dimension. Thus, if the sources indicate constraints but only with regard to projecting authority across space, that information is insufficient to code the ruler as constrained.
- **De facto vs. de jure power.** In many cases, the ruler was theoretically absolute (and perhaps divine), but in practice constrained by other elites. In such cases, the information about the extent of de facto rather than de jure power informs our coding decision.
- **Legislative vs. judicial constraints.** Our first (and main) coding criterion takes into account information about information about legislative power (i.e., making policy decisions) rather than judicial power. We document instances in which the ruler faced some constraints on his ability to unilaterally decide court cases yet a council did not constrain his legislative power. We code such cases as unconstrained.
- **Councils vs. other constraining positions/institutions.** In most cases, the most notable constraining institution was a regularly constituted council of elites. In some cases, the main constraint mentioned in the sources was a Queen Mother or other officials acting in an individual capacity rather than as a council. To consider such information as constituting executive constraints, we require the leading officials to be non-royal (i.e., not part of the royal family or appointed by the ruler or ruling family); although to feel confident about the coding, we prefer when there is information specifically about a council. Another form of non-council constraints came from secret societies. We code these as constraints when present because of the source of influence comes from outside the ruling family.

B.5 EXCERPTS FROM CODING NOTES

B.5.1 Bornu (Northern Nigeria)

Coding: Bornu, ruled by the Shehu, had become an *unconstrained state* by the nineteenth century as prior checks on the executive had weakened.

Details: Bornu was an ancient state in West Africa. It was part of the historical Kanem-Bornu empire before breaking off to form its own empire. The sources indicate that constraints on the Shehu weakened considerably over time. “The whole Council of State (Nokena) is only a shadow nowadays, surviving from the aristocratic constitution of an earlier period, and has no longer any effective power . . . Now it is only the will of the sovereign and the influence of his favorites that count” (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966, 333). The council members “gradually came to regard themselves as princes, and at the end of the fifteenth century Ali Dunama greatly curtailed their powers” (Temple 1922, 435). The Bornu Council of State “is composed of members of the royal family, the brothers and sons of the Shehu, together with the state councillors . . . who themselves fall into two categories: the free-born representatives of different national groups, and the military commanders . . . who are of slave origin” (Hogben and Kirk-Greene 1966, 332).

B.5.2 Buganda (Uganda)

Coding: Buganda, ruled by the Kabaka, had become an *unconstrained state* by the nineteenth century as prior checks on the executive had weakened.

Details:

- The Bataka, the class of notables, were originally able to check the king when they had ruled alongside him as a hereditary chiefly council. However, they lost their power during the “growth of royal despotism during the eighteenth century,” as one king began replacing hereditary chiefs with new chiefs loyal to him (Kiwanuka 1971, 100-101). “There is no doubt that the authority of the Kabaka was greater in the nineteenth century than it had previously been. Previously there had been many checks on his authority,” such as the bataka (clan, sub-clan, and lineage heads), national gods, and officers who “could suggest and advise, and were expected to do so” (Fallers 1960, 64). “Before the reign of Mutebi, a king could have his wishes blocked by the opposition of the chiefs. But by the eighteenth century a strong king could easily ignore the protests of the notables as demonstrated by the policies of Tebandeke . . .” (Kiwanuka 1971, 100). In the nineteenth century, “the central authority of the Kabaka was increasing at the expense of the bataka and the spokesmen for the gods . . . By the time of first recorded history, the Kabaka had an absolute right to rule the country—symbolized by his ‘eating Buganda’ at the time of his coronation” (Fallers 1960, 64).
- Later chiefs could replace bataka at will, including previously hereditary positions. “As royal despotism expanded, it became easier for the kings to get rid of unwanted chiefs.” By the nineteenth century, Bataka had lost their ancient privileges and “the balance of political power had shifted more into the royal hands than it had ever done before” (Kiwanuka 1971, 101-102). “It was said that the Kabaka was the head of all the bataka.” One Kabaka replaced the clan heads with administrative chiefs, while another substituted “direct appointments to some ssaza [county] chieftainships which had previously been hereditary” (Fallers 1960, 64). “The Kabaka, once established, had great power in his own right, which he exercised throughout the kingdom through his court officials and his chiefs . . . in the nineteenth century the power of the Kabaka increased and he became strong enough to appoint chiefs where previously the position had been inherited” (Fallers 1960, 61-63). Hailey (1950a, 14) also describes how at least six of the saza (county) posts were hereditary at the beginning of the eighteenth century but that changed during that century. “The reason for the change was doubtless the expansion of Buganda and the growing authority of the Kabaka vis-a-vis the hitherto powerful families.”

B.5.3 Oyo (Western Nigeria)

Coding: Oyo, ruled by the Alafin, was a *constrained state* throughout the nineteenth century. Councils influenced day-to-day policy decisions and affected the selection and replacement of Alafins.

Details:

- A Council of Seven, called the Awyaw Mesi, drew its members from seven lineages; these members are referred to as semi-hereditary nobility (Talbot 1926, 571). The chief of the counselors was called

the “terrestrial chief” whereas the Alafin was the “celestial chief” (Forde 1951, 22). According to Talbot (1926, 571), “No law could be promulgated” without the consent of the Awyaw Mesi.

- Another powerful council was the Oyo Mesi, the council of head chiefs. In theory, “the king was supposed to have the last word” in disagreements. Yet in practice, “the king was reduced to the position of figure head” and “real power fell to the Oyo Mesi who were the civil lords of the commoners” (Imoagene 1990, 25). “Thus the king was very effectively checked not only by the Ogboni cult but also by the Oyo-Mesi” (Imoagene 1990, 26).
- The Awyaw Mesi chose and could depose the Alafin. The three “Fathers of the King” nominated elections, among whom the Awyaw Mesi chose. The new Alafin typically came from a different branch than the late Alafin (Talbot 1926, 568). The head of the council “had the right to demand the [king’s] death if he proved to be a failure or a tyrant.” Supposedly, this event was fairly common (Talbot 1926, 571).

B.5.4 Barotse/Lozi (Northern Rhodesia)

Coding: Barotse was a *constrained state* throughout the nineteenth century. The main council (which was divided into sub-councils) influenced day-to-day policy decisions and could replace the king.

Details:

- The kuta, or council, was the main ruling body and had many sub-councils, where “matters of national importance might originate . . . Attempts were made to get agreement between the three councils before the king was called on to give the final decision” (Turner 1952, 37). “The councils of the two real capitals interlock into a single council in which councillors of Lwambi rank below those of Namuso. This council was until 1947 the real ruling body of Loziland” (34). “In all routine matters the Kuta worked as one composite body . . . In other matters, and particularly those involving issues of major importance to the Lozi, the Kuta was divided formally into the three Councils”—the Sikalo, Saa, and Katengo (Hailey 1950*b*, 96). The first council was comprised of minor commoner councillors and the king’s stewards. The second was comprised of all the other councillors (princes and commoners) except for the two most senior ones, and the third consisted of the senior councillors of the second council and the two most senior officials, the Ngambela and the Natamayo (Caplan 1970, 3-4).
- The council could not act without the king’s approval, but the king could not in practice override the council if its opinion was united. “If all three Councils agreed a decision was taken. If not, the Councils sat again, this time having the advantage of knowing each other’s views, including those of the Sikalo, which were reported to the other Councils. If they could not agree the Sikalo’s decision had the greatest weight, but the Paramount and Ngambela might follow the Katengo’s decision against both upper Councils. It is said that they respected the Katengo ‘as speaking for the mass of the people’” (Hailey 1950*b*, 96). “Because of the different interests into which all these members of the ruling class were divided, it was difficult for them to unite against the King. But if they did reach a consensus of opinion, it was hazardous for the King to adopt an opposing policy” (Caplan 1970, 4).

- The counselors depended on the king for their positions and promotion. However, because the king could be any member of the royal family, they also could choose to support a rival candidate for king at any time, in hopes of gaining a better position. “The King could appoint any commoner to any place in the established hierarchy of council titles, or to the Ngambelaship. This both augmented and diminished the power of the King, for while his subjects depended on him for promotion, he was perpetually open to the threat that, if antagonized, they would rally behind a prince whom they would attempt to substitute for the incumbent” (Caplan 1970, 3). “In this way, then, permanent intrigue at every level of government inhered in the system, no man from King to the most subordinate councillor enjoying secure tenure of office” (Caplan 1970, 3). “As the Lozi themselves say, the state is always on the verge of revolt” (Caplan 1970, 3). The system of territorial division, however, ensured that no councillor or prince could accrue “a solid localized block of men.” Power was instead concentrated in the capital (Caplan 1970, 4-5).
- The Ngambela was the chief minister who wielded considerable power (Hailey 1950b, 96; Turner 1952, 37). The Ngambelaship was the highest position a commoner could aspire to, and was “greatly dependent on the King’s favour” for his position. However, it was also his duty to represent the nation and perform “his function to oppose a King who ruled unjustly” (Caplan 1970, 3).

C CODING NOTES ON NATIVE AUTHORITY INSTITUTIONS

We first discuss ambiguities for coding elite members on councils and the limited role of women in the Native Authorities. We then present excerpts from the detailed coding notes we compiled for each case to code Native Authority institutions. The case notes will be available in full upon publication.

