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COUNCILS AND INDIRECT RULE IN BRITISH AFRICA

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Councils and Indirect Rule in British Africa

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**ABSTRACT**

Did Western colonial rule transform African political institutions? Despite extensive research on indirect rule, we have little systematic evidence about how colonizers' aims interacted with the structure of indigenous institutions to shape local governance. We explain why colonizers faced incentives to delegate authority to traditionally legitimate institutions, even in historically decentralized areas. Empirically, we analyze originally compiled data on African political institutions in the precolonial and colonial periods for more than 450 subnational units across British Africa. We focus on councils as a form of executive constraints. Subnational councils were widespread, highly correlated with precolonial institutions and patterns of socioeconomic development, and exerted meaningful decision-making powers. These indirect-rule institutions reflected reforms to replace ineffective installed agents. Pressure from below prompted British officials to reintroduce systems of executive constraints based on precolonial models. Our findings contrast with the widespread claim that colonizers could unilaterally implement indirect-rule institutions while disregarding precolonial precedents.

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A Main Appendix is available at <http://www.nber.org/data-appendix/w30582>

## INTRODUCTION

How did Western colonial rule impact the development of political institutions in Africa? The imprint is unmistakable at the international and national levels. Europeans imposed a state system with fixed boundaries and introduced Western-style elections, both of which largely survive today (Herbst 2000; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2016; Lee and Paine 2024; Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet 2025). However, these higher-level institutions often had limited reach during and after the colonial period. Instead, throughout much of the colonial period, subnational institutions formed the backbone of European administration. Rural African elites usually exercised some degree of autonomy under colonial systems of “indirect rule,” and traditional chiefs from this era remain influential in African politics to this day (Baldwin 2015; De Kadt and Larreguy 2018; Archibong 2018; Wilfahrt 2022; Baldwin and Ricart-Huguet 2023; Brierley and Ofosu 2023; Henn 2023; Nathan 2023). These observations raise crucial questions. To what extent did incorporation into the colonial state transform precolonial institutions? How did this process vary based on the structure of precolonial institutions? And what legacies did this leave for the postcolonial state?

We explain why it was often optimal for colonizers to delegate authority to traditionally legitimate institutions, even in historically decentralized areas. Despite military superiority, colonizers could not rule on the cheap while unilaterally overriding precolonial institutions, which in historically decentralized areas usually entailed substantial constraints on the decision-making powers of rulers. Indirect-rule agents who lack traditional legitimacy usually struggle to maintain order and generate revenue. This is particularly true when rapid social and economic changes occur, prompting widespread dissatisfaction among the colonial subjects. Empirically, we analyze original data for a comprehensive sample of subnational political institutions across British Africa, often considered the quintessential example of indirect rule. We demonstrate that subnational councils were widespread, highly correlated with precolonial institutions and patterns of socioeconomic development, and exerted meaningful decision-making powers.

Our findings build off and revise a rich literature on the theory and practice of indirect rule. Though approaches vary, the main focus is on patterns of delegation and institution-building from the perspective of the colonizers; the structure of indigenous local institutions plays a lesser role. The most common comparison is between British indirect rule and French direct rule, including his-

torical evidence on distinct governance patterns and more recent social-scientific studies that analyze long-term consequences (Crowder 1964; Crowder and Ikime 1970; Lee and Schultz 2012; McCauley and Posner 2015; Letsa and Wilfahrt 2020). Yet all empires exhibited extreme intra-imperial diversity in the forms of local institutions. Existing studies capture one crucial dimension: within the British empire, governance tended to be more indirect wherever British officials perceived the existence of more hierarchically organized states (Gerring et al. 2011; Müller-Crepon 2020). But rulers varied not only in the size and centralization of their domains, but also the constraints on their authority. In precolonial Africa, institutional constraints were the norm and unchecked authority was the exception. How did historical forms of executive constraints such as councils influence decisions about the structure of colonial institutions under indirect rule?

The main answer in existing work is that historical systems of executive constraints *did not matter* during the colonial period. Mamdani (1996) provides the most widely cited characterization of local institutions under British colonial rule. He argues that in legally bifurcated states, which prioritized the rights of white settlers, rural African chiefs who governed under practices of indirect rule lacked any institutional constraints on their authority over their subjects. This system of “decentralized despotism” (p. 8) was a creation of British rule (p. 39). For chiefs under this system, “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 chief is answerable only to a higher administrative authority” (p. 54).

The idea that the British were routinely able to install institutions of their own choosing builds on earlier theories by Ranger (1983) about the “invention of tradition” in the British empire and also relates to careful studies of particular regions such as Eastern Nigeria (Afigbo 1972), Northern Ghana (Nathan 2023), Kenya (Tignor 1971), Eastern Uganda (Roberts 1962), and Zambia (Posner 2005).<sup>1</sup> This research yields valuable insights into the local realities of colonial rule in these regions, especially earlier in the colonial period. Nonetheless, even when considered collectively, these works do not analyze a representative sample of British Africa. Instead, they focus disproportionately on regions where precolonial institutions were highly decentralized. Even Mamdani (1996), cited 12,000 times by scholars examining varied times and places, primarily analyzes atyp-

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<sup>1</sup>For a more recent example of invented chieftaincies, see Robinson (2024).

ical settler colonies such as South Africa (Spear 2003, 9).<sup>2</sup> Other scholarship on local African councils does not analyze the colonial period, instead focusing on the precolonial period (Baldwin 2015; Ahmed and Stasavage 2020; Stasavage 2020), the present day (Baldwin and Holzinger 2019; Baldwin, Muyengwa and Mvukiyehe 2022), or both (Neupert-Wentz and Müller-Crepon 2023).<sup>3</sup>

Thus, existing work on indirect rule in British Africa is incomplete in at least three ways. First, the cases studied are not representative. In fact, without systematic data, it is difficult to establish exactly what would constitute a representative sample. Second, existing studies provide little insight into either the structure of local institutions or the constraints on power embedded within them. Finally, existing work usually treats indirect-rule institutions as reflecting a static choice made at the start of the colonial period (e.g., delegation to a centralized ruler, invention of a powerful chief), rather than as the dynamic outcome of ongoing interactions between colonial policies and African preferences.

Our theory addresses how rulers choose agents to govern foreign territories, given fundamental goals such as keeping the peace and extracting resources. When metropolitan agents are prohibitively expensive, the ruler needs to decide what type of indigenous agent to appoint in each locality. Agents with traditional sources of legitimacy can more effectively carry out the ruler's directives, but appointed non-traditional agents should exhibit greater loyalty to the foreign power. We explain why colonizers will usually choose to delegate authority to traditionally legitimate institutions, even in regions with historically decentralized governance. Applied to our context of British Africa, this framework recovers the standard expectation that the British should delegate authority to rulers of precolonial states, where present — although, unlike related theories, we also anticipate that councils should accompany such rulers wherever such institutions had a historical basis. The key implication that departs from existing research applies to historically decentralized areas. Even if appointed agents who lacked traditional sources of legitimacy were chosen in the low-information environment of the early colonial period, socioeconomic changes and rising African discontent should challenge the favored status of invented chiefs. The appointment of

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<sup>2</sup>For critiques of Mamdani's thesis applied elsewhere, see Alexander (2006, 22); Harris (2014, 22).

<sup>3</sup>For global studies that connect precolonial institutions to contemporary political regimes, see Giuliano and Nunn (2013); Bentzen, Hariri and Robinson (2019).

colonial agents is a dynamic, not static, choice. In reaction to pressure, we expect British officials to reintroduce constraining institutions such as councils, which pervaded decentralized areas prior to colonialism. Smaller-scale institutions could be repurposed to achieve British objectives of effective governance by scaling them up into more highly aggregated units, governed by a council comprised of traditionally legitimate members.

We assess these theoretical expectations by analyzing a large and systematic sample of over 450 subnational governance units across British colonial Africa. This case not only is canonical in widespread debates about indirect rule, but also exhibits the type of precolonial variation needed to assess our hypotheses while offering sufficiently detailed and disaggregated data. The local governance units, known at the time as Native Authorities, were the primary governing institution of British rule in rural areas where the majority of the population lived. Each Native Authority consisted of chiefs and/or councils that exercised jurisdiction over a specified subnational territory. The jurisdiction of some Native Authorities coincided with a single precolonial state, whereas other Native Authorities combined people who had previously lived under disparate polities. Native Authorities provided government services such as a court system, land allocation, and the regulation of local markets. They built and maintained local infrastructure such as roads. They also provided local education and health care, which they financed through the management of Native Treasuries empowered to collect local taxes.

Our primary source of data on colonial institutions is a comprehensive survey of District Officers conducted in the late 1940s. The responses to this survey, now held in the British National Archives, formed the empirical basis for Lord Hailey's *Native Administration in the British African Territories* (Hailey 1950a,b, 1951a,b, 1953), a five-volume comparative study of systems of local government in African colonies. Our sample includes units from the eleven colonies for which the Hailey surveys and other sources provide quantifiable information on the structure of local institutions and other contextual information, yielding 458 subnational governance units in total. Collectively, the sample covers almost every British colony in Africa. We discuss areas excluded from Native Administration in Appendix D, focusing on areas dominated by white settlement.

We coded numerous new variables that capture colonial-era institutions and conditions. Our main outcome variable is a cross-sectional measure of indirect-rule institutions — whether each Native

Authority consisted of a solo chief, a chief and council, or a council only — at the time of the Hailey surveys. Additionally, we used numerous sources to construct an original variable for the year in which councils were introduced in each locality. We also used these sources to quantify numerous other aspects of Native Authority institutions, including council membership and public spending; and we compiled information about the process of scaling up councils.

For the precolonial period, we drew from sources that describe institutional structures immediately prior to European colonial expansion in the late nineteenth century. The basis of our originally compiled data is 38 volumes of the *Ethnographic Survey of Africa* (edited by Daryll Forde), which cover close to 200 African societies. To cross-check, we also consulted dozens of historical and ethnographic monographs and articles. We constructed a three-valued variable for precolonial political institutions: state with an authoritarian ruler, state with a constrained ruler, or decentralized political institutions. We thus assess not only whether a state existed at all on the eve of colonialism, but also information about executive constraints. For reasons discussed later, our variable improves substantially upon quantitative measures of precolonial institutions used in previous research, in particular Murdock's (1967) *Ethnographic Atlas*. Previous research does not adequately classify the diversity of precolonial institutions in a manner that enables assessing our hypotheses, and our new data help to open up a black box in quantitative research on precolonial institutions.

Supporting our theory and contrary to existing claims, we find that local councils were a common component of colonial indirect-rule institutions and their presence overwhelmingly reflected precolonial precedents. In areas where precolonial councils constrained rulers, the Native Authorities contained councils. This includes historically decentralized areas as well as centralized areas with historical constraints on rulers. Native Authorities comprised of solo chiefs — in the “decentralized despotism” mold of Mamdani (1996) — were comparatively rare and largely confined to the emirates of Northern Nigeria, where precolonial rulers had also governed without meaningful constraints. Ironically, the region commonly cited as paradigmatic of British indirect rule was in fact exceptional, which is possible to show with our more systematic sample.

In many cases, the indirect-rule institutions in place at the time of the Hailey surveys reflected departures from earlier colonial practices, as anticipated by our theoretical framework that situates agent selection as a dynamic rather than static choice. In many areas with historically decentral-

ized institutions, British colonial officials at first attempted to govern through indigenous agents who lacked traditional sources of legitimacy, like the “Warrant Chiefs” of Eastern Nigeria. But these appointed agents struggled to maintain order and collect taxes amid socioeconomic changes during the turbulent interwar decades. Reforms throughout the empire during the 1930s and 1940s resurrected systems of councils, which were comprised of traditionally legitimate members while also incorporating some newer voices. Following the reforms, the main departure from precolonial precedents was the scale of authority; to meet British aims of effective administration, these councils and their associated Native Treasuries typically encompassed much larger areas than their precolonial predecessors in decentralized areas. The main exceptions to these reforms were areas with authoritarian precolonial states and peripheral colonial areas that experienced marginal socioeconomic changes.

Patterns of public spending also indicate the influence of councils on local policies. Native Authorities with legally recognized councils tended to spend a greater fraction of their budget on public goods and less on officials’ salaries. By exerting influence through councils, often accompanied by finance committees with wider membership, educated Africans and local entrepreneurs were able to boost spending on desired areas such as education and medical services.

We establish these results through a multi-method approach. Quantitatively, we regress indirect-rule institutions on precolonial institutions and measures of socioeconomic development. We consider a battery of different estimation techniques to account for substantive confounders, spatial dependence, dynamic spatial lags, and alternative methods of clustering. These tests leverage the maps we digitized of local government areas across our entire sample. Qualitatively, we present case studies on four major colonies: Nigeria, Kenya, Gold Coast, and Uganda. This evidence not only explicates the main sources of variation in Native Authority institutions that yield the regression results, but also highlights heterogeneity within colonies, the emphasis on scaling up the scope of authority, and the importance of socioeconomic changes.

Our findings have important implications for ongoing debates about African institutions and the legacies of colonialism. The prior absence of more systematic data obscured the relationship between precolonial institutions and African local governments under indirect rule. In fact, given the heterogeneity inherent in colonial practices, systematic data such as ours are needed simply to

describe the institutional structures under indirect rule (in particular the previously overlooked role of councils). Our empirical approach therefore follows the general shift in studies of colonialism toward measuring institutions and outcomes at a more disaggregated scale than the national level (Boone 2024). Examples of more fine-grained units in existing work on Africa are precolonial African states (Müller-Crepon 2020; Dasgupta and Johnson-Kanu 2021; Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet 2025), 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). Elsewhere, in Spanish America, Garfias and Sellars (2021, 2024) and Chiovelli et al. (2024) analyze the local implementation of direct-rule agents such as *corregimientos* and *intendants*.

Moreover, our analysis challenges arguments that British administrators were usually able to unilaterally wipe away existing institutions by permanently installing authoritarian chiefs, and the corollary that Africans lacked agency in shaping colonial institutions. Instead, British officials had compelling incentives to respond to African demands for local institutional constraints — not out of benevolence, but because these reforms furthered their colonial aims of keeping the peace and collecting revenue. Consequently, African-dominated councils became widespread at the subnational level and affected policy. Collectively, this evidence suggests that attributes of colonialism above the subnational level may provide a more compelling explanation for the difficulty of establishing durable executive constraints in postcolonial Africa. We return to this question about legacies in the conclusion.

## THEORY: CHOOSING AGENTS UNDER INDIRECT RULE

Colonial governments in Africa were not the first to confront the challenges of remote administration in foreign territories. Throughout history, colonizers have sought to achieve the overarching aims of maintaining order and collecting revenue.<sup>4</sup> A key component of their choices is what type of agent to appoint; different types of agents vary in their loyalty, effectiveness, and cost. The headline implication of our theory is that when cost is a binding constraint, colonizers usually face

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<sup>4</sup>For diverse scholarship that emphasizes these objectives, see the Conceptual Prologue to Finer's (1997) treatise on the history of government (in particular pp. 66–70) and Padró i Miquel and Yared's (2012) theoretical analysis of principal-agent problems in imperial governance.

strong incentives to delegate to traditionally legitimate institutions. This implication largely aligns with existing theories for localities with a clear centralized ruler (e.g., Kabaka of Buganda), although we also offer implications for including councils (not just chiefs) as part of the bundle of traditional institutions. In a starker contrast to existing work, we also explain why colonizers will usually pivot toward traditional legitimacy even in historically decentralized areas, where institutions were typically based on extensive constraints on rulers. Installed agents like Warrant Chiefs can be expedient in circumstances of low information about local conditions and military repression. However, as societal pressures rise and colonizers gain information, traditionally legitimate agents become more attractive, as long as councils can be scaled up to achieve fiscal efficiency. This calculus reflects the dynamic rather than static choice of colonial agents. Table 1 summarizes our main theoretical expectations.

**Table 1: Optimal Choice of Colonial Agents**

Agent	Loyalty	Effectiveness	Cost	Conditions for optimal choice
Traditional	✗	✓	✓	Precolonial states; Decentralized areas following socioeconomic changes
Installed	✓	✗	✓	Illegible decentralized areas; Disloyal kings
Direct rule	✓	✓	✗	European settlement; Minerals

*Notes:* ✓ denotes a dimension on which the specified agent is relatively favorable and ✗ denotes relatively unfavorable.

## TRADEOFFS IN TYPE OF AGENT

Colonizers can choose to delegate substantial local authority to indigenous actors, a practice known as indirect rule. Within this broad mantle, colonizers decide between two ideal-types of agent: *traditional* elites with substantial local legitimacy and *installed* agents who lack this basis. Whereas traditionally legitimate agents tend to be more effective, they are also less beholden to the colonial administration — and therefore less inherently loyal.

Traditionally legitimate elites tend to have better information about their population. Among other advantages, superior information can help to uncover plots of revolt before they manifest. Such actors also tend to be better at inducing the quasi-voluntary compliance needed to effectively collect direct taxes (Levi 1989). However, these same sources of local legitimacy can also be used against the colonizer. Local elites are better positioned to themselves rebel or otherwise conspire against the colonizer (Finer 1997, 66–70). Even after consolidating foreign rule, they can leverage various

“weapons of the weak” that undermine colonial control (Scott 1987; Abernethy 2000).

The other ideal-type of indirect-rule agent is an installed indigenous agent who lacks traditional legitimacy. One example is appointing an agent based in a nearby area, a common practice in French Africa. Another example is inflating the powers of an individual who traditionally lacked such powers, such as Warrant Chiefs in Southern Nigeria. Installed agents entail the converse pros and cons of traditionally legitimate agents. On the one hand, installed agents derive their elevated status from colonial control, which increases their loyalty toward colonial officials. On the other hand, the local population is more likely to resist foreign impositions. This lessens the effectiveness of appointed agents by reducing their ability to prevent revolts or extract direct taxes.

Alternatively, colonizers can eschew indigenous agents entirely and govern the territory more *directly* through official metropolitan agents or unofficial settlers. The main drawback of metropolitan agents is their high expense, a barrier that proved to be prohibitive throughout most of our empirical setting of Africa, in particular the rural areas (Frankema 2009; Gardner 2012; Cogneau, Dupraz and Mesple-Somps 2021). Governing through European settlers entailed a somewhat different tradeoff (Lee and Paine 2024), but possibilities for European settlement were geographically circumscribed in Africa (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2001; Paine 2019) and few areas had the scope of known mineral wealth present in other historical settings like Spanish America (Engerman and Sokoloff 2011; Garfias and Sellars 2024). Given the prohibitive costs of constructing a Weberian-style bureaucratic state, we focus primarily on the choice between types of indirect-rule agents. In Appendix D, we discuss more direct rule in areas of substantial European settlement and extensive corporate presence among colonies within our sample (Kenya Highlands, Northern Rhodesia Copperbelt, parts of Bechuanaland) and outside (South Africa, Southern Rhodesia).

Another dimension we exclude from our theory is metropolitan ideology, in particular the inherent desire of metropolitan officials to effect transformation in their colonies. This is often cited as a key difference between British and French rule in Africa (Crowder 1970; Crowder and Ikime 1970; Müller-Crepion 2020). In the Conclusion, we engage with this consideration while also suggesting why local realities mattered independently of metropolitan ideology.

## OPTIMAL CHOICE OF AGENT: COUNCILS IN DECENTRALIZED AREAS

Given the tradeoff between loyalty and effectiveness, how does a colonizer choose between traditionally legitimate and installed agents? One key factor is the degree of centralization in precolonial institutions, as studied in existing work (Gerring et al. 2011; Müller-Crepon 2020). Effective local administration requires economies of scale. This leads colonial officials to prioritize elites whose scope of authority extends beyond a small locality (e.g., only a single or small cluster of villages). If the colonizer secures basic promises of allegiance from local elites with a centralized basis, aspects of traditional administration can be repurposed under foreign rule. Furthermore, colonizers often have more hierarchical political institutions at home. Therefore, they better understand how to delegate authority to elites who themselves command allegiance under hierarchical political institutions. For these reasons, we concur with much existing work by anticipating that in areas with centralized political institutions, colonizers would delegate to traditional elites. The exceptions should occur in places where resistance to the colonial imposition was exceptionally strong, and thus the disadvantage of proven disloyalty would outweigh the advantage of greater effectiveness.

Historically decentralized areas pose greater administrative challenges. Existing work posits that colonizers necessarily install non-traditional agents like Warrant Chiefs; if no king could be found, they would make one. This implication is logical in the low-information environment of early colonialism, when traditional societal structures were illegible to the colonizers. Misunderstandings of traditional sources of authority and constraints in African societies would lead to the installation of non-traditional agents as the default choice. Even when the local population disapproved of this choice, the military repression campaigns associated with installing early administrations would usually suffice to deter movements against colonially chosen agents.

However, non-traditional agents are an expedient choice under much more circumscribed conditions than implied by existing theories. Over the longer term, we anticipate that various types of pressures would reopen the choice of loyal-but-ineffective agents. Installed agents may prove to be hopelessly ineffective as the local population turns against invented despots who lack local accountability. Moreover, socioeconomic conditions change over time. Revolts and other forms of agitation by colonial subjects create pressure on colonizers to pivot to another type of agent.

In decentralized areas, the scope of choice over colonial agents was broader than existing work — or early colonial officials — realized. Institutions that replicate certain aspects of traditionally legitimate institutions could constitute a viable alternative to installed agents. Historically decentralized areas are not “ungoverned” spaces (Murtazashvili 2016) and may have “complex” institutions that empower disparate members of society through village councils, age grades, purchased titles, and secret societies (McIntosh 1999). Foreign institutions often create prohibitive transaction costs for colonizers with limited knowledge of newly conquered territory. However, after gaining experience and learning over time, the colonizers can seek to restructure earlier institutions in ways to achieve economies of scale. For example, they can scale up councils to encompass larger areas than single villages, therefore achieving aims of fiscal efficiency. The drawbacks of autocratic installed agents increase the relative attraction of delegating authority to institutions with stronger local accountability.

Socioeconomic changes reinforce the desire to reform earlier local institutions. Incorporation into a larger political structure through territorial expansion or constructing an empire inevitably yields changes. For example, traditional indigenous agents lose some powers while gaining others, and they will strategically manipulate indigenous institutions to align with the new principal-agent relationship created by the ruling power. The promotion of new modes of economic output such as cash crops and cultural influence from the metropole (e.g., religious missionaries) will also create new elites (Pengl, Roessler and Rueda 2022).<sup>5</sup> These new voices create novel demands for incorporation into local institutions. Local governance through expanded councils is better able to accommodate such demands than autocratic governance through installed agents. For similar reasons that institutions of accountability are lauded for promoting better governance in Western societies (North and Weingast 1989; Acemoglu and Robinson 2020), locally accountable agents can serve colonizers’ goals of minimizing revolts and collecting revenue.

In sum, we explain why colonizers will often choose to delegate governance to traditionally legitimate agents. This implication includes, but is not limited to, areas with centralized precolonial states. In historically decentralized areas, colonizers should delegate to agents with traditional sources of legitimacy (including scaled-up councils) when their advantages in effectiveness are

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<sup>5</sup> As an example from colonies outside of Africa, the end of slavery in the West Indies created a new Black middle class while reducing the power of white plantation owners (Owolabi 2023).

accentuated relative to the alternative of installed agents. Scope conditions that favor traditionally legitimate agents include prior governance failures by autocratic installed agents and socioeconomic transformation, each of which would prompt colonizers to learn more about sources of authority in precolonial institutions amid heightened pressure from local actors.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: APPLYING THE THEORY TO BRITISH AFRICA

Matching the implications of our theory to historical realities within British Africa yields expectations for which types of indirect-rule institutions colonizers would construct. Areas with precolonial states supplied effective rulers that colonizers could repurpose. In historically decentralized areas, by contrast, the conditions that would favor delegation to agents with traditional legitimacy did not emerge until the interwar period. Autocratic installed agents proved to be ineffective, socioeconomic changes created new pressures, and the colonizers gained information about precolonial constraining institutions such as councils.

Two key attributes of precolonial Africa structured the subsequent choices made during the colonial period. First, although some larger and more centralized states emerged, most African political units (which numbered in the thousands) were small scale (Southall 1970, 231). Second, institutionally constrained rulers were the rule rather than exception. The ease of exit in regions with low population density and readily available land made it difficult to concentrate autocratic powers (Herbst 2000; Stasavage 2020). Many African societies jealously guarded the internal autonomy of their local community (Vansina 1990, 119), which often resulted in small-scale political units with significant institutional checks on unilateral authority.

Administrators in British Africa shared the standard colonial goals of keeping the peace and raising revenues. The high costs of employing metropolitan officials prompted London to rely primarily on African agents (Kirk-Greene 1980; Berry 1992; Iliffe 2007; Richens 2009; Gardner 2012; Bolt and Gardner 2020). British officials could more easily identify agents with suitable authority in regions with a history of political centralization. In Buganda, for example, the Uganda Agreement of 1900 delegated a high degree of authority to the Kabaka and his council, the Lukiiko (Low and Pratt 1960). In Northern Nigeria, under the rule of Frederick Lugard, the paradigmatic institutions

of British Indirect Rule (Native Authorities, Native Treasuries, and Native Courts) were formalized between 1914 and 1917 in the emirates of the former Sokoto Caliphate (Lugard [1922](#)).

By contrast, in areas of small-scale and decentralized precolonial polities, early British officials often misunderstood authority structures that lacked an easily identifiable head. In areas such as Southern Nigeria, the British engaged in extensive repression and military pacification to establish control (Tamuno [1972](#)). British administrators were rotated frequently and usually lacked a deep familiarity with their posted area and its political history. This impeded their ability to make informed decisions when constructing a new administrative apparatus, which often entailed on-the-spot decisions. Thus, in the early years, it was expedient to install chiefs as executive agents of the regime, many of whom lacked sources of traditional legitimacy. Empowered by the British administration and lacking indigenous institutions to check their power, Warrant Chiefs in Southern Nigeria, headmen in Kenya, and similar agents elsewhere often developed autocratic powers and were highly corrupt and repressive (Tignor [1971](#); Afigbo [1972](#)).

However, several shocks during the interwar period heightened the tradeoff between loyalty and effectiveness by revealing inadequacies with the status quo. In many areas, installed agents — whatever their loyalty to the British administration — proved ineffective at collecting taxes and maintaining order. In Southern Nigeria, riots occurred in Warri in 1927–28, followed by the Aba Women’s War farther east in 1929. These revolts responded to the initial attempts to collect direct taxes in each area and the unpopularity of the Warrant Chiefs who sought to collect them (Ikime [1966; 1968](#), 436–38; Afigbo [1972](#), 207–48). Similarly, in Kenya, nationalist agitation and protests in the 1920s signaled discontent with local headmen (Schilling [1976](#), 221). In the Kumasi Division of Ashanti, there was no realistic threat of a revolt, but the British needed a way to induce tax compliance. The British had previously deposed the traditional leader (Asantehene) and subsequently realized that “people would not pay tax to support a stool which, traditionally, had no claim upon their allegiance . . . [which] helped to persuade the Government to restore the Ashanti Confederacy” (Tordoff [1965](#), 147).

Elsewhere, officials complained about fiscal ineffectiveness stemming from inadequate economies of scale in areas with small-scale indigenous authority. Colonial officials in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) lamented that the Native Authorities “controlled so few people that they were unable

to support independent treasuries and could never become effective units of local government.”<sup>6</sup> Administrators in the Gold Coast were even blunter about their desire for larger units: “The presence of these little petty kingdoms which have in the past been allowed to break away from the parent states, ridiculous little places, consisting only of a few hundred people, with nonsensical talk about inherent rights of sovereignty and the power of their ‘natural rulers’ all fiercely jealous of their semi-independence but all within the same economic entity, has militated greatly against progressive and satisfactory Native Administration.”<sup>7</sup>

Fiscal effectiveness was important at a time when colonial administrations were turning increasingly to local governments — including Native Authorities — to address growing demands for social services among the African population. These demands reflected the economic instability of the interwar period. Early colonial administrations generated revenue streams primarily by building infrastructure to promote export production of a small number of primary commodities. In many colonies, this fostered economic growth and expanded the taxable surplus. However, this growth was highly vulnerable to shifts in global prices, and several prolonged bouts of contraction occurred during the interwar period (Broadberry and Gardner 2022). The impact of these economic upheavals on living standards led to growing political activism among African producers (Southall 1975). They demanded increased provision of public services, which the colonial governments had few resources to meet. Moreover, new classes of literate Africans emerged (often but not exclusively in more urban areas) who sought to leverage their voice in decisions over local governance.

Applying our general theoretical framework, these are precisely the conditions under which we would expect the delegation of authority to traditionally legitimate agents. Some areas were predated by autocratic rule, which we expect to persist under foreign rule. But much of precolonial Africa was governed through constraining institutions such as councils. Despite earlier colonial practices of installing non-traditional chiefs, the twin stimuli of anti-tax revolts and socioeconomic changes should prompt reforms that promote institutions with a greater degree of traditional legitimacy, even if scaled up from their precolonial predecessors, and open space for the voices of new elites emerging from processes of economic change. We anticipate that the shift toward councils

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<sup>6</sup>“Notes on African local government in Northern Rhodesia,” in UK National Archives CO 1015/524.

<sup>7</sup>Gold Coast Western Province Report, 1934.

would be most pronounced in historically decentralized areas (which usually began with loyal-but-ineffective installed agents), but should also occur in areas with a history of constrained centralized rulers. Consequently, decentralized areas and areas with constrained precolonial states should more frequently have councils as part of their Native Authority than areas with authoritarian precolonial states; and areas with any type of precolonial state should be more likely to have a chief as part of their Native Authority than decentralized areas. Moreover, the extent of reforms toward empowering councils in decentralized areas should be greater where socioeconomic changes were more extensive. In the remainder of the article, we assess these hypotheses and theoretical corollaries using originally compiled data on precolonial and colonial institutions in British Africa.

