The AEHN newsletter brings you up to date with current and forthcoming events in African Economic History. It gives you a chance to publicise your new research and opportunities to the right audience.

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If you want to publicize your own research, events or organize a panel for an upcoming conference, please send a message to aehnetwork@gmail.com and I will include your news in our quarterly round up.

Best regards,

Johan Fourie
on behalf of the African Economic History Network
News and Announcements

Statement by AEHN Board

The African Economic History Network (AEHN) endorses the National Economic Association (NEA) statement denouncing all forms of anti-Black racism and violence against the Black community in the U.S. and globally. As an international community of scholars on sub-Saharan Africa, we are committed to the fight against anti-Black racism and emphatically condemn violence against Black people and the Black community.

Working Papers Series

If you have a paper you would like to submit for our consideration please send us an email. For questions regarding the WPS please contact Erik Green at Erik.Green@ekh.lu.se.

Frontiers in Economic History Blog

Frontiers in African Economic History – AEHN’s blog – diffuses research-based content and promotes discussion concerning the study of long-term African development. The blog provides authors a platform to disseminate easily accessible summaries (700 words) of their recently published research (articles, book chapters, book reviews, theses), publishes interviews with key scholars in the field, and discusses relevant developments. We welcome blog contributions and suggestions. Please contact the editors (Felix Meier zu Selhausen, Michiel de Haas and Kate Frederick) to discuss possible posts at: frontiers.aehn@gmail.com.


Do public sector employees in Africa form a disproportionate share of the richest ranks of society? In the early independence era, many scholars argued that an oversized bureaucratic elite was a hindrance to development as it crowded out entrepreneurial and commercial activity. This piece examines this charge in the Kenyan and Tanzanian contexts, and traces how the relative economic standing of public sector employees declined over the course of the postcolonial era.

Michiel de Haas. Labour market formation in post-slavery Africa: Ruanda-Urundi migrants and Buganda’s low wage economy. (1 June 2020).

Between 1920 and 1960, every year tens of thousands of people migrated voluntarily and on their own initiative from Ruanda-Urundi to Buganda. In this blog post I explain why migrants were willing to work for low wages in Buganda’s thriving cash crop economy by highlighting the exceptional labour abundance in the migrant sending regions and the benefits of circular migration.

Currently Africa, accounting in May 2020 for only 0.8% of confirmed cases and 0.6% of deaths worldwide, is marginal to global analysis of coronavirus. This situation seems likely to change, given the fragility of African health systems, the prevalence of underlying health conditions such...


The authors evaluate the short-term responses of African governments to the COVID-19 pandemic and reflect on the far more complicated issue of developing a long-term strategy to simultaneously cope with the virus and avoid the potentially far-reaching economic consequences of a lengthy lockdown.

Postponed:
Due to covid-19, the 15th Annual Meeting of the African Economic History Network has been postponed to 2021!

Get in touch!

If you want to publicize your own research, events or organize a panel for an upcoming conference, please send a message to aehnetwork@gmail.com and I will include your news in our bi-monthly round up. The next issue will appear in early November.
NEW RESEARCH IN AFRICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY

For the bookshelf


Debates about the origins and effects of European rule in the non-European world have animated the field of economic history since the 1850s. This pioneering text provides a concise and accessible resource that introduces key readings, builds connections between ideas and helps students to develop informed views of colonialism as a force in shaping the modern world.

With special reference to European colonialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in both Asia and Africa, this book:

• critically reviews the literature on colonialism and economic growth;
• covers a range of different methods of analysis;
• offers a comparative approach, as opposed to a collection of regional histories, deftly weaving together different themes.

With debates around globalization, migration, global finance and environmental change intensifying, this authoritative account of the relationship between colonialism and economic development makes an invaluable contribution to several distinct literatures in economic history.