C.1 CODING ELITE MEMBERS ON COUNCILS

A typical elite member on a council was an individual who (a) gained a local title by hereditary means and (b) held an *ex officio* seat on the council, that is, the traditional title automatically qualified them for a seat on the council. Yet some individuals met one but not both of these conditions. Suppose that a lower-level council such as a village council selected all members for the higher-level NA council, a common selection procedure. In such cases, any hereditary title holder on the NA council gained this seat because the village council selected them, as opposed to their hereditary title automatically qualifying them for a seat. Such individuals met the first but not second condition outlined above for an elite member. By contrast, in areas such as Igboland, individuals gained traditional titles by popular acclamation or by purchase, as opposed to by hereditary selection. Any non-hereditary titleholder who gained an *ex officio* position on the NA council met the second but not first condition for an elite member. In the main version of the elite-member variable, we coded an individual who met either condition as an elite. For a robustness check, we code an alternative version in which an “elite” member must hold a hereditary title. Finally, note that the following type of council member did not meet either condition, and thus we code them as popularly selected rather than elite: holders of non-hereditary local titles who gained their position on the NA council via selection by a lower-level council.

C.2 WOMEN IN THE NATIVE AUTHORITIES

Almost every NA chief was a male, although the Hailey documents mention four chieftainesses: Tawana in Bechuanaland, Isoka in Northern Rhodesia, Kalolo in Nyasaland, and Unyanyembe in Tanganyika. Additional examples outside our statistical sample include female paramount chiefs in Mendeland in Sierra Leone (Day 2016) and a female warrant chief in Eastern Nigeria in the early twentieth century (Achebe 2011).

Almost all counselors were men, although with some exceptions. In five areas in Western Nigeria, women gained elected seats on the NA council or a Subordinate Native Authority council. Queen Mothers held seats on the Ashanti Confederacy Council, Divisional Councils in Ashanti, the Fante Confederacy Council, and the Liqoqo in Swaziland. In the latter cases, this reflected the traditional importance of Queen Mothers, who also played a role in selecting a new ruler.

C.3 EXCERPTS FROM CODING NOTES

C.3.1 Bornu (Northern Nigeria)

Coding: Bornu was a NA/NT in the eponymous district and province in Northern Nigeria. The Native Authority was a solo chief with an entirely chief-appointed council.

Details. From Hailey (1951a, 55): “In the Bornu Division the Shehu, who is sole Native Authority, has an Advisory Council of six, the Waziri (£1,000) who is in charge of District affairs and prisons; the Mukaddam (£600) who is in charge of the police and of Maiduguri town; Mainia Kanandi (£540), the first legal member; the Wali (£450) the second legal member and in charge of agriculture and forestry; the Ma’aji (£450) who is the Treasurer and supervises the co-operative societies; and Shettima Kashim (£510) who is the Education Officer. Two of the Council (Mukaddam and the Ma’aji) are Shuwa Arabs appointed on merit; the Waziri and the Mainia Kanandi come from traditional families. The Advisory Council is appointed by the Shehu and approved by the Resident.”

C.3.2 Buganda (Uganda)

Coding: Buganda was a Native Government in Uganda with its own treasury. The NA was chief and council, and the council had a plurality of chief-appointed members with a minority of each of elite and popularly selected members.

Details. From Hailey (1950a): Britain’s foundational treaty with the Kabaka of Buganda, the Agreement of 1900, provided the constitution for Buganda. Hailey stresses the unique extent of autonomy in Buganda given the Agreement of 1900, which “contemplated that the Kabaka should, subject to certain conditions, exercise direct control over the natives of Buganda. Given the circumstances existing in 1900, that provision clearly applied primarily to requirements such as the maintenance of law and order or the administration of justice . . . As the picture presents itself to-day, the Native Government provides a large part of the machinery for the administration of law and order and of justice, while the Protectorate Government provides the greater part of the services ministering to the social and economic needs of the Province” (8).

The NA was a chief and council. “The Native Government has been gazetted as the Native Authority . . .” (18). Later he clarifies that the “Native Government” refers to both Kabaka and Lukiko: “As has been shown, not only are the laws enacted by the Kabaka and Lukiko subject to the assent of the Governor, but it is expressly provided that in this respect the Native Government must explicitly follow the advice tendered to it through his representatives” (22).

Hailey provides extensive detail on the composition and powers of the council:

- “The Kabaka was to ‘exercise direct rule over the natives of Buganda,’ to whom he was to administer justice through the Lukiko or Native Council . . . The Kabaka’s Council of the Lukiko was to discuss and pass resolutions on all matters concerning the native administration of Buganda; but the Kabaka was to consult the representative of the British Government in Uganda before giving effect to such resolutions . . . Subsequent Agreements of 1910 and 1937 made it clear that this Article of the 1900 Agreement was to be interpreted as conferring on the Kabaka and Lukiko the power to make, with the consent of the Governor, laws which were to be binding on natives in Buganda” (6). Later he states: “The machinery for effecting Buganda legislation is the Kabaka and Lukiko. The Great Lukiko at Mengo . . . is a body which, as will be seen, has also important functions in the field of administration, and supplies the members of the supreme judicial court of Buganda. Its legislative business was formerly concentrated at its annual session, but arrangement have now been made for it to hold quarterly sessions” (9).
- Hailey then describes how the membership of the Lukiko evolved over time. Before 1939, the council consisted almost entirely of Kabaka-selected chiefs, who served as official members. The Kabaka agreed to reforms in 1939 that added non-official members, and in 1945 he assented to further reforms to introduce elected members. On p. 10, Hailey provides an exact composition since 1946, which we use to code the council composition variables in the dataset. Overall, despite these changes, chief-appointed members remained the plurality on the council.
 - 38 chief-appointed members: The Kabaka selected the ministers (3), Kabaka’s nominees (6), Gombolola chiefs (15), and Miruka chiefs (14).
 - 20 elite members: The saza (county) chiefs formed “the higher ranks of the civil service in Buganda and are appointed by promotion or transfer or on merit” (14). We code these members as meeting both criteria for elites because they gained their positions *ex officio* and many of the positions had recently been hereditary. However, given the rise of royal absolutism in Buganda in the century prior to colonization, the historical status of some of these appointments was in flux. As Hailey notes, appointment by merit “has not always been the case. Whilst there is insufficient evidence to speak with certainty of all the nine posts which existed up to the reign of Junju in the late eighteenth century, it is clear that at least six posts, those of Mugema, Kago, Kasuju, Kangawo, Kitunzi and Katambala, were hereditary in accordance with Buganda rules of succession. As examples, the titles of Mugema dating from Kintu and Kasuju dating from Kimera were hereditary (for former in one and the latter in two families) for possible five hundred years and only ceased to be so in modern times, as did that of Katambala, which had been hereditary in one family since its establishment three hundred years before.”
 - 36 popularly selected members. These “unofficial” members are elected by the following process: “The 20 Sazas [counties] elect for the Kabaka’s selection the 36 unofficial representatives, in numerical proportion according to the population of each Saza. The representatives of each Saza are elected by the representatives of the Gombololas [next administrative level down], and the representatives of the Gombololas are elected by the Muluka [smallest administrative unit]

representatives. Each Muluka elects 2 representatives from among its registered voters” (10). The Kabaka plays a role in the selection of these unofficial representatives, but his influence was “largely nominal.” Instead, it represented “the attempt to combine the Kabaka’s right of selection with the element of popular representation introduced by the 1945 Law.”

C.3.3 Oyo (Western Nigeria)

Coding: Oyo was a NA/NT in the eponymous district and province of Western Nigeria. The Native Authority was chief and council with an elite-plurality council and some popularly selected members.

Details. From Hailey (1951a, 120): “The administration was until 1945 vested in the Alafin, assisted by an Advisory Council of 12 Chiefs from Oyo Town. In 1945 the Alafin abandoned his status as sole NA, and the composition of his council was changed to 11 Chiefs from Oyo, eight Chiefs from other towns in the Division and five nominated members. As the result of a further reorganization in 1949 the Council now consists of 13 Oyo Chiefs, 17 Chiefs from other towns, and 18 elected members, making, with the Alafin, a total membership of 49. The Council includes two women; all the elected Councillors are literate. The Council has six working Committees. The composition of the Councils of the five NAs has also been revised, with the purpose of increasing the number of elected Councillors, and nomination by Chiefs or Societies has been abolished.”

C.3.4 Barotse (Northern Rhodesia)

Coding: Barotse was a NA/NT in the eponymous province of Northern Rhodesia. The Native Authority was chief and council. The council was elite-plurality with a minority of chief-appointed members and non-hereditary elite members.

Details. From Hailey (1950b, 95); see also survey CO 1018/55:

- “It will be simplest to state at once the form which the native administration has now taken. It consists of the Paramount Chief and his Council at Lealui, as Superior Native Authority, with five Subordinate Native Authorities, consisting of a Chief (or District Head or President) and the local Kuta.”
- “The chieftom of the Paramount is hereditary, in the patrilineal line. The present Paramount Chief, Mwanawina, is a son of Lewanika and a half-brother of Imwiko the late Paramount. The headquarters Council at Lealui, which, as shown above, is now known as the Saa-Sikalo, has no rigidly prescribed membership, but the nucleus consists of a body of some 25 office holders, described as ‘sitting on the Right,’ though it may be attended also by certain members of the ruling family and others holding traditional Court posts described as ‘sitting on the Left,’ so that the numbers normally entitled to attend may be taken as between 30 and 40 in all.”
- “The office holders are (1) the Chief Minister (Ngambela) whose appointment has always been a prominent feature of the Lozi organization, seven of the nine holders of the post having been ‘commoners’ or of commoner descent, one a member of the ruling family, and one the son of a former Leashimha of Sesheke. The present occupant of the post was an interpreter in the Protectorate. (2) The Administrative Secretary—a comparatively recent creation. He is well educated and has served

in the Protectorate. (3) The Chief of the judicial side (Natamoyo), traditionally the ‘Keeper of the King’s Conscience,’ and always a member of the ruling family. (4) The Mukulwakashiko, the traditional Chairman of the former Saa Council. (5) Three Indunas, holding the senior posts of Education, Agriculture and Development. (6) Fifteen Councillors, of whom five are Indunas seconded in rotation from each of the five District Kutas, this being an innovation since 1946. (7) Five Indunas, holding less important ‘departmental’ posts. The non-traditional appointments are now made on merit and educational qualifications, but the narrow range of higher education in Barotseland tends to involve a preference for persons brought up at Lealui, who are mainly of Lozi or mixed Lozi descent.”