## DATA

### UNIT OF ANALYSIS: NATIVE TREASURIES AND DIGITIZED MAPS

The British administrative scheme featured, in descending order of size: provinces, divisions/districts, Native Treasuries (NTs), and Native Authorities (NAs). Throughout, our unit of analysis is the NT. Our sample consists of 458 NTs across British Africa, including 201 in Nigeria, 87 in the Gold Coast (Ghana), 52 in Tanganyika (Tanzania), 42 in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), 25 in Kenya, 16 in Nyasaland (Malawi), 12 in Uganda, 12 in the Gambia, nine in Bechuanaland (Botswana), and one in each of Lesotho and Swaziland (Eswatini).

Although we measure colonial institutions for each Native Authority, we use Native Treasuries as the unit of analysis. In practice, the distinction makes little difference for our main outcome variable because NTs containing multiple NAs exhibit almost no institutional variance (we later provide details). The theory-related consideration for preferring NTs as the unit of analysis is that British assessments about the scale of effective authority applied to fiscal units, which were the NTs. Comparing NT units, rather than observations that include many small NAs, in some sense helps to make the units in the data set more easily comparable to each other, although NTs nonetheless varied in their perceived importance and population within and across colonies. Moreover, fiscal authority was exercised through Native Treasuries, a key component of the decision-making powers of Native Authorities.

We sourced and digitized a comprehensive set of maps of Native Treasuries for essentially our

entire sample.<sup>8</sup> We compiled these maps from the colonial archives and other available sources; only for the small colony of the Gambia were we unable to uncover a disaggregated source map. In some colonies (e.g., Kenya, Uganda), the set of NT areas was nearly synonymous with the set of districts, and thus these maps align with ones digitized in prior work (Müller-Crepon 2020; Ricart-Huguet 2022). But in the two colonies with the largest number of NTs, Nigeria and the Gold Coast, most districts contained numerous NTs. Using varied source maps, we constructed a one-to-one mapping between NTs and polygons that we digitized using our more detailed colonial maps. For some NTs in these two colonies, the historical maps did not provide a corresponding delineated area. In such cases, we created a proxy by digitizing a small radius around a point corresponding to the location of the NT, which we identified by locating the main town associated with the NT in the source maps and cross-checking it with Google Maps. Thus, building on the pioneering efforts of Bolt and Gardner (2020), we constructed comprehensive maps of British administrative units at a level of detail not available in existing work. The spatial data enable us to measure socioeconomic conditions for each Native Treasury and assess spatial dependence across units.

## PRECOLONIAL INSTITUTIONS

We constructed a new disaggregated measure of precolonial political institutions.<sup>9</sup> We first distinguished between states and decentralized areas. To do so, we built upon a recent dataset of precolonial African states from Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2025). Their data draw in large part from the *Historical Atlas of Africa*, edited by the eminent historians Ajayi and Crowder (1985). This source includes regional maps of precolonial African states between the 1850s and 1880s.<sup>10</sup> The underlying conceptualization for determining which polities constituted *states* is 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." Extending the data from Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2025) yields a list of 58 states.

Our main innovation was the second step: measuring whether institutional constraints were present for each state. Based on extensive historical and anthropological sources, we coded a binary vari-

<sup>8</sup> Appendix A.2 provides more details.

<sup>9</sup> Appendix A.1 provides details and Appendix Table B.1 presents summary statistics by colony. Appendix E.1 provides excerpts from our codebook.

<sup>10</sup>The maps also indicate regions that came under early colonial control. Among the precolonial states in our data set, only Lesotho (colonized in 1878) came under European control before 1885.

able for whether a council imposed effective institutional constraints on the ruler around the eve of colonization. To determine this, we sought to answer the following types of questions using our sources, with affirmative answers indicating an effective 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? 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. We consulted the dozens of relevant volumes of the *Ethnographic Survey of Africa* (edited by Daryll Forde), which we cross-checked using scores of additional books and articles about individual cases.

Precolonial institutions were not static. States rose and fell over time; for example, Yorubaland underwent changes throughout the nineteenth century after the Old Oyo Empire collapsed. Institutional constraints fluctuated as well; for example, the kabaka of Buganda increased his authoritarian powers during the nineteenth century by gaining the ability to unilaterally appoint county chiefs. Nonetheless, measuring the influence of councils in the late nineteenth century provides an informative snapshot because the existence of states and constraints on the executive tended to reflect longer-term forces. Moreover, Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2025) include only states in existence prior to 1850, all of which still existed on the eve of colonialism.<sup>11</sup>

Third, we matched each precolonial state to a Native Treasury. This was straightforward. Nearly every state gained an eponymous Treasury; and we also verified using our digitized maps that the location of the (last) capital of each state was located within the associated NT area.<sup>12</sup> Overall, we score precolonial institutions for each Native Treasury as either (a) state with an *authoritarian* ruler, (b) state with a ruler *constrained* by an influential council, or (c) *decentralized*. The latter category encompasses NTs without a corresponding precolonial state. Although we do not directly measure institutions in areas with decentralized institutions, extensive anthropological and historical evidence catalogs the prevalence of political constraints on rulers and of village governance entirely through councils (later we provide examples from specific cases). Thus, we interpret NTs with decentralized institutions as ones with historical institutional constraints (and thus, on this dimension, similar to states with constrained rulers).

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<sup>11</sup> Appendix E.1 addresses another possible concern about using colonial-era anthropological accounts.

<sup>12</sup> Appendix Table A.1 lists each precolonial state and associated NT(s).

Existing data sets cannot replicate our relatively fine-grained measure of precolonial institutions. Earlier variables that capture aspects of precolonial institutional constraints use 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 186 polities across the world, and only six located within the eleven African colonies in our dataset. By contrast, our dataset incorporates 458 NTs in these colonies. Furthermore, the ethnic units from Murdock (1959) constitute a much more highly aggregated unit than actual polities in precolonial Africa, and his list and polygons 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.<sup>13</sup>

## MAIN COLONIAL VARIABLE: NATIVE AUTHORITY INSTITUTIONS

We compiled numerous new variables that capture colonial-era institutions and conditions. 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 comprehensive surveys of District Officers that Hailey used to construct these volumes, which we accessed from the UK National Archives in London.<sup>14</sup> The Hailey surveys constituted the first attempt to systematically characterize Native Administration in British Africa.<sup>15</sup> This enabled us to develop appropriately local measures of indirect-rule institutions in the 1940s, reflecting reforms which took place over the course of the previous decade. We are unaware of comparable data sources for other empires, but the wide vari-

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<sup>13</sup>In Appendix A.1, we visualize these discrepancies for the Gold Coast.

<sup>14</sup>The surveys are from the TNA CO/1018 series; see Bolt and Gardner (2020) for a lengthier description. Colonial sources raise important concerns about bias. However, available evidence suggests that Hailey attempted to accurately characterize local political institutions—even where such assessments 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.

<sup>15</sup>This study built on an earlier report written by Hailey during the early 1940s (Hailey 1944). Due to restrictions on capacity and mobility during the war, the 1944 report included little direct evidence from the colonies themselves.

ety in precolonial institutions across British Africa make this setting ideal for empirically assessing our theoretical implications.

We classify the following institutional structures, which differ in whether a chief and/or council was legally recognized in the colonial *Gazettes* as part of the Native Authority.<sup>16</sup>

- Solo chief, e.g., the Emir of Kano in Northern Nigeria. He had an advisory council, but this body was not legally recognized as having powers as part of the Native Authority.
- Chief and council, e.g., the Ada Manche and the State Council in the Gold Coast.
- Council only, e.g., the Ndoki Clan Council in Eastern Nigeria. For this and the preceding two types, we code subnational institutions based on the structure of the Superior Native Authority, although many encompassed lower-level Subordinate Native Authorities that lacked the full powers of Superior NAs.
- Federal council, which consisted of a higher-level Native Authority council that controlled the Native Treasury (e.g., Local Native Councils in Kenya, federal councils of chiefs in Tanganyika and Nyasaland, and District Councils in Eastern Uganda) and multiple lower-level Native Authorities, typically chiefs, who retained various powers delegated to authorities at a more local level. For our main analysis, we group federal-council NAs with council-only NAs. Such cases are coded solely based on the higher-level council because this body coincided with the Native Treasury, our unit of analysis. However, we also present a robustness check (Appendix Table B.7) in which we group these cases with chief-and-council NAs, which reflects the institutions for the lower-level NAs as well.

For Native Treasuries that encompassed multiple Native Authorities, we compute the fraction of NAs with each type (e.g., an NT encompassing two NAs with solo chiefs and two with chief-and-council NAs would be 0.5 on each of these variables and 0 on council only). Although many NTs contained multiple NAs, institutional variance within NTs was minimal: in 426 of 458 NTs (93%), the NT is coded as fully solo chief, chief and council, or council only.

## OTHER FACETS OF COLONIAL INSTITUTIONS

**Panel data on introduction of councils.** We additionally constructed an original variable on the year in which councils were introduced in each locality, measured at the somewhat more aggregated district level (N=238). We used the Hailey volumes and surveys as well as numerous

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<sup>16</sup> Appendix Table B.2 presents summary statistics by colony and Appendix E.2 provides excerpts from our codebook.

additional colony-specific sources as needed to fill in dates as precisely as possible.<sup>17</sup>

**Membership of councils and finance committees.** The existence of legally recognized councils would be unimportant if they routinely lacked independent sources of authority or meaningful decision-making powers. Thus, one important piece of information is who participated on these councils. For each council, we used descriptions from the Hailey volumes and surveys to score how the counselors were selected: elites (either hereditary or not), popularly selected, chief-appointed, or British-appointed. Using this information, we computed (a) which type of member comprised the *plurality*, and (b) whether *any* members of each type sat on the council.<sup>18</sup>

We think of elites and popular members as exhibiting a greater degree of independence from the colonial administration than chief- or British-appointed members. Elite counselors held an *ex officio* seat on the council, that is, the traditional title automatically qualified them to sit on the council. Most common were lower-level chiefs who were subordinate to the office that became the Native Authority chief. Elites are distinguished, though, in whether they held their positions by hereditary or non-hereditary means. Most chiefs in Eastern Nigeria, for example, fit the latter category because elites typically gained their titles through age and/or purchase. Popularly selected members gained their seat either through direct means (e.g., local election) or indirectly (e.g., selection by a lower-level council).

We also compiled information on the presence of finance committees.<sup>19</sup> These committees were intended to facilitate greater local control over the Native Treasury budget. They were generally composed of members of the wider council and sometimes joined by mission-educated members of the local community. These committees varied in terms of their size, capacity, and level of activity. However, the surveys note that many took an active role in determining the priorities of Native Treasury spending.

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<sup>17</sup> Appendix C provides details.

<sup>18</sup> Appendix Table B.4 presents summary statistics and Appendix E.2 provides excerpts from our code-book.

<sup>19</sup> Appendix Table B.6 presents summary statistics.

**Native Treasury expenditures.** To assess whether the presence of councils affected outcomes, we examine the composition of public expenditures by Native Treasuries, drawing from various sources to construct original measures.<sup>20</sup> Budgets recorded in colonial archives distinguish between expenditures on administration (which included the salaries of chiefs, counselors, and lower-level officials) and public goods such as education, medical services, and road maintenance. Disaggregated spending data for individual NTs is available sporadically, and thus we can measure this variable for only a subset of colonies in a single year in the 1940s. As a result, local spending has been neglected by research on the history of colonial fiscal systems.<sup>21</sup> Our article is the first of which we are aware that uses systematic data on the composition of expenditures by individual Native Treasuries.

## SOCIOECONOMIC VARIABLES

Socioeconomic changes play an important role in our theory, as we anticipate that colonial officials would target more developed areas when they implemented reforms to improve the fiscal efficiency of local governance units. We operationalize socioeconomic changes with the following variables, which (if not otherwise specified) are measured around mid-century and whose measurement we describe in more detail in Appendix A.3.

*Cash crops*, where present, were typically the main source of economic value and export revenue (Frankema and Booth 2020; Pengl, Roessler and Rueda 2022). Early British administrators sought to raise revenue and targeted long-standing cash-crop products while additionally trying to develop new ones (e.g., palm oil and cotton, respectively, in Nigeria; see Tamuno 1972). Thus, the value of cash crop production within each Native Treasury area directly measures an important component of the area's development. Colonial *railways* were among the most significant colonial investments. They were deliberately constructed to connect areas of high economic value and, in turn, spurred significant socioeconomic change (Jedwab and Moradi 2016; Jedwab, Kerby and Moradi 2017; Okoye, Pongou and Yokossi 2019). We capture this effect by measuring the distance

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<sup>20</sup> Appendix A.4 provides supporting details and Table B.5 presents summary statistics.

<sup>21</sup> For exceptions, see Gardner (2012); Bolt and Gardner (2020); Müller-Crepon (2020).

between the centroid of each NT polygon and the nearest railway. We also control for *distance from the capital* and *distance from the coast* from the centroid of each NT area. These are, however, less direct measures of social economic development and potential because the capital was not always the only (or even main) economic center, and the relative distance from the coast was less important within inland colonies. *Population density* could have influenced the intensity of the colonial imposition (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2002; Mahoney 2010; Engerman and Sokoloff 2011) and the difficulty of constructing effective state institutions (Herbst 2000), and the absolute *population* size could have affected prospects for constructing economies of scale.

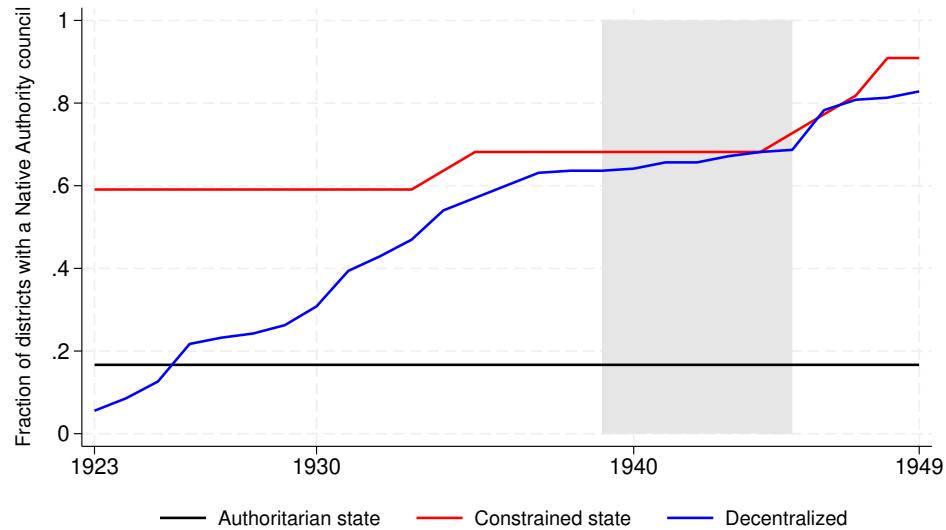
European special interests also affected local economies and governance. The presence of *Christian missions* could both reflect existing patterns of socioeconomic development and stimulate further change (Ajayi 1965; Jedwab, Meier zu Selhausen and Moradi 2022), particularly in the case of missions founded earlier in the colonial period. We capture early missionary presence with a binary indicator for whether the Native Treasury area encompassed a mission site prior to 1914. European settlers, where present, were another influential special-interest group, and we capture their presence with the percentage of *European-alienated land*. However, as discussed in Appendix D, the areas with the highest levels of alienated land were excluded from Native Administration entirely, which creates sample-selection issues for interpreting coefficient estimates for this variable.

## VARIANCE IN NATIVE AUTHORITY INSTITUTIONS

### OVERVIEW OF PATTERNS

Early British administration in Africa was characterized by the persistence of chiefs in areas of precolonial states and installed chiefs elsewhere. However, socioeconomic changes made these systems untenable, and the British pivoted to governance institutions that drew from precolonial precedents. Over time, the prevalence of councils diverged between areas that traditionally had constraints on rulers and those that did not, shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Councils in Native Authorities over Time**



*Notes:* The unit is the colonial district. The lines are averages for each category of precolonial institutions for every year between 1923 (one year before reforms became widespread, starting in Kenya) and 1949 (Hailey surveys). Years during WWII are shaded gray. Appendix C provides details on the longitudinal data and Table C.1 summarizes changes over time for individual regions and colonies.

By the time of the Hailey surveys at the end of the 1940s, solo chief NAs were rare — only 17% of Native Authorities (Table 2). The remaining Native Authorities included councils, either chief and council (36%) or council only (47%). This observation contrasts starkly with the standard portrayal of “decentralized despotism” and unchecked chiefs everywhere, and also underscores the extreme heterogeneity in indirect-rule institutions. Native Authorities without a council (solo-chief NAs) pervaded Native Treasury areas that encompassed authoritarian precolonial states (90%), but were rare in areas with a constrained precolonial state (9%) or historically decentralized institutions (12%). Native Authorities without a chief (council-only NAs) were common in Native Treasury areas with historically decentralized institutions (58%), but completely absent from areas containing a precolonial state — all of which contained a chief as part of their Native Authority. As a corollary of these two patterns, Native Treasury areas with constrained precolonial states usually preserved both the chief and the council elements of their precolonial institutions (91% had chief-and-council NAs).

**Table 2: Cross Tabulations: Indirect-Rule Institutions**

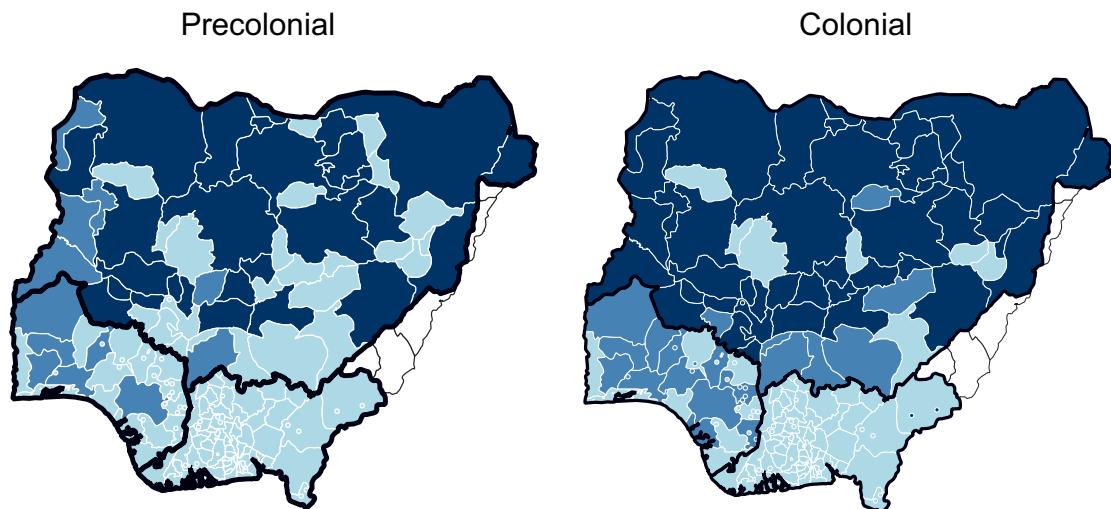
Precolonial/Colonial	Solo chief	Chief and council	Council only	Totals
Authoritarian state	90%	10%	0%	7%
Constrained state	9%	91%	0%	12%
Decentralized	12%	30%	58%	81%
Totals	17%	36%	47%	N=458

*Notes:* Appendix Tables [B.1](#) and [B.2](#) provide more detailed summary statistics for precolonial institutions and Native Authority institutions, respectively, disaggregated by colony.

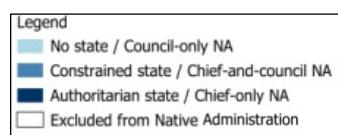
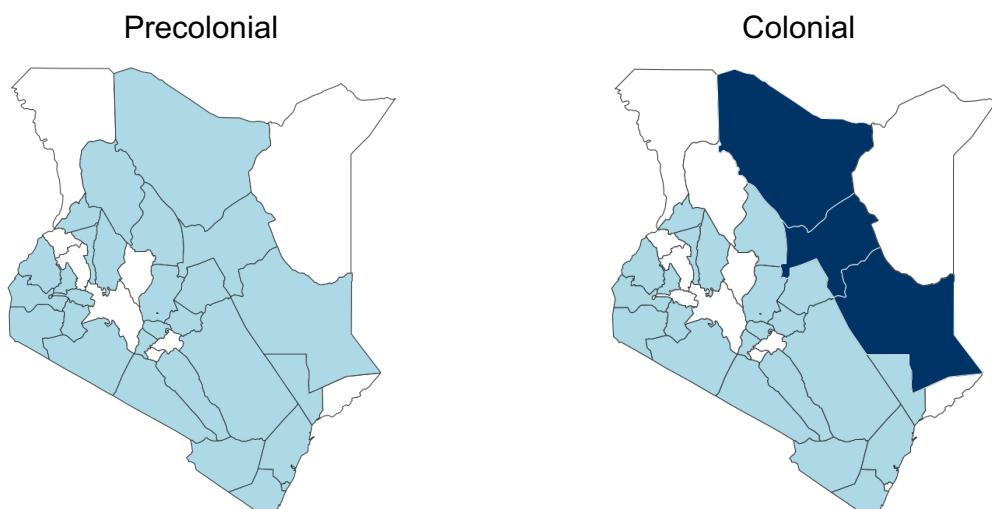
Figure 2 depicts precolonial and colonial institutions for four colonies — Nigeria, Kenya, Gold Coast, and Uganda — which, collectively, exhibited substantial variation on the main variables. These are the main cases for which we provide supporting qualitative evidence, although we present maps for the remaining colonies in Appendix [C.6](#). Nigeria exhibits the greatest amount of within-colony variation. As the map shows, the authoritarian precolonial states in the North all had solo-chief Native Authorities, the constrained states in the West all had chief-and-council NAs, and council-only NAs were nearly universal among the decentralized areas in the East; later we discuss this variation in more depth. In Kenya, the predominant pattern is decentralized historical institutions and council-only NAs. In the Gold Coast, chief-and-council NAs were nearly universal amid a precolonial landscape comprised of both large and small constrained states as well as decentralized areas. In Uganda, the southwestern areas with precolonial states preserved chiefs in their Native Administration (although formerly authoritarian rulers were recognized alongside their councils under British rule) in contrast to council-only NAs in the decentralized East and North.

**Figure 2: Maps of Precolonial and Colonial Institutions**

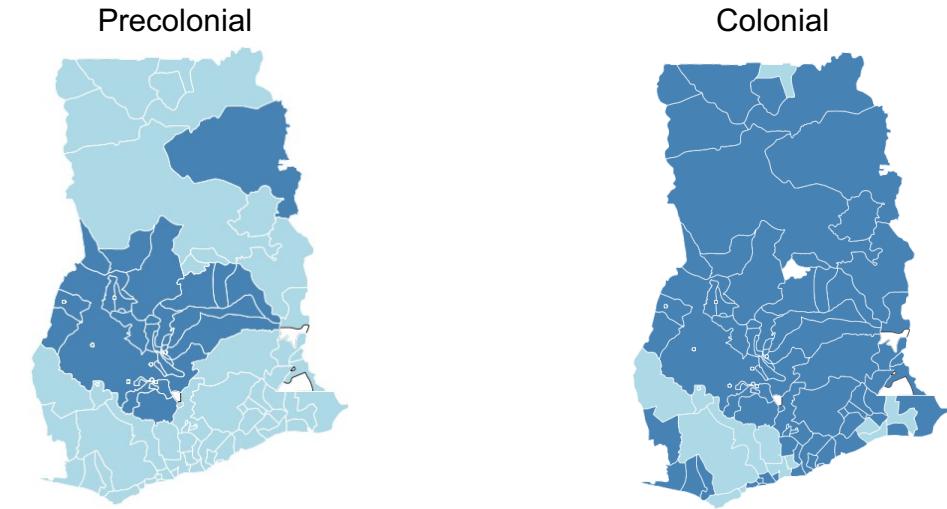
**(a) Nigeria**



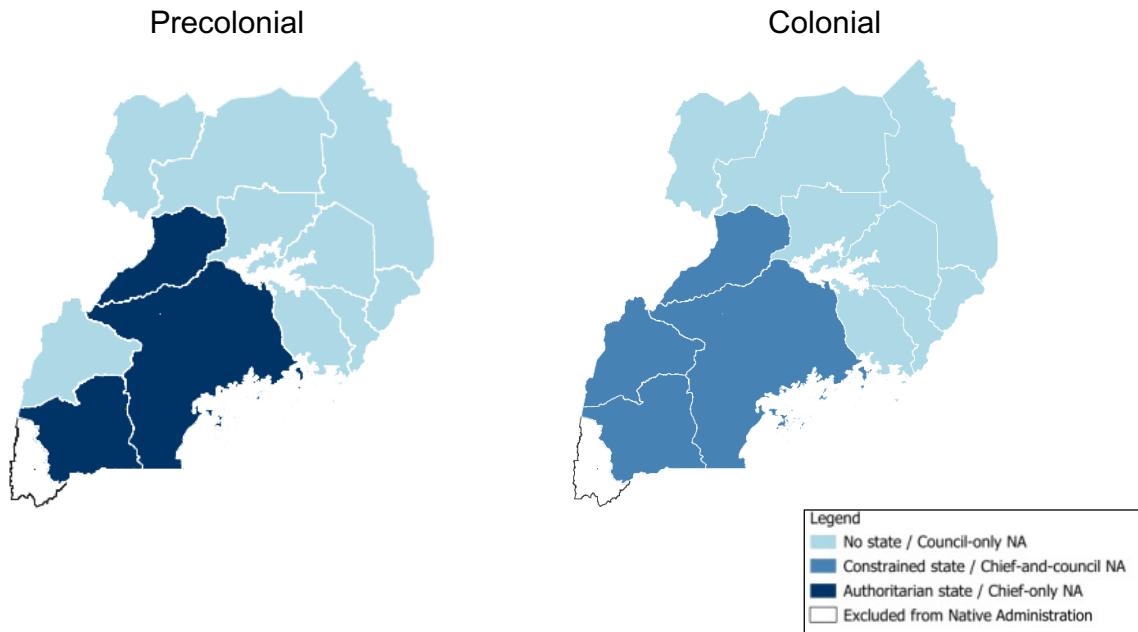
**(b) Kenya**



(c) Gold Coast



(d) Uganda



*Notes:* The units in each map are Native Treasury areas. The colors for the Native Authority institutions reflect whichever type of institution comprised the plurality within the NT area. *Nigeria:* White lines separate each Native Treasury area and black lines separate the Northern, Western, and Eastern provinces. The white polygons are areas from our source maps in the Mandate/Trust territory of British Cameroons that Hailey does not discuss as part of the Native Administration system. *Kenya:* The white areas are districts excluded from Native Administration because of extensive white settlement or low population density (see Appendix D). *Gold Coast:* The white areas comprised “independent districts” in our source map. *Uganda:* The white district is Kigali, which we exclude from our data set because its Native Authority at the time of the Hailey surveys was the District Officer. For maps of the remaining colonies, see Appendix Figure C.3.

## REGRESSION MODELS

We confirm a robust correlation between precolonial institutions and Native Authority institutions using regression models that account for various confounders. In Table 3, the DV in Columns 1–3 is solo-chief NAs, and in Columns 4–6 is chief-and-council NAs. We do not run models using council-only NAs as the DV because, as shown in the cross-tabulations, such institutions were exclusive to decentralized areas (hence creating collinearity with the intercept term in the model).

Using OLS, we estimate

$$\text{NATIVE AUTHORITY}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_P \cdot \text{PRECOLONIAL INSTITUTIONS}_i + \beta_X \cdot X_i + \epsilon_i,$$

In Columns 1–3, the omitted reference category for PRECOLONIAL INSTITUTIONS is authoritarian state, which reflects our theoretical expectation that solo-chief NAs would be less prevalent in Native Treasury areas with either of the other two types of precolonial institutions. In Columns 4–6, the omitted reference category for PRECOLONIAL INSTITUTIONS is constrained state, which reflects our theoretical expectation that chief-and-council NAs would be less prevalent elsewhere.

Columns 1 and 4 are the baseline specifications that contain only the precolonial 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 the socioeconomic variables. For each specification, we adopt a conservative approach by estimating standard errors at the province level (N=60). We separately estimate Conley standard errors. Both procedures address concerns about spatial autocorrelation, which we discuss in more depth later.

The regressions confirm that the discrepancies from the cross-tabs table remain large in magnitude and statistically significant when accounting for possible confounders. Columns 1–3 are the most important specifications for our thesis, as they demonstrate that areas with precolonial constraints were much less likely than areas with authoritarian states to have unconstrained solo chiefs.

**Table 3: Correlates of Native Authority Institutions**

	<u>DV: Solo-chief NA</u>			<u>DV: Chief-and-council NA</u>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Decentralized	-0.778*** (0.0787) [.0583]	-0.814*** (0.0593) [.0468]	-0.628*** (0.0829) [.0606]	-0.610*** (0.0972) [.0617]	-0.313*** (0.0803) [.0641]	-0.599*** (0.0927) [.0610]
Constrained state	-0.812*** (0.0938) [.0696]	-0.718*** (0.0919) [.0728]	-0.657*** (0.0931) [.0774]			
Authoritarian state				-0.812*** (0.0938) [.0696]	-0.375*** (0.106) [.0856]	-0.566*** (0.110) [.0861]
Population		0.0480*** (0.0165)				-0.0564** (0.0214)
Population density		-0.0113 (0.0245)				-0.0120 (0.0210)
Value of cash crops		-0.0124* (0.00722)				0.00322 (0.00596)
% alienated land		-0.0224 (0.0154)				0.105*** (0.0279)
Distance from railway		0.0318* (0.0176)				0.0699*** (0.0221)
Distance from capital		-0.0194 (0.0431)				-0.0450 (0.0509)
Distance from coast		-0.00351 (0.0267)				0.0452 (0.0336)
Mission in 1914		-0.194*** (0.0548)				0.255*** (0.0674)
Intercept	0.903*** (0.0721)	0.729*** (0.0851)	0.534** (0.264)	0.909*** (0.0713)	1.035*** (0.00892)	1.017*** (0.325)
Native Treasuries	458	458	446	458	458	446
Provinces (clusters)	60	60	59	60	60	59
R-squared	0.281	0.433	0.407	0.193	0.561	0.398
Colony FE	✓				✓	

*Notes:* All models are estimated using OLS. The precolonial variables are binary. Every socioeconomic development variable is logged except the binary indicator for any Christian mission in 1914. Province-clustered standard error estimates for all variables are reported in parentheses. Conley standard error estimates for the precolonial variables are in brackets; the distance cutoff is  $1^\circ$  lat  $\times 1^\circ$  long, or approximately 70 sq.mi. at the equator. All NTs in the Gambia are dropped in the models with covariates, and the Gambia, Swaziland, and Lesotho are dropped in the calculation of Conley standard errors. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

Thus, precolonial constraints were usually replicated with some form of empowered council under British Native Administration. Columns 4–6 demonstrate that areas with constrained precolonial states were unique, but for heterogeneous reasons: more likely than areas of authoritarian precolonial states to have councils as part of their Native Authority, and more likely than historically decentralized areas to have chiefs as part of their NA.