Ayodeji Olukoju and Daniel Castillo Hidalgo. African Seaports and Maritime Economics in Historical Perspective

It is our pleasure to inform the African economic history community of the imminent publication of our book African Seaports and Maritime Economics in Historical Perspective (Palgrave, 2020). This edited collection of essays is part of the Palgrave Studies in Maritime Economics series. The book is edited by Prof. Ayodeji Olukoju (University of Lagos) and Dr Daniel Castillo Hidalgo (Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria).

This book takes a general approach to the economic and maritime history of the African continent through the analysis of the influence of ports and maritime trade from the 19th century to the present. This volume is published half a century after the reference work in the study of African ports edited by Brian Hoyle and David Hilling (1970).

The essays that make up this book documents the evolution of ports and transportation systems in Africa, attending to the development of the hinterland and the changes in economic and institutional structures in the long term. International specialists from different fields of study
such as history, geography or the economy of transport participate in this book.


Now in print

Stefania Galli and Klas Rönnbäck. Colonialism and rural inequality in Sierra Leone: an egalitarian experiment.

We analyze the level of inequality in rural Sierra Leone in the early colonial period. Previous research has suggested that the colony was established under highly egalitarian ideals. We examine whether these ideals also are reflected in the real distribution of wealth in the colony. We employ a newly assembled dataset extracted from census data in the colony in 1831. The results show that rural Sierra Leone exhibited one of the most equal distributions of wealth so far estimated for any preindustrial rural society.


Land distribution is considered to be one of the main contributors to inequality in pre-industrial societies. This article contributes to the debate on the origins of economic inequality in pre-industrial African societies by studying land inequality at a particularly early stage of African economic history. The research examines land distribution and inequality in land ownership among settlers in the Colony of Sierra Leone for three benchmark years over the first 40 years of its existence. The findings show that land inequality was low at the founding of the Colony but increased substantially over time. We suggest that this increase was enabled by a shift in the type of egalitarianism pursued by the colonial authorities, which was reflected in a change in the redistributive policy applied, which allowed later settlers to appropriate land more freely than had been previously possible.


Johannes Norling. Education and employment following apartheid protests.

Demonstrations, rallies, boycotts, and other forms of protest were common under apartheid in South Africa. Using a compilation of more than 150 geocoded protests between 1948 and 1990, this paper compares people affected and unaffected by protests at every age throughout childhood. Exposure to protests before age 14 was associated with 2.7 percent fewer years of completed schooling. This difference was larger following violent protests, and for African residents of South Africa. On the other hand, people who experienced protests as children were up to 6.9 percent more likely to be employed as adults. The paper considers social solidarity as a possible channel connecting protests to changes in education and employment, and finds that places that had more protests during apartheid had lower reported levels of trust and physical safety in the years after apartheid ended.

www.aehnetwork.org

**Laura Channing. Taxing Chiefs: The Design and Introduction of Direct Taxation in the Sierra Leone Protectorate, 1896–1914.**

This paper investigates the introduction of direct colonial taxation in the Sierra Leone Protectorate. By examining the local dynamics of colonial taxation policy, a more nuanced reading of colonial relationships can be reached, that appreciates the minitiae of colonial finance and sheds light on the fundamentally different terms on which people were incorporated into ‘states’ in empires compared to the western contexts that we encounter more commonly in the literature on taxation. While direct taxation has been given many non-revenue functions, including facilitating the extension of a cash economy and the promotion of wage labour, in this colonial context, the power of the colonial government to shape behaviour at an individual level was sacrificed in the interests of a reliable revenue policy in the context of a state with seriously limited administrative and financial capacity.