C.3.5 Kwahu (Gold Coast)

Coding: Kwahu was a NA/NT in the Birim district of the Gold Coast Colony. The Native Authority was chief and council, and the council was plurality elite and with a minority of popularly selected members.

Details. From Survey CO 1018/10:

Question 7. (a) The Kwahu Native Authority comprising the Omanhene of Kwahu and his state Council. This State Council comprises:

1. Nana Akuamoa Akyeampon, Omanhene of Kwehu (President)
2. Kwasi Apora, Odikro of Atibie and Gyasehene of Kwahu
3. Kwame Sei, Krontihene of Abene
4. Kwabena Adueni, Gyaseshene of Abene
5. Kwasi Amoa, Kyidomhene of Abene
6. Kwasi Banah, Odikro Sadan
7. Ntri Amponsam II, Adontenhene of Kwahu, Abetifi
8. Owusu Mensah II, Kyidomhene of Kwahu, Pepease
9. Diawuo Afari II, Odikro of Akwaseho and Twafohene of Kwahu
10. Kwaku Kunnipa III, Ohene of Twenedurase
11. Kwakye Ababio, II, Odikro of Nteso
12. Agyepon Baadu II, Ohene of Bukuruwa
13. Yao Ntim, Benkumhene of Kwahu, Aduamo
14. Dwamena Ayiripe II, Ohene of Bukuruwa
15. Kofi Ampadu, Ohene of Mpraeso
16. Kwasi Ameyao, Odikro of Kwahu Tafo
17. Kwabena Fofie, Okyeame, Abene
18. Kwasi Nyako, Nifahene of Kwahu, Obo
19. Ohene of Obomeng
20. Kwasi Bosompem II, Odikro of Bepong
21. Kwasi Mireku II, Odikro of Asakraka
22. E.Abednego Mensah, Councillor, Nkawkaw
23. E.J.O.Ababio, Councillor, Nkwatia
24. Kofi Nkansah, Councillor, Abetifi
25. Kwaku Domfe, Councillor, Nkawkaw
26. D.B.Asante, Nominated member, Abetifi
27. Yao Appa, Councillor, Pepease

28. Yao Fori, Councillor, Obomeng
29. Kwahu Amo, Councillor, Abene

(b) The chiefs within the Native Authority are traditional rulers inheriting their position in the matrilineal line. Selection within the line is made by the stool family who present their selection to the Gyase or keeper of the household.

(c) In Kwahu the Council mainly composed of traditional members of the State Council but is leavened by number of selected intelligentsia from various walks of life. This selection is made by the State Council. There has been no occasion for the Administration to intervene in prescribing or influencing the composition of the Council, except in the general way of advising that non-traditional members would be of help in running affairs.

(d) The Native Authority is a body with in this case the Paramount Chief as its President. In practice the President has only one vote and though his personal influence and hereditary position go a long way towards producing decisions, these factors can only be exercised in a direction in which he considers his councillors likely to follow.

(e) In only a few cases are the chiefs literate. All non-traditional members are literate, comprising about 25 per cent of the Native Authority.

C.3.6 Ada (Gold Coast)

Coding: Ada was a NA/NT in the Ho district of the Gold Coast Colony. The Native Authority was chief and council, and the council was comprised entirely of elites.

Details. From Survey CO 1018/10:

Question 7. (b) The Chiefs and Elders who constitute the Native Authority are traditional and hereditary (patrilineal).

(c) The Native Authority consists of the Ada Manche and the State Council which is constituted as follows
State Mankralo

9 Asafoatse-ngwa from the 9 tribes

6 Wornors (2 from the Tekperbiawe tribe)

1 Chief Linguist

4 Elders and Headmen

2 Djasetses of Kabiawe Tribe

1 Asafoatse

1 Paramount Stool Father

9 Private gentlemen.

The names of members of Native Authority are approved by Government and therefore in theory intervention by the administration is possible. In practice, no intervention has in fact taken place. The Chiefs who are members of the Native Authority are very greatly dependent on their own tribes for advice and support.

(d) Ada Manche gets £3-2-6 per month. (about £37.5 per year).

(e) While it is becoming increasingly common for educated men to be appointed as Chiefs, the standard of literacy in the Native Authority is at present very low.

C.3.7 North Nyanza (Kenya)

Coding: North Nyanza was a NA/NT in the eponymous district of the Nyanza Province of Kenya. The Native Authority was council-only; this coding is based on the higher-level Local Native Council, although there were also lower-level NA headmen. The council was primarily popularly selected members, with some DO-appointed members.

Details. From Hailey (1950a, 151–55):

- “In North Nyanza District the Locations, which originally took account of tribal divisions, were at one time more numerous, but have since been reduced in number as a matter of administrative convenience. Though the status of ‘Chiefs’ is not hereditary (save possibly in the exceptional case of Mumia’s chiefdom) there is no doubt that in a number of cases they represent an inherited tradition, and have been selected from what are recognized locally as ‘chiefly’ families. Some of the present Headmen claim that there have been chiefs in their families for many generations, and of only two could it be said that they belong to families who have previously had no such connection. The method of selection is elastic; in some cases a man is clearly indicated by family position, while others are appointed after a process of consultation with the inhabitants of a Location, which has something of the character of election. But in each case the final choice is that of Government, and there is no traditional body of Elders, such as are found in the Bantu areas of some other territories, who are recognized as entitled to select a chief. Fourteen of the present Headmen are literate.”
- “The system of Local Native Councils has now been in force for nearly a quarter of a century in the Province, and has become an important feature in the administration of native affairs, more especially in the three Nyanza Districts.”
- “In North Nyanza District the election of members is arranged so as to secure one representative for roughly 13,000 inhabitants, and the 20 Locations are sub-divided into electoral units for this purpose. The names of candidates are put forward at locational meetings, and election, which is sometimes keenly contested, follows the ‘line-up’ procedure. It has, however, been proposed that a list of candidates should in the future be nominated at meetings of the Locational Advisory Councils. The tendency has been to select younger educated men, and there are several Makerere students among the present members.”
- “There is a general agreement that the Councils, as now constituted, provide an effective representation of different aspects of local opinion, including that of the younger element in the population, and their deliberations are marked by free and open discussion. This on occasion takes the form of strong criticism of Government measures, but the Nyanza Councils have not developed the tendency, noticeable in some of the Kikuyu Councils, to exhibit a standing opposition to the Government on political grounds. While the District Commissioner remains the central and most responsible figure in the Councils, his position has tended to become one of guidance rather than control. Most of the routine deliberations of the Councils take place under the chairmanship of the African Deputy Vice-Presidents; the Councils sit once a quarter, and much of their detailed work is transacted in Standing Committees.”

C.3.8 Bukoba (Tanganyika)

Coding: The Treasury of Council of Bukoba Chiefs was a NT in the eponymous district in the Lake Province of Tanganyika. There were eight solo-chief NAs who were federated into a district-level council that controlled the treasury, creating a council-only NA. The council consisted solely of the constituent NA chiefs, which we code as elite only.

Details. From Hailey (1950a, 227):

- “In the Bukoba District the eight Chiefs (Bakama) who, as already indicated, are of Hima stock, have an hereditary status. They administer their areas through sub-chiefs (Bami) who have not necessarily a traditional standing, but are selected by the Bakama, and it is said that the latter have a tendency to keep the post as far as possible in the family.”
- “The Chiefs have no regular Councils, and it was frequently said in the past that they paid less regard to consultation with responsible and representative bodies of Elders than is usual elsewhere.”
- “The eight Chiefs are federated in the Council of the Chiefs of Bukoba (the Council of Bakama) which is gazetted as a Native Authority, and is in practice a deliberative and financial body whose legislative functions are limited to making Orders under Section 8 and Rules under Section 15 of the Ordinance for the whole of the chiefdoms and controlling the Treasury of the District. In these respects it has been more effective than many of the other federated Councils in the Province, partly because of the relatively large revenue of the Treasury, but perhaps even more because the Council had for some years the advantage of the service of an outstanding African Secretary.”

C.3.9 Calabar (Eastern Nigeria)

Coding: The Calabar Province of Eastern Nigeria contained 28 NTs and 46 NAs, all of which were council-only. The councils had a plurality of non-hereditary elite members with a minority of popularly selected members.

Details. From Hailey (1951a, 160–61):

“In the Calabar Province the great majority of Native Authorities are normally Clan Councils, which were in fact at one time meetings of family Heads. But their attendance was irregular, and it at times consisted largely not of family Heads, but of their representatives, so that the Councils tended to deteriorate into mass meetings, and to fall into the hands of undesirable elements. They have now been reorganized so that only recognized members attend, and are composed of Village or family representatives. Some of the Councils are very large, but efforts are being made to reduce them in size; an example is the Efik-qua-Efut Council, which was reduced in 1947 from 165 to 80 members, including roughly 50 per cent. representing the educated and professional classes. Similarly the Aro Council now includes one traditional member for each village, together with 23 elected representatives, while the Enyong Council has been reduced from 100 to 33, some of whom are traditional and some are elected members. All these Councils include a fairly high proportion of literate members and the percentage is continually increasing.”