**Additional robustness checks.** Appendix B.2 presents various robustness checks for Table 3: estimating the coefficients with logit models, using provinces as the unit of analysis, changing which precolonial state is the omitted reference category, measuring council-only NAs with alternative criteria, and assessing sensitivity to unobserved confounders. We also confirm in a regression model the pattern suggested in Figure 1. Decentralized areas became significantly distinguished from authoritarian states in the early 1930s, as reforms became widespread. The time trend is also positive, but flatter, for constrained states, which had a higher prevalence of councils at the beginning of the interwar period.

**Spatial autocorrelation.** Precolonial institutions exhibited high spatial autocorrelation. Areas of close ethnic, language, and cultural affinities often developed similar political institutions, and successful states expanded their territorial domains. Then, under colonial rule, states (including subcomponents like the individual emirates within the Sokoto Caliphate) were deliberately repurposed not only into distinct Native Treasury areas, but also higher-level units like districts and provinces. If our theory is correct, then broad areas with similar political institutions across neighboring colonial units should have homogeneous colonial institutions — creating spatial autocorrelation in the dependent variable. Nonetheless, introducing a colonial council to one local governance unit could spill over to influence prospects for introducing a council in neighboring governance units. This indirect effect, as opposed to the direct effect of precolonial institutions that we attempt to estimate, creates a specific confounding concern.

Our main models partially address the non-independence of Native Treasury units by clustering standard errors at the higher level of the province, and we also estimate Conley standard errors. Here, we directly account for non-independent observations by estimating spatial autoregressive models. In Panels A and B of Table 4, we show that adding a spatial lag attenuates somewhat the estimates for the main coefficients, but they remain large in magnitude and statistically significant. In Panel C, we incorporate a dynamic component into the spatial models by using our annual panel data on the introduction of councils, which enables us to include a longitudinal lag for institutions

**Table 4: Spatial Autoregressive Models**

	DV: Solo-chief NA			DV: Chief-and-council NA			DV: Council in NA (panel)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Decentralized	-0.424*** (0.0578)	-0.517*** (0.0557)	-0.381*** (0.0577)	-0.469*** (0.0558)	-0.284*** (0.0539)	-0.476*** (0.0543)	0.418*** (0.0887)	0.402*** (0.0755)	0.338*** (0.0945)
Constrained state	-0.453*** (0.0671)	-0.449*** (0.0673)	-0.411*** (0.0680)				0.550*** (0.114)	0.256** (0.104)	0.548*** (0.116)
Authoritarian state				-0.608*** (0.0841)	-0.350*** (0.0794)	-0.449*** (0.0837)			
Population		0.0261** (0.0121)				-0.0632*** (0.0154)		0.0379 (0.0368)	
Population density		-0.00220 (0.0124)				0.00787 (0.0161)		-0.0273 (0.0257)	
Value of cash crops		-0.0112*** (0.00416)				0.00408 (0.00536)		0.00443 (0.00339)	
% alienated land		-0.0202 (0.0125)				0.0796*** (0.0163)		0.0425** (0.0196)	
Distance from railway		0.0312** (0.0122)				0.0562*** (0.0157)		-0.0663*** (0.0195)	
Distance from capital		-0.0298 (0.0208)				-0.0393 (0.0268)		0.0630* (0.0355)	
Distance from coast		0.000252 (0.0131)				0.0436** (0.0170)		-0.0466* (0.0246)	
Mission in 1914		-0.146*** (0.0293)				0.183*** (0.0385)		0.157** (0.0647)	
Intercept	0.507*** (0.0599)	0.457*** (0.107)	0.459*** (0.164)	0.648*** (0.0570)	0.963*** (0.107)	0.912*** (0.185)	-0.245*** (0.0890)	0.254** (0.110)	-0.544 (0.445)
Native Treasuries	446	446	446	446	446	446	6,426 238	6,426 238	6,426 238
District-years									
Districts									
LDV	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colony FE		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Covariates		✓			✓			✓	
Error lag						✓	✓	✓	
Year FE						✓	✓	✓	

*Notes:* Columns 1–6 use our core data set (cross section of Native Treasuries) and replicate the respective columns from Table 3. Here we estimate spatial autoregressive models, with the spatial lag of the dependent variable specified using a spatial weighting matrix that assigns an (identical) positive weight for any NTs that share a common border, and 0 otherwise; and the weights sum to 1. We estimate these models using maximum likelihood and present heteroskedasticity-robust standard error estimates in parentheses. Columns 7–9 use an annual panel of observations for each district between 1923 and 1949. The DV equals 1 in any year including and after the first in which a Native Authority within the district had a legally recognized council. These are GLS random effects models with spatial lags for the dependent variable and error term. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

in neighboring areas. Decentralized areas and constrained states each continue to be distinguished from authoritarian states when accounting for these additional sources of confounding.

## DECENTRALIZED AREAS

Case evidence from Nigeria, Kenya, Gold Coast, and Uganda provides additional confirmation for our hypotheses. These are the four largest colonies in our sample by population<sup>22</sup> and, collectively, exhibited substantial variation on both precolonial and colonial institutions. The qualitative

<sup>22</sup>Excepting Tanganyika, which became a British territory after World War I.

evidence not only highlights sources of within-colony variation, but also provides process-tracing evidence on the dynamics of institution building over the course of the colonial period and the emphasis the British placed on identifying traditionally legitimate institutions while simultaneously scaling up fiscal authority.

Political organization in precolonial Southern Nigeria, east of Yorubaland, was punctuated by hundreds (possibly thousands) of independent villages in densely populated areas, in which authority was concentrated in village elders who did not hold hereditary positions. The decentralized institutions of the Igbo and neighboring groups were initially illegible to the British, who granted warrants for individuals to serve on the Native Courts. Many of these Warrant Chiefs were arbitrarily selected, and even those with some traditional standing gained powers well beyond what existing customs permitted (Afigbo 1972). In response to the anti-tax revolts in Warri and Aba in the late 1920s, mentioned earlier in the theoretical discussion, the British collected over 300 Intelligence Reports to learn about traditional institutions throughout Eastern Nigeria and adjacent areas. Colonial reports noted that the Warrant Chiefs, or Native Courts, would not provide a suitable basis for constructing better Native Authorities: “Attempts have been made to utilise in part the machinery of Native Courts already in existence, but these, being very largely alien institutions unsupported by native custom, have been found unsuitable as a foundation on which true Native Administrations can be built.”<sup>23</sup>

Instead, new Native Authorities were deliberately built up from the village level. By the mid-1930s, the scores of Native Treasuries corresponded with new clan and district councils (Hailey 1951a, 159–60; Kirk-Greene 1965, 212; Ikime 1969, 220–63; Noah 1987). British administrators were often surprised at the resiliency of precolonial institutions, despite decades of colonial rule. In Warri, for example, the local African response to the governance void created by the anti-tax riots was that “village councils composed of Ekpako [village elders] and titled men were ruling the towns. It thus became clear that the operation of the Native court [Warrant Chief] system had not succeeded in destroying the indigenous political institutions. . . . The ease with which they revived

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<sup>23</sup>*Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Nigeria, 1931.*

showed a resilience which is not often credited to them" (Ikime 1969, 227). Councils of village elders successfully collected the taxes with which they were tasked (pp. 229, 241), which met the aims of the British administration. Beyond Warri, British administrators were pleased that "[a]t the present stage the newly-organised councils are beginning to find their feet and to gain confidence, and it is a significant fact that in areas where, in the past, tax could only be collected with difficulty under direct European supervision, it has this year been collected in full by the Councils without any extraneous aid."<sup>24</sup>

Following the reforms, the main break from precolonial precedents was a much greater scale of authority than traditional village councils had wielded, as the new Native Authority and Treasury institutions scaled up from village councils to higher-level councils for the clan or division. The British explicitly encouraged scaling-up for purposes of administrative efficiency, noting that, "[t]here has been a marked tendency towards a reduction of the numbers of representatives composing these administrative and judicial bodies, and an amalgamation of the small units into larger ones which can be given a higher degree of responsibility."<sup>25</sup>

In Kenya, the predominant form of traditional institutions among major groups such as the Kikuyu and Kamba was age grades, which consisted of relatively small lineage groups who rotated power within the group. The British initially created headmen to serve as executive agents for the nascent colonial regime. These headmen, who were not subject to the types of traditional constraints present in these decentralized societies, often governed in an authoritarian manner (Tignor 1971). But nationalist agitation and protests in the early 1920s prompted reforms. "The violence made the danger of unregulated African political activity clear to government officials, but they also realized the hazards of totally repressing political expression . . . The local native council, then, was to be a safety valve, an acceptable framework for African political expression and action" (Schilling 1976, 221).

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<sup>24</sup>*Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Nigeria, 1934.*

<sup>25</sup>*Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Nigeria, 1936.* Comments like these are common in the *Annual Reports* of the 1930s. Appendix C.2 provides additional details.

Starting in 1924, the British began supplanting the executive powers of the headmen by introducing Local Native Councils (LNCs). Scaled up to the district level, LNCs administered much larger jurisdictions than those of headmen; each district, on average, encompassed over fifteen headmen.<sup>26</sup> LNCs had expanded powers and responsibilities, including the imposition of local rates, and were explicitly intended to incorporate a wider range of voices (particularly those of mission-educated Africans and local businessmen, in addition to the headmen).<sup>27</sup>

Many local leaders in Eastern Uganda were vassals to the neighboring states of Buganda and Bunyoro before the onset of British colonialism. The process of scaling up small-scale traditional political institutions began shortly after the turn of the century, when agents from the neighboring state of Buganda implemented reforms in Busoga and neighboring areas. “The larger of the Soga kingdoms became *saza* (counties) on the Ganda model, while smaller ones were amalgamated as *gombolola* (sub-counties) . . . Following modern Ganda practice, a *muruka* (parish) unit with a chief was introduced between the sub-county and the village levels” (Fallers 1960a, 84–85; see also Roberts 1962, 450). In 1919, a Native Administration headquarters was created for all of Busoga, which consisted of a council headed by a Soga king who served as President, a non-hereditary position (Fallers 1960a, 84; Hailey 1950a, 28). During the 1930s, the colonial administration embarked on a process of reorganization aimed at amalgamating smaller chieftaincies.<sup>28</sup> In 1936, the new scaled-up councils gained a firmer legal footing with the introduction of a tiered system of councils building up to the county level from the lower-levels gombolola and muruka units.

## CONSTRAINED STATES

Executive constraints were not exclusive to decentralized areas. Many hereditary leaders of larger states were constrained in their decision making by different types of councils. The southern ar-

<sup>26</sup>Finding the right scale required experimentation, and some early LNCs were merged to create larger units. For example, the original three LNCs in the Baringo district were combined in 1931 because “the Pokot Council (Baringo II) proved to be an uneconomically small unit.” (*Native Affairs Report 1931*). Others, like the originally unitary Masai LNC, were split when the geographic size of the districts made meetings difficult to convene (*Native Affairs Report 1930*).

<sup>27</sup>Appendix C.3 provides more details on the powers of LNCs and the process of scaling up.

<sup>28</sup>See, for example, the *Provincial Commissioners Report for the Northern Province, 1935*.

eas of precolonial Gold Coast were populated by Akan speakers who formed states of varying sizes, the largest of which was the Asante empire centered at Kumasi. Each Akan state had its own hereditary *Omanhene*, or ruler, who alongside his Council of Elders (and for some decisions, a broader State Council) controlled the state administration (Rattray 1929, 77; Manoukian 1950, 35; Busia 1951, 14; Wilks 1975, 387–413). The British had established a formal colonial administration over the coastal area of the Gold Coast in 1874. The Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1878 empowered chiefs to enact bylaws “with the concurrence of their Chiefs, Captains, Headmen and others who by Native Customary Law were the Councillors of their Stools” (quoted in Hailey 1951a, 200). Adoption of the bye-laws which brought Native Authorities under the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance occurred gradually until a new Native Jurisdiction Ordinance became law in 1911.<sup>29</sup> Adopters of the ordinance included leading Akan states in the Colony area mentioned by Wilks (1971, 441–450): Fanti, Denkyira, Akwamu, the Akyem kingdoms, Sefwi, and Wassaw. The traditional *Omanhene* of each State became the president of a Native Authority (Manoukian 1950, 41), all of which all included a council.

Issues of scale were also present in areas with existing chiefs, especially after the fiscal power of Native Authorities expanded. In coastal areas, for example, the decades leading up to the 1940s saw the combination of some smaller states into scaled-up Native Authorities, thus resulting in 27% of NT units consisting of council-only NAs by the time of the Hailey surveys.<sup>30</sup> According to contemporary observers, the need for such scaling up originated in the small size of indigenous states. In 1934, the Provincial Commissioner for the Western Province noted that many of the Native Authorities along the coast consisted of “a collection of petty states, fifteen in number, some of which have a population of under 2,000 and one with a population of only 979 people.” This fragmentation “militated greatly against progressive and satisfactory Native Administration”

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<sup>29</sup>For examples of this process, see Gold Coast, *Annual Report on Native Affairs*, published from 1903 when the Department of Native Affairs was first established.

<sup>30</sup>For our quantitative measure, we code the entire coastal Colony area as decentralized. This reflects their small-scale organization and quasi-vassalage relationship with Asante. This area, though, undoubtedly differed from areas like Eastern Nigeria or Kenya that lacked any form of hereditary chieftaincies. Nonetheless, the precolonial institutions in the Gold Coast Colony underscore our contention that areas we code as decentralized generally had substantial constraints on whatever form of rulers existed.

and pointed to a need to create “larger states on a sounder political and economic basis.”<sup>31</sup>

Governance patterns were similar north of the coast in what was governed as the separate Ashanti Colony. Leading *Omanhene* from the Asante state became chiefs of Native Authority administrations, and their relationship with their councils was unchanged (Tordoff 1965). The main exception was the leader of the Asante state, the *Asantehene*, in the capital of Kumasi. The incumbent Prempeh I was deposed and exiled in 1896, but his son restored to this prior position in 1935. At that point, the Asante Confederacy once again consisted of the Asantehene and his council of leading chiefs.

When Native Administration was formally introduced to Western Nigeria in 1917, the major Yoruba rulers were named as first- or second-class chiefs but their traditional councils were disregarded, at least in the British *Gazettes* (see Appendix C.2). The most notorious case was the Alafin of Oyo, whose powers were inflated well beyond traditional limits with British support (Atanda 1973). The pivot away from authoritarian chiefs began in tandem with the reforms to supplant Warrant Chiefs in the 1930s, although the councils were not legally recognized as part of the Native Authority until the 1940s. The eventual *de jure* balancing of chiefs with councils in Yorubaland reflected the long-standing status quo (Brown 1950, 17). The shift toward councils reflected the new British emphasis that “the doctrine that the jurisdiction of any Native Authority must be based on the consent of the people over whom such authority would be exercised,” as they feared a repeat of the anti-tax revolts in Warri and Aba in the late 1920s (Atanda 1973, 249).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Gold Coast, *Western Province Annual Report 1933–34*.

<sup>32</sup> These protests were “against the new type of authority which the Warrant Chiefs wielded; against the concentration of authority in a few hands. … The Alafin [of Oyo] was not a warrant chief in the Eastern Nigeria sense, but … from 1901 he was wielding authority of a new type, and that over the years this authority did become just as objectionable as that of the Warrant Chiefs. … [B]ecause the people became dissatisfied with the new order, they evinced a desire to return to a system which had operated successfully under different conditions, i.e., the pre-colonial system” (Ikime 1968, 436–38). For example, in Ibadan in the early 1930s, English-educated men with non-chiefly backgrounds pressured the British administration and traditional leaders for membership on a reformed council (Vaughan 2000, 36).

## AUTHORITARIAN STATES

The structure of Native Authorities in Northern Nigeria was more authoritarian throughout the colonial period, but this reflected precolonial precedents. The Sokoto Caliphate originated in the early nineteenth century when jihadist cavalrymen conquered long-standing Hausa states (Adeleye 1971; Smaldone 1977). They subsequently formed roughly two dozen emirates, each of which had substantial local autonomy but was tied to the center at Sokoto through annual tribute and claims of legitimacy. Hereditary emirs faced few constraints; councils existed but tended to have little influence (Johnston 1970, 172). Under British rule, the emirs of leading Sokoto emirates (including Sokoto, Gwandu, and Kano) became first-class chiefs, and every emir was recognized at least as a second-class chief. Throughout the colonial period, these solo-chief NAs had councils but they were advisory rather than legally recognized (see Appendix C.2).

Buganda, though, pivoted in a more constrained direction under colonial rule. The Uganda Agreement of 1900 enshrined Buganda's position at the core of the nascent British protectorate (Ingham 1958). British administrators concluded this agreement not with the kabaka (ruler), but instead with the county chiefs, the highest level of territorial organization beneath the kabaka. The temporary weakness of the incumbent kabaka — a small child who had taken the throne following the British deposition of his father in 1897 — enabled the county chiefs to elevate their prerogatives by empowering the indigenous council, the *Lukiiko* (Low and Pratt 1960, 73–74). This reversed trends during the nineteenth century whereby successive kabakas had amassed substantial authoritarian powers and gained the right to unilaterally appoint most county chiefs (Fallers 1960b, 61–64; Kiwanuka 1971, 100–2). Consequently, whereas Buganda was an authoritarian state prior to colonization, under Native Administration it became a chief and council. “[T]he Agreement quite clearly deprived the Kabaka of his single-handed legislative and judicial functions” that he had enjoyed prior to colonial imposition. Instead, “by the Agreement the *Lukiiko* became none the less quite unmistakably a ‘council’; that is, it became a legislating institution, and not just a gathering of chiefs . . .” (Low and Pratt 1960, 130–31). Its members consisted primarily of important land chiefs who held their positions independent of the kabaka (p. 135), which weakened the kabaka's

powers relative to the precolonial era (p. 145).

## VARIATION WITHIN REGIONS

The British often used the domains of precolonial states to distinguish provinces and districts from each other, which also often correspond how we think about distinct regions of these countries (e.g., Buganda as distinct from Bunyoro or Busoga). Precolonial states are a key explanatory variable in our theory, and therefore we expect that the most consequential variation would occur *across* rather than *within* regions — as illustrated by the preceding case examples. Nonetheless, intraregional variation on precolonial institutions within each major region of Nigeria further substantiates our hypotheses (we discuss Eastern Nigeria in Appendix C.2).

The British territorial claims for Northern Nigeria, vis-à-vis both the French and British territories farther south in Nigeria, deliberately reflected the historical limits of the Sokoto Caliphate. After militarily defeating or otherwise pacifying each emirate by 1903, Governor-General Lugard organized the constituent provinces around these precolonial units (Prescott 1971). But despite the dominance of the Sokoto Caliphate, Northern Nigeria also encompassed decentralized areas. The Sokoto emirs confronted hostile enclaves populated mostly by non-Muslims concentrated in mountainous regions like the Jos Plateau. Despite persistent warfare and slave raiding, the various emirs failed to incorporate these areas into their domains. Externally, the limits of Sokoto expansion were countered by other states, such as Bornu in the northeast and Borguland in the southwest, as well as by smaller states and decentralized peoples like the Tiv.

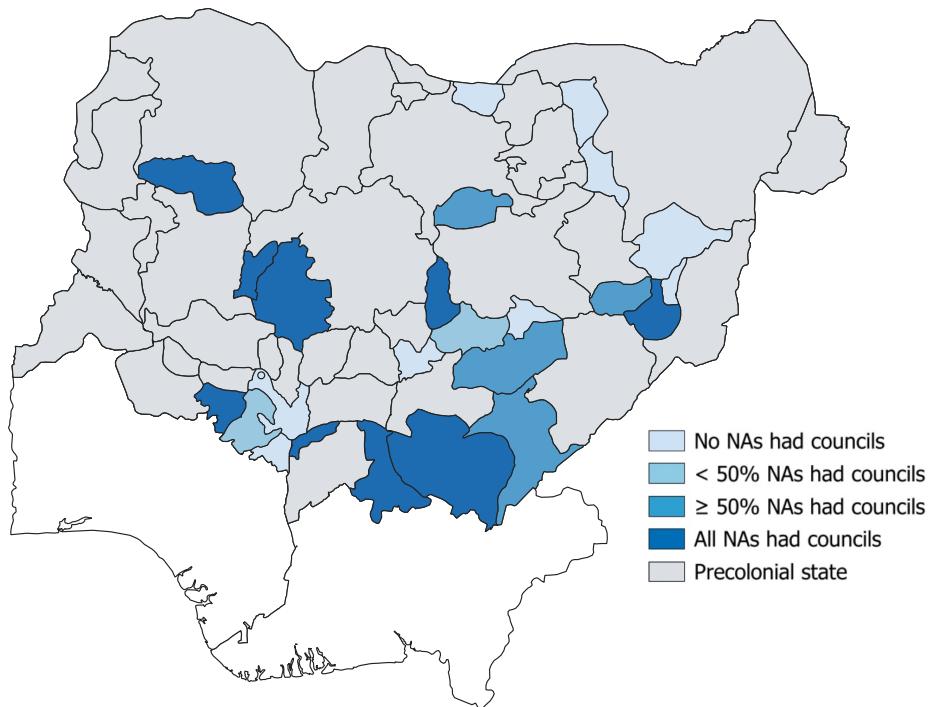
Native Authorities in the historically decentralized parts of Northern Nigeria experienced substantial changes in the 1930s, like their counterparts in Southern Nigeria. British administrators acknowledged that although the emirate system worked in areas that historically had such institutions, it did not in what they referred to as the “pagan” areas. “The objective during the latter months of [1933] was therefore to endeavour to penetrate this veneer and discover the true forms of government among the numerous pagan tribes.”<sup>33</sup> For example, the Tiv were organized by small-

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<sup>33</sup>*Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Nigeria, 1933.*

scale units such as descent groups and lineages (Bohannan 1958). British administrators initially misunderstood traditional institutions and tried various schemes over time to impose authority and collect taxes. They eventually recognized councils throughout the roughly three dozen localities and created a scaled-up Native Authority council populated by local clan fathers (Dorward 1969). Following the reforms, two-thirds of Native Treasury areas in historically decentralized parts of the North contained at least one Native Authority with a council (see Figure 3 and Appendix C.2).

**Figure 3: Councils in Decentralized Parts of Northern Nigeria**



*Notes:* Native Treasury areas with decentralized institutions are shaded based on the fraction of Native Authorities that include a council, with darker colors indicating a higher fraction of councils. NTs with precolonial states are in gray; all but one of those was a solo-chief, and thus would have the light shade if included in the figure.

The Yoruba states were the most salient parts of Western Nigeria, but much of this region was decentralized.<sup>34</sup> Within-region distinctions in Native Authority institutions reflected these differences

<sup>34</sup>Reflecting the endogeneity of colonial divisions to precolonial states, one component of the border between the originally distinct colonies of Northern and Southern Nigeria was the split between the Sokoto emirate of Ilorin, which was populated by Yoruba speakers but incorporated into the Sokoto Caliphate in the 1820s; and Ibadan, which by the end of the nineteenth century had become the leading Yoruba state outside

(see Appendix Figure C.2). Whereas chief-and-council NAs were universal among the leading Yoruba states, only half of decentralized areas had this structure; the remainder had council-only NAs. Some variation was present even among the Yoruba, as several decentralized Yoruba subgroups were organized as council-only NAs. The obas of over a dozen Ekiti towns formed the core of the Ekitiparapo confederation in 1877 to combat their expansionist neighbor, Ibadan. The onset of Native Administration in 1917 designated each oba as a NA over his own kingdom, but three years later the Ekitiparabo Council was revived, which became the single Superior Native Authority in the Ekiti District in the 1940s (Akintoye 1971, 231). Farther west, Egbado villages were located in the borderlands between the constantly warring Yoruba state of Egbado and the Fon state of Dahomey, whom the French conquered (Anene 1970; Asiawaju 1976). No centralized authorities existed in the depopulated Egbado area, and the Egbado Divisional Council NA created in the 1940s combined various smaller federations of Egbado rulers.

## INDEPENDENCE AND RELEVANCE OF COUNCILS

Local councils not only existed within Native Authorities, but exercised independent decision-making powers and exhibited differential patterns of spending behavior. This evidence suggests that Native Authority councils acted as meaningful constraints on chiefs.

Councils were typically dominated by members who were not beholden to the colonial administration, as shown in Table 5. Nearly 90% of councils consisted of a plurality of some type of elites or popularly selected members. By contrast, councils were rarely dominated by members appointed by either the Native Authority chief (9%) or British officials (2%). Moreover, these institutional forms correlate with their precolonial predecessors. Chief-dominated councils were common in areas with authoritarian precolonial states, but rare elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> Areas with constrained precolonial states typically had councils dominated by hereditary elites. Hereditary elites were also common

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the Sokoto orbit.

<sup>35</sup>Reflecting the patterns from Table 2, councils with a plurality of chief-appointed members were mostly confined to areas with solo-chief NAs. These councils served only in an advisory capacity without formal discretion over policy decisions.

in decentralized areas, but less so; taken together, more councils were dominated by the other types of meaningful members: non-hereditary elites and popularly selected members.

**Table 5: Cross Tabulations: Composition of Councils**

	Elite (hereditary)	Elite (non-hereditary)	Popularly selected	Chief appointed	British appointed
Authoritarian state	42%	4%	4%	50%	0%
Constrained state	75%	0%	18%	7%	0%
Decentralized	44%	14%	33%	6%	3%
Totals	48%	11%	29%	9%	2%

*Notes:* Appendix Table B.4 provides more detailed summary statistics and Appendix Table B.10 provides corresponding regression estimates.

Native Treasuries with NA councils spent more on public goods and less on administration, which encompassed salaries for members of the NA. In Panel A of Table 6, the fraction of expenditures on administration is the dependent variable in the first three columns, and the fraction of total expenditures on public goods (education, medical care, roads) is the dependent variable in the last three. The sequence of columns for each outcome mirrors those in the previous tables, although now SOLO-CHIEF NA is the main explanatory variable. The baseline specifications show that solo-chief NAs correspond with an increase of 18.5% in the fraction of expenditures on administration, from a base level of 21.0%. Conversely, solo-chief NAs correspond with a decrease of 7.0% in the fraction of expenditures on public goods, from a base level of 34.4%.

The reforms that implemented councils across most of British Africa also created finance committees, which enabled African counselors to influence the budget process. In Panel B, we demonstrate that NA councils were strongly correlated with the existence of finance committees. As shown in Column 1, the baseline prevalence of finance committees was 64.8% in NAs organized as either chief-and-council or council-only. By contrast, solo-chief NAs reduce this frequency to 5.3%.

Our four main cases bear out the quantitative patterns. In Eastern Nigeria, non-hereditary local leaders and other popularly selected members comprised a plurality on 66% of councils, and elites with hereditary positions predominated on the remainder. The balance was flipped in West-

**Table 6: Public Expenditures and Finance Committees**

<i>Panel A. Public expenditures</i>						
	<b>DV: Administration %</b>			<b>DV: Public goods %</b>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Solo-chief NA	0.185*** (0.0439)	0.138*** (0.0197)	0.0945** (0.0443)	-0.0701*** (0.0196)	-0.0481*** (0.0155)	-0.0550** (0.0243)
Intercept	0.210*** (0.0226)	0.140*** (0.0117)	-0.0626 (0.159)	0.344*** (0.0114)	0.353*** (0.0124)	0.397*** (0.117)
Native Treasuries	309	309	309	309	309	309
Provinces (clusters)	42	42	42	42	42	42
R-squared	0.202	0.622	0.414	0.051	0.209	0.098
Colony FE	✓			✓		
Covariates		✓			✓	
<i>Panel B. Finance committees</i>						
	<b>DV: Finance committee</b>					
	(1)	(2)	(3)			
Solo-chief NA	-0.595*** (0.0816)	-0.537*** (0.0919)	-0.351*** (0.0824)			
Intercept	0.648*** (0.0757)	1.000*** (0.000)	1.535*** (0.243)			
Native Treasuries	399	399	399			
Provinces (clusters)	55	55	55			
R-squared	0.211	0.579	0.487			
Colony FE	✓					
Covariates		✓				

*Notes:* Models are estimated using OLS with province-clustered robust standard errors. Covariates are the same as in the preceding regression tables. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

ern Nigeria, where 79% of councils had an elite plurality and the rest were primarily popularly selected. Africans routinely played a role in determining budget estimates through finance committees, which existed in 94% of NTs in Western Nigeria and 84% in Eastern Nigeria. Reflecting the priorities of counselors with greater accountability to the local population, spending on public goods — education, medical care, and roads, which collectively averaged 32% of expenditures by NTs in each region — exceeded expenditures on salaries (15% in Eastern Nigeria and 22% in Western Nigeria). This ratio contrasted with that in Northern Nigeria, where chiefs faced fewer constraints and Native Treasuries tended to spend more on salaries than on public goods (average of 31% of all NT expenditures versus 26%).<sup>36</sup> Ikime (1969, 260) notes for the Urhobo region of Western Nigeria that “[i]t was necessary to demonstrate to the tax-payers in clear and practical

<sup>36</sup>Perham (1937, 118), discussing Northern Nigeria, remarked about “the problem of personal extravagance . . . salaries, large by African standards, especially in comparison with the practice in territories more directly ruled, are paid to the Emirs.”

ways that their money was being sensibly and profitably used. The building of roads and bridges, wells and permanent market stalls featured prominently among the various works undertaken by the different clan councils.” The discrepancies in public good provision between Southern and Northern Nigeria would have been even larger had missionaries not played such an important role in educational provision in the South.<sup>37</sup>

In Kenya, British administrators explicitly sought for Local Native Councils (LNCs) to increase the scale of local government and expand representation beyond traditional elders and “represent as large a range of relevant interests as possible” in a context of widening local fiscal powers (Hicks 1961). Across the twenty LNCs in the core provinces of Kenya — Coast, Central, Rift Valley, and Nyanza — the average composition was 61% elected members (who could not be headmen), 23% nominated headmen, and 16% other nominated members. In the South Nyanza LNC, for example, the elected members were schoolteachers, traders, and farmers (Hailey 1950a, 155).