Supplemental Appendix

D ADDITIONAL CASES: SOUTH AFRICA, ZIMBABWE, AND SIERRA LEONE

The statistical sample we analyze in the paper includes eleven countries for which the Hailey books and archives provide extensive details on local institutions. Here we provide qualitative details on three additional cases for which our source lacks any, or sufficiently detailed, information at the local level: South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and Sierra Leone. Colonial historians and anthropologists have dedicated extensive attention to these cases, which enables us to consider in detail how they relate to our argument. The secondary sources on other British African colonies—Sudan, Somaliland, and Zanzibar—are more fragmentary, which makes it difficult to construct a systematic picture of their administration.¹

Existing accounts do not convincingly explain these cases. Precolonial African polities in both South Africa and Zimbabwe exhibited strong executive constraints and various types of councils, contrary to the *precolonial authoritarianism* accounts described in the introduction. The large white settlements in these cases prompted European officials to rule more directly, which disrupted local precolonial institutions more than in the cases in our statistical sample. Yet for most of the colonial period, direct rule weakened precolonial rulers rather than empowered despotic local officials, contrary to the *colonial authoritarianism* accounts. Most dramatically, the largest and most powerful state in Zimbabwe, Ndebele, vanished as an institution during colonial rule. As in other colonies we have discussed, councils were often created to fill the institutional void. The picture changed somewhat after far-right parties gained power in South Africa (1948) and Zimbabwe (1962). In both cases, new policies emphasized the autonomy of African societies and bestowed renewed powers upon chiefs to counter nationalist sentiments. However, these cases departed from the standard template only after the establishment of autonomous and hardline white settler rule, and do not generalize to other parts of British Africa.

Sierra Leone, like most of the cases discussed in the paper, lacked a large white settlement. This case offers some support for the precolonial authoritarianism thesis. The larger precolonial states lacked strong executive constraints and institutionalized councils, like the Sokoto Caliphate and Buganda. However, in Sierra Leone, the constituent “countries” (see Abraham 2003) that comprised each larger state could check the power of ruling “big men” and “big women” by withdrawing their support. Local institutions persisted throughout the colonial period. The most obvious change during British rule was to weaken the ruling states. In the 1890s, the British created a precocious and independent model of indirect rule in which they broke up the system of larger states. The constituent countries became chieftaincies whose rulers were recognized as paramount chiefs (PCs) and whose local elites became ruling families from whom subsequent chiefs were chosen. Although other changes under British governance reduced constraints on chiefs, the bulk of the evidence from Sierra Leone rejects the colonial authoritarianism thesis.

¹However, the information we do have about these cases supports our main claim about precolonial institutions persisting throughout the colonial period. In Somaliland, the social and political organization of society has been based on clans in the post-independence period, and it is clear that these clans have deep historical roots. For example, Lewis (1961) documents the inability of British officials to levy taxation on the clans of Somaliland, which now has a senate that represents clan elders. In Zanzibar, the traditional sultan persisted throughout the colonial period.

D.1 SOUTH AFRICA

Precolonial political institutions. Contemporary South Africa consisted of several large cultural areas prior to European expansion and colonial rule. The Ngoni peoples were located in modern Natal and down into the Eastern Cape in the 19th century.² The most well known of the Ngoni groups are now the Xhosa, Swazis, and Zulus. The Sotho peoples were also important. Their descendants formed the modern states of Lesotho (Basotho peoples) and Botswana (Tswana peoples), and Sotho also spread east into the Transvaal, where the Pedi people resided. North of Johannesburg, the Venda and Tsonga made up two distinct cultural groups. Non-Bantu peoples, such as the Khoisan, were indigenous to the Cape.³ While also acknowledging important differences, Schapera (1956, 208) observes, “All South African forms of government share certain basic features.”

The predominant polity in the area was, in our terminology, a constrained state, which goes against pre-colonial authoritarianism accounts. Neither the Nguni nor Sotho peoples were ever unified politically, and they instead formed various chieftaincies. Some became quite large centralized states, particularly the Zulu, Swazi, and Basotho in the 19th century.⁴ Hereditary chiefs governed these domains (Schapera 1937a, 174). Chiefs governed with, and were effectively constrained by, various types of councils. Although “the chief is the executive of his tribe . . . he must always consult with his council, both private and public” (Schapera 1937a, 178). Schapera (1937a, 182–84) emphasizes that the council acted as a check on the chief and was “expected to warn and even reprimand him if he goes wrong.” The inner council of a chief tended to be informal and was made up of elders, trusted advisors, and relatives. But the chief occasionally had to consult a “much wider, more formal council” that examined all the chief’s decisions, which they could “freely discuss and criticize . . . They may accept, modify or reject.” Consequently, the popular council “exercises the greatest check upon his behaviour.”⁵ These councils were often so powerful that “[a]mong the Nguni, Shangana-Tsonga and Venda this council is in effect the governing body of the tribe.”⁶ Schapera concludes that in the Nguni and Sotho worlds, a chief was “very seldom absolute ruler and autocratic despot . . . The existence of these councils greatly limits the Chief’s actual exercise of his power.” Schapera (1956, 144) reproduces the oft-quoted Tswana proverb, “A chief is chief by grace of his people.” He compares this to the Tsonga version: “The elephant is the trunk,” meaning “just as the elephant cannot seize anything without its trunk, so the chief cannot do his work without his subjects.”⁷

²Our information is much better for the 19th century. Historians broadly agreed that large migrations and population movements occurred through the early 19th century.

³We provide only a brief overview of the large literature on precolonial South Africa. The essays in Schapera (1937b), Hammond-Tooke (1959), and Thompson (1969) provide useful, if dated in many ways, overviews of the different cultural groups. Schapera (1956) is an incisive overview of many of the political systems. Soga (2013b,a) provides important overviews of the main Nguni groups, and Sheddick (1953) does so for the Southern Sotho peoples. Many important studies analyze specific peoples, polities, and their institutions, for example Beinart (1984) on the Mpondo of the Eastern Cape.

⁴See Duminy (1989) and Eldredge (2018) on the emergence of the Zulu state and Eldredge (2015) for a regional and comparative perspective.

⁵“His” with the exception of the famous kingdom of the Lovedu, which was ruled by a Rain Queen (Krige and Krige 1943).

⁶Lestrade (1930) and Stayt (1931) describe the traditional political system of the Venda, which differed in some ways from nearby polities. For example, Lestrade (1930, 311) points out when discussing the Venda chief that “greater stress is laid on the sacred as opposed to the secular character of [his] person.” By contrast, “[a]mong the Cape Nguni and Southern Sotho the chief has comparatively little ritual significance” (Schapera 1956, 214).

⁷This assessment is overwhelmingly shared by the existing scholarly literature and standard textbooks.

European administration before apartheid. Two facts about European governance prior to the onset of the apartheid regime go against colonial authoritarianism accounts. First, European rule was more direct than in the cases in our statistical sample. European magistrates and, later, Native Commissioners exercised executive authority at the local level. Greater European interference not only resulted in less institutional persistence (our predominant finding for the cases in our statistical sample), but also weakened the powers of chiefs. Second, laws regarding African affairs tended to focus more on councils than on chiefs.

European magistrates dominated the initial administration of the Cape Colony, which caused chiefs to “disappear as the recognized authority over the tribe” (Hailey 1957, 420). The Glen Grey Act 1894 changed this situation by implementing “a practical system of Local Government in Native areas” (Hailey 1957, 420). One key reform was to introduce District Councils, which continued to de-emphasize the role of chiefs. “Measures such as the Glen Grey Act fundamentally altered such vital matters as access to land and marginalized chiefs” (Evans 1997, 166). A contemporary administrator noted, “Many of the chiefs look upon councils as designed to supplant them” (Herbst 1930, 482). The councils were particularly developed in the Transkei, where the District Councils sent representatives to a general council, the Bunga. Yet these councils did not reproduce the precolonial councils mentioned above.⁸ They were more like the innovations we described in the text in Kenya, and they covered areas much larger than precolonial polities.

Cape, Natal, Orange, and Transvaal were amalgamated into the Union of South Africa in 1910, which led the other regions to adopt policies similar to those in the Cape.⁹ In 1920, a uniform system of administration was created with the Native Affairs Act 23. It extended to the entire country the system of District Councils that had originated in the Cape under the Glen Grey Act. The membership was partially elected and partially appointed. The district Magistrate served as the head of the council, and the councils had broad powers to raise local rates to fund medical and educational services. “Each district council was composed of twelve members, of whom six were nominated by the magistrate and six were elected by Africans, subject to the magistrate’s approval” (Evans 1997, 185).

Later reforms granted some powers to chiefs, albeit very limited relative to Native Authorities elsewhere in British Africa. The Native Affairs Act of 1920 was greatly augmented in 1927 by the Native Administration Act. The Act “made some concession to . . . the principle of using Native Authorities as part of the machinery

For example, Sansom (1959, 267) proclaims, “The traditional ruler faced his people or their representatives in the councils of the tribe or nation . . . A ruler was, therefore answerable to his people.” In Davenport’s (2000, 46) characterization, “Chiefs had councils but these “were of various kinds, formal and informal . . . All societies, even the Zulu in normal times, laid stress on the principle of government by discussion and consent. The pitso of the Sotho, the imbitso (imbizo) of Nguni chiefdoms, the libandla of the Swazi . . . provided a sounding-board for the ruler as he tried to determine the big issues of state.” See also Hammond-Tooke (1969) and Davenport (1991).

⁸Some works, however, see some loose connections: “Bodies modeled to some extent on the old informal Council have been created and developed with a great amount of success in the Cape” (Brookes 1924, 252).