By the mid-1930s, the LNCs were attached to distinct Native Treasuries, which also operated at the district level. LNCs gained important fiscal powers and prioritized education spending. Among all colonies, Kenya’s NTs spent the largest fraction of total expenditures on education — averaging 25%. In 1930, the commissioner of the Central Province concluded, “the demand for education is genuine and widespread [which] is proved by the large sums voted by the Local Native Councils of Fort Hall, Kiambu and Nyeri amounting to £20,000 for the establishment of ‘C’ schools and the anxiety shown by the councils to get them started” (quoted in Mambo 1981, 63). Indicating the influence of the LNCs, the survey for the South Kavirondo LNC notes that the “finance and general purposes committee deals with the estimates and hears the views of the department officers when arguing the claims of their departments for financial allocations” (Survey CO 1018/25).

Throughout the Colony and Ashanti territories in the Gold Coast, councils constrained the *Omanhene* NA chiefs. Reflecting precolonial practices, the councils were primarily comprised of elders

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<sup>37</sup>Missionaries and other private associations accounted for almost all primary schools in Southern Nigeria, 98% in the East and 96% in the West (Hailey 1951a, 101, 150). Thus, Native Treasuries spent little on education in both absolute terms (3.4% of total expenditures in East and 2.8% in West) and relative terms (4.8% in North).

who were hereditary heads of lineages.<sup>38</sup> We code traditional elites as comprising a majority on every council except that in Akim Abuakwa. There, the practice of multiple councils — which included a popularly selected element — reflected prior practices (Manoukian 1950, 45–46; Survey CO 1018/1). The Hailey surveys emphasize the degree to which councils constrained chiefs. For example, in the Kwahu Native Authority, “[i]n 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” (Survey CO 1018/10). The councils also influenced the budget-setting process. The Hailey surveys provide commentary on the budgeting process for 32 of the 76 NTs, and in all indicate some form of council involvement in setting estimates. For example, in the Mampong district, “[p]reparatory 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” (Survey CO 1018/7).

In Eastern Uganda, scaled-up councils created in the 1930s consisted of clan heads and chiefs from various levels, and also included unofficial members such as religious figures and teachers (Hailey 1950a, 32–35). These councils had the responsibility “to levy local rates and collect dues for the benefit of a Native Treasury to be maintained by them, and it is they who prepare the estimates of revenue and expenditure which, when sanctioned by the Government, provide the funds and determine the expenditure of the Native Administration” (p. 30). Reports from the Province during the 1930s reported extensive capital investments by Native Authorities. For example, in the Busoga district, the 1935 report noted that new permanent buildings included Lukiiko halls, residences for county chiefs, and a maternity center; and the creation of boreholes to supply water.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Manoukian (1950, 35–37) describes precolonial practices, and the Hailey surveys provide detailed lists of membership on the NA councils (see Appendix E for examples).

<sup>39</sup>Uganda, *Annual reports of the Provincial Commissioners on Native Administration for the year 1935* (Entebbe: 1936).

## VARIATION IN COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT

British African colonies exhibited substantial differences in the degree of socioeconomic changes under colonialism. The development of railways, the promotion of cash crops, and the spread of Christian missionaries each transformed local economies, as shown in existing research. We demonstrate that these changes affected local government institutions as well. First, commercial expansion and education constituted channels of social mobility that created new elites eager to play a role in local governance. Second, colonial administrations increasingly turned to local governments to solve fiscal dilemmas as demands for the expansion of social services like education and healthcare outstripped central government resources.

In our theory, we posit that areas with greater socioeconomic change, captured mainly by developments in railways, cash crops, missionaries, and population density, would experience more substantial reforms in the 1930s and 1940s. In Table 7, we provide multiple pieces of supporting evidence. The sample is restricted to historically decentralized areas to focus solely on places where it was more difficult for colonial administrators to construct what they perceived as an effective form of local governance. All specifications control for colony fixed effects to account for idiosyncratic differences across colonial administrations while taking advantage of the fact that these variables exhibit substantial variation within colonies (at least relative to the precolonial variables).

In Panel A, we show that across our main socioeconomic indicators, decentralized areas with higher levels of development were less likely to have a solo-chief NA and more likely to have either elites or popularly-selected members comprise a plurality on an NA council. In Panel B, we analyze our panel data that measures the year in which a council was introduced to the Native Authority. These coefficient estimates demonstrate that councils tended to be introduced later (if at all) in economically peripheral areas.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>In Appendix Table B.11, we re-run these specifications for the other socioeconomic variables used as controls in earlier tables. These correlations are mostly null, which reflects our weaker theoretical expectations that distance from the capital or coast, European alienated land, or absolute population size would affect institutional reforms.

**Table 7: Socioeconomic Development**

<i>Panel A. Cross-section</i>								
	<b>DV: Solo-chief NA</b>				<b>DV: African counselors</b>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Distance from railway	0.0594*** (0.0209)				-0.0633*** (0.0190)			
Value of cash crops		-0.0201*** (0.00708)				0.0259*** (0.00763)		
Mission in 1914			-0.153*** (0.0524)				0.207** (0.0970)	
Population density				-0.0494* (0.0256)				0.0693** (0.0312)
Intercept	-0.0258*** (0.00907)	0.139*** (0.0489)	0.153*** (0.0524)	0.148* (0.0766)	1.027*** (0.00823)	0.821*** (0.0527)	0.793*** (0.0970)	0.793*** (0.0934)
Native Treasuries	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360
Provinces (clusters)	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
R-squared	0.245	0.240	0.235	0.230	0.236	0.247	0.246	0.242
Colony FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

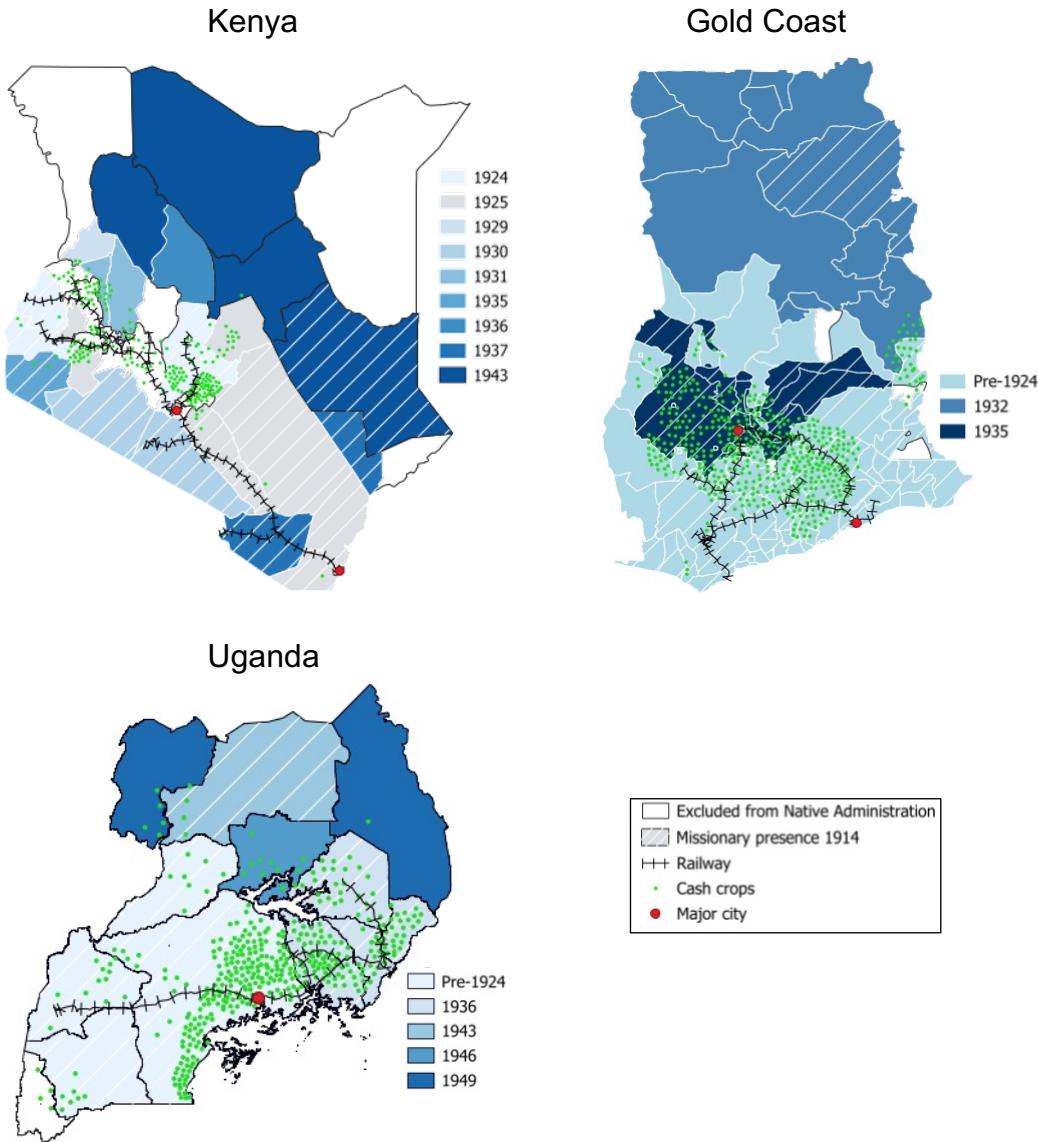
<i>Panel B. Panel data</i>								
	<b>DV: Onset of council in NA</b>							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)				
Distance from railway	-0.0176*** (0.00547)							
Value of cash crops		0.00252*** (0.000653)						
Mission in 1914			0.0505*** (0.0148)					
Population density				0.0166* (0.00839)				
Intercept	0.321* (0.177)	0.227 (0.172)	0.211 (0.173)	0.201 (0.173)				
District-years	2,575	2,575	2,575	2,575				
Districts	188	188	188	188				
Provinces (clusters)	47	47	47	47				
R-squared	0.051	0.049	0.048	0.048				
Colony FE	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Cubic polynomials	✓	✓	✓	✓				

*Notes for Panel A:* The sample contains only Native Treasury areas with decentralized precolonial institutions. The models are estimated using OLS on a cross section of NTs with province-clustered standard errors and controlling for colony FE. The African counselors DV indicates whether either elites or popularly-selected members comprised a plurality on an NA council. If we lacked information about the composition of the council, we set this variable to 0.

*Notes for Panel B:* The sample contains only districts which exclusively contain Native Treasury areas with decentralized precolonial institutions. The sample in Panel B encompasses units from fewer provinces than in Panel A because in three provinces, the only NTs with decentralized institutions were located within districts that contained another Native Treasury area which included a precolonial state. All models are estimated using OLS on an annual panel of districts between 1923 and 1949 with province-clustered standard errors and controlling for colony FE. The DV equals 0 if no NAs within the district included a council, 1 in the first year that any NA within the district gained a council, and is set to missing in years after the first. Every model controls for cubic polynomials to mimic survival models. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

The peripheral areas of Kenya, Gold Coast, and Uganda underscore the variance that yields these regression estimates. Figure 4 provides a map that highlights key development indicators and the timing of council creation, and Appendix Table C.2 presents summary stats on the development variables (disaggregated by province in these colonies).

**Figure 4: Variance in Socioeconomic Development**



*Notes:* Unit is the Native Treasury area. Lighter shades for each unit indicate an earlier year in which a council was created. Appendix A.3 provides details on the socioeconomic variables. The two cities highlighted in Kenya are Mombasa on the coast (original capital) and Nairobi in the interior (later capital). The two cities highlighted in the Gold Coast are Accra on the coast (capital of the Gold Coast Colony) and Kumasi in the interior (capital of the Ashanti Colony). The city highlighted in Uganda is Kampala (capital). Each city was a major link on the railway. See also Appendix Table C.1 for more precise details on the timing of council creation in different areas.

In Kenya, Local Native Councils (LNCs) with a majority of popularly selected members were universal within the four core provinces, but absent from the peripheral pastoral areas of the Northern and Masai provinces where councils were introduced later if at all. The main aim of railway

building in Kenya was to link Mombasa on the coast to Lake Victoria at the border with Uganda. The railway prompted the creation of Nairobi and attracted white settlement in the fertile Kenya Highlands area between Nairobi and Lake Victoria. Areas alongside the railway also became sites of major cash crop production, including coffee and tea (Jedwab, Kerby and Moradi 2017). The main rail lines ran through the four core provinces but not the Masai or Northern areas.<sup>41</sup> Colonial administrators were skeptical of introducing treasuries in the peripheral areas. For example, the 1928 Native Affairs Report said of the Northern Frontier Province: “there are no councils in this Province, and owing to widely scattered groups of diverse tribes inhabiting it, it is doubtful if it will be possible to establish any for many years to come.” Even after three NTs were introduced in the 1940s, their members were not popularly selected and their expenditures were minuscule.<sup>42</sup> Other parts were so sparsely populated that the British never established Native Treasuries (see Appendix D.1). The two Masai districts had Local Native Councils (LNCs), but these were introduced later than in the core areas of the colony and the District Officer chose all the Masai counselors.<sup>43</sup> Panel A of Figure 4 depicts the late onset of councils in the peripheral areas.

Early governance patterns in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast resembled those in Eastern Nigeria and Kenya. The British did not understand precolonial institutions and installed chiefs as executive agents of the regime, although some NA chiefs were drawn from traditional hereditary ruling dynasties.<sup>44</sup> Chiefs were “vested with powers which they had never previously held and which had no relation to the native political system” (Manoukian 1952, 64). The British presence anywhere in the Northern Territories remained scant throughout the colonial period (Nathan 2023). The North was located far from the railway, produced few cash crops, and had minimal missionary presence, as shown in Panel B of Figure 4. Reforms in the 1930s regularized the Native Authority system in the North and reconstituted almost all the NAs as chief-and-council, with traditional

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<sup>41</sup>A branch line was built to serve the Soda Ash mines at Lake Magadi in Masai territory, but “the branch lines turned out to be unprofitable” (Jedwab, Kerby and Moradi 2017, 1479; see also their Figure A4).

<sup>42</sup>Average expenditures by LNCs in the four core provinces were 40 times higher than those in the North.

<sup>43</sup>Appendix C.3 provides more details.

<sup>44</sup>Manoukian (1952, 64) discusses Dagomba, Mamprusi, and Gonja. Nathan (2023, 73) and Hailey (1951a, 258–61) additionally mention smaller states in Wala, Nanumba, and Kassena.

elites constituting the main elements of the council. However, these reforms to introduce councils were only partial; the invented chiefs retained their positions, in contrast to wholesale replacement of the original systems in Eastern Nigeria and the core parts of Kenya.

In Uganda, scaled-up councils were created sooner and more effectively in the East than the North, which reflected differential patterns of colonial development (see Panel C of Figure 4). The onset of cotton production after the turn of the century firmly incorporated the East (in particular Busoga) into the colonial economy (Nayenga 1981, 176).<sup>45</sup> These exports were facilitated by Busoga's proximity to the railway, which stretched from the Mombasa coast in Kenya to Lake Victoria and was augmented in 1910–12 to link Busoga to Buganda and other parts of the colony (p. 186). But the North was peripheral to the colonial economy (see Appendix C.5). The area was barely administered until after World War I, and early governance strategies were based on scant knowledge of the area (Barber 1968). In the mid-1930s in the Acholi district, the British attempted to use hereditary clan heads as the basis for administration. However, traditional institutions did not enable a sufficient scale of administration: “the clan heads were so numerous that their salaries made an unreasonable charge on the funds available, and an effort to amalgamate the clans still left the District with some 50 divisions” (Hailey 1950a, 61). Finally, in the 1940s, the British began to implement a system of district councils modeled on those created earlier in the Eastern Province, with the delay occurring because of lesser prior development (Hailey 1950a, 63). For example, “[u]p to 1948 it had not been found feasible to arrange for county Councils in [the West Nile] District, as it is held that the counties are too numerous and the establishment of Councils must be deferred until they are amalgamated” (Hailey 1950a, 65). Panel C of Figure 4 depicts the late onset of councils in the peripheral North.

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<sup>45</sup>In Appendix Table D.3, we list major primary-product areas in Nigeria, the Gold Coast, the Northern Rhodesian Cooperbelt, and Buganda. Busoga's cotton was the most valuable primary product in any district in British Africa outside of these areas, and in fact outproduced most divisions or districts within Nigeria and the Gold Coast.

## CONCLUSION: VARIETIES OF IMPERIAL RULE

British indirect rule in Africa was not a simple story of continuity or change. Like all imperial rulers, the British considered the loyalty and effectiveness of different possible agents. In areas with precolonial states, the choice was relatively straightforward — delegate authority to traditional institutions. In historically decentralized areas, chiefs installed early in the colonial era were loyal but largely ineffective at keeping the peace and collecting revenue, especially in the face of socioeconomic changes occurring during the interwar period. British officials responded to African pressure by creating new systems of councils that attempted to replicate, at a scaled-up level, the types of institutional constraints that pervaded precolonial Africa. Overall, across British Africa, precolonial political institutions mattered. African preferences and pressure resulted in local institutions that did not resemble the image of “decentralized despotism” often cited in the literature. We substantiate this new perspective with original data on precolonial and colonial institutions in local governance units across British Africa.

One unambiguous conclusion from this analysis is that British indirect rule did not prescribe a particular set of political institutions. We cannot understand the array of chiefs and councils that comprised the executive agents of Native Administration without recognizing how diverse precolonial institutions shaped colonial patterns. Therefore, in neither the precolonial nor the colonial era was it generally true that “the person of the chief signifies power that is total and absolute, unchecked and unrestrained” (Mamdani 1996, 54).

The picture becomes even more varied when we zoom out to consider where in Africa the British chose to implement the indirect-rule system of Native Administration. The scope conditions for our theory is areas in which the costs of more direct governance were prohibitively high. However, these conditions were not universal, as we discuss in Appendix D. Throughout the entire epoch of Western overseas colonialism, white settlers consistently agitated the metropole to govern themselves (Lee and Paine 2024). In Cape, Natal, and Southern Rhodesia, the European community was large enough to wrest control of the colonial state, and subjugated larger kingdoms such as the

Zulu and Ndebele. The European population in Kenya was much smaller, but in certain districts nearly all the land was alienated for European usage and Africans did not gain a Native Treasury. In Northern Rhodesia, Europeans monopolized the lucrative Copperbelt. Local governance institutions were undoubtedly more direct in these areas than in most of British Africa, but even the settler-dominated cases exhibit some parallels to our main cases. The settlers in southern Africa did not seek to transform political institutions outside their strongholds, and the limited authority that Europeans delegated to Africans was typically through councils rather than chiefs. This pattern changed only with the rise of hardline white supremacist governments after World War II. In the face of major latent or realized mass mobilization by the large African majority, the new regimes transformed relations in the countryside by propping up chiefs — in the style of decentralized despotism — to serve as buffers and undercut broader African political movements. But these were *highly atypical* conditions that do not generalize.

Zooming out farther still, our findings offer suggestions for the broad literatures on imperial governance, state building, and colonial legacies. Scholars often contrast the British indirect rule system enacted in Africa and India with more direct forms of rule in empires such as French Africa, Spanish America, the Portuguese on both these continents, and the Soviet Union. Some differences are easily apparent, such as the French propensity to break up larger kingdoms (Crowder 1968; Müller-Crepion 2020), the decimation of indigenous populations in the Americas and their near-replacement by Europeans and mixed-raced persons, and the forced imposition of collective agriculture in Russia and dependencies.

But our findings also suggest a return to earlier debates about the role of factor endowments in shaping the relationship between colonialism and economic development (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2001; Engerman and Sokoloff 2011). The Spanish asserted more direct imperial control in fiscally legible mineral-rich areas (Garfias and Sellars 2024), similar to the Rhodesian Copperbelt. Boone (2003) contends that differences within each of the British and French West African spheres reflected variance in cash crop production, social hierarchy, and economic auton-

omy. The French, despite stated ideals about association and assimilation, often made concessions to local accommodate conditions. Robinson (2000) concurs with Boone's conclusions by examining the substantial heterogeneity in the degree of accommodation between French administrators and marabouts in Senegal and Mauritania. As Djata (1997, 145–46) describes in the French Sudan (Mali), “the local population also participated in and influenced the administration, forcing the colonial administration to adapt to local situations regardless of their initial intentions. Furthermore, the French tended to keep intact smaller political units such as villages (p. 148). In places such as Morocco, the French preserved and governed through pre-existing kingdoms, leading Bidwell (1973, 10) to highlight the similarities between French administrators there and Frederick Lugard.

Like the shortcomings we highlighted up front about existing work on British Africa, these valuable observations about individual cases do not yield a general conclusion; instead, the interpretation depends on the sample one uses. More broadly focused work, moreover, focuses primarily on differences in metropolitan ideologies. Compiling more detailed information on local governance institutions is essential to understanding how the interaction between metropolitan goals and indigenous institutions shaped patterns of colonial governance beyond British Africa.

Finally, our approach suggests new directions for understanding colonial legacies. Various forms of states led by hereditary ruling classes and small-scale direct democracies pervaded the globe before the Western invasion. Although much work focuses on the persistence (or not) of the pre-colonial states under colonial rule, considerably less research connects the early direct democracies to contemporary regimes (exceptions include Bentzen, Hariri and Robinson 2019 and Stasavage 2020). One observation that arises from the present analysis is the difficulty of scaling up to the national level traditional constraints on local rulers that worked effectively at the local level — particularly because of their heterogeneity. For example, in Nigeria, the methods of accountability differed among the Yoruba, Tiv, and Igbo; in fact, different parts of Igboland had different mechanisms of accountability and constraint. And 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 national institutions that would impose accountability and constraints enabled many postcolonial rulers to discard executive constraints. 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. This alternative agrees in a sense with some existing work, yet is steeped in our observation about the prevalence of executive constraints at the local level in precolonial and colonial Africa. Perhaps the roots of postcolonial authoritarian regimes in Africa are largely centralized rather than decentralized, a vital avenue for future research.

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# Appendix for *Councils and Indirect Rule in British Africa*

In Appendix A, we provide supporting information for our data. In Appendix B, we provide summary statistics and supplemental regression tables. In Appendix C, we present qualitative evidence that augments the material in the article and explains how we measured when councils were introduced in each locality. In Appendix D, we discuss areas of British Africa excluded from Native Administration, both districts within colonies in our statistical sample and additional colonies (South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Sierra Leone). In Appendix E, we present excerpts from our lengthy codebook.

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## A DATA APPENDIX

### A.1 PRECOLONIAL INSTITUTIONS

For coding precolonial institutions, our main innovation is to code constraints on the ruler for each precolonial state in our data set. This process proceeded three steps. 1. Compiled a list of precolonial states. 2. Coded whether each precolonial state had meaningful executive constraints. 3. Matched precolonial states with Native Treasuries.

**Step 1: Distinguishing states from decentralized areas.** We built upon a recent data set of precolonial African states from Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2025), 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 (2025) 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 (2019a), in addition to numerous country-specific monographs. Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2025) also provide detail on how their data set differs from and improves upon the widely used data set of ethnic-group institutions from Murdock (1959, 1967).

We include every state from the list in Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2025). We also add states in two regions for which the maps in Ajayi and Crowder (1985) are not sufficiently precise. In total, we identify 58 distinct states.

1. 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.
2. Ajayi and Crowder (1985) do not disaggregate the constituent components of the enormous and highly decentralized Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria. We therefore consulted additional sources to identify distinct states and dynasties within its geographical confines, primarily the detailed maps in Johnston (1970, Map 2) and Smaldone (1977, 55), the detailed overview of each emirate in Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1966), and supporting details from Adeleye (1971). The Caliphate was formed in the early nineteenth century by a Fulani jihad that initially conquered numerous historical Hausa states in what later became Northern Nigeria, and also expanded farther east and south to incorporate many previously decentralized peoples into the empire. There were eighteen distinct emirates, three of which had subemirates of their own (seven total).<sup>1</sup> And despite the Fulani conquests in Hausaland, many of the original ruling dynasties survived (often fighting Sokoto emirates throughout the nineteenth century). To create a denominator for the ruling dynasties, we considered only

---

<sup>1</sup>We group an additional subemirate depicted in the maps, Pategi, as part of the Nupe emirate. Pategi was not territorially separated until British intervention in 1898, which resulted in a member of the pre-Fulani Nupe dynasty gaining the title of emir.

the set of original Hausa states, including the seven Hausa Bakwai and the seven Banza Bakwai listed in Hogben and Kirk-Greene (1966, 82). For each, we used the detailed narratives from this source to determine which Hausa dynasties existed and governed a statelike entity upon British conquests at the turn of the twentieth century: Daura (fled to Zango to resist the Daura emirate), Zazzau (fled to Abuja to resist the Zaria emirate), Kebbi (migrated to Argungu to resist the Gwandu emirate), Zamfara (migrated to Anka and peacefully submitted to Sokoto suzerainty), Yauri (migrated to Yelwa and peacefully submitted to the suzerainty of the Gwandu emirate), and Nupe (resided in the new capital Bida of the Nupe emirate, usually peacefully).<sup>2</sup>

**Step 2: Coding institutional constraints on rulers.** Given our list of precolonial states, we coded an original dichotomous variable for whether the ruler of each precolonial state was authoritarian 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. In Appendix E.1, we provide excerpts from our codebook.

1. **Relationship vis-à-vis a council.** To determine whether the ruler was constrained by an effective council, we sought to answer the following types of questions using our sources, with affirmative answers indicating an effective 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 ruler'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.

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<sup>2</sup>Several met this criterion but were ultimately incorporated into French Niger rather than British Nigeria: Gobir, who fled to Tibiri; and the Habe Katsina dynasty (not to be confused with the Fulani Katsina dynasty that replaced it), who fled to Maradi.

- **Legislative vs. judicial constraints.** Our main coding criterion takes into account 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 authoritarian.

**Step 3: Matching precolonial states with Native Treasuries.** It was straightforward to match each precolonial state with a Native Treasury (see Table A.1) because of the high overlap in names. Essentially all of the 58 precolonial states in our dataset had a Treasury named for it (the exception was that Zamfara was incorporated into the Sokoto NT). Using the spatial polygons for precolonial states from Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Huguet (2025) and information on the (last) capital (data mostly from Stewart 2006), we additionally verified that each precolonial state and the corresponding NT aligned geographically. Among the precolonial states with named treasuries, for all but two we code a one-to-one correspondence between the precolonial state and the Native Treasury. The exceptions are the Asante state, which we link to all 29 Treasuries 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 were largely independent political entities within the precolonial system of Borgu states (Crowder 1973). In sum, we code 86 NTs (out of 458 total) in our dataset as having a precolonial state.

**Table A.1: Matching Precolonial States with Native Treasuries**

State	Province	District	Native Treasury
Nigeria (Western Provinces)			
<i>Egba (Abeokuta)</i>	Abeokuta	Egba	Egba
<b>Benin</b>	Benin	Benin	Benin
<i>Ijebu</i>	Ijebu	Ijebu	Ijebu
<i>Ibadan</i>	Oyo	Ibadan	Ibadan
<i>Ife</i>	Oyo	Ife	Ife
<i>Oyo</i>	Oyo	Oyo	Oyo
Nigeria (Northern Provinces)			
<b>Adamawa</b>	Adamawa	Adamawa	Adamawa
<b>Muri</b>	Adamawa	Muri	Muri
<b>Bauchi</b>	Bauchi	Bauchi	Bauchi
<b>Gombe</b>	Bauchi	Gombe	Gombe
<b>Jemaari</b>	Bauchi	Katagum	Jamari
<b>Katagum</b>	Bauchi	Katagum	Katagum
<b>Misau</b>	Bauchi	Katagum	Misau
<b>Lafia</b>	Benue	Lafia	Lafia
<b>Keffi</b>	Benue	Nasarawa	Keffi
<b>Nasarawa</b>	Benue	Nasarawa	Nasarawa
Bornu	Bornu	Bornu	Bornu
Dikwa	Bornu	Dikwa	Dikwa
<i>Borgu</i>	Ilorin	Borgu	Bussa, Kaiama
<b>Ilorin</b>	Ilorin	Ilorin	Ilorin
<b>Lafiagi</b>	Ilorin	Pategi-Lafiagi	Lafiagi
<b>Pategi</b>	Ilorin	Pategi-Lafiagi	Pategi
<i>Igala</i>	Kabba	Igala	Igala
<b>Kano</b>	Kano	Kano	Kano
<b>Kazaure</b>	Kano	Kano	Kazaure
<b>Hadejia</b>	Kano	Northern	Hadejia
<b>Daura</b>	Katsina	Katsina	Daura
<b>Katsina</b>	Katsina	Katsina	Katsina
<i>Abuja</i>	Niger	Abuja	Abuja
<b>Lapai</b>	Niger	Abuja	Lapai
<b>Agaie</b>	Niger	Bida	Agaie
<b>Nupe (Bida)</b>	Niger	Bida	Bida
<b>Kontagora</b>	Niger	Kontagora	Kontagora
<b>Jema'a</b>	Plateau	Jemaa	Jemaa
<i>Argungu (Kebbi)</i>	Sokoto	Argungu	Argungu
<b>Gwandu</b>	Sokoto	Gwandu	Gwandu
<i>Yauri</i>	Sokoto	Gwandu	Yauri
<b>Sokoto</b>	Sokoto	Sokoto	Sokoto
<i>Zamfara</i>	Sokoto	Sokoto	Sokoto
<b>Zaria</b>	Zaria	Zaria	Zaria

*Italics:* Constrained precolonial state.