⁹In the pre-Union period, British administrators played a more important role in the colonies neighboring the Cape. In Natal, from 1850 onwards, the reforms of Theophilus Shepstone yielded a policy in which “newly appointed Chiefs had to be given jurisdiction” (Hailey 1957, 423) because many areas had no chiefs as a consequence of Zulu conquest. These “[c]hiefs exercised judicial powers, but were . . . subject to the general control of the Magistrates” (Hailey 1957, 421). The general balance of the literature is that this period in Natal was a fairly textbook type of indirect rule though with quite intrusive colonial authority. By contrast, the Transvaal and Orange Free State republics more directly ruled Africans by appointing Native Commissioners (Hailey 1957, 425–26).

of rule. It not only provided for the appointment of Chiefs and Headmen but gave them some measure of executive authority” (Hailey 1957, 428). In principle, the appointed chiefs had to have traditional authority. The Act states, “As a rule chieftainship . . . vests in a particular family and the person who is entitled under Native custom to the office is appointed to the position” (Rogers 1949, 12). Yet the powers of chiefs were nonetheless limited. The main reform in the 1927 Act was to appoint Native Commissioners, whose primary duty was to “exercise control over and supervision of the Native people for their general and individual welfare” (Rogers 1949, 9). The Native Commissioners and their deputies were authorized to “collect taxes due and payable by Natives” and to “exercise such civil and criminal jurisdiction as may be conferred upon them, and shall carry out all laws and regulations applying to Natives” (Rogers 1949, 9). Chiefs merely “render[ed] assistance in tax collection” (Rogers 1949, 13) and “had no judicial powers unless these were expressly conferred, and it was mainly in Natal that such powers were given” (Hailey 1957, 428).

Overall, European governance of rural Africa was undoubtedly more direct than in the cases from our statistical sample, even if scholars disagree about how this system worked in practice and about the extent to which the councils wielded authority.¹⁰ The 1927 legislation restored some power to chiefs, yet they continued to lack powers common elsewhere for chiefs in British Africa.

Native governance under apartheid. In 1948, the National Party gained power and began to implement intensive apartheid policies. Scholars concur that European governance changed radically,¹¹ and in a manner more consistent with colonial authoritarianism accounts.¹²

The centerpiece policy for administering Africans was the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, which was “an attempt to restructure the government of the reserves on more traditional lines, but in practice came to mean the establishment of a system of indirect rule through the medium of subservient . . . chiefs” (Davenport 1991, 347). Hailey pointed out that the 1951 Act “has assigned to the chiefs a role which . . . had not previously been regarded in the Union as appropriate to them—namely, as chairman of Native Councils entrusted with the expenditure of funds for local services” (Hailey 1957, 430). This Act began the transition towards the separate ethnic homelands, or Bantustans, that the Apartheid government would start to make self-governing in the 1960s (following the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959). The 1951 Act also sidelined or disbanded

¹⁰Hailey (1957) contends that “the Council system, while providing for a measure of Local Government, has been largely a projection of the system of magisterial rule” (426). Nonetheless, Africans could clearly exercise some authority in the District Councils, and “powers of a somewhat similar character [as Native Commissioners in South Africa] have been exercised by the Executive in many of the British dependencies” (432). Evans’ view is, “State policy condensed all the authority of the central state in the local Native Commissioners, bestowing upon them with considerable power to demand the submission of Africans in the reserves” (Evans 1997, 163). Later he concludes, “The council system, which formed the basis of local government in the Transkeian territories, is perhaps best viewed as a parallel but subordinate institution to magisterial authority” (Evans 1997, 184). See also Perham (1934) on direct rule policies, Dubow (1989) on the evolution of local administration in this period, and Hammond-Tooke (1975) and Ntsebeza (2005) for case studies set in the Eastern Cape.

¹¹See Posel (2011) for an up-to-date overview of this project and the historiography.

¹²Africans contested the administrative transition and the intensification of apartheid, which is well-covered in the academic literature. Mager and Mulaudzi (2011) provide an overview and discussion of the historiography, and Beinart and Bundy (1980) provide an earlier discussion. Seminal studies are that of Delius (1997) in Pediland, with the Pondoland uprising in the 1950s being perhaps the most famous instance, discussed by Mbeki (1964). See also Kepe and Ntsebeza (2011) and Kelly (2015) for nuanced discussions.

the previous councils. In 1955, the Bunga (general council) of the Transkei disappeared and was replaced by “a bastardized mimicry of tribal government in pre-conquest society.” The act “introduced a pyramidal structure composed of three levels, with each level controlled by chiefs and headmen: a single Transkeian Territorial Authority to replace the Bunga, with a Paramount Chief instead of the (white) Magistrate” and “numerous Tribal Authorities would form the base of the entire edifice” (Evans 1997, 250). “Closing down the Ciskei bunga and finding chiefs to place in charge of people accustomed to elected representatives meant silencing the voices of respected, educated men and riding roughshod over the wishes of ordinary people” (Mager and Mulaudzi 2011, 394). Many studies emphasize the extent to which the apartheid state manipulated “tradition.” For example, “The Bantu Authorities Act augmented the powers of the chiefs and headmen. In some instances, the act necessitated creating chiefs and tribal affiliations where none existed or where their authority had collapsed” (Mager and Mulaudzi 2011, 389).

The 1951 Act and the new strategy by the National Party government seems to have created clear instances of the type of “decentralized despotism” that Mamdani (1996) highlighted. Unlike typical British colonies, the goal was identify local leaders who could suppress nationalist agitations by younger and more educated individuals. Kaiser Matanzima is a famous example. In 1963, self-government was given to the Transkei with a legislature organized to give chiefs a majority and to elect the Chief Kaiser Matanzima, Pretoria’s favored candidate, as premier (Davenport 1991, 362–63). The rise of chief Mangosutho Buthelezi in KwaZulu is another notorious case (Mare and Hamilton 1987).¹³ Yet the case of Buthelezi is also notable because it coincided with the sidelining of his cousin, the Zulu king, which contrasts with the pattern elsewhere of favoring traditional royal lineages. Consequently, Buthelezi “prevented the royalist lobby from securing an executive king” (Mager and Mulaudzi 2011). Nevertheless, below the king, numerous cases support the contention that the 1951 Act allowed chiefs to take control in way which they had not done previously, and “it was only through an alliance with segregationists and the forces of state and capital that Zulu chiefs secured their control of the reserve political economy” (MacKinnon 2001, 590).¹⁴

Nevertheless, we reiterate that whatever the support for colonial authoritarianism accounts, these developments occurred nearly four decades after South Africa gained dominion status. It is unclear how to compare the political project of the National Party to British colonialism, given the vastly different goals and constraints faced by European policymakers.

D.2 ZIMBABWE (SOUTHERN RHODESIA)

Precolonial political institutions. Prior to the colonial period, Zimbabwe was primarily divided into two large cultural areas, Matabeleland in the west and Mashonaland to the east. In the 19th century, Matabeleland was united politically under the guise of the Ndebele state, which was a product of a great migration from South Africa in the 1830s. Chief Mzilikazi, originally an ally of the powerful Zulu king Shaka, fell out and migrated north with his followers, eventually settling around Bulawayo (Omer-Cooper 1978). Along the way, he incorporated many peoples, similar to the creation of the Ngoni “snowball” state in Malawi (Barnes 1954).¹⁵ Mashonaland was far less uniform. In fact, the notion of being ‘shona’ seems to have emerged only in the colonial period. What became Mashonaland was united by broad cultural and linguistic features and was the residue of different local polities: Karanga, Mutapa, or Rozvi (Mazarire 2009; Holleman 1951).

¹³Murray (1992) presents case studies from the Orange Free State.

¹⁴Parcells (2018) is an interesting study of the impact of the 1951 Act on Zulu chiefs.

¹⁵Kuper and van Velsen (1954, 47-53) provides a condensed history of the migration and founding of the Ndebele state in Zimbabwe.

We characterize Ndebele as a constrained state, which is inconsistent with precolonial authoritarianism accounts. The political institutions of the Ngoni resembled those we discussed for precolonial South Africa, given their shared origins. Descendants of Mzilikazi created a line of hereditary kings that governed the Ndebele state. One of his sons, Lobengula, was king at the time of the invasion of the British South Africa Company in 1890. Beneath the king was a hierarchy of councils and administrative positions. For example, “Assisting the king was a hierarchy of the three great councillors of the nation, and of two councils, the *izikulu* and the *umpakati*” (Kuper and van Velsen 1954, 64). The state was divided into provinces, which were themselves divided into regiments that were each based in a “town” with a system of chiefs and “a sort of ‘town council’” (Kuper and van Velsen 1954, 65).

The Shona peoples, who we do not categorize as a precolonial state, were divided into many different polities but appeared to have shared some important characteristics.¹⁶ “The tribe under the hereditary chief is the widest functioning political unit,” and Shona tribes “appear to have no formal councils comparable to those of the South-Eastern Bantu” (Kuper and van Velsen 1954, 28–29). Nevertheless, there were important executive constraints. “The chief, however, is assisted and to a large extent controlled by the heads of wards and villages and by a panel of personal advisers” (Kuper and van Velsen 1954, 28–29). Chiefs were also constrained by spirit mediums who played important religious but also political roles. Bucher (1980, 37) notes, “A chief in whose area a powerful spirit medium resides has to be careful to avoid incurring negative sanctions of the territorial spirit for disobeying his orders,” and spirit mediums intermediated between the people and chiefs (Garbett 1969).