**Bold:** Emirate or subemirate within the Sokoto Caliphate.

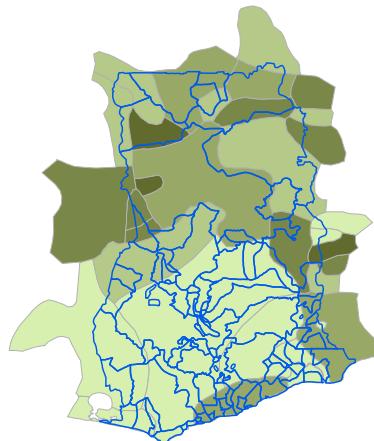
**Table A.1, continued**

State	Province	District	Native Treasury
<u>Basutoland (Lesotho)</u>			
<i>Basuto</i>	n/a	n/a	National
<u>Bechuanaland (Botswana)</u>			
<i>Malete</i>	n/a	Gaberones	Malete
<i>Tlokwa</i>	n/a	Gaberones	Tlokwa
<i>Kgatla</i>	n/a	Kgatleng	Kgatla
<i>Kwena</i>	n/a	Kweneng	Kwena
<i>Rolong</i>	n/a	Lobatsi	Barolong
<i>Tawana</i>	n/a	Ngamiland	Tawana
<i>Ngwaketse</i>	n/a	Ngwaketse	Ngwaketse
<i>Ngwato</i>	n/a	Ngwato	Ngwato
<u>Gold Coast (Ghana)</u>			
<i>Asante</i>	Ashanti	Multiple	29 NTs in Ashanti Colony
<i>Dagomba</i>	Northern	Dagomba	Dagomba
<u>Northern Rhodesia (Zambia)</u>			
<i>Barotse</i>	Barotse	Barotse	Barotse
<i>Bemba</i>	Northern	Kasama	Chitimukulu & Bemba
<i>Kazembe</i>	Western	Kawambwa	Kasembe & Lunda
<u>Swaziland (Eswatini)</u>			
<i>Swaziland</i>	n/a	n/a	National
<u>Uganda</u>			
Buganda	Buganda	Buganda	Buganda
Nkore	Western	Ankole	Ankole
Bunyoro	Western	Bunyoro	Bunyoro

*Italics:* Constrained precolonial state.

**Illustrating differences from Murdock.** In the article, we discussed important differences between our measure and Murdock. In Figure A.1, we illustrate these discrepancies for Ghana.

**Figure A.1: Native Treasuries and Murdock Ethnic Groups in Ghana**



*Notes:* Murdock ethnic groups in green and Native Treasury borders in blue.

## A.2 DIGITIZED MAPS

For the Gold Coast, Kenya, Nigeria, and Nyasaland, we use digitized maps of Native Treasuries from Bolt and Gardner (2020). In two cases, however, we improved on the previously digitized maps to expand their coverage. For Nigeria, the source maps did not provide an explicit boundary for 46 of the 201 NTs listed in Hailey. For the Gold Coast, this was true for 11 of 86 NTs. For each of these cases with a missing map, we identified a town or area with the same name as the NT and that was located within the same district as the NT. Where necessary, we confirmed the location using contemporary references such as Google Maps and Wikipedia. For these NTs, we geocoded a point and constructed a standardized buffer polygon around it. These polygons were then used in the calculation of the spatial covariates (see Appendix A.3 for details).

For all other colonies, we digitized several colonial maps which covered every Native Treasury. In Lesotho and Swaziland, a single NT covered the entire colony and thus more detailed source maps were not needed. We sourced our maps from several archives, listed below.

- Bechuanaland: Map of Bechuanaland Protectorate from Makgala (2004) and Map of Bechuanaland Protectorate showing the Crown Lands and the Ngwato Reserve from Hitchcock et al. (2017).
- Gold Coast: “Native States.” 1946, British Library 65356 (19).
- Kenya: “Map of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Showing District Boundaries and Provinces.” 1936. U.K. National Archives CO 533/470/1.
- Nigeria (all): “Regional, Provincial & Divisional Map,” British Library 4000/413/5-53.
- Nigeria (Eastern): “Local Government,” Royal Geographic Society – Nigeria, Div. 34.
- Nigeria (Western): Provincial Maps, Bodleian Library (Abeokuta E39:10(1), Benin E39:13(2), Ijebu E39:19(1), Ondo E39:26(1), Oyo E39:29(2), Warri E39.34(1)).
- Nigeria (Northern): “Native Authority Areas,” Bodleian Library E39:1(22).
- 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.
- Nyasaland: “British Central Africa 1906,” Royal Geographical Society – Malawi G.11.
- 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.
- Uganda: “Uganda Counties 1959,” attributed to Dr. J.B. Kabera, Department of Geography, Makerere University.

### A.3 SOCIOECONOMIC VARIABLES

- **Population and population density.** We compiled population estimates at the district level using the Hailey volumes and censuses from the late 1940s and early 1950s (although in Northern Nigeria, the census had information at the level of individual emirates, which we used). Where the Native Treasury was synonymous with an entire district, we directly used the district-level estimate for our NT unit. For districts containing multiple NTs, we assumed population density was constant throughout the district and therefore assigned population values in proportion to the area of each NT.

For area (measured in square kilometers), for almost every NT for which we digitized a polygon, we used our digitized polygon to compute area. The structure of the Native Reserves in Bechuanaland was somewhat distinct from the district-level maps we used, and therefore we used the area of the Native Reserve reported in Hailey (1953).

As noted above, we digitized points for certain NTs in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. In Native Treasury areas that included such points, we split the total areas of the polygon across each NT (hence estimating the point-NTs to be identical in size to the polygon-NTs). For example, if we had a map for Treasury A that was 100km<sup>2</sup> and we geolocated Treasury B to a point within that map, we would estimate that both NTs had an area of 50km<sup>2</sup>.

- **Value of cash crop exports.** We 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, and thus we estimate the value of cash crops per NT by the number of dots times this multiplier. When taking the log, we add \$1,000 to each observation because of the many NTs with zero points in the Hance et al. map.
- **Land alienated for Europeans.** For districts with a substantial European presence, the Hailey books provide information on the percentage of land area alienated for European use. The volumes are less precise for Kenya (an important case of white settlement), so we drew this variable from the 1931 census. For the entire sample, we assume every NT within each district had the same value of the variable. We assume the 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 QGIS to calculate the straight-line (Euclidean) distance between the centroid of the NT and specified features: nearest railway, capital city, nearest point on the coast. Data on capital cities from colonial Blue Books and data on railroads from Jedwab, Kerby and Moradi (2017).
- **Mission station.** The binary variable indicates whether a mission was located within the area of the NT as of 1914, using data from the Blue Books, the Ecclesiastical return section. This information is missing for two colonies not yet under British crown rule (Northern Rhodesia – British South African Company, Tanganyika – German East Africa) and Lesotho. For these colonies, we imputed values from the map by Roome (1925), previously used in and digitized by Nunn (2010), based on regressing our missions data on the Roome data for the entire sample.

## A.4 EXPENDITURES

Data on spending by Native Treasuries was not reported consistently or in the same format across all colonial governments. Often, as in the Hailey volumes (Hailey 1950a,b, 1951a,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 availability constraints we were unable 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 usable format. Reports for 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. Similarly, Nyasaland did not report spending on roads, one component of our public goods variable. Therefore, we excluded expenditures from either Northern Rhodesia or Nyasaland.

Sources:

- Ghana: Gold Coast, *Report on Local Government Finance* (Accra, 1952).
- Kenya: Kenya, *Report on Native Affairs 1946-7* (Nairobi, 1947).
- 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.

## B ADDITIONAL TABLES

### B.1 SUMMARY STATISTICS

**Table B.1: Summary Statistics: Precolonial Institutions**

Colony	# NTs	Authoritarian state	Constrained state	Decentralized
Nigeria	201	0.14	0.06	0.80
Eastern	94	0.00	0.00	1.00
Northern	59	0.47	0.10	0.42
Western	39	0.00	0.15	0.85
Colony	9	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	25	0.00	0.00	1.00
Nyasaland	16	0.00	0.00	1.00
Uganda	12	0.25	0.00	0.75
Gambia	12	0.00	0.00	1.00
Bechuanaland	9	0.00	0.89	0.11
Lesotho	1	0.00	1.00	0.00
Swaziland	1	0.00	1.00	0.00
<b>Averages</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>0.81</b>

*Notes:* The cells in the table present the fraction of Native Treasuries (disaggregated by colony) with each of the three types of precolonial political institutions: authoritarian state, constrained state, or decentralized.

**Table B.2: Summary Statistics: Native Authority Institutions**

Colony	# NTs	NAs per NT	Solo chief	Chief & council	Council only	Federal council
Nigeria	201	1.9	0.24	0.15	0.61	0.00
Eastern	94	2.1	0.02	0.02	0.96	0.00
Northern	59	2.0	0.78	0.11	0.11	0.00
Western	39	1.5	0.00	0.56	0.44	0.00
Colony	9	1.3	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00
Gold Coast	87	1.0	0.01	0.83	0.16	0.00
Tanganyika	52	7.1	0.36	0.04	0.14	0.46
N. Rhodesia	42	1.0	0.00	0.76	0.24	0.00
Kenya	25	15.6	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.88
Nyasaland	16	6.5	0.55	0.00	0.01	0.44
Uganda	12	5.3	0.00	0.33	0.67	0.00
Gambia	12	1.0	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Bechuanaland	9	1.0	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Lesotho	1	1.0	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Swaziland	1	1.0	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Authoritarian state	31	1.2	0.90	0.10	0.00	0.00
Constrained state	55	1.0	0.09	0.91	0.00	0.00
Decentralized	372	3.7	0.12	0.30	0.41	0.16
<b>Averages</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.13</b>

*Note 1:* For each colony, the cells in the table present numbers that are nearly equivalent to the fraction of Native Treasuries with either of the four primary types of Native Authority institutions: solo chief, chief and council, council only, federal council. Recall, though, that some NTs contained multiple NAs. To compute the value of the NA institutions variable for our analysis, we compute the average of the four categories. Therefore, for any NT with variance in the institutional structure of its constituent NAs, the institutional variables measured at the level of the NT are not indicator variables. However, because this was true of so few NTs, the numbers in the tables are nearly equivalent to fractions computed over indicator variables.

*Note 2:* For NTs with a federal council, the entire NT is denoted as a federal council regardless of the institutional structure of its lower-level NAs. However, for the column *NAs per NT*, we count every lower-level NA within each federal-council NT.

*Note 3:* A small number of NAs were a confederacy of chiefs. We count these as council-only NAs because no chief was individually recognized as an NA. In four instances, the District Officer was the Native Authority. For three, there were other NAs within the NT, and we calculate the fraction of each type of NA while ignoring the District Officer NAs. For the Kigezi treasury in Uganda, the District Officer was the only NA, and we drop this NT from the data set.

**Table B.3: Summary Statistics: Socioeconomic Variables**

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Population	446	127K	229K	240	2.88M
Population (log)	446	10.93	1.42	5.48	14.87
Population density	446	49.7	67.6	0.2	503.7
Population density (log)	446	3.02	1.50	-1.53	6.22
Value of cash crops	446	\$1.48M	\$4.27M	\$0	\$64.5M
Value of cash crops (log)	446	-0.14	2.02	-2.30	5.41
European alienated land	446	5%	12%	0%	83%
European alienated land (log)	446	0.62	1.24	0.00	4.43
Distance from railway	446	99km	100km	0.5km	502km
Distance from railway (log)	446	4.00	1.28	-0.79	6.22
Distance from capital	446	391km	244km	2km	1,281km
Distance from capital (log)	446	5.71	0.83	0.81	7.16
Distance from coast	446	356km	321km	0.4km	1,178km
Distance from coast (log)	446	5.24	1.38	-0.92	7.07
Missionary station in 1914 (binary)	446	0.55	0.48	0	1

*Notes:* These variables encompass our entire sample, excepting the 12 NTs in the Gambia. We used the logged values in the regressions but additionally summarize the non-transformed values here to facilitate a clearer interpretation of their magnitude. The unit for population density is people per square kilometer.

**Table B.4: Summary Statistics: Composition of Councils**

Colony	# NTs	Elites (hereditary)		Elites (non-hered.)		Popular		Chief appointed		British appointed	
		Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality	Any	Plurality
Nigeria	183	0.33	0.27	0.40	0.23	0.73	0.41	0.09	0.09	0.02	0.00
Eastern	84	0.08	0.00	0.62	0.35	1.00	0.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Northern	51	0.59	0.59	0.02	0.02	0.20	0.06	0.33	0.33	0.02	0.00
Western	39	0.59	0.49	0.33	0.31	0.79	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00
Colony	9	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Gold Coast	86	0.99	0.98	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.00
Tanganyika	32	0.59	0.53	0.03	0.03	0.28	0.19	0.19	0.13	0.19	0.13
N. Rhodesia	42	0.79	0.79	0.05	0.00	0.14	0.02	0.76	0.19	0.00	0.00
Kenya	22	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.91	0.73	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.27
Nyasaland	13	0.69	0.69	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.46	0.31	0.00	0.00
Uganda	12	0.08	0.00	0.92	0.25	0.92	0.67	0.33	0.08	0.67	0.00
Bechuanaland	9	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Lesotho	1	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Swaziland	1	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Averages</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.09</b>	<b>0.10</b>	<b>0.02</b>

*Notes:* The table reports the composition of councils in terms of how its members were selected, disaggregated by colony and averaged across NTs. Our sample of councils includes not only councils included as part of the Native Authority, but also advisory councils (e.g., the Emir of Kano had a traditionally constituted council but the Emir was legally recognized as the sole Native Authority). 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 Appendix Table B.2 either because some NAs lacked any council (even advisory) or we lack information about its composition.

**Table B.5: Summary Statistics: Native Treasury Expenditures**

Colony	#NTs	Admin	Education	Medical	Roads	All PGs
Nigeria	155	22.8%	3.8%	8.1%	17.9%	29.8%
Eastern	64	15.4%	3.4%	9.2%	19.7%	32.3%
Northern	59	31.5%	4.8%	6.4%	14.8%	26.0%
Western	32	21.6%	2.8%	9.0%	20.2%	32.0%
Gold Coast	83	14.0%	18.7%	8.0%	8.6%	35.3%
Tanganyika	47	51.8%	15.7%	10.2%	4.0%	29.9%
Kenya	24	24.9%	25.8%	12.7%	11.1%	49.6%
NA with council	240	21.1%	11.9%	9.2%	13.2%	34.3%
NA without council	69	38.7%	9.2%	7.1%	11.4%	27.7%
<b>Averages</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>32.9%</b>

*Notes:* The cells in the table present the average fraction of expenditures on the specified item (with “All PGs,” or public goods, constituting the sum of the preceding three columns), disaggregated by colony or type of NA institutions.

**Table B.6: Summary Statistics: Finance Committees**

Colony	#NTs	Finance committee
Nigeria	170	61.8%
Eastern	70	84.3%
Northern	57	8.8%
Western	34	94.1%
Colony	9	100%
Gold Coast	86	88.4%
Tanganyika	52	1.9%
Northern Rhodesia	41	0%
Kenya	23	73.9%
Nyasaland	15	13.3%
Uganda	5	100%
Bechuanaland	5	100%
Lesotho	1	100%
Swaziland	1	100%
NA with council	320	64.7%
NA without council	79	7.6%
<b>Averages</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>53.4%</b>

*Notes:* The cells in the table present the fraction of Native Treasuries with a finance committee, disaggregated by colony or type of NA institutions.

## B.2 ROBUSTNESS CHECKS FOR TABLE 3

**Alternative models, units, and measures.** The following table provides various robustness checks for Table 3.

- Panel A. Logit models. These models are estimated using a logit link, rather than the linear link used in the main models. To make the dependent variables binary, for each NT, we score the solo-chief, chief-and-council, and council-only NAs as 1/0 each depending on which type is the plurality within the NT (which changes the value of the DV for NTs with multiple NAs that vary in their type).
- Panel B. Province as unit of analysis. We change the unit of analysis from NTs to provinces. Each variable is an average over the values for every NT within the province.
- Panel C. Standard errors clustered by ethnic group. We assigned each Native Treasury to an ethnic group by merging our digitized map of Native Treasuries with the widely used map of Murdock ethnic groups (Murdock 1959) (digitized by Nunn 2008), matching each NT area with the plurality ethnic group in the area. In Panel C, the specifications are identical to those in Table 3 except now the standard errors are clustered by ethnic group.
- Panel D. Alternative reference category for precolonial institutions. In Columns 1–3 of Table 3, authoritarian state is the reference category, which enables showing that both of the other two types of precolonial institutions were differentiated in their propensity to have solo-chief NAs; and constrained state is the reference category in Columns 4–6, which enables showing an analogous relationship for chief-and-council NAs. Here we change the reference category to historically decentralized areas in all columns, which enables recovering other patterns suggested by Table 2: constrained states were not statistically differentiated from decentralized areas in their propensity to have solo-chief NAs, and authoritarian states were not statistically differentiated from decentralized areas in their propensity to have chief-and-council NAs.
- Panel E. Alternative measure of Native Authority institutions. In this panel, we classify federal-council NAs as chief-and-council NAs (as opposed to council-only NAs in our main specifications). We re-estimate Columns 4–6 of Table 3, the models for which this recoding alters values of the DV.

**Table B.7: Alternative Models, Units, and Measures**

<i>Panel A. Logit models</i>						
	<b>DV: Solo-chief NA</b>			<b>DV: Chief-and-council NA</b>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Decentralized	-4.051*** (0.861)	-18.56*** (0.487)	-3.559*** (0.926)	-3.094*** (0.908)	-2.402*** (0.714)	-3.538*** (0.959)
Constrained state	-4.536*** (1.102)	-17.16*** (0.741)	-4.278*** (0.993)			
Authoritarian state				-4.536*** (1.102)	-3.061*** (0.843)	-3.608*** (1.132)
Intercept	2.234*** (0.823)	18.09*** (0.729)	-1.427 (2.659)	2.303*** (0.861)	3.479*** (1.030)	3.185 (2.318)
Native Treasuries	458	381	446	458	394	446
Provinces (clusters)	60	46	59	60	57	59
Colony FE	✓			✓		
Covariates		✓			✓	
<i>Panel B. Province as unit of analysis</i>						
	<b>DV: Solo-chief NA</b>			<b>DV: Chief-and-council NA</b>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Decentralized	-0.783*** (0.207)	-0.911*** (0.153)	-0.656*** (0.160)	-0.788*** (0.0921)	-0.547** (0.215)	-0.746*** (0.121)
Constrained state	-0.908*** (0.204)	-0.883*** (0.164)	-0.757*** (0.196)			
Authoritarian state				-0.876*** (0.201)	-0.609** (0.278)	-0.435** (0.215)
Intercept	0.957*** (0.194)	0.886*** (0.159)	0.279 (0.477)	1.014*** (0.0738)	1.061*** (0.0238)	1.072** (0.472)
Provinces (clusters)	60	60	59	60	60	59
R-squared	0.357	0.592	0.571	0.324	0.651	0.572
Colony FE	✓			✓		
Covariates		✓			✓	
<i>Panel C. Standard errors clustered by ethnic group</i>						
	<b>DV: Solo-chief NA</b>			<b>DV: Chief-and-council NA</b>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Decentralized	-0.774*** (0.0637)	-0.814*** (0.0559)	-0.628*** (0.0652)	-0.633*** (0.0779)	-0.313*** (0.0701)	-0.599*** (0.0755)
Constrained state	-0.812*** (0.0807)	-0.718*** (0.0854)	-0.657*** (0.0830)			
Authoritarian state				-0.812*** (0.0807)	-0.375*** (0.0931)	-0.566*** (0.0982)
Intercept	0.903*** (0.0576)	0.729*** (0.0807)	0.534** (0.218)	0.909*** (0.0581)	1.035*** (0.0353)	1.017*** (0.339)
Native Treasuries	446	446	446	446	446	446
Ethnic groups (clusters)	178	178	178	178	178	178
R-squared	0.280	0.430	0.407	0.214	0.539	0.398
Colony FE	✓			✓		
Covariates		✓			✓	

*Notes:* Table continued on the next page.

**Table B.7, continued**

<i>Panel D. Alternative reference category for precolonial institutions</i>						
	<b>DV: Solo-chief NA</b>			<b>DV: Chief-and-council NA</b>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Authoritarian state	0.778*** (0.0787)	0.814*** (0.0593)	0.628*** (0.0829)	-0.202** (0.0979)	-0.0618 (0.0707)	0.0329 (0.0853)
Constrained state	-0.0341 (0.0798)	0.0955 (0.0814)	-0.0282 (0.0647)	0.610*** (0.0972)	0.313*** (0.0803)	0.599*** (0.0927)
Intercept	0.125*** (0.0358)	-0.0849 (0.0724)	-0.0939 (0.241)	0.299*** (0.0686)	0.722*** (0.0714)	0.419 (0.337)
Native Treasuries	458	458	446	458	458	446
Provinces (clusters)	60	60	59	60	60	59
R-squared	0.281	0.433	0.407	0.193	0.561	0.398
Colony FE	✓				✓	
Covariates		✓				✓
<i>Panel E. Alternative measure of Native Authority institutions</i>						
	<b>DV: Chief-and-council NA (alt.)</b>					
	(4)	(5)	(6)			
Decentralized		-0.613*** (0.0973)	-0.313*** (0.0803)	-0.603*** (0.0920)		
Authoritarian state		-0.812*** (0.0938)	-0.375*** (0.106)	-0.565*** (0.110)		
Intercept		0.909*** (0.0713)	1.035*** (0.00892)	0.975*** (0.308)		
Native Treasuries		458	458	446		
Provinces (clusters)		60	60	59		
R-squared		0.195	0.569	0.408		
Colony FE		✓				
Covariates				✓		

*Notes:* All models estimate province-clustered robust standard errors (except Panel C, which uses ethnic group-clustered standard errors). The preceding text describes each panel. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Sensitivity of Table 3 to unobserved covariates.** Table B.8 encompasses 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. We use this metric to assess the coefficient estimates for the precolonial institutions variables from Table 3, comparing the specifications with covariates to the baseline specifications (therefore comparing Columns 2 and 3 to Column 1, and Columns 5 and 6 to Column 4). Reasonably large positive numbers, as well as negative numbers (denoted as “neg.” in the table), indicate highly robust results (Altonji et al. themselves interpret a score of around 3 on their sensitivity metric as highly robust).

All the coefficient estimates are highly robust except for those in Column 5, which are somewhat more sensitive. Because this model includes colony FE, this tells us that cross-colony comparisons account for roughly half of the magnitude of the covariance between precolonial institutions and chief-and-council NAs. Nonetheless, even after controlling for colony FE, the distinction of areas with constrained precolonial states remains reasonably large in magnitude and statistically significant (as shown in Table 3), and the present sensitivity analysis informs us that unobservables would need to explain the same amount of covariance (hence the sensitivity estimate of 1) as controlling for colony FE to drive the coefficient estimate to 0.

**Table B.8: Sensitivity to Unobserved Covariates**

	Column in Table 3			
	(2)	(3)	(5)	(6)
Decentralized	neg.	4.3	1.0	17.3
Constrained state	7.6	4.2		
Authoritarian state			0.9	2.3

**Magnitude of coefficient estimates over time.** Using our district-level data on the timing of council creation, we can examine how the correlation between precolonial institutions and the presence of councils within a Native Authority changed over time. The following regression model interacts year with precolonial institutions. The main takeaway is that the coefficient estimate for both interaction terms is positive and statistically significant, therefore establishing that the coefficient estimate for each of decentralized institutions and constrained states (each compared to authoritarian states) increased over time. In the accompanying marginal effects plot, we show that decentralized areas became significantly distinguished from authoritarian states in the early 1930s, as reforms became widespread. The time trend is also positive, but flatter, for constrained states, which had a higher prevalence of councils at the beginning of the interwar period. This confirms the patterns depicted in Figure 1.

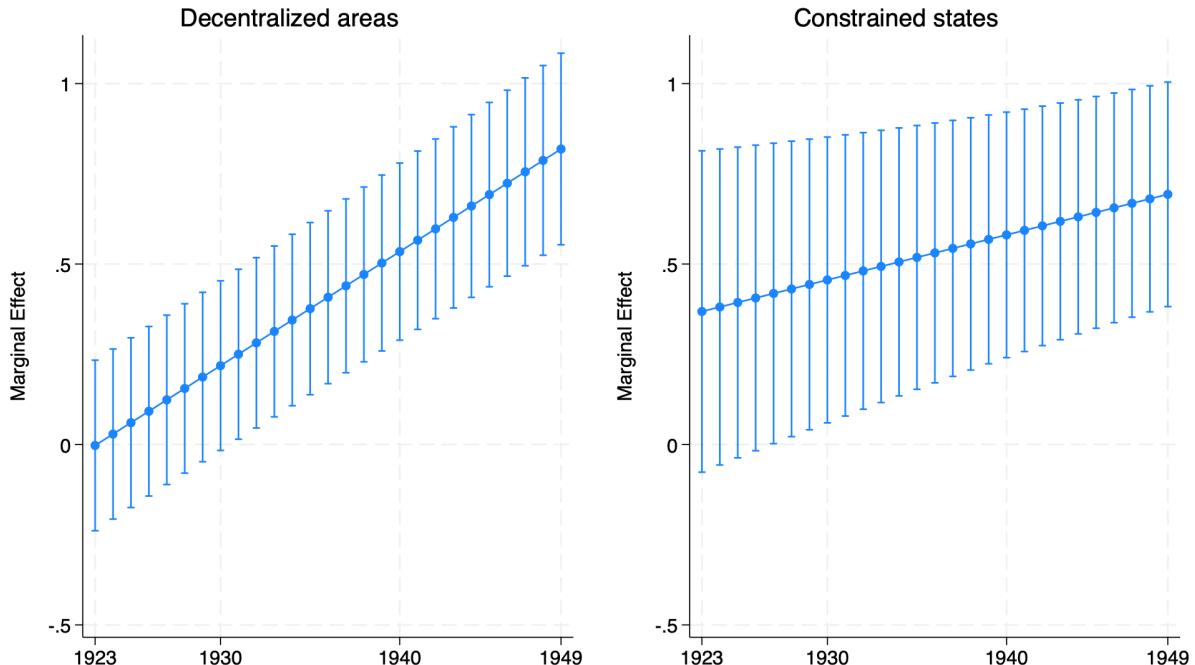
**Table B.9: Changes in Marginal Effect Estimates Over Time**

<b>DV: Council in district</b>	
	(1)
Decentralized*Year	0.822*** (0.0757)
Constrained state*Year	0.325** (0.134)
Decentralized	-0.00271 (0.118)
Constrained state	0.369 (0.222)
Year	-0.0468* (0.0242)
Intercept	0.134 (0.109)
District-years	6,426
Districts	238
Provinces (clusters)	59
R-squared	0.233

*Notes:* All models estimate province-clustered robust standard errors. The dependent variable equals 1 if a council is present in the specified district and year, and 0 otherwise. To improve interpretation, we use a transformed version of year that equals what fraction of years between 1923 and 1949 has elapsed in each year,  $\frac{\text{year}-1923}{1949-1923}$ .

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Figure B.1: Changes in Marginal Effect Estimates Over Time**



*Notes:* These plots are generated from the preceding regression model, although using the raw year.

### B.3 ADDITIONAL REGRESSION TABLES

**Regression table for composition of councils.** The following presents a regression table that corresponds with the cross-tabulations from Table 5. Each triplet of columns analyzes a different dependent variable. Most indicate whether a plurality of members on the council were of the specified type: hereditary elites in Columns 1–3, non-hereditary elites or popularly selected in Columns 4–6, and appointed by the Native Authority chief in Columns 7–9. In Columns 10–12, we instead use a variable for *any* British-appointed members because there are so few councils in which British-appointed members comprised a *plurality*. For each DV, the series of specifications follows those in the preceding tables.

For most types of counselors, our clearest expectations are for decentralized areas. The weakness of traditional hereditary authority figures should yield relatively few hereditary elites or chief-appointed members. By contrast, we would expect more popularly selected and non-hereditary elites (two types of individuals who lack hereditary status and are not beholden to the colonial administration) but also more British-appointed members (to make up for the absence of other possible options in certain areas). Thus, most columns estimate DECENTRALIZED, leaving NTs with a precolonial state as the omitted reference category. The exception is that for chief-appointed members, we anticipate differences among precolonial states, depending on whether the ruler was autocratic or constrained. The stronger prerogatives of chiefs descending from authoritarian precolonial states should yield more chief-appointed members than elsewhere. Hence, in Columns 7–9, we estimate AUTHORITARIAN STATE.

The two distinctions that are largest in magnitude and robustly statistically significant are (a) decentralized areas had a higher frequency of councils with a plurality of either popularly selected members or non-hereditary elites than areas with a precolonial state, and (b) areas with authoritarian precolonial states had a higher frequency of councils with a plurality of NA chief-selected members than other areas. Decentralized areas also tended to have fewer elite-plurality councils and more councils with any members chosen by a District Officer or District Commissioner, although these differences are smaller in magnitude and not robustly statistically significant.

**Table B.10: Precolonial Institutions and Composition of Councils**

	DV: Elite (plurality)			DV: Popular/non-hered. elite (pl.)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Decentralized	-0.201 (0.180)	-0.185** (0.0842)	-0.226 (0.168)	0.321** (0.139)	0.401*** (0.118)	0.299** (0.147)
Intercept	0.642*** (0.157)	0.0206** (0.00936)	0.446 (0.623)	0.148 (0.106)	0.955*** (0.0131)	0.586 (0.627)
Native Treasuries	401	401	401	401	401	401
Provinces (clusters)	57	57	57	57	57	57
R-squared	0.026	0.463	0.160	0.069	0.521	0.304
Colony FE	✓			✓		
Covariates		✓			✓	
	DV: Chief-appointed (plurality)			DV: British-appointed (any)		
	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Authoritarian state	0.439*** (0.111)	0.475*** (0.105)	0.401*** (0.104)			
Decentralized				0.0972** (0.0443)	0.0236 (0.0304)	0.151*** (0.0544)
Intercept	0.0613*** (0.0191)	0.000 (0.000)	0.117 (0.182)	0.0247 (0.0186)	-0.00263 (0.00338)	-0.169 (0.213)
Native Treasuries	401	401	401	401	401	401
Provinces (clusters)	57	57	57	57	57	57
R-squared	0.143	0.236	0.203	0.017	0.663	0.144
Colony FE	✓			✓		
Covariates		✓			✓	

*Notes:* Models are estimated using OLS with province-clustered robust standard errors. Covariates are the same as in the preceding regression tables. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Socioeconomic development – alternative indicators.** In Table 7, we assess the correlation between various socioeconomic indicators and institutional outcomes. In that table, we analyze the four indicators for which we have the strongest theoretical expectations of importance, corresponding to our discussion when introducing the eight socioeconomic variables. In Table B.11, we re-run these specifications using the four other socioeconomic covariates from the earlier tables. Most of these correlations are null (or at least inconsistent across specifications), which reflects our weaker theoretical expectations that distance from the capital or coast, European alienated land, and absolute population size would affect institutional reforms. The main problem with interpreting the coefficient for European alienated land is that the districts with the highest scores on this variable were omitted from the Native Administration system, as we discuss in Appendix D.

**Table B.11: Socioeconomic Development – Alternative Indicators**

<i>Panel A. Cross-section</i>								
	<b>DV: Solo-chief NA</b>				<b>DV: African counselors</b>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Population	-0.00130 (0.0145)				0.0209 (0.0205)			
% alienated land		-0.0315 (0.0200)				-0.0199 (0.0364)		
Distance from capital			0.0294 (0.0309)				-0.0745* (0.0392)	
Distance from coast				0.0336 (0.0259)				-0.0162 (0.0201)
Intercept	0.0127 (0.142)	0.140 (0.0886)	-0.187 (0.196)	-0.221 (0.171)	0.795*** (0.200)	1.088*** (0.161)	1.473*** (0.249)	1.107*** (0.133)
Native Treasuries	360	360	360	360	360	360	360	360
Provinces (clusters)	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
R-squared	0.199	0.207	0.203	0.212	0.205	0.203	0.220	0.203
Colony FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Panel B. Panel data</i>								
	<b>DV: Onset of council in NA</b>							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)				
Population	0.0304*** (0.00904)							
% alienated land		0.0163** (0.00754)						
Distance from capital			-0.0140 (0.00996)					
Distance from coast				-0.00958 (0.00992)				
Intercept	-0.122 (0.190)	0.227 (0.165)	0.322 (0.192)	0.295 (0.191)				
District-years	2,575	2,575	2,575	2,575				
Districts	188	188	188	188				
Provinces (clusters)	47	47	47	47				
R-squared	0.049	0.048	0.045	0.044				
Colony FE	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Cubic polynomials	✓	✓	✓	✓				

*Notes:* See the note for Table 7. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## C SUPPORTING QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE

The following narratives provide historical background on local-governance institutions and when councils were introduced. In some, we provide additional evidence regarding variation within the colony or specific regions as well as details regarding the process of scaling up smaller units. We also provide supplemental figures that highlight additional theoretically relevant sources of variation. We used the Hailey volumes and surveys<sup>3</sup> as well as numerous additional colony-specific sources as needed to fill in dates of council creation as precisely as possible.

### C.1 OVERVIEW

**Changes over time.** Table C.1 summarizes major changes over time. Three broad patterns are apparent. First, early administration in almost all decentralized areas consisted of installed agents, typically some form of chief who lacked a traditional basis for his rule — but, in subsequent decades, these installed agents were either supplanted entirely or otherwise made accountable to councils. For example, in Eastern Nigeria and the decentralized parts of Western Nigeria, the Warrant Chiefs were eliminated entirely as Clan and District Councils were formed. In Kenya, the Headmen retained their positions at more local levels. However, at the district level to which Native Treasuries were attached, Headmen were supplanted by Local Native Councils that typically had a majority of popularly selected members.

Second, even though councils eventually pervaded decentralized areas, the timing varied. The Gold Coast Colony was exceptional because small existing states with chiefs and councils were recognized from the outset. For the rest of the sample, though, councils were implemented at different points between the 1920s and 1940s. Some of this variation occurred across colonies, but the more theoretically relevant source of variation is between the core and peripheral parts of individual colonies. Compared to the core parts of their respective colonies that experienced more substantial socioeconomic development, councils were introduced later to the northern parts of the Gold Coast, Kenya, and Uganda.

Third, the degree of continuity over time was stronger in areas with constrained states, although here too there was a notable uptick in the colonial recognition of councils over time. Distinct treaties with more important rulers throughout Southern Africa left existing institutions largely in place.<sup>4</sup> But other cases experienced more substantial colonial disruption at the outset. Examples of later-recognized councils include the restoration of the Ashanti Confederacy in 1935 and the legal recognition of councils throughout Yorubaland in Western Nigeria in the 1940s.

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<sup>3</sup>Recall that these are the sources for our main measure of colonial institutions, a cross-sectional measure of Native Authorities in the late 1940s, aggregated to the level of Native Treasuries.

<sup>4</sup>This observation does not, of course, apply to cases like the Zulu (South Africa) and Ndebele (Southern Rhodesia) who were militarily defeated amid the expansion of white settlement. We discuss these and other cases excluded from our statistical sample in Appendix D.

**Table C.1: Indirect Rule Institutions over Time – General**

State/Region	Colony	Early indirect rule institutions	Council creation (median year)
<i>Constrained precolonial states</i>			
Ashanti (non-Kumasi)	Gold Coast	Chief and council (traditional)	1896
Tswana	Bechuanaland	Chief and council (traditional)	1899
Buganda	Uganda	Chief and council (traditional)	1900
Barotseland	Northern Rhodesia	Chief and council (traditional)	1900
Lesotho	Lesotho	Chief and council (traditional)	1903
Swaziland	Swaziland	Chief and council (traditional)	1903
Bunyoro, Ankole	Uganda	Chief and council (traditional)	1920
Northern Territories	Gold Coast	Chief (traditional)	1932
Ashanti (Kumasi)	Gold Coast	Direct rule	1935
Yoruba	Nigeria (Western)	Chief (traditional)	1947
<i>Decentralized areas</i>			
Colony	Gold Coast	Chief and council (traditional)	1883
Core provinces	Kenya	Headmen (installed)	1925
Tanganyika	Tanganyika	German administration	1926
Southern	Nigeria	Warrant Chiefs (installed)	1932
Northern Territories	Gold Coast	Chief (installed)	1932
Northern	Nigeria	District Heads (installed)	1934
Uganda (Eastern)	Uganda	Baganda-chosen chiefs (installed)	1936
Nyasaland	Nyasaland	Principal Headmen (installed)	1941
Northern, Masai	Kenya	Lightly administered	1930/1943
Gambia	Gambia	District Heads (installed)	1944
Northern Rhodesia	Northern Rhodesia	Chiefs (installed)	1946
Uganda (Northern)	Uganda	Baganda-chosen chiefs (installed)	1947/1948

**Variance in socioeconomic development.** In the article section on variation in colonial development, we contrasted the core and peripheral areas within each of Kenya, the Gold Coast, and Uganda. Table C.2 presents summary stats for the development variables, disaggregated by province in these colonies as well as Eastern Nigeria (discussed below).

**Table C.2: Variance in Socioeconomic Development**

<b>Kenya</b>					
<i>Province</i>	<i>NTs</i>	<i>Rail distance</i>	<i>Cash crops</i>	<i>Missions</i>	<i>Pop. dens.</i>
Nyanza	4	37	\$1.88M	3.3	79
Central	7	39	\$3.68M	3.4	63
Masai	2	67	\$0.29M	0.0	1.7
Rift Valley	5	70	\$1.33M	0.0	16
Coast	4	79	\$0.43M	8.3	8
Northern	3	273	\$0.39M	1.3	0.3
<b>Gold Coast</b>					
<i>Region</i>	<i>NTs</i>	<i>Rail distance</i>	<i>Cash crops</i>	<i>Missions</i>	<i>Pop. dens.</i>
Colony	47	41	\$1.78M	47.5	80
Ashanti	29	79	\$3.41M	21.3	27
Northern	11	349	\$0.71M	3.1	31
<b>Uganda</b>					
<i>Province</i>	<i>NTs</i>	<i>Rail distance</i>	<i>Cash crops</i>	<i>Missions</i>	<i>Pop. dens.</i>
Eastern	4	15	\$10.49M	4.5	56
Buganda	1	35	\$64.80M	51	30
Western	3	84	\$3.86M	4.7	18
Northern	4	174	\$1.81M	0.5	14
<b>Eastern Nigeria</b>					
<i>Province</i>	<i>NTs</i>	<i>Rail distance</i>	<i>Cash crops</i>	<i>Missions</i>	<i>Pop. dens.</i>
Owerri	28	31	\$0.90M	1.2	231
Onitsha	10	37	\$1.51M	3.4	311
Rivers	13	47	\$0.62M	1.9	50
Calabar	7	54	\$0.87M	5.0	138
Ogoja	24	75	\$0.58M	1.1	49
Cameroons	13	218	\$1.42M	0.0	25

*Notes:* The figures in the table are averages across all Native Treasury areas within each province (including NTs with precolonial states). Within each colony, we sort provinces by inverse rail distance. Unlike in the regressions, we do not take the log of the development variables to improve interpretation.

## C.2 NIGERIA

We have more precise information about early institutions in Nigeria than elsewhere, which we present in Table C.3. The early colonial period recognized the leading Yoruba leaders in the West and the Sokoto emirs (plus other rulers like the Shehu of Bornu) as first- or second-class chiefs. Reflecting distinct institutions of precolonial constraints, though, the Sokoto emirs persisted as Sole Native Authorities whereas the Yoruba obas were eventually recognized alongside their councils. For each of the West and North, within-region comparisons between areas of precolonial states and decentralized areas demonstrates their distinctiveness. Some leaders of decentralized areas were recognized as first- or second-class chiefs, but the overwhelming majority were recognized as either District Heads or Warrant Chiefs. Councils became common after reforms, though. Solo-chief NAs were eliminated in the West, where a mixture of chief-and-council NAs and council-only NAs were created. Some solo-chief NAs persisted in the decentralized parts of the North, but two-thirds of Native Treasury areas had at least one NA with a council. Similarly, in the East, Warrant Chiefs were universal in the East in the 1920s. Following the reforms, though, council-only NAs became the near exclusive form of local governance institutions.

**Table C.3: Indirect Rule Institutions over Time – Nigeria**

	1920s			1940s		
	<i>1st/2nd class chief</i>	<i>District head</i>	<i>Warrant chief</i>	<i>Solo chief (exclusive)</i>	<i>Chiefs and councils (any)</i>	<i>Council-only (exclusive)</i>
<b>Northern</b>						
Precolonial state	96%	4%	0%	97%	3%	0%
Decentralized	36%	64%	0%	33%	53%	13%
<b>Western</b>						
Precolonial state	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
Decentralized	22%	33%	44%	0%	48%	52%
<b>Eastern</b>						
Decentralized	0%	0%	100%	2%	4%	94%

*Notes:* 1940s data from our main data set, with averages computed over NTs; 1920s from the UK Military Report on Nigeria (United Kingdom War Office 1929). The latter source describes institutional form at the division level, which was straightforward to merge with our precolonial institutions data (measured at the less aggregated level of the Native Treasury). We verified that the comparisons are qualitatively unchanged if we use 1920s divisions as the unit of analysis for aggregating Native Authority institutions in the 1940s.

### C.2.1 Eastern Nigeria

**Historical background and onset of councils.** The Native Councils Ordinance of 1906 developed (or in some places formalized) of a system of Native Courts that “became the main if not the only instruments of executive control” (Hailey 1951a, 157). This yielded the creation of Warrant Chiefs. Ordinances regarding Native Courts and Native Authorities between 1914 and 1916 (despite their nominal applicability throughout Nigeria) made little difference in the Eastern provinces; without an attempt at direct taxation, the British did not reform the warrant chief system. As of the 1920s, the historically decentralized areas of Southern Nigeria (which encompasses all of Eastern Nigeria and the non-Yoruba parts of Western Nigeria) were governed almost exclusively by Warrant Chiefs.

The British imposed direct taxes in 1928, which prompted the Aba Women’s War (which itself followed anti-tax riots in Warri, located in the Western provinces, the prior year). During the 1930s, the British replaced the warrants chiefs with various councils (Clan, Group, Village) that reflected the information gathered from Intelligence Reports in the early part of the decade. “The chief purpose of these inquiries was to determine as far as possible the natural limits of the different units which should be recognized for administrative purposes, and to discover the true seat of indigenous authority in them. The result was the recognition, for the purpose of the Ordinance, of a very great variety of units of Native Authority which only in a few instances consisted of a traditional Chief or Chief in Council (these being mainly in the Cameroons and Ogoja Provinces and in the Onitsha Division of Onitsha Province) and for the most part consisted of Group or Clan Councils or Village Councils” (p. 160).

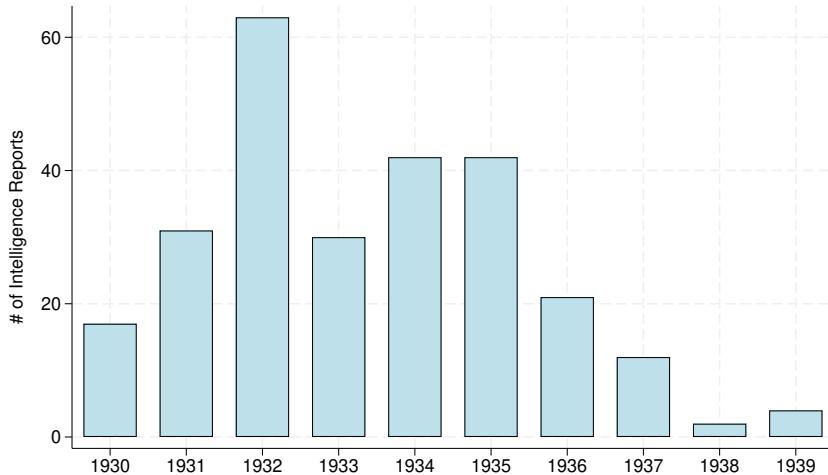
To assess more precisely when the councils were created in each district, we used a source document obtained from the Enugu Archives in Nigeria: “An Index to Intelligence Reports, Anthropological Reports, Assessment and Reorganisation Reports in National Archives, Enugu.” This documents lists Intelligence Reports collected by District Officers in Eastern Nigeria about individual village groups (often referred to as tribes or clans), with the explicit goal of instituting reforms based on more extensive knowledge of precolonial institutions. After recording these entries into a spreadsheet, we counted 265 Reports collected between 1930 and 1939, and almost all of these entries also list in which division the villages were located.<sup>5</sup> Figure C.1 presents a histogram for the number of Intelligence Reports collected per year. For each division, we record the first year in which an Intelligence Report was collected.<sup>6</sup> Equating this year with the onset of councils in the district is sensible because British administrators moved quickly to implementation after collecting each report. The *Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Nigeria, 1933* states, “During the past year, however, steady progress has been recorded. Over forty-five intelligence reports on individual clans or similar homogeneous units have been submitted by Administrative Officers after careful investigation and close consultation with the people concerned. In the majority of cases the provisional or final approval of Government has been accorded to the concrete proposals put forward in these reports for the reorganisation of the Administrative and Judicial systems of the units in question on lines acceptable both to the conservative and the progressive elements of the people.”

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<sup>5</sup>The document lists an additional 48 without an accompanying year of collection.

<sup>6</sup>Of the 32 divisions in Eastern Nigeria, only two have no record of any Intelligence Reports in the indexing document. For those two, we use the latest year among any divisions within their province.

**Figure C.1: Intelligence Reports in Eastern Nigeria**



**Variation within the region.** We code all of Eastern Nigeria as decentralized before colonialism, and there are few exceptions to council-only NAs. However, more subtle precolonial differences can explain a handful of exceptions.<sup>7</sup> In the far west of Eastern Nigeria, the founding myths of Igbo villages centered on migrations from the nearby state of Benin (located in the Western provinces), which had a centralized political tradition. In the town of Onitsha before colonization, the leading position (obi) rotated between two families, in contrast to non-hereditary chieftaincy positions throughout most of Igboland (Nzimiro 1972, 7–8, 194–212). The Onitsha Native Authority was the Obi in Council, and the same two pre-British families participated in the Obi’s selection. Far to the east, the Cameroons Province contained the only solo-chief NAs in Eastern Nigeria. Although small-scale (and not counted as precolonial states in our data set), hereditary fons had led various traditional states. The Nsaw and Bafut fomdoms persisted under British rule and their fons were designated as solo chiefs (Chem-Langhee 1983; Niba 1995).

Differential colonial development correlates with another aspect of institutional variation in the region, prerogatives over setting Treasury estimates. In Onitsha and Owerri, Finance Committees comprised of members of the NA council took part in preparing estimates; in Calabar, a Finance Committee existed but did little work; and no Finance Committee existed in the other three provinces (Hailey 1951a, 167–68). These differences largely mirror variance in the major colonial development indicators (see Table C.2). Places like Oguta (Owerri) and Onitsha town became centers of the lucrative palm oil trade (Ekechi 1981), and the railway built through the colonially created town of Enugu (Owerri) spurred migration to and development in this coal-producing area (Odemene 2018).

**Scaling up smaller units.** In the article, we noted the goal of scaling up local institutions at the level of the Native Treasuries. To provide an example of the scale, the Ndoki Clan Council in

<sup>7</sup>Of the 217 NAs in Eastern Nigeria (not all of which had their own NT), the only exceptions to council-only NAs were six solo chiefs in the Cameroons Province, a chief-and-council NA in Onitsha Town, and five chief-and-council NAs in the Ogoja Province.

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.<sup>8</sup> To gain a sense of the magnitude of scaling up under these new institutions, there were approximately 76,000 people per Native Authority in Owerri Province.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, the contemporaneous population in the village of Owerri was estimated at 1,730 (Meek 1933, 5). Thus, if the Owerri village was typical for its eponymous province, the scaled-up Native Authorities and Native Treasuries were more than forty times larger than the traditional village units. The process by which village councils were scaled up was similar in the Afikpo Division (Ottenberg 1956), Onitsha Division (African Studies Branch 1949, 23–25), and Itsekiri and Urhobo Divisions of the Warri Province in the West (Ikime 1969, 233, 259).

### C.2.2 Western Nigeria

**Historical background and onset of councils.** The Native Courts Proclamations of 1900 and 1901 created a system of Native Courts that comprised the initial system of administration. As in Eastern Nigeria, these proclamations facilitated the creation of Warrant Chiefs. However, the British occupation of Yorubaland was based on individual treaties, which limited the colonial government's jurisdiction and executive authority. Between 1904 and 1914, each of the major Yoruba rulers agreed to abrogate their earlier treaties with the British. This enabled the extension of British judicial authority and Native Courts throughout Western Nigeria. Between 1916 and 1918, the system that Lugard designed for Northern Nigeria was applied to the West. “Lugard obtained permission in 1916 to introduce direct taxation in Yorubaland, Egba and Benin, and in 1918 an amending Ordinance was passed extending to Southern Nigeria the Native Revenue Ordinance of 1917 which had applied before only to the Northern Provinces. The procedure of native administration embodied in the Native Authority Ordinance of 1916 was then introduced in the areas above mentioned, and was gradually extended to other areas west of the Niger, the latest being the Asaba Division of the Benin Province and the four Divisions of the Warri Province” (Hailey 1951a, 112). As of the 1920s, the historically decentralized parts of Southern Nigeria (which included parts of Western Nigeria) were almost exclusively governed by Warrant Chiefs, whereas all the Yoruba precolonial state areas were governed by first- or second-class chiefs.

Similar reforms as implemented throughout Eastern Nigeria were also applied to the decentralized parts of Western Nigeria. British administrators noted, in contrast to what they described more effective administration in the Yoruba states, that “[t]he constitution of the Native Administrations of [the decentralized] areas has, with certain exceptions, not yet been finally determined and every effort is now being made to find satisfactory solutions to the many problems which arise in the attempt to evolve a system of Native Administration based on the indigenous organisations.”<sup>10</sup> Reforms occurred first in Warri, in response to its anti-tax revolts of 1927, and we date its council to 1931.<sup>11</sup> The *Annual Reports* between 1933 and 1935 discuss reforms in the decentralized parts of

<sup>8</sup>Intelligence report CSE 1/85/5128. Collected by the authors from the Enugu Archives in Nigeria.

<sup>9</sup>Population data from Hailey (1951a, 147) and number of clan councils from p. 161. In Owerri province, essentially every Native Authority clan/district council had its own Native Treasury.

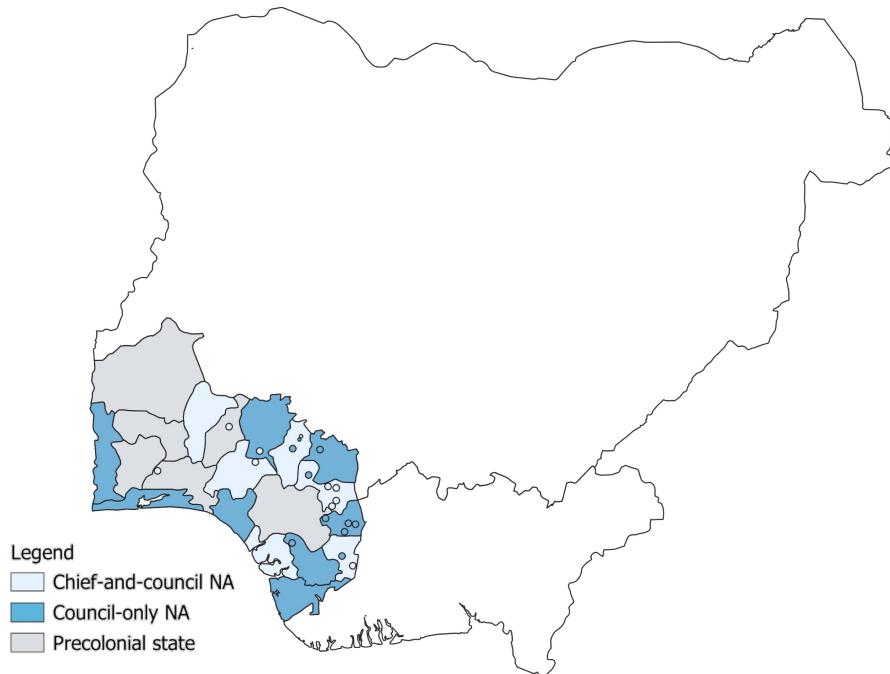
<sup>10</sup>*Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Nigeria, 1931.*

<sup>11</sup>See the discussion in Ikime (1969, 220–63) and the *Annual Report, 1931* mentioned in the prior footnote.

Yorubaland, indicating that many such reforms were implemented by 1934. The formal recognition of councils in the major Yoruba states (plus the Edo state of Benin) occurred later, although in practice their councils were still influential actors.<sup>12</sup> The earliest reform was in Ibadan, where the Bale of Ibadan and Council became the Native Authority in 1934 following the separation of Ibadan from the suzerainty of Oyo (Hailey 1951a, 120). However, the other five precolonial states in Western Nigeria had Sole Native Authorities as of 1939 (pp. 112–13). Subsequent entries in Hailey list in which year of the 1940s councils were formally recognized in each.

**Variation within the region.** In the article, we discussed the discrepancies between the parts of Western Nigeria with centralized as opposed to decentralized traditions; all the major Yoruba states were chief and council whereas many decentralized areas were governed as council-only. Figure C.2 depicts these discrepancies, which visualizes the pattern shown earlier in Table C.3.

**Figure C.2: Council-Only NAs in Decentralized Parts of Western Nigeria**



*Notes:* Among NTs with decentralized institutions, council-only NAs have the darker shade of blue and chief-and-council NAs have the lighter shade (there is no variation in NA institutions within any NT in Western Nigeria). NTs with precolonial states are in gray; each had a chief-and-council NA and thus would have the light shade if included in the figure.

<sup>12</sup>“The autocratic powers of these chiefs are limited by the provision of a council and, in order to enlist the support of the literate classes these councils have, in certain cases, been strengthened by co-opting persons in virtue of their educational attainments rather than their traditional prerogatives. These Native Administrations exercise a very considerable degree of control over the Native Treasuries and, although Government Ordinances continue to apply, responsibility for enforcing many provisions of the laws is, at the request of the chiefs and councils concerned being assumed by the Native Authorities” *Annual Report, 1931*.

### C.2.3 Northern Nigeria

Following the creation of Native Courts in 1900, the Native Authority Proclamation of 1907 empowered chiefs (who were recognized by the colonial government) to issue legal orders. This system was extended in 1916 to encompass areas of Nigeria outside the North, following the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914. The Native Revenue Ordinance of 1917 created Native Treasuries. These innovations reflected Lugard's design for Indirect Rule.

Northern Nigeria differs from the other regions in our sample because solo-chiefs were the predominant form of Native Authority institution even in the late 1940s, which reflected its authoritarian precolonial states. However, as we discussed in the article, precolonial states were not universal throughout Northern Nigeria. Donald Cameron, who became governor in 1931, sought to implement reforms in the decentralized areas of the North similar to those that had begun in the south, in particular by shifting away from the District Head system and empowering councils (Ballard 1972). Cameron, in his memorandum of 1934 outlining the new approach to indirect administration in Nigeria, explicitly lamented the earlier practice of placing “pagan” communities under the control of Fulani emirs, and the new approach sought to recreate institutions “based on their own decentralized and democratic system” (reproduced in Kirk-Greene 1965a, 195). The *Annual Report* of 1933 echoed this sentiment: “... in pagan areas it has frequently had the effect of covering with a veneer the traditional forms of government, without utilising which little progress can be expected. The objective during the latter months of the year was therefore to endeavour to penetrate this veneer and discover the true forms of government among the numerous pagan tribes.”<sup>13</sup> The British subsequently collected a series of Intelligence Reports, and the *Annual Reports* between 1933 and 1938 detail the changes in all the areas that we code as having councils as part of the NA in our main statistical data set.

### C.2.4 Lagos Colony

The town of Lagos was the most important part of the Colony area, comprising roughly 60% of its population in the late 1940s. However, the town itself was exempt from the Native Authority ordinances that applied to the Colony's rural districts. Before 1938, village heads were selected by traditional means (popular selection of candidates from leading families), and they directly administered their areas with minimal regulation by the colonial government. However, the Native Authority (Colony) Ordinance of 1937 initiated a system of Native Authorities, which was “based mainly on the town or village Councils, but embracing also the Chiefs above mentioned and certain other traditional elements” (Hailey 1951a, 28). We thus code the onset of councils in Lagos Colony as 1937. Afterwards, the Native Authority Ordinance of 1943 applied throughout Nigeria (except Lagos), but with the special provision for the rural district parts of the Colony area that chiefs could not be a part of the Native Authority: “the Governor may appoint as Native Authority any Council or any group of persons (provided that such Council or group of persons is composed of not less than five persons), but no provision is made for the appointment of a Chief or Chief and Council, as in the Protectorate. Alternatively, the Governor may appoint a District Officer as the Native Authority” (p. 29).

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<sup>13</sup>*Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Nigeria, 1933.*

### C.3 KENYA

**Historical background.** The Native Authority Ordinance of 1912 empowered local Headmen, many of whom lacked traditional status. The 1924 Amendment to the Native Authority Ordinance authorized the creation of Local Native Councils (referred to as District Native Councils in the ordinance), which ultimately supplanted the power of the authoritarian Headmen. The Councils, according to the bill, were to consist of the District Commissioner and Assistant District Commissioner, “together with such headmen and other natives as the Governor may appoint thereto.” District Commissioners acted as president of the Local Native Councils and had the power to approve or disapprove of resolutions passed by the Council.

**Onset of councils and scaling up smaller units.** The creation of LNCs scaled up Kenya’s local government institutions, which had previously operated at the village level through appointed headmen. Whereas village headmen had done little beyond executing policies on behalf of the central government, LNCs were made responsible for various public services. According to the bill, they could “make and pass resolutions for the Welfare and good Government of the native inhabitants” of the areas under their jurisdiction. The Ordinance particularly flagged: “the provision, maintenance and regulation of food and water supplies, forests, cattle dips, roads, bridges and culverts, public health, recruitment of labour and the use of land in the Native Reserves.” To raise the revenues needed to provide these services, LNCs were allowed to “make and pass a resolution for the imposition of a rate, to be levied and collected from the native inhabitants” of their districts.

The LNC system consolidated and expanded between 1924 until 1948, when the Hailey surveys were conducted. British administrators commented on the uneven progress. In some areas, they continually experimented to achieve a balance between pressures for smaller units (better for local consultation) and larger units (better for fiscal efficiency). This created some variation in the time at which LNCs were constituted in each district. We use the annual reports of the Native Affairs department of the colonial administration in Kenya to track the creation of LNCs over time.

The first LNCs to be established on paper in 1924 were in Fort Hall, Kyambu, South Nyeri, Embu, North Kavirondo, Central Kavirondo, and Masai. By 1925, LNCs had been established in all other districts apart from the peripheral northern areas (Turkana, Northern Frontier Provinces), discussed later. But not all of the original LNCs created in 1924–25 were retained in their original form, leading us to code later dates in some districts. In 1928, the Luna Location left the Kisii-Bakoria Council and “is now included with the Luo for reasons of racial affinity. The latter council is now designated ‘Luo-Abasuba.’” In 1930, the Masai LNC split into two, Kajiado and Narok. The reasons for this was that “the long and expensive journey to Ngong . . . entails a waste of time and money and is very inconvenient for the older and less robust members.” Two of the Baringo LNCs were amalgamated in 1931. The reason for this was that the Baringo-Pokoot Council (Baringo II) “proved to be an uneconomically small unit and that on many occasions its members had expressed their desire to their Provincial Commissioner and District Commissioner to amalgamate with the Kamasia and Njemps Section (Baringo I).” The Elgeyo-Marakwet Council was also amalgamated in the same year. In 1935, the Luo-Abasuba and Kisii-Bakoria Councils were amalgamated into the South Kavirondo LNC. In 1936, a new Samburu LNC was established in the Rift Valley Province. In 1937 the Tana River LNC was established in Coast Province. The last LNC created outside the

Northern Frontier was the Freretown LNC in 1941 that covered a small part of the former capital of Mombasa.