Colonial administration. The patterns of governance in Southern Rhodesia were similar to those just described in South Africa. Prior to the rise of the National Front in 1962, direct rule by white settlers suppressed the powers of chiefs, who had to compete with councils in the limited domain for local autonomy exercised by Africans. The empowerment of chiefs began only after 1962, and was largely ineffective at containing nationalist agitations. Overall, the evidence is at best weakly supportive of the colonial authoritarianism thesis, and even then only after whites had established *de facto* independence.

Until 1923, Zimbabwe was governed by the British South Africa Company, and became self-governing afterwards. This gave the local white settlers a degree of autonomy from the British government and Colonial Office over the design of political institutions that did not exist in most British African colonies. The country was divided into provinces, each of which was divided into six or eight districts (Weinrich 1972, 5). These “native districts, [had] a Commissioner in each, and subdivisions where necessary” (Jollie 1935, 975). These districts did not conform in a simple way into precolonial polities, and sometimes cut across them (Hughes 1974, 16). Underneath the districts were chiefdoms. In 1974, there were 252 of these units led by government-recognized chiefs (Hughes 1974, 16).

The autonomous settler government rejected the model of indirect rule prevalent in British Africa. The likely reason was that the white government wanted greater control over the African population to force them to work on the white-owned farms. As Howman, a senior administrator in the Ministry of Native Affairs, put it, “There was no building up of ‘native authorities,’ no ‘tribal treasuries,’ no reconstruction of ‘native courts’ with criminal jurisdiction, and the masses of thought and action necessary to implement such ideas” (Howman 1959, 133). A contemporary commentator stated, “We do not envisage building up native States within our State; we are not trying to preserve a social system which is obsolete and inefficient in a modern world” (Jollie 1935, 982). Writing later, Hughes was adamant that “Rhodesia never adopted the

¹⁶Beach (1980) and Beach (1994) are seminal overviews of Shona history and society; see also Holleman (1951).

theory of ‘indirect rule’” like the colonies administered by the British Colonial Service (Hughes 1974, 124). More recent scholarship concurs with these assessments. For example, Karekwaivanane (2017, 47) noted how Southern Rhodesia contrasted with “other British colonies in Africa which adopted ‘Indirect Rule’ in the 1920s and 1930s.” Alexander even directly compares the nature of administration in Zimbabwe in this period to Mamdani’s thesis, concluding that it was “a far cry from a system of ‘indirect rule’ on the model propounded by Mahmood Mamdani” (Alexander 2006, 22).

The destruction of the Ndebele kingdom provides the clearest example of how Rhodesian settlers approached governance over Africans differently than in most British colonies. Elsewhere, large and more institutionalized states such as the Sokoto Caliphate and Buganda facilitated indirect rule. In Zimbabwe, the opposite happened. After the Second Matabele War in 1896,¹⁷ the state was destroyed institutionally. Kuper and van Velsen (1954, 18) note that “no Ndebele king was recognized in place of Lobengula and the Government refused to permit any resurgence of a strong centralized kingship. Instead, many subsidized chieftainships were established. Shona and Ndebele were put on the same footing, and the chiefs (Shona and Ndebele) were permitted to exercise limited jurisdiction under the control of Native Commissioners.” Writing in the 1950s, they conclude, “Today there is no distinct central authority for Ndebeleland as such. The kingship is no longer recognized” (Kuper and van Velsen 1954, 69). The same situation holds true today.

Rather than relying on Africans for local governance, provincial and district commissioners were the primary administrators in native areas (Weinrich 1972, 5). “The native commissioners’ authority extended over the whole economic and political life of the African people. The most important powers which the African chiefs had traditionally exercised were transferred to native commissioners.” Native commissioners were in charge of land allocation, settlement, cattle permits, labour procurement for European settlers, and contact with missionaries and businessmen (Weinrich 1972, 10). Moreover, “The extensive powers granted to native commissioners were intended to limit the influence of chiefs among their people and to make Africans directly dependent on European administrators” (Weinrich 1972, 11). Weinrich’s assessment that “The real rulers of tribal trust lands are not chiefs but European bureaucrats” (Weinrich 1972, 165), and that the heightened power of white officials tended to reduce the power of chiefs, is standard in the literature. A typical assessment is that the tribal authority “found itself permanently crippled by the loss of its two principal sources of power: the secular custody of the land and the right to punish criminals . . . It was only in the 1960s, under entirely different and for them immeasurably more difficult circumstances, that chiefs and headmen were again officially given some use of these powers” (Holleman 1969, 17). Kuper and van Velsen (1954, 69) conclude in 1954 that “rule is still fairly direct.”

The initial institutionalization of local government came with the Native Affairs Ordinance of 1910. This act defined the role of chiefs, who were given limited authority to assist with the collection of taxation and as constables. Chiefs had no judicial powers until 1937 and then were not given jurisdiction over criminal cases (Hailey 1957, 441). With the 1927 Native Affairs Act, the responsibilities of chiefs were increased, as with the 1927 Act in South Africa. However, their powers seem to have been fewer in practice than in South Africa. Hailey comments, “In the present practice the use made of chiefs varies widely, but is largely of an informal character” (Hailey 1957, 441).

A system of councils, mirrored roughly on South Africa, was also adopted. In 1923, the sentiment was to “let the chiefs and headmen, with a few more natives elected by the heads of kraals and a few nominated by the Government, be constituted a Council” (Annual 1923, 89). In 1930, Advisory Boards for the local administration were constituted with an equal number of elected members and of chiefs and headmen, with the Native Commissioners as chairmen. These boards were given no power, however. They were replaced by councils in 1937 with the passage of the Native Councils Act. This established Councils in the Native

¹⁷This was known as the First Chimurenga in Zimbabwe; see Ranger (1967) for a seminal analysis.

Reserves consisting of Chiefs or Headmen, other Africans approved by the Governor and elected by the people, and the Native Commissioner as chairman (Hailey 1957, 442; Weinrich 1972, 14). The councillors were elected “by the inhabitants, men and women,” of the area. “The method of election is left to the people” and can range from a preference for traditional leaders to a group acclamation or a secret ballot (Howman 1959, 135). Yet these councils lacked powers typical of Native Authorities elsewhere in British Africa. Even after 1937, “This was not a recipe for the creation of powerful ‘native authorities’: chiefs had no budgets, no trained staff, no criminal jurisdiction in their courts, no law making authority” (Alexander 2006, 23). The 1937 act was superseded by the African Councils Act of 1957, largely the work of Howman (Alexander 2006), which increased the powers of the councils. Chiefs and headmen were *ex officio* members.

In 1962, the Rhodesian Front (RF) came to power. Ian Smith led the party with an explicit agenda to declare independence. This marked the rise of a more apartheid-type regime and the RF government adopted a similar strategy to the South African National Party for governing Africans. They attempted to increase the powers of chiefs as a tool for controlling nationalism. Weinrich notes, “One act after another was passed by parliament to increase their power” (Weinrich 1972). These included the 1967 Tribal Trust Land Act which returned to the chiefs the power to allocate land to their subjects and the 1969 African Law and Tribal Courts Act which greatly strengthened their judicial powers extending them to include criminal cases (see Chapter 4 of Karekwaivanane 2017). In 1973, it was stated in parliament, “Government regards chieftainship as the traditional local government . . . he (the Chief and his various ‘councils’) is the development authority . . . it is desirable to bring the chiefs more fully into the administrative structure of the local government machine” (Hughes 1974, 129). The consensus of the academic literature, however, is that in the face of mounting national mobilization and eventually an armed insurgency, these policies were a failure. Alexander sums them up by stating, “The Rhodesian state did not ‘win’ the struggle for chiefs’ allegiance and it transformed the chieftaincy into neither an effective instrument of control nor a legitimating stamp for settler rule” (Alexander 2006, 84).

A reasonable summary of this secondary literature offers limited support for colonial authoritarianism accounts. Instead of Native Authorities found elsewhere in British Africa, native administration involved a combination of district commissioners, chiefs, and councils in each local area. District commissioners had authority over the most important issues—land and criminal law—and the power to override the chiefs and councils. Chiefs retained a limited amount of authority over “traditional” issues, such as civil disputes, but were generally not used by the administration until the 1960s. Councils, consisting of a combination of elected and nominated officials and traditional chiefs, were created to oversee public services and other administrative issues. However, they lacked local legitimacy and only began to have access to resources by the 1940s and after the 1957 Act.

D.3 SIERRA LEONE

Precolonial political institutions. For our purposes, the colonial era in Sierra Leone began when Britain declared a Protectorate over the interior in 1896. Previously, a colony had existed in Freetown since 1806, and residents of Sierra Leone engaged in centuries of trading relations with Europe. As a consequence, institutions had certainly changed as a result of trade, especially the slave trade. Nevertheless, our the main empirical questions concern the impact of colonialism on institutions as they stood prior to British governance. Therefore, we characterize political institutions in the 19th century in the interior of Sierra Leone. We discuss Mendeland in the south and Temneland in the north, the two areas for which we

have the most detailed information about institutional history.¹⁸ These areas offer mixed evidence for the precolonial authoritarianism thesis. Although leaders were checked in some important ways, constraints were less institutionalized than in many precolonial African states.

In Mendeland, Abraham (2003) identifies nine distinct larger states. All were weakly institutionalized and lacked a central administration. Instead, they were a loose amalgam of lower polities, what he calls the “countries.” The larger states were recent creations by charismatic “big men” (and one “big woman,” Madam Yoko) and were held together by expedience and patronage (e.g., Galinhas/Vai state under Siaka and Mana) or charisma (e.g., Luawa state under Kai Londo). Higher kings consulted with lower chiefs, but there do not seem to have been more formal councils as with the Nguni and Sotho peoples. There were other constraints, such as the Poro Society, which was a secret society which spanned the entire country. At the level of the states, there was a lack of an established hereditary principle for choosing rulers, though as we will see, hereditary succession occurred nonetheless.