**Variation in the peripheral North.** The introduction of councils occurred much later in the North (and in parts, not at all). Colonial administrators writing in the 1920s were pessimistic about prospects for introducing Local Native Councils. In 1927, the Native Affairs report stated for Turkana that “there are no councils in either North or South Turkana, where it would be premature to establish them until the Turkana have become more accustomed to civil administration.” The 1928 report said something similar about the Northern Frontier Province: “there are no councils in this Province, and owing to widely scattered groups of diverse tribes inhabiting it, it is doubtful if it will be possible to establish any for many years to come.” The first LNC in Turkana was established in West Suk in 1929, followed by Southern Turkana in 1930. However, the latter was disbanded in 1932. “The Council was found, after a good trial, to be entirely unsuited to the conditions of life in Southern Turkana and to the nomadic population inhabiting these large areas of barren country.” Eventually three councils (Garissa, Isiolo, Marsabit) would be established in the Northern Frontier Province during the war years, but as of 1945 they were reported as “not yet playing a very effective part in local government.” In our expenditures data set, these NTs were tiny.

## C.4 GOLD COAST

**Historical background and onset of councils in the Colony.** The Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1878 regulated the powers and jurisdiction of Native Authorities in the newly created Gold Coast Colony. Chiefs were empowered to enact bylaws “with the concurrence of their Chiefs, Captains, Headmen and others who by Native Customary Law were the Councillors of their Stools” (Hailey 1951a, 199–200). Although this ordinance invoked councils, we code their colonial recognition as occurring in 1883, when a slightly modified version of the ordinance was enacted. The Gold Coast Colony was unusual for the late introduction of Native Treasuries, owing to early treaty relationships between the Crown and smaller states near the coast. The Native Administration (Colony) Ordinance of 1927 aligned Native Administration in the Gold Coast Colony to ordinances in other colonies while specifically highlighting the role of councils. “It defined the position of the States’ Councils and the relative positions of the Paramount Chief and other Chiefs. It prescribed a procedure for election and destoolment” (p. 203). Hailey characterizes the measure as largely ineffective, though, because “[i]t did nothing to control the use of Stool resources by the establishment of Native Treasuries” (p. 203). Subsequently, the Ordinance of 1936 and Native Administration Treasuries Ordinance of 1939 created Native Treasuries in Gold Coast Colony, and the Native Authority Ordinance of 1944 created a more regular form for the Native Authorities. Almost all the Native Authorities were recognized as Paramount Chief and the State Council, plus several confederacies of chiefs.

**Historical background and onset of councils in Ashanti.** North of the coastal Colony area, in 1896, the British deported the Asantehene (ruler of Asante) and dissolved the long-standing Asante Confederacy. But although the British interfered with traditional institutions in the capital region of Kumasi, they otherwise ruled indirectly. The governor at the turn of the century “wished to preserve, and rule according to, the customs of the people in each particular state . . . interfere

as little as possible in the ordinary administration of an Omanhene and his chiefs. Each state under the Resident's supervision was to arrange its own affairs and to hold its own courts of justice . . . the internal organization of the various, outlying divisions was not vitally changed after 1896; the reason for this was that each, under its own Omanhene, had enjoyed a good deal of autonomy with the Confederacy" (Tordoff 1965, 82, 165). Thus, with the exception of the Kumasi Division, we code the onset of councils as 1896. Tordoff stresses the disorganization within the Kumasi Division which resulted from deposing the Asantehene, including the creation of an artificial Native Committee of Administration (p. 83). We code 1935 the onset of a council in the Kumasi Division, when the Ashanti Confederacy was re-created.

**Historical background and onset of councils in the Northern Territories.** Even farther north, the Ordinance of 1906 for the Northern Territories minimally regulated the powers of chiefs. "Administration was limited at the outset to making provision for the maintenance of law and order, and where traditional Chiefs appeared to have the necessary authority, they were recognized as agencies for this purpose. . . . There is a general agreement that the results were unfortunate in more than one direction. The backing of the Administration gave a coercive power to Chiefs whose own position was in many cases that of religious rather than secular heads, and they used it for their own private gain, either by extortion or by levying in the form of money the ritual tribute accorded to them by religious custom" (Hailey 1951a, 262). The Native Authority (Northern Territories) Ordinance of 1932 and Native Treasuries Ordinance of 1932 introduced institutions along the lines of those in Nigeria and Tanganyika. "[T]he Native Authorities and the Subordinate Native Authorities have in the majority of cases been gazetted as composed of a Chief and his Council. The composition of the Councils is governed by local custom, and it does not appear that the Administration has so far taken steps to regulate their membership" (p. 265). Hailey also notes, though, that "[t]he degree to which the Native Authorities are dependent on the advice or support of their Councils varies greatly." We thus code 1932 as the onset of councils in the Northern Territories.

## C.5 UGANDA

Agreements with Buganda, Toro, and Ankole in 1900 and 1901 conferred powers upon each of their traditional rulers in a precocious form of indirect rule. In Buganda, the ruler (Kabaka) was explicitly recognized alongside his council (Lukiiko), and thus we code 1900 as the introduction of a council in Buganda. In 1920, Native Councils in Toro and Ankole were officially delegated certain legal powers, which reflected long-standing practices. Bunyoro's relations with the British had always been more strained, and they did not sign an agreement with the British until 1933. Hailey notes that this later agreement "confirmed in this respect a practice that was already well established, laid down that the Mukama should be assisted in the Native Government by a Native Council, the Rukurato" (Hailey 1950a, 51). We thus consider 1920 an appropriate year from which to date the council in Bunyoro, as similar practices were formalized in Toro and Ankole then.

Also at the turn of the century, Baganda agents began to govern and install chiefs whom they selected throughout Eastern Uganda. But the Native Authority Ordinance of 1919 created a more regular form of Native Administration outside Buganda, which reflected socioeconomic development in the East and its incorporation into the colonial economy via cotton exports. By the end of the 1920s, earlier-installed Baganda agents outside Buganda were largely replaced by local elites with indigenous sources of legitimacy. In 1936, a system of district councils was introduced in Eastern Uganda. The District Councils managed the levying and collection of taxes, and prepared the budget and expenditure estimates for the Native Treasuries.

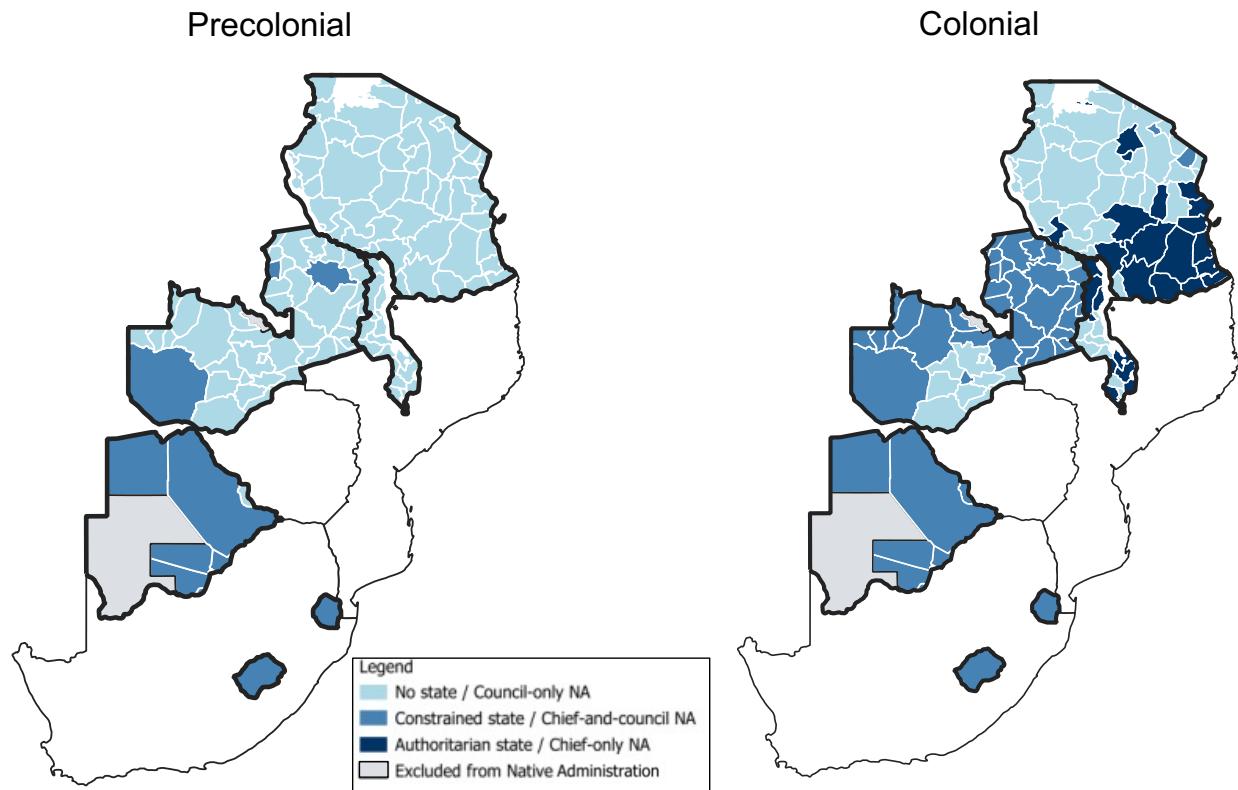
The North was less developed and more lightly administered than the East. Lango had ties to Bunyoro and received an influx of Baganda agents shortly after the turn of the century (Roberts 1962, 441). However, Acholi and the West Nile lacked any British administrative presence until around World War I (Hailey 1950a, 61; Uganda Department of Lands and Surveys 1962), and the incorporation of Karamoja occurred even later (Barber 1968). Early on, the British attempted a medley of governance strategies, such as appointing chiefs who lacked traditional standing (Lango), recognizing former Belgian agents (West Nile),<sup>14</sup> and using agents from neighboring districts (Acholi agents in Karamoja). In different years in the 1940s, the Eastern Uganda model was transplanted to the North where district councils were created, as described in the article.

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<sup>14</sup>The West Nile district comprised part of the Lado Enclave, a piece a British-claimed territory that was leased to King Leopold of Belgium between 1894 and 1909. Originally transferred to Sudan, the West Nile district became part of Uganda in 1914.

## C.6 ADDITIONAL CASES

**Figure C.3: Maps of Precolonial and Colonial Institutions – Six Colonies in E/S Africa**



*Notes:* The units in each colored country are Native Treasury areas. The colors for the Native Authority institutions reflect whichever type of institution comprised the plurality within the NT area. In Appendix D, we discuss the gray areas excluded from Native Administration in Northern Rhodesia (Copperbelt) and various parts of Bechuanaland; and we also discuss South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

### C.6.1 Tanganyika

Tanganyika was a German colony until World War I. German Commissioners repurposed the system that the Sultan of Zanzibar had constructed in the coastal areas. The Sultan's officers (mainly Arab or Swahili), known as Akidas, administered native affairs. Some of the more influential traditional village headmen (Jumbes) were recognized alongside Akidas (Hailey 1950b, 212–13). The first British Native Authority Ordinance of 1923 sought to displace the Akidas and Jumbes as agents of local rule, but the Native Authority Ordinance of 1926 was the key piece of legislation for creating indirect-rule institutions in Tanganyika. The system, introduced by new Governor Donald Cameron starting in 1925 (who later oversaw similar reforms in Nigeria), “aimed at making the fullest use of the traditional institutions of rule existing in African society” (Hailey 1950b, 212). The ordinance defined Native Authorities as “Chiefs or other natives or any Native Council or groups of natives declared as such by Government” (quoted in Hailey 1950b, 218).<sup>15</sup> Although

<sup>15</sup>“Cameron’s Policy of Indirect Administration” describes, in his own words, his ideals of using traditionally legitimate African chiefs and councils as agents (reprinted in Kirk-Greene 1965b, 193–25). For a

most lower-level Native Authorities were solo chiefs (because of the difficulty of identifying proper councils), these NAs did not exercise unilateral control over a Treasury.<sup>16</sup> Instead, “[i]n a number of areas [the Native Authorities] have also been federated in Councils of Chiefs which, while discharging certain functions, such as the conduct of joint Treasuries or the making of Rules of general application, do not in other respects override the powers of the individual Chiefs recognized as Native Authorities” (Hailey 1950b, 218).

Our main source for coding the onset of councils in each district was the annual reports to the League of Nations between 1925 and 1929,<sup>17</sup> which discuss the creation of many new Native Treasury units and councils at the local level. For example, the 1925 report states

“In this, the Tabora Province, several of the Sultanates of the same tribe have amalgamated in the form of a Council with a common Treasury, the view being held by the Sultans that administration would be improved and that the problem caused by the fly could be dealt with more effectively by concerted action, also that the funds available could be used to better advantage if they were in one large purse instead of several small ones. Each Sultanate is represented on the Council, and confederation was not approved until it had been submitted to the people themselves and received their approval.”

Various years of the *Native Affairs* reports and Hailey (1950a) provided additional information. Collectively, these sources enabled us to record an exact date for over one-third of the councils that Hailey lists as present in Tanganyika in the 1940s (that is, the list we use for our primary Native Authority variable). For almost all the remainder, we use 1926. It is clear from the 1925 League of Nations report that the reforms began then across the colony, culminating in the new Native Authorities ordinance the next year. The 1926 League of Nations report provides a general characterization of how Native Treasuries and councils were implemented throughout the colony, although provides few specifics on individual localities. But the 1927 report (and the 1928 report, to a lesser extent) discuss a large number of specific instances of creating councils in places where these institutions had not already been created by 1926. Finally, the 1929 report characterizes the reforms as mostly completed,<sup>18</sup> and presents a table spanning four pages that lists the composition

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discussion of some limitations in practice, see Unomah (1970/71) and Coulson (1982, 94–99).

<sup>16</sup>Most lower-level Native Authorities were solo chiefs because of the difficulty of identifying proper councils. As Hailey (p. 218) describes, “there would in this Territory be some difficulty in giving formal recognition to a Chief’s Council as part of the Native Authority organization since the Elders or other advisers are very seldom a regularly constituted body and in many cases the identity of those to whom a Chief looks for advice or support is not brought definitely to the knowledge of the officers of the Administration. There is also a considerable diversity in the extent to which a Chief considers himself free to act without reference to the Elders or other advisers, and it is clear that there are instances in which the grant to him of legal powers as a Native Authority has given him a more absolute position than that which older native custom would have allowed him. There are, on the other hand, cases in which tribal custom has not yet allowed this situation to arise, and a Chief would not venture to make an important decision without calling a ‘baraza,’ which would be attended not only by Elders, but by Headmen and other members of the tribe.”

<sup>17</sup>*Report by His Britannic Majesty’s Government to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Tanganyika Territory.*

<sup>18</sup>“In the sphere of Native Administration there is little of special interest to record during the year under

of every Native Authority in the colony. For every district in our main data set (i.e., as of the late 1940s) that contained at least one NA with a council, we checked whether the corresponding NA was listed in the table for 1929 as having a council. We found a match for the overwhelmingly majority, indicating the council was created no later than 1929. For the handful of districts with councils at the time of the Hailey surveys that did not have one as of 1929, we consulted additional sources to determine when it was created (usually in the 1940s). Thus, for councils created before 1929 for which we lack a precise year, we feel confident coding its onset as 1926, as most council were created in 1925–26 and subsequent years of the League of Nations reports selectively listed only areas in which new councils were created.

Like other British colonies, the creation of councils in Tanganyika reflected the push to scale up units to improve their fiscal efficiency. We illustrate this process for the Tanga Province in the following table.

**Table C.4: Scaled-Up Councils in Tanga Province**

District/ Treasury	Federal NA	Lower-level NAs	Creation
Pare	Upare Tribal Council	9 Pare Chiefs	Merger of North Pare and South Pare in 1929 to create a single Superior NA: The Council of the Pare Tribe. Hailey: “The Upare Council of Chiefs or Tribal Council elects its own Chairman annually, and the Council (with the assistance of the members of the present Advisory Council), is said to take an intelligent part in the work of the Native Treasury of the District, especially in regard to the expansion of education.”
Lushoto	None	Chief and Council	Reduced to a single Superior NA when South Pare was transferred. Originally solo chief, then council introduced in 1947 in response to pressure by the Usambara African Association.
Handeni	Handeni Tribal Council (the Zigua-Nguu Council)	9 hereditary Chiefs (Jumbe)	Number of Superior NAs reduced from six to two in 1929 (Council of the Sigua Tribe, Council of the Nguu Tribe). The Chiefs were Subordinate NAs as of 1929 but comprised individual NAs by the time of the Hailey surveys, federated under the Handeni Tribal Council (which Hailey characterizes as ineffective).
Pangani	Pangani Coastal Council	4 Bondei Chiefs (Zumbe)	Council created in 1928 by combining six independent units.
Tanga	Tanga Council of Headmen	8 Headmen (one entitled Akida and the others Jumbe and Mkuu)	No federal council in place as of 1929. Hailey characterizes the creation of a Native Treasury in 1944 as a shift from what was effectively direct rule, and the council was created then.

review which was one of quiet progress along the lines of established policy . . . It is probable that this phase is now nearing its end, and that the number of Native Administrations existing to-day, namely, 134, will remain substantially the same for some years to come . . . ”

## C.6.2 Northern Rhodesia

The British South Africa Company (BSAC) governed Northern Rhodesia until 1924 through a system of appointed chiefs (Hinden 1950, 170–71). According to a 1938 report on the administration of the colony by Sir Alan Pim and Milligan (1938, 179), which details the development of the system, under Chartered Company rule chiefs were “used as agencies of the government,” during which time “the authority of the chiefs was gradually undermined by their dependence on Administrative Officers.” The BSAC sought to define their relationship with the chiefs through the Administration of Natives Proclamation of 1916, under which “Chiefs were able to exercise considerable control over their people” (Hailey 1950b, 83). After the transition to Crown Colony rule, the British began to implement policies of indirect rule. The Native Authority Ordinance of 1929, which was based on the recommendations of a conference of administrative officers in 1927, recognized the executive and judicial powers of chiefs. It also enabled the creation of “Superior Native Authorities” consisting of a council or chief in council, through which local administration could be scaled up. The 1936 Native Authorities Ordinance expanded on this system by introducing Native Treasuries.

Conditions in Northern Rhodesia made the implementation of the Native Authority system more difficult than elsewhere. The development of large-scale copper mining from the late 1920s created enormous demand for labor from across the colony and broader region. Finding the right scale of local authority was a particular problem. During the years following the passage of the 1936 Ordinance, an incremental process of reorganization occurred similar to that taking place in Kenya. This was punctuated by the outbreak of World War II, during which time the implementation of the policy was paused before being resumed in 1946 (Chipungu 1992, 52–53).<sup>19</sup> Our dates for implementation thus span from 1937 until 1948, and are based primarily on notes and interviews undertaken by Hailey during the time the survey was being conducted.<sup>20</sup> Northern Rhodesia is unique because the most developed part of the country, the Copperbelt, was excluded from the Native Authority system. The scale of labor migration also redirected attention toward developing provincial and national-level advisory councils as an outlet for individuals no longer firmly attached to a specific region (Roberts 1979, 204).

The one exception for which we code an earlier date for the council is Barotseland, a historical state located in what was originally North-Western Rhodesia. The agreement between BSAC and King Lewanika came into force in 1900 (Hailey 1950b, 88). Hailey (pp. 93–94) describes the traditional system of councils, or Kuta, which consisted of three distinct councils; the Saa and Sikalo represented elites whereas the Katengo represented popular elements (see also Caplan 1970, 3–6). These councils (in particular the Saa and Sikalo) continued to function throughout the colonial period, and therefore we code a council as present since 1900. “Under the British, the Sikalo at Lealui became the Appeal Court for the Province, and the Saa and Katengo were formed into the District Court and Authority for Lealui District. The Sikalo and Saa were still, however, regarded in many matters as a single senior body and in important matters the two bodies consulted together, but the Katengo definitely declined in importance” (Hailey 1950b, 94).<sup>21</sup> Notably, Barotseland was

<sup>19</sup> See also Northern Rhodesia, *African Affairs Annual Report 1947*.

<sup>20</sup> These can be found alongside the survey responses in TNA CO 1018/50-55.

<sup>21</sup> The Katengo was later revived in 1947 to constitute “the first step towards an elected administration” (*Native Affairs Report for 1947*; see also Hailey 1950b, 96 and Caplan 1970, 166–67).

deliberately administered under different provisions than the rest of the protectorate. As discussed in the *Native Affairs Report for 1930*, the 1929 Native Authorities Ordinance did not apply to Barotseland because of prior treaties with its ruler.

### C.6.3 Nyasaland

The District Administration (Native) Ordinance of 1912 instructed District Residents to create Administrative Sections (which did not necessarily correspond with tribal divisions) administered by Principal Headmen. “Principal Headmen were not necessarily to be persons who had hitherto been recognized as Chiefs or headmen, and consideration was to be given to the claims—which might often be superior claims—of other persons of good standing ‘who have assisted the Resident in native administrative matters in the past.’ … While therefore this system did not exclude the use of traditional Native Authorities as agencies of local rule, its first intention was to utilize both them and the ‘selected’ Principal Headmen mainly as executive agents of the Administration” (Hailey 1950b, 26).

Later, the Native Authority Ordinance of 1933 was modeled on Tanganyika’s Native Authority Ordinance of 1926. The new ordinance substituted traditional authorities for the Principal Headman as Native Authorities and introduced Native Treasuries. “The Native Authority was now defined as any Chief or other native or native council or groups of natives declared to be established as a Native Authority, and a Chief was defined as any native recognized as such by the Governor” (p. 27). All the lower-level Native Authorities, though, were solo chiefs. “The Chiefs have no formally constituted Councils, but have Advisers who are in some cases sub-chiefs, in others headmen, and in others persons holding traditional posts in the tribal organization. The Protectorate Administration does not intervene to decide their numbers or their personnel” (p. 28).

Although all the lower-level Native Authorities were solo chiefs, Treasuries operated at the more highly aggregated district level. Instead, “[t]he institution of the Treasury system has been followed by a movement, initiated by the Administration, to secure the federation of the different Native Authorities in a District, in order to provide for a pooling of their resources and for the issue of uniform rules on matters of common interest to them” (p. 28). Councils were created for some of these districts, and Hailey lists the onset year for some of them. For districts with councils but without an explicit year mentioned, we use the last year in which a council was created among all districts within that province.

### C.6.4 Bechuanaland

The Proclamation of 1899 created Tribal Reserves (Hailey 1953, 205). The resultant system of rule, as described by the Resident Commissioner in 1904, permitted “a very wide latitude to the Paramount Chiefs in the management of their own people” (p. 206) and thus the traditional councils (Kgotla) remained important (Schapera 1938). We thus code 1899 as the onset of councils. Later, the Native Administration Proclamation of 1934 enacted a Native Administration system that followed the general model from Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland. In addition to regulating the powers of Native Authority chiefs, “[t]he Proclamation made provision for the formal establishment of a Tribal Council. It was laid down that the Chief and the tribe having assembled in Kgotla, the Chief should designate (and subsequently notify to the Magistrate) the

persons who under Native custom were entitled to act as his Councillors" (Hailey 1953, 219). Finally, the Native Treasury Proclamation of 1938 created Native Treasuries for the Tribal Reserves (p. 223).

### **C.6.5 Basutoland and Swaziland**

These were unusual dependencies in which a single monarch (Paramount Chief) had jurisdiction over the entire territory. Throughout the period of European occupation, the monarch and his council enjoyed substantial autonomy, although official Native Authority and Native Treasury ordinances were not implemented until later.

In Basutoland, a National Council, which built on the longer tradition of popularly attended meetings (pitsos), was created in 1903. The Native Administration Proclamation of 1938 formally regulated the powers of the Paramount Chief with regard to issues such as law making and the recognition of lower-level chiefs (Hailey 1953, 83–84). The Native Treasury Proclamation of 1946 created a National Treasury under the control of the Paramount Chief, who was to be advised by a finance committee comprised of members nominated by the Paramount Chief and elected by the Basutoland Council (p. 94).

In Swaziland, the Paramount Chief relied on two councils throughout the colonial period, the Liqoqo (inner/privy council) and the Libandhla (national/popular council). Hailey (1953) describes the traditional composition and powers of the councils (pp. 356–57) before stating that, as of 1949, “[t]he composition of the Liqoqo does not differ materially from that of which an account was given in Section IV when describing the traditional institutions of the Swazi,” with the exception of more extensive participation by non-royals (pp. 394–95). We therefore date the onset of this council to 1903, when British rule began. Later, the Native Administration Proclamations of 1946 and 1950 formally regulated the powers of the Paramount Chief along the lines of the earlier proclamation in Basutoland. The Native Treasury Proclamation of 1950 created a Swazi National Treasury under the control of the Paramount Chief.

### **C.6.6 Gambia**

A 1913 Ordinance, which concerned Native Courts and District Heads, regulated the exercise of District Heads' judicial functions (Hailey 1951a, 336–37). The set of chiefs was based off a list published in 1895 of seventeen District Heads, which “included a certain number of Chiefs belonging to former ‘mansa’ families, together with others appointed on purely personal grounds.” The Native Authority Ordinance of 1933 followed the model from Tanganyika and gave “the Governor power to create Native Authorities, these being any Chief or other native or a Native Council or group.” This ordinance regulated the powers and responsibilities of Native Authorities. The Protectorate Ordinance of 1935 granted Head Chiefs the authority to supervise tax collection. The Native Authority (Amendment) Ordinance of 1944 introduced a system of informal councils into the Native Authority Organization, which replaced Head Chiefs as solo NAs. The Protectorate Treasuries Ordinance of 1945 subsequently introduced Native Treasuries.

## D SCOPE CONDITIONS AND ADDITIONAL CASES

In our theory and historical background sections, we highlight that the costs of imposing more direct forms of rule were prohibitively expensive in most of British Africa. However, in certain parts of the continent, the development of sizable white settlements created pressure to prioritize the settlers rather than Africans in local administration. We first analyze colonies within our statistical example to explain why certain districts were excluded from Native Administration, focusing mainly but not exclusively on areas of European settlement or corporate interests. We then analyze three cases excluded from our statistical sample. Two were major settler colonies, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, which were governed through distinct local institutions that reduced the autonomy of Africans. Nevertheless, until hardline governments took power after WWII, councils were more important than individual chiefs for administering the African population. The third, Sierra Leone, came under Native Administration. However, the Hailey volumes and surveys lack sufficient detail to characterize local institutions and Native Treasuries (in contrast to the colonies within our statistical sample). In Sierra Leone, the British largely replicated precolonial institutions. Colonially recognized chiefs in Mendeland and Temneland lacked legally recognized councils, but this institutional arrangement reflected their more authoritarian precolonial polities. Across all three cases, the larger states were reduced in power and territorial scope — Zulu in South Africa, Ndebele in Southern Rhodesia, and various in Sierra Leone.

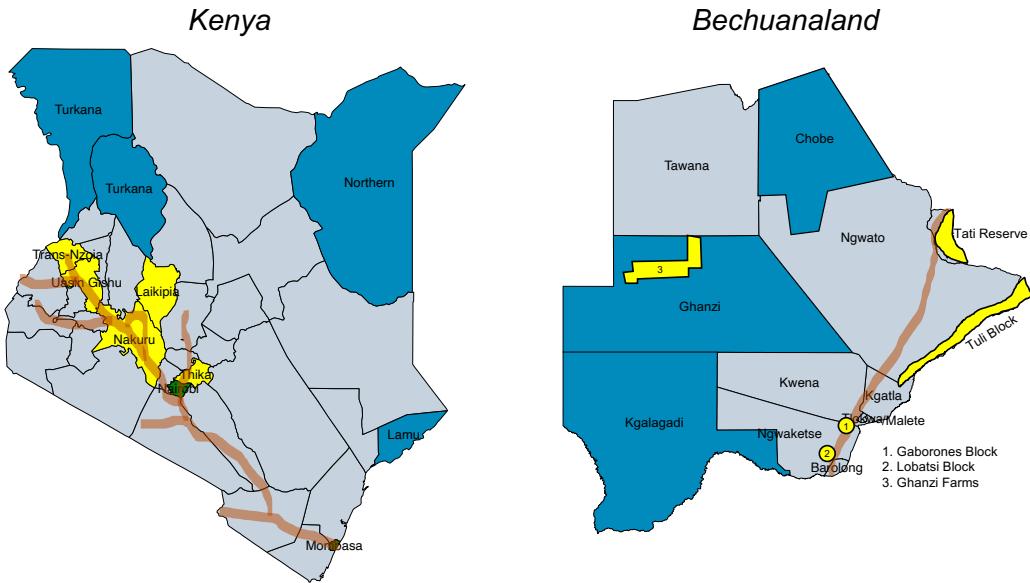
### D.1 AREAS EXCLUDED FROM NATIVE ADMINISTRATION

Among the colonies within our statistical sample, certain districts were excluded from Native Administration. Nearly all these fit into at least one of four categories: major European settlements, mining and other primary-product interests, urban areas, and desert areas. For the following analysis, we draw from the same colonies as in our statistical sample. However, we switch from our main unit in the statistical results — Native Treasuries, which presuppose the existence of Native Administration — to districts. The overwhelming majority of districts within these colonies were included within Native Administration, but some were not; this is the variation we seek to explain here. Kenya and Bechuanaland were the most heterogeneous colonies with regard to districts excluded from Native Administration. We plot their districts and other concession areas in Figure D.1, which we explain in the subsequent text.

**Major European settlements.** Areas of European settlement created special interests that mitigated against status quo institutions. Settlers sought to gain concessions for themselves while forcibly removing Africans from their land and subjugating them to work on European farms. The more standard form of indirect rule would have worked against rather than toward these goals.

In addition to South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (discussed below), sizable parts of Kenya were reserved for European settlement. The Rift Valley area in southwestern Kenya had favorable conditions for European settlement: sufficient rainfall and elevation, and low tsetse fly prevalence (Mosley 1983; Paine 2019b). The Kenya railway, which connected Mombasa on the coast to Lake Victoria in the interior, ran through the Rift Valley. European settlements followed the path of the railway (Jedwab, Kerby and Moradi 2017), as highlighted in Figure D.1.

**Figure D.1: Districts Excluded from Native Administration**



*Notes:* Districts with Native Treasuries (Local Native Councils in Kenya, Tribal Reserves or Native Areas in Bechuanaland) in light blue; all others lacked NTs. Areas reserved for European settlement or other concessions in yellow. Districts with major urban sites in green. Areas of very low population density in darker blue (except Lamu, which is an outlier). Railways in brown.

The following table presents more detail on patterns of land allocation and population, using information from the 1931 census. The districts are sorted by the percentage of land alienated for Europeans. Of the eleven districts in which Europeans alienated at least one-quarter of the land, all but Kiambu were excluded from Native Administration (that is, no Local Native Council or Native Treasury was created in such districts). Among the ten excluded districts, the European percentage of the population was at least 1% and the percentage of land allocated to African native reserves was low or zero.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere in Kenya, the European population was tiny, the majority of the land was reserved for Africans, and the area was governed by Local Native Councils which controlled Native Treasuries. The only exceptions besides the settler territories were areas of very low population density, which we discuss later.

<sup>22</sup>Africans lived on Crown lands as well as lands alienated for Europeans, but lacked certain legal rights that they possessed in native reserves.

**Table D.1: Europeans in Kenya**

Province	District	% Eu. land	% Eu. pop.	% Afr. land	LNC
Central	Nairobi	100% <sup>a</sup>	8.36%	0.0%	✗
Rift Valley	Uasin Gishu	79.9%	7.77%	2.5%	✗
Rift Valley	Trans-Nzoia	76.6%	3.91%	1.0%	✗
Nyanza	Kisumu-Londiani	70.8%	2.67%	0.0%	✗
Rift Valley	Nivasha	66.3%	3.00%	6.6%	✗
Rift Valley	Nakuru	63.3%	7.56%	0.3%	✗
Central	North Nyeri	47.8%	7.65%	0.0%	✗
Coast	Mombasa	47.2%	2.12%	0.9%	✗
Central	Kiambu	38.7%	0.04%	37.2%	✓
Rift Valley	Laikipia-Samburu	37.9%	2.73%	0.0%	✗
Rift Valley	Ravine	26.9%	1.18%	0.0%	✗
Central	Fort Hall	24.3%	0.04%	48.3%	✓
Nyanza	Kericho	17.7%	0.28%	50.8%	✓
Central	Machakos	15.5%	0.10%	43.0%	✓
Rift Valley	Nandi	11.2%	0.14%	88.7%	✓
Coast	Kwale/Digo	6.2%	0.07%	62.3%	✓
Coast	Kilifi & Malindi	5.4%	0.05%	47.4%	✓
Coast	Teita/Voi	4.0%	0.19%	5.4%	✓
Masai	Narok/Ngong/Kajiado	2.3%	0.19%	96.9%	✓
Coast	Lamu	1.3%	0.06%	0.0%	✗
Nyanza	North Nyanza	0.7%	0.03%	89.1%	✓
Rift Valley	West Suk	0.5%	0.03%	99.5%	✓
Central	Kitui	0.2%	0.01%	32.3%	✓
Rift Valley	Baringo	0.1%	0.03%	98.0%	✓
Nyanza	Central Nyanza	0.0%	0.02%	72.7%	✓
Coast	Tana River	0.0%	0.05%	1.9%	✓
Northern	Turkana	0.0%	0.02%	0.0%	✗
Northern	Northern Frontier	0.0%	0.02%	0.1%	partial <sup>b</sup>
Central	South Nyeri	0.0%	0.03%	64.2%	✓
Nyanza	South Nyanza	0.0%	0.02%	78.7%	✓
Central	Embu	0.0%	0.02%	82.9%	✓
Central	Meru	0.0%	0.02%	92.3%	✓
Rift Valley	Elgeyo-Marakwet	0.0%	0.01%	96.2%	✓

Source: *Report on the Census Enumeration of the Non-Native Population Made in the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya on the Night of the 6th March, 1931.*

Notes: “% Eu. land” is the percentage of “Alienated land” in the census; the purpose of alienating land was to reserve it for Europeans. “% Eu. pop.” is the percentage of Europeans in the total population. “% Afr. land” is the percentage of land reserved for “Native Occupation” in the census, which is synonymous with the Native Reserves discussed in Hailey (1950a). The vast majority of land not included in these categories was either Unalienated Crown Land or Forest Reserve.

<sup>a</sup> The census does not disaggregate the allocation of land in Nairobi. However, the entire district was classified as a township governed by Europeans, and therefore we classify 100% of the land as reserved for Europeans.

<sup>b</sup> See the analysis below of areas with very low population density for a discussion of LNCs in the Northern Frontier district.

Europeans also gained concessions in certain parts of Bechuanaland. Leading Tswana chiefs in the protectorate, such as Khama of the Ngwato, voluntarily acquiesced to British protection amid threats from the Boers and the Ndebele king, Lobengula. In return, they enabled the British South African Company (BSAC) to build a railway by making various concessions along their eastern frontier: the Gaborones, Lobatsi, and Tuli Blocks (Hailey 1953, 200, 310). Whereas Africans were granted small reserves in Gaborenes (Tlokwa and Malete) and Lobatsi (Barolong Farms), the very sparsely populated Tuli Block (total population of around 500) was entirely reserved for Europeans. Farther west, the BSAC sponsored the Kalahari Expedition to settle Europeans on farms in the Ghanzi area near German Southwest Africa, thereby creating a buffer against German expansion (Hailey 1953, 198, 243–44). Although small in absolute terms, Europeans comprised a relatively large percentage of the population in all these areas. Later we discuss areas of very low population density that were governed without Native Treasuries.

**Table D.2: Europeans in Bechuanaland**

District	% Eu. land	% Eu. pop.	% Afr. land	Native Reserve
Tuli Block	100.0%	21.80%	0.0%	✗
Francistown (Tati)	83.4%	2.41%	16.6%	✓
Lobatsi	39.2%	4.85%	65.1%	✓
Gaborones	35.2%	1.57%	49.6%	✓
Ghanzi	4.3%	3.11%	0.0%	✗
Kgatleng	0.0%	0.34%	100.0%	✓
Kweneng	0.0%	0.30%	100.0%	✓
Ngamiland	0.0%	0.33%	100.0%	✓
Ngwaketse	0.0%	0.13%	100.0%	✓
Ngwato	0.0%	0.50%	100.0%	✓
Chobe	0.0%	1.14%	0.0%	✗
Kgalagadi	0.0%	0.25%	0.0%	✗

Sources: Hailey (1953, 149–51) and the map in Hitchcock et al. (2017).

**Mining and other primary-product interests.** Areas of extractable mineral wealth attracted interest from European firms and created incentives to rule more directly. This occurred, for example, in New Spain (Mexico) and Peru (Garfias and Sellars 2024). The British governed similarly in their one such area of Africa: the Copperbelt in the Western Province of Northern Rhodesia. The copper boom began in the 1920s (Gann 1964, 204–212), and by the end of the colonial period the value of its copper production dwarfed the value of primary products anywhere else in British Africa. To show this, we calculated the value of cash crop production at the district level for all colonies within our statistical sample. The first four rows of Table D.3 list the districts with the highest value of primary-product production.<sup>23</sup> Buganda, Birim, and Ondo all engaged in valuable cash-crop production. But none came close to matching the value of the Copperbelt — and these other three were each governed by Native Administration. In the bottom three rows of the table, we list the three other main primary products in British Africa at the colony level, cocoa and palm

<sup>23</sup>This includes some aggregation to properly count unified areas: four geographically small districts in the Copperbelt (Kitwe, Chingola, Luanshya, and Mufulira), three districts in Buganda, and all districts within the Ondo Division.

oil production in Nigeria and cocoa in the Gold Coast. The tiny Copperbelt region produced more export value than any of the main cash crops for these entire, large colonies.

**Table D.3: Production Value in Major Primary-Product Areas**

Colony	District(s)	Area (sq km)	Products	Output value	NT
N Rhodesia	Copperbelt	5,413	Copper	\$236M	✗
Uganda	Buganda	19,600	Coffee (mainly)	\$65M	✓
Gold Coast	Birim	6,008	Cocoa	\$42M	✓
Nigeria	Ondo	8,276	Cocoa, palm oil	\$34M	✓
Nigeria	All	965,221	Cocoa	\$149M	✓
Gold Coast	Colony/Ashanti	143,405	Cocoa	\$128M	✓
Nigeria	All	965,221	Palm oil	\$111M	✓

*Notes:* Source data from the map in Hance, Kotschar and Peterec (1961); digitized and geolocated to the district level by authors. Production value is in millions of USD.

Earlier, we discussed land concessions to Europeans in Bechuanaland. One, the Tati Concession, was explicitly for minerals. This lightly populated area attracted the interest of European gold prospectors in the 1860s. Europeans first gained a concession from Lobengula, the Ndebele king, in 1870, and in 1888 the Tati Concession Mining and Exploration Company acquired the title. This area was explicitly separated from the sphere of influence of the British South Africa Company, who subsequently defeated Lobengula to establish effective occupation of Southern Rhodesia. The Tati district thus became part of Bechuanaland; much of the Tati district remained reserved for Europeans, although a small Native Reserve was created as well (Hailey 1953, 230–37).

Besides the aforementioned cases in Kenya, Bechuanaland, and the Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, only a handful of districts (listed in Table D.4) had more than one-third of their land alienated for Europeans. Africans in these areas were governed by Native Administration despite the influence of Europeans. In Swaziland, European settlers held 49% of land across the entire territory (Hailey 1953, 414; Bonner 1983), and their presence was roughly evenly spread out across the six districts (see the map in Kuper 1952). However, due to the territory's small size, all of Swaziland was governed by a single Native Administration headed by its traditional leader, the king of the Dlamini clan. In Nyasaland, a large fraction of the land was alienated for Europeans in three southern districts. All were areas of tobacco plantations, in each case managed by a few dozen Europeans.<sup>24</sup> In the Mazabuka district in the Southern Province of Northern Rhodesia, over one-third of the land was reserved for Europeans in an area near the railway and with favorable soil conditions for maize production and low tsetse fly prevalence (Hailey 1950b, 112–13). Finally, in the Gold Coast Colony, approximately one-third of the land was ceded to European gold miners, but Native Administrations were created throughout the territory (Hailey 1951a, 221).

<sup>24</sup>These were also the areas of Nyasaland with the largest European populations in both absolute (several hundred) and relative terms (between 0.31% and 0.92%). Land numbers from Hailey and population figures from *Report on the census of Nyasaland, 1931*.

**Table D.4: Other Areas of High European Land Alienation**

Colony	District	% Eu. land	Product	NT
Nyasaland	Zomba	70%	Tobacco	✓
Nyasaland	Cholo	67%	Tobacco	✓
Swaziland	All	49%	Speculative	✓
Northern Rhodesia	Mazabuka	37%	Maize	✓
Nyasaland	Blantyre	33%	Tobacco	✓
Gold Coast	Colony (all)	33%	Gold	✓

**Urban areas.** Densely populated urban areas also created difficulties for implementing indirect rule, in particular where Europeans were influential. Some sites were excluded entirely from districts governed by a Native Authority: Mombasa and Nairobi in Kenya, the Copperbelt area in Northern Rhodesia, Lagos in Nigeria, and Bathurst in the Gambia. Other urban areas were governed in tandem with Native Authorities, although usually through municipal or town councils regulated by distinct urban governance ordinances. Town councils were typically responsible for providing public goods such as sanitation, electricity, water works, education, roads, hospitals, and the maintenance of markets and buildings.<sup>25</sup>

Europeans dominated town councils in coastal urban areas, many of which had been under colonial control prior to the Scramble beginning in the 1880s. Until after World War II, the typical composition of these councils was a majority of official members (i.e., Europeans who were legally required to vote as instructed by the colonial government) and a minority of unofficial members representing different interests, including some Africans. Three coastal sites in British Africa were governed by town councils and excluded from the jurisdiction of any Native Authority: Lagos in Nigeria, Bathurst in the Gambia, and Mombasa in Kenya.<sup>26</sup> In the older coastal towns in the Gold Coast (Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi), the town councils were largely autonomous in the urban area despite belonging to a larger jurisdiction governed by a Native Authority. Town councils in the three Gold Coast towns dated back to the 1890s. During debates in the 1920s, their members refused to allow representation on the councils for Native Authority chiefs, whose “suitability as an electorate was being criticized by the educated and progressive members of the community” (Hailey 1951a, 217).

Europeans dominated some urban areas in the interior as well. Nairobi (population of 161,000 in the 1940s) was created by Europeans and was placed in its own district and excluded from the jurisdiction of any Native Authority. This was but one area of European settlement throughout Kenya’s Rift Valley, discussed earlier. The Northern Rhodesian Copperbelt, also discussed earlier, was governed similarly. Other invented sites, like Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia, had

<sup>25</sup>For every colony, the Hailey volumes describe urban governance institutions. The following draws from this material.

<sup>26</sup>Starting in the 1940s, a tiny fraction of Mombasa gained a Local Native Council and associated Native Treasury. According to Hailey (1950a, 110), “[t]he Freretown Settlement Council administers the small settlement of Freretown, formerly controlled by the Church Missionary Society. All the inhabitants are Christians.” In 1947, the total expenditures of the Freretown NT was £38, which was about one-sixth of one percent of the average expenditure amount by LNCs within Kenya’s four main provinces, £22,316. Given its exiguous LNC and NT, we consider Mombasa to be outside the Native Administration system.

town councils but were too minor to warrant separate administration (population of 12,000 in the 1940s).

Other interior urban areas were long-standing centers of African states. Here, Native Authorities engaged in joint governance with town councils. In Kumasi (Ashanti), “the management of town affairs can indeed be said to be shared between the Council and the Native Authorities. While in certain matters the population is subject to Municipal Rules, in others it is subject to the Rules and Orders issued by the Native Authority and civil suits and minor criminal cases come before the Native Authority Courts” (Hailey 1951a, 249). In places like Kano in Northern Nigeria, “[i]t has always been the policy of the Administration to leave the control of the urban areas to the Native Authorities within whose jurisdiction they lie. . . . the Native Authority Ordinance makes special provision for the issue of Orders and the passing of Rules applicable to urban conditions. Where the Native Authority administers an important town, it has been usual to place one of the Councillors in charge of it, the executive management being entrusted to a District Head, to whom the Ward Heads are responsible” (Hailey 1951a, 87). In Kampala, “[t]here is no special Native Court for urban cases, and in practice most of the cases in which Africans are concerned are dealt with by the neighbouring Kibuga gombolola Court, which is part of the normal judicial organization of the Native Government of Buganda” (Hailey 1950a, 74).

**Desert areas.** Indirect rule via Native Administration reduced European administrative costs. However, in desert areas of low population density, the scarcity of people to administer obviated the need for establishing even these minimalist institutions. During the partition of Africa, the British famously conceded areas of “light land” to the French while reserving more populated areas for themselves.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, northern Kenya was arid, including the Chalbi desert; and southwestern Bechuanaland consisted of the Kalahari Desert. These areas (along with some parts of Northern Rhodesia) had the lowest population density of any districts within the colonies in our sample. Kenya’s Northern Province was originally split into the Turkana and Northern Frontier districts before they were combined in 1949; Turkana lacked any Local Native Councils and Native Treasuries, as did parts of the Northern Frontier. And, as discussed earlier, the areas of the Northern Frontier with councils gained them very late and their expenditures were tiny. The lightly populated parts of Bechuanaland lacked Native Reserves, including the Kgaladadi and Ghanzi districts in the Kalahari Desert, the Chobe district in the northeast, and the aforementioned Tuli Block. These areas (except Tuli) consisted almost entirely of Crown Lands in which Africans lacked certain legal rights, although a handful of headmen were recognized in each place as constituting Native Authorities and/or oversaw Native Courts.

Table D.5 lists every district among colonies in our sample with a population density of less than one person per square kilometer. For comparison, the median across all districts within our statistical sample is over 12.

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<sup>27</sup>This was the phrasing used by British Prime Minister Salisbury in 1890 after the initial border division between what became northwest Nigeria and French West Africa (Flint 1960, 166–67).

**Table D.5: Districts with Lowest Population Density**

Colony	District	Population	Area (sq. km.)	Pop. Dens.	NT
Bechuanaland	Ghanzi	4,890	180,328	0.03	✗
Bechuanaland	Kgalagadi	6,874	155,011	0.04	✗
Bechuanaland	Chobe	5,095	98,031	0.05	✗
Bechuanaland	Tuli Block	414	4,999	0.08	✗
Bechuanaland	Ngamiland	38,724	89,355	0.43	✓
Northern Rhodesia	Kasempa	49,000	74,022	0.66	✓
Kenya	Northern	196,000	270,524	0.72	partial
Kenya	Tana River	21,000	25,817	0.81	✓
Northern Rhodesia	Livingstone	27,000	30,821	0.88	✓
Northern Rhodesia	Mpika	38,000	41,777	0.91	✓
Bechuanaland	Ngwato	100,987	108,987	0.93	✓

## D.2 SOUTH AFRICA

The prevalence of white settlers in the British colonies of Cape and Natal (later incorporated into the Union of South Africa along with the Boer republics Transvaal and Orange) yielded distinct governance patterns than we have seen for areas of British Africa under Native Administration. Africans never gained a comparable level of autonomy and larger states like the Zulu were dismantled rather than used as the basis for indirect rule. Nonetheless, Europeans delegated some degree of governance authority to Africans in rural areas with a smaller European presence, and — similar to areas under Native Administration — the institutional arrangements tended to follow precolonial precedents by empowering councils rather than individual chiefs. Local African governance was transformed only after the imposition of apartheid after World War II, when chiefs were empowered in return for exerting effort to dampen African mobilization against the “wind of change” sweeping through colonial Africa. The result was the type of “decentralized despotism” described by Mamdani (1996) and others. However, this was a highly atypical arrangement in an area not controlled by a European metropole.

**Precolonial political institutions.** Contemporary South Africa consisted of several large cultural areas prior to European expansion and colonial rule, although “[a]ll South African forms of government share certain basic features” (Schapera 1956, 208). In the nineteenth century, the Nguni peoples were located in modern Natal and down into the Eastern Cape, including important groups such as the Xhosa, Swazis, and Zulus. Another major grouping was the Sotho peoples, whose descendants formed the modern states of Lesotho (Basotho peoples) and Botswana (Tswana peoples). The 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.<sup>28</sup>

Constrained precolonial states predominated in the area, as we have shown was common across Africa. 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.<sup>29</sup> 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

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<sup>28</sup>We 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.

<sup>29</sup>See Duminy (1989) and Eldredge (2018) on the emergence of the Zulu state and Eldredge (2015) for a regional and comparative perspective.

or reject.” Consequently, the popular council “exercises the greatest check upon his behaviour.”<sup>30</sup> 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.”<sup>31</sup> 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.”<sup>32</sup>

**European administration before apartheid.** South Africa differs from our core cases because extensive European settlement yielded more direct rule. European magistrates and, later, Native Commissioners exercised executive authority at the local level. One consequence of colonial interference, though, was to weaken the powers of chiefs. Moreover, laws regarding African affairs tended to focus more on councils than 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. Similar to Local Native Councils in Kenya, these councils encompassed areas much larger than traditional polities, although some works posit closer 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).

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.<sup>33</sup> In 1920, a uniform

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<sup>30</sup>“His” with the exception of the famous kingdom of the Lovedu, which was ruled by a Rain Queen (Krike and Krike 1943).

<sup>31</sup>Lestrade (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).

<sup>32</sup>This assessment is overwhelmingly shared by the existing scholarly literature and standard textbooks. 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 imbito (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).

<sup>33</sup>In the pre-Union period, British administrators played a more important role in the colonies neighboring

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 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).

Hailey’s reference to Natal reflects that the chiefs in Zululand — the most powerful African state in the region — were able to maintain greater authority. The Zulu king Cetshwayo was initially exiled after his defeat in 1879, but he returned in 1883 and his son Dinuzulu succeeded him in 1884. The British annexed Zululand and in 1887 incorporated it into Natal in 1897. Dinuzulu’s son Solomon kaDinuzulu succeeded him in 1913. The Zulu state was fragmented into over a dozen chieftaincies after 1879; while neither Dinuzulu nor his son were recognized as Zulu king, they maintained much of their traditional powers and legitimacy and resisted the implementation of the District Council in Natal (Marks 1986; MacKinnon 2001). After Solomon’s death in 1933, the regent Mshiyeni gained recognition as “Acting Paramount Chief of the Zulu” until the Apartheid regime recognized Solomon kaDinuzulu’s son Cyprian Bhekuzulu as the Zulu king in 1948.

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

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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).

the extent to which the councils wielded authority.<sup>34</sup> The 1927 legislation restored some power to chiefs, yet they continued to lack powers common elsewhere for chiefs in British Africa.

**“Decentralized despotism” under apartheid.** In 1948, the National Party gained power and imposed repressive apartheid policies. At this point, this case departed sharply from the core scope conditions of our theory. Resistance by Africans prompted the National Party to govern Africans in a more authoritarian direction whereby loyal chiefs were actively propped up as agents of the administration (Posel 2011). Local agents now needed to play a more active role to keep the peace, which created a premium on loyalty to the colonial project. European arms substituted for traditional sources of legitimacy as a means of efficiency to enable agents to achieve these goals.<sup>35</sup> This yielded governance patterns conforming to Mamdani’s description of “decentralized despotism,” albeit in a highly atypical context.

After the onset of apartheid, 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 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

<sup>34</sup>Hailey (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.

<sup>35</sup>Africans 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.

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 Matazima 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 Matazima, 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).<sup>36</sup> Yet the case of Buthelezi, who was the traditional prime minister of the Zulu kingdom, 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).<sup>37</sup>

In sum, South African governance eventually converged upon a pattern that resembled colonially created "decentralized despotism." However, 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.3 SOUTHERN RHODESIA (ZIMBABWE)

Patterns of African governance in Southern Rhodesia resembled those in South Africa. Throughout the colonial period, Africans had less autonomy and larger states were dismantled (Ndebele). Limited delegation to traditional institutions was common in the rural areas, although it is difficult to discern from the sources whether chiefs or councils tended to be more important. More authoritarian governance through propped-up chiefs became prevalent only after the hardline Rhodesian Front came to power in 1962.

**Precolonial political institutions.** Prior to the colonial period, Southern Rhodesia 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

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<sup>36</sup>Murray (1992) presents case studies from the Orange Free State.

<sup>37</sup>Parcells (2018) is an interesting study of the impact of the 1951 Act on Zulu chiefs.

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).<sup>38</sup> 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).

Ndebele rulers faced substantial constraints on the exercise of power. 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 were divided into many different polities but appeared to have shared some important characteristics.<sup>39</sup> “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 before the Rhodesian Front.** Governance patterns in colonial Southern Rhodesia resembled 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 largely failed to contain nationalist agitation.

The British South Africa Company governed Southern Rhodesia until 1923, when the colony became self-governing. Henceforth, white settlers enjoyed a degree of autonomy from the British government and Colonial Office over the design of political institutions absent 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).

<sup>38</sup> Kuper and van Velsen (1954, 47–53) provides a condensed history of the migration and founding of the Ndebele state in Zimbabwe.

<sup>39</sup> Beach (1980, 1994) and Holleman (1951) provide seminal overviews of Shona history and society.

The autonomous settler government rejected the model of indirect rule prevalent in British Africa. White settlers sought control over the African population to force them to work on the white-owned farms. Thus, they exhibited more transformative goals than was typical of British colonialism, and consequently governed differently in rural areas. As Howman, a senior administrator in the Ministry of Native Affairs, put it, “There was no building up of ‘native authorities,’ no ‘tribal treasures,’ 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 (1974, 124) assessed that “Rhodesia never adopted the theory of ‘indirect rule’” like the colonies administered by the British Colonial Service. 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 Southern Rhodesia, the opposite happened. After the Second Matabele War in 1896,<sup>40</sup> 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). This did not change in subsequent decades.

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

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<sup>40</sup>This was known as the First Chimurenga in Zimbabwe; see Ranger (1967) for a seminal analysis.

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 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.

**"Decentralized despotism" under hardline rule.** 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; the loyalty of such chiefs became paramount while European arms promoted their efficiency at suppressing mobilization. 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).

Our summary of this case is similar to South Africa. In contrast to Native Authorities elsewhere in British Africa, 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.4 SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone exhibits similar scope conditions as the cases analyzed in the article; unlike South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, it was not a settler colony. The main difference is that we lack systematic data from the Hailey volumes or surveys to include Sierra Leone in the quantitative analysis, and thus here we instead draw from qualitative historical sources. The British delegated high degrees of autonomy to traditionally legitimate authorities and institutions, in particular by allowing the selection of colonial Paramount Chiefs among the same ruling families who dominated precolonial politics. Councils tended to be less important during the colonial period than we have seen elsewhere in British Africa, although this reflected the more authoritarian forms of rule among the larger precolonial states in Sierra Leone. Moreover, under colonial rule, chiefs lost important powers as the largest territorial jurisdictions were reduced in size and they lost control over the means of coercion.

**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.<sup>41</sup> Although leaders were checked in some important ways, constraints were less institutionalized than in many precolonial African states.

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<sup>41</sup>For 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).

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,<sup>42</sup> “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 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

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<sup>42</sup>Note that Galinhas is often spelled Gallinas, and is alternatively referred to as Vai.

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 suprachieftaincy 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 Gbatekaka 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 highly 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.** British administration relied on traditionally legitimate agents, although they weakened the larger ruling states. In the 1890s, the British created a precocious and independent model of indirect rule in which they broke up the 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 general pattern was not one of inventing authoritarian chiefs.

Colonial administration spread into the interior of Sierra Leone gradually in the 19th century as British officials signed numerous 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.<sup>43</sup> 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 chieftaincies reveals that the paramount chieftaincies were much smaller. The paramount chieftaincies 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," alternatively referred to as "crowning houses" (Fenton 1932, 3). There is an almost one-to-one mapping between the 19th century countries that collectively formed the Kpaa-Mende state and modern chieftaincies 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 chieftaincy. 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 chieftaincies did not become institutionalized until the 1930s. In 1937, systematic

<sup>43</sup>Krio 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.

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 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 institutionalization of chieftaincies under colonialism 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).<sup>44</sup>

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 article, for example Eastern Nigeria or Kenya, Sierra Leone did not have a system of councils formally recognized in the colonial *Gazettes* 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

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<sup>44</sup>See also McCulloch (1950, 27).

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.”

Ultimately, colonial interference empowered chiefs in some ways and constrained them in others. 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. Chieftaincy is still a vibrant institution in Sierra Leone even through colonial rule ended over six decades ago. 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.<sup>45</sup> 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, Sierra Leone confirms our main theoretical expectation the colonizers would delegate authority to local agents with traditional sources of legitimacy. Other aspects of this case are more complicated, but at best constitute mixed evidence for the idea that colonial rule routinely empowered despotic chiefs. Rulers of larger states were undoubtedly less powerful than their precolonial predecessors, due to their reduced territorial jurisdiction and lost means of coercion. At the level of the lower-level country chiefs, the British did not innovate institutions like the Local Native Councils in Kenya but nor did they create Warrant Chiefs as in Southern Nigeria. Many countervailing effects were at work; some led to more authoritarian practices, but many others worked in the opposite direction.

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<sup>45</sup><https://afrobarometer.org/countries/sierra-leone-0>.

## E EXCERPTS FROM CODEBOOK

Here we present excerpts from the detailed coding notes we compiled for each case to code both precolonial and Native Authority institutions. The case notes will be available in full upon publication.

### E.1 PRECOLONIAL INSTITUTIONS

Our information about precolonial institutions draws heavily from anthropological accounts compiled during the colonial era. We briefly address concerns about our sources before providing excerpts from the codebook. Although the use of such sources has become standard practice in social scientific work on precolonial states in Africa, some criticize this trend because many dates of observation occurred after significant economic change and European intervention had taken place (Henderson and Whatley 2014). This undoubtedly created challenges to constructing accurate accounts. However, we believe that, if anything, the bias induced by inaccuracies would tend to go against our characterization that institutional constraints were widespread in precolonial Africa. 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 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.

#### E.1.1 Bornu (Northern Nigeria)

**Coding:** Bornu, ruled by the Shehu, had become an *authoritarian 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).

#### E.1.2 Buganda (Uganda)

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

**Details:**

- The elite class of bataka (clan, sub-clan, and lineage heads) 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,” including the bataka elites, 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 elites at will, including for positions that were previously hereditary. “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.”

**E.1.3 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).

#### E.1.4 Barotse (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 1950b, 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 1950b, 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).

## E.2 NATIVE AUTHORITY INSTITUTIONS

### E.2.1 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.”

### E.2.2 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.”

### E.2.3 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.”

### E.2.4 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 chiefdom 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.”

### **E.2.5 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.** The following is quoted in 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 Abora, 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, Aduamoa
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.”

#### **E.2.6 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 mainly of elites. The exceptions were the nine Asafoatse-ngwa and their leader, the Asafoatse. As described in Simensen (1975) for the nearby state of Kwahu, the precolonial asafo was comprised of commoners and “was said to have originated primarily for military purposes and was integrated into the traditional authority structure of the Kwahu state.” Throughout the colonial period, the asafo agitated for their incorporation onto the Native Authority council, which elites dominated. They did not secure their inclusion after World War II.

**Details.** The following is quoted in 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.”

### **E.2.7 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 ‘chieffy’ 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.”

### **E.2.8 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.”

### **E.2.9 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.”

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