In the Galinhas area in the eighteenth century,¹⁹ “it seems improbable that any ruler controlled more than a handful of towns” (Jones 1979, 246). The first written description of the system of government in Galinhas dates back to 1796. The slave trader Dalton gave an oral account to Governor Macaulay, who noted

“This [the Vai] Country is divided into a great many towns or districts, each of which has a voice by a delegate in a congress which assembles for the purpose of regulating the affairs of the Kingdom. These also elect a King who becomes their organ and who is invested with unlimited power to execute their resolves, but he cannot go beyond these” (Jones 1979, 188-9).

The sources paint a picture of a bottom-up federation with a “minister . . . who in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would have been called the speaker . . . who announced the decisions and judgements . . . of the king in his absence” (Jones 1979, 192).

In the 19th century, King Siaka centralized the Galinhas polities. He was a newcomer to the area and probably managed to take control over trade, particularly the slave trade. As late as 1808, he was just one of numerous competing chiefs. By the 1830s, however, chiefs of different sections (countries) came together at his capital of Gendema to consider “legislation” that would apply to all of them and to resolve disputes. Siaka’s power stemmed from several sources. In addition warfare and selling slaves, he pursued a strategy of fostering kinship ties by marrying (him and his son Mana) into elite families in Sakrim, Bari, Soro, Perri, Kpanga, and Tewa. In 1853, Mana succeeded Siaka. Mana died in 1872 and was succeeded by his brother Jaia. The state fell into civil war and Jaia was killed in 1884, just prior to the formalization of British control over the interior. Overall, starting in the early 19th century, “Siaka managed to create a sort of confederation, in which chiefs of different sections occasionally came together to agree on legislation which would apply to them all and to hear disputes affecting the different sections. Dalton’s account from 1796 demonstrates

¹⁸For Mendeland, Abraham (2003) reconstructs the state system as it existed in the middle of the century (see also Little 1951). Jones (1979, 1983) provides a uniquely detailed history of the Galinhas state on the border with Liberia; and see Hollins (1929) and Wylie (1969) for the Luawa state. For Temneland, we rely primarily on Dorjahn (1960), Ijagbemi (1968), Howard (1972), Wylie (1977), and Bangura (2017). Many standard works, such as McCulloch (1950), claim to present evidence on all of Sierra Leone but, in effect, have information only on the Mende and Temne. Useful evidence on the Limba is contained in Finnegan (1965), Fyle (1979a), and Fanthorpe (1965); and Fyle (1979b) discusses the Yalunka. However, little systematic evidence exists about precolonial institutions of other groups, such as the Kono or Susu (although see tangential references in Wylie 1977).

¹⁹Note that Galinhas is often spelled Gallinas, and is alternatively referred to as Vai.

that this was not a totally new arrangement. However, in Siaka's reign, the scale was larger and the position of the king more important" (Jones 1979, 246).

Northeast of the Galinhas state, Kai Londo ruled the Luawa state in the second half of the 19th century.

"He ruled with a heavy hand. He was so powerful and his intelligence network so efficient, that nothing of consequence occurred without coming to his ears . . . he was hardly merciful to his enemies; on the contrary, he was ruthless with them and understandably so. He could have inspired love in the people he defended, but in the ordinary people, he seems to have inspired more fear and terror than love. Above all, Kai had many personal slaves" (Abraham 2003, 94).

Despite some gains in centralization during the 19th century, neither the Galinhas or Luawa states were very institutionalized. Jones (1979, 412–13) argues that "Neither Siaka nor Mana can be said to have formed a bureaucracy or hierarchy of officials to administer their kingdom: even at its peak, Galinhas was little more than a confederation held together by respect for a particular chief and by common economic interests." He also notes

"The traditional territorial unit throughout this area . . . was merely a group of towns linked by kinship and historical ties and ruled by a landowner. Occasionally a war chief unattached to a particular descent group might bring together several clans under his rule; but his control never became institutionalized, because the religious power of the ancestors (represented by the Poro) could be turned against him" (Jones 1979, 245).

Here Jones identifies the Poro Society as a significant constraint on executive power. This political society for men, along with the Bundu and Sande societies for women, stretched across Sierra Leone. It was highly important politically as a check on the power of chiefs and as a supra-chieftaincy institution that linked not just Mendeland, but the whole of Sierra Leone (see Little 1965a,b on the political importance of the Poro). Chiefs were members, but "it does not follow that they govern or influence the concerned action of the Poro," which "can act independently of the chiefs" (Goddard 1945, 31; see Warren 1926 for an early colonial view).

As another constraint on the executive, rulership of larger states such as Galinhas and Luawa was not based on a deep hereditary ideology. Instead, Siaka and Kai Londo became kings because of personal achievements; that is, they were "big men." Abraham (2003, 74) notes that in choosing a precolonial chief, "The election was carried out after due consultation with the country and provincial chiefs and the 'Big Men' or 'elders.'" Similarly, in Gaura, another large state that emerged in the 19th century, he describes: "the people of Gaura were still mourning the death of their late king Gbatakaka when the Governor asked them to elect a successor. Meetings were then held by the sub-chiefs and leading men to come to a unanimous decision." It seems that Hollins (1928, 26) is discussing this level of governance when he says about Mende chiefs that "it may be confidently stated that a Mende chief is not a despot, but a constitutional ruler—custom rather than strict law framing the constitution. Custom forbids him certain acts and insists that in an important matter he should only act after consultation with his 'big men.'" Nonetheless, in Galinhas, hereditary succession occurred in practice; Siaka was succeeded by two of his sons.

The hereditary principle was more established at the lower level of "countries." Hollins (1928, 28) noted in the 1920s, "The office of chief in Mende country is usually regarded as the property of the family of the traditional founder," suggesting a hereditary principle. While discussing precolonial Mende political institutions, McCulloch (1950, 16) reports, "In former days the position of *ndomahei* [paramount chief]

followed in direct line of descent from the founder of the chiefdom.” Further, “The Chief was formerly assisted by an advisory council as today in chiefdoms still run under the old system . . . As these persons were often members of the Chief’s kin group, his power was more or less autocratic” (McCulloch 1950, 17).

Overall, the sources paint a mixed picture, which is perhaps inevitable because of heterogeneity within Mendeland, a cultural area that lacked a single centralized polity. Evidence for councils is missing at the level of the more aggregated state, but is present in the lower-level countries. However, even these seem to have been largely informal and not as broadly representative as the types of councils we saw with the Nguni or Sotho peoples of southern Africa, or indeed many cases discussed in the text such as in southern Nigeria.

In Temneland, the situation was similar. Many traditional polities governed by hereditary rulers were, in the 19th century, absorbed into larger states. The main difference was that invasions influenced the creation of larger states. The countries in Temneland were coerced into joining larger entities, whereas in Mendeland the larger polities emerged through a more cooperative process.

In Port Loko, Wylie (1977, 33) notes that “the chief was chosen from among the candidates of a royal patrician . . . He held office for life.” He was “selected from among eligible candidates by certain of the titled sub-chiefs.” But elsewhere, there appear to have been multiple families with the right to advance candidates. McCulloch (1950, 61) says, “The Paramount Chief is chosen from among the oldest suitable male member of the ruling house or houses, i.e., the kin group that traces descent from the first settlers of the chiefdom.” McCulloch emphasizes the possibility that several families will have legitimate claims (see also Biyi 1913 and Thomas 1916 and the discussion in Dorjahn 1960, 126-8). As in Mendeland, chiefs had relatively informal councils composed of the sub-chiefs, and a speaker who came from a particular family and section chiefs (McCulloch 1950, 63-64).

In the 19th century, most of Temneland was challenged militarily and larger polities emerged. Wylie documents how Moriba Kindo emerged as a *santigi*, a Muslim title for a town chief. By 1816, he had set himself up as king of Port Loko with a new title of *Alkali*. Previously, independent chiefs were integrated into Moriba’s state with the title of *almami* and were appointed by him. The type of state that emerged was clearly more centralized than in Mendeland. Referring to the authority of kings under new model, Wylie notes that “the traditional checks on his power might be gradually undermined, if not wholly subverted” (Wylie 1977, 171). Nevertheless, the picture is complicated. There was clearly a lot of heterogeneity, and some parts of Temneland better preserved their previous institutions (Dorjahn 1960).

Colonial administration. Under British rule, the main pattern is institutional persistence. The most obvious change from British rule was to weaken the ruling states. In the 1890s, the British created a precocious and independent model of indirect rule in which they broke up the system of larger states. The constituent countries became chieftaincies whose rulers were recognized as paramount chiefs (PCs) and whose local elites became ruling families from whom subsequent chiefs were chosen. Although other changes under British governance reduced constraints on chiefs, the bulk of the evidence from Sierra Leone rejects the colonial authoritarianism thesis.

Colonial administration spread into the interior of Sierra Leone gradually in the 19th century as British officials signed a large number of different types of treaties with African rulers. In 1896, Britain declared a Protectorate and incorporated African rulers as paramount chiefs (PCs) into a system of chieftaincies (Abraham 1979). This system of indirect rule emerged not as the outcome of a political philosophy on the lines later developed by Lord Lugard in Nigeria, but instead because this arrangement reflected the equilibrium balance of power. British officials deemed it not possible to do anything else. Harris (2014)

discusses various proposals to take over the interior (see also Fyfe 1964, 13-15). Influential Krio intellectuals such as Sir Samuel Lewis and J.C.E. Parkes discussed similar plans.²⁰ Despite in principle favoring a governance structure akin to direct rule, they recognized the likelihood of destabilizing consequences and of other difficulties (Fyfe 1964, 196, 259; Wylie 1977, 181).

After the British annexed the interior, they recognized individual elites in each lower-level country unit as elites of the new chieftaincies. In the south, this resulted in the fragmentation of the Mende state system. Comparing Abraham's (2003, 70) reconstruction of pre-existing states to the contemporary paramount chiefdoms reveals that the paramount chiefdoms were much smaller. The paramount chiefdoms that map onto precolonial states, such as Galinhas, Banta, Bumpeh, and Tikongoh, were much reduced compared to the states that preceded them. The precolonial Kpaa-Mende state illustrates this pattern of fragmentation (see the map in Abraham 2003, 136). Here, a group of pre-existing countries with well-defined rulers united loosely in the 19th century into the bigger Kpaa-Mende state. As Abraham (2003, 71) describes

A number of provinces with a distinct historical, geo-political or cultural identity formed what might be called a 'country,' ruled by a country chief, which was generally recognized as a chiefdom during the colonial period. . . . The identities of these countries were forged in more peaceful times in their history, and long pre-dated the war era [second half of the 19th century] . . . the tier above this comprising a number of countries, may be labelled the state proper, over which a king ruled.

In 1896, the British recognized these country chiefs as paramount chiefs alongside the local elites whom they recognized as "ruling families" (Fenton 1932, 3 calls them "crowning houses"). There is an almost one-to-one mapping between the 19th century countries that collectively formed the Kpaa-Mende state and modern chiefdoms in the Moyamba district.

In the institution that subsequently emerged, PCs were elected for life by the Tribal Authority (TA) and only members of the designated ruling families were eligible. This system remains today. Historically, the TA comprised elites and elders. The system is more democratic today because there is one member of the TA for every twenty taxpayers in the chiefdom. Nevertheless, this only determines the number of members of the TA, and the specific individuals are appointed by the likes of elites, elders, and local counselors. When the sitting PC dies, an election is held. Anyone from a ruling house can run and the electors are members of the Tribal Authority. Fenton (1932, 5) describes the system as follows

The Tribal Authority is defined as the Paramount Chief and his councilors and men of note, or sub-chiefs and their councilors and men of note . . . one might expect the average chiefdom to have a TA of between thirty and forty persons.

The system of chiefdoms did not become institutionalized until the 1930s. In 1937, systematic Ordinances defined the powers of chiefs as Native Authorities with Native Treasuries (Hailey 1957, 534). Earlier, Goddard (1926, 83) noted, "The chiefs are territorial rulers and have jurisdiction, derived from their former pure native jurisdiction and confirmed by the Government." According to Hailey (1957, 534), "Previous Ordinances . . . had not gone farther than to lay down the general principle that local administration should be carried on through Chiefs." Overall, it does not seem that much changed in practice, and this trend was strengthened by the fact that the British allowed the PCs to decide whether to opt into the new system. It

²⁰Krio refers to the Creole peoples of Freetown. They descended from many different African groups, but had formed a distinct culture and identity by the late 19th century.

took over a decade before they all did so (Kilson 1966, 29). British officials applied Native Authority labels to local officials in Sierra Leone that resembled those used elsewhere in British Africa, but this seems to have simply formalized a system that already existed.

This system yielded a high degree of institutional persistence in the lower-level countries. Many, although not all, changes lessened the authoritarian powers of rulers. Colonial PCs were weaker than precolonial big men in several clear ways. First, they controlled far less territory and fewer people. Second, they seem to have been much less rich. Consider, for example, Siaka's successor and son Mana. "As the supreme political authority, he owned the largest number of slaves; and he was widely thought to have about 500 wives" (Jones 1979, 313). Third, slavery—clearly a large source of wealth of kings like Siaka and Mana—was abolished in 1927 (Grace 1975). Fourth, precolonial rulers had independent large armies of "war boys" (Fenton 1932, 3), which vanished after 1896 (see Alldridge 1910, 174 for a photograph of a contemporary Mende village surrounded by fortifications, or "war fences").

Moreover, even with the more rigid system of ruling families, many precolonial constraints persisted. This included not only the Poro society, but also the system of landowning families. Most chieftaincies in Sierra Leone have histories in which various families claim ownership stemming from the original occupation. The creation of colonial chieftaincies did not disrupt the strength of these families.

"A chief holds land just as any individual does—that is, he has his share in the land belonging to his family. As regards all other lands in the chiefdom, he is the guardian of the rights of the different families . . . owning these lands. . . . In none of the districts of the Protectorate is there any evidence that any land was set aside for the office of chief" (Goddard 1926, 88, 89).²¹

Councils also persisted in the same form, albeit relatively weak and informal, in which they existed in the 19th century. Prior to the institutionalization of the TA, PCs had "a Council of the form recognized by local custom . . . The membership of the Council depended in practice partly on selection by the Chief, but they were seldom a formally constituted body, and often consisted only of members of the Chief's family" (Hailey 1957, 534). This assessment resembles that of McCulloch (1950, 17) for the precolonial era, who additionally contends, "Under the Native Administration system the council has been placed on a wider basis." Unlike in many places we have analyzed in this paper, for example Eastern Nigeria or Kenya, Sierra Leone did not have a system of formally gazetted councils until the 1940s and 1950s, and even then they were dominated by the PCs. But precolonial chieftaincies either in Mendeland or Temneland, as we have seen, do not seem to have had a formal council either. The available accounts suggests that the TA was in fact closely modeled on precolonial institutions.

In contrast to the many ways in which changes under colonialism reduced the powers of chiefs, the institutionalization of indirect rule freed chiefs from other constraints. Abraham (1979) argues that colonial rule, by institutionalizing the ruling houses, reduced the scope for upward social mobility into politics. He concludes that one consequence of indirect rule was that "the traditional democratic basis of Mende chiefship was radically undermined" (Abraham 1979, 305). In his view, the types of informal councils we have seen became much less effective in the colonial period. Wylie (1977, 195) makes a similar argument for Temneland. Yet Abraham (1979, 272) also points out that as a consequence of colonial rule, the chiefs in many ways became less powerful and "were unable to enforce their authority over their subjects in the traditional fashion." In a similar vein, Wylie (1977, 205) concludes that "the resulting transformation in the chiefly power base hardly makes up for the loss of independence or for the transformation in prerogatives, rights, and duties."

²¹See also McCulloch (1950, 27).

Ultimately, whether Sierra Leone supports the colonial authoritarianism hypothesis depends to some extent on which mechanisms one wants to emphasize. Generally, PCs were less powerful than the rulers of larger precolonial states in Mendeland or Temneland. They ruled much smaller territories and fewer people, and lacked slaves or independent military forces. The real argument, then, is about the lower chiefs of countries. There seems to be a great deal of persistence in the way they were chosen and who was eligible to stand. To some extent, more informal councils were formalized and broadened under the TA, but there is also a lot of continuity here. Chiefs lost many powers, particularly judicial ones. Other institutions that placed checks and balances on chiefs, like landownership and secret societies, also persisted. Yet it is not clear if they stayed as powerful as they had been in the 19th century. For example, Dorjahn (1960) discusses a case in Temneland in which Poro authority over a PC had weakened. We have also seen that Abraham and Wylie argue that democratic mechanisms were weakened because PCs gained backing from the colonial state. Trying to assess the balance of evidence, Dorjahn (1960, 132) notes

“Informants insisted that in pre-Protectorate times chiefs were ‘good,’ that they were loved and respected, and that corruption and extortion became rampant only with the coming of the British. These same informants on different occasions, however, provided ample documentation that excesses occurred then as well as in more recent times.”

Harris’ conclusion is, “All in all, chiefs lost some powers and gained others.” He references Mamdani’s thesis when highlighting that “[o]ne observer has gone as far as labelling these new era chiefs . . . as ‘decentralized despots.’” Yet Harris contends that “the Sierra Leonean institutions of chieftaincy had survived and retained a good proportion of its legitimacy during the transition” (Harris 2014, 22).

Harris’ observation here is key and suggests one way of assessing the balance of the forces at work, at least today. Despite the end of colonialism sixty-one years ago in Sierra Leone, the chieftaincy is still a vibrant institution. The 2009 Chieftaincy Act reconfirmed the institution along the lines that emerged in the colonial period. Perhaps this can be dismissed as a case in which institutions persisted simply because of the generic difficulty of switching institutions, but more likely it points to the legitimacy of the institution in Sierra Leone. One simple way of demonstrating this is via data in the 2020 Afrobarometer.²² Sierra Leoneans were asked “How much do you trust each of the following?” among a specified list of institutions. There are four possible answers in addition to “refused to answer” and “don’t know”: “Trust a lot, trust somewhat, just a little, not at all.” Aggregating the answers to “a lot” and “somewhat” and calling it trust for short, we find that a mere 33% of people trust parliament, 43% trust the anti-corruption commission, and 56% trust the president. By contrast, 63% trust traditional leaders, and this figure rises to 78% in rural areas. It seems improbable that PCs would be despotic but still evince such overwhelming levels of trust among the population.

Overall, as our discussion shows, the Sierra Leone case is complicated. There was a classic form of indirect rule in which the British worked with legitimate traditional rulers. With regard to larger states, colonial chiefs were undoubtedly less powerful than their precolonial predecessors. Regarding the lower-level country chiefs, there is contradictory evidence about the impact of colonialism on the power and behavior of these rulers. The British did not innovate institutions like the councils in Kenya, and there was no need for the type of Warrant Chief system created in southern Nigeria. But even here we have seen that many countervailing mechanisms were at work. Some potentially led towards despotic practices, but many others worked in the opposite direction.

²²<https://afrobarometer.org/countries/sierra-leone-0>.

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