**Nina Kleinöder. A ‘Place in the Sun’? German Rails and Sleepers in Colonial Railway Building in Africa, 1905 to 1914**

The article “A ‘Place in the Sun’? German Rails and Sleepers in Colonial Railway Building in Africa, 1905 to 1914” takes up Bernhard von Bülow’s imperialistic claim that was closely connected to economic protagonists. Today, these protagonists are still fairly unknown and overlooked by (economic) colonial research. Therefore, the article is an approach to outline a first example for German entrepreneurial engagement in colonial railway building, by analyzing the case of Fried. Krupp/Friedrich-Alfred-Hütte. Looking at Krupp’s activities in (West-)Africa, the article explores which paths the German railway building followed, and tries to identify protagonists and their networks. We assume that the distinct markets of colonies were a vehicle for the internationalization of the firms involved. In questions of agency and as part of the imperial project, German enterprises participated in the colonization of Africa, but at the same time, they followed their own economic agenda.


**Working Papers**

**Warren C. Whatley. Up the River: International Slave Trades and the Transformations of Slavery in Africa.**

According to western observers, slavery was almost universal in Africa by the end of the slave trade era. I investigate the extent to which the international slave trades transformed the institutions of slavery in Africa. I use newly-developed data on travel time to estimate the inland reach of international slave demand. I find that societies in decentralized catchment zones adopted slavery to defend against further enslavement. More generally, I find that the international slave trades incentivized the evolution of aristocratic slave regimes characterized by slavery as a property system, polygyny as a family organization, inheritance of property within the nuclear family and hereditary succession in local politics. I discuss the implications for literatures on long-term legacies in African development.


Institutions of justice, like prisons, can be used to serve economic and other extra-judicial interests, with lasting deleterious effects. We study the effects on incarceration when prisoners are used primarily as a source of labor using evidence from British colonial Nigeria. We digitized sixty-five years of archival records on prisons from 1920 to 1995 and provide new estimates on the value of prison labor and the effects of labor demand shocks on incarceration. We find that prison labor was economically valuable to the colonial regime, making up a significant share of colonial public works expenditure. Positive economic shocks increased incarceration rates over the colonial period. This result is reversed in the postcolonial period, where prison labor is not a notable feature of state public finance. We document a significant reduction in contemporary trust in legal institutions, like police, in areas with high historic exposure to colonial imprisonment. The resulting reduction in trust is specific to legal institutions today.


Kate Ekama, Johan Fourie, Hans Heese and Lisa Martin. When Cape Slavery Ended: Evidence from a New Slave Emancipation Dataset.

The emancipation of the enslaved across the British Empire in 1834 is one of the major events in world history. Slave-owners received cash compensation for freeing the enslaved. In the Cape Colony, appraisers assigned a value to the former slaves which was later used to calculate the compensation. We transcribed 37,412 valuation records and matched them to compensation claims to compile a novel emancipation dataset. Our analysis of these individual-level records gives us a new picture of the enslaved population in the Cape at the time of the emancipation. We highlight the nature and distribution of the Cape valuations, noting differences between districts in the enslaved and slave-owner populations. This new dataset not only allows us to ask new questions about an understudied period in South African history, but can illuminate broader discussions about the impact of slavery on economic development, in South Africa and beyond.


Abel Brodeur, Marie Christelle Mabeu and Roland Pongou. Ancestral Norms, Legal Origins, and Female Empowerment.

A large literature documents persistent impacts of formal historical institutions. However, very little is known about how these institutions interact with ancestral traditions to determine long-term economic and social outcomes. This paper addresses this question by studying the persistent effect of legal origins on female economic empowerment in sub-Saharan Africa, and how ancestral cultural norms of gender roles may attenuate or exacerbate this effect. Taking advantage of the arbitrary division of ancestral ethnic homelands across countries with different legal origins, we directly compare women among the same ethnic group living in civil law countries and common law countries. We find that, on average, women in common law countries are significantly more educated, are more likely to work in the professional sector, and are less likely to marry at young age. However, these effects are either absent or significantly lower in settings where ancestral cultural norms do not promote women's rights and empowerment. In particular, we find little effect in bride price societies, patrilocal societies, and societies where women were not involved in agriculture in the past. Our findings imply that to be optimal, the design of formal institutions should account for ancestral traditions.
Andrew Kerr and Bruce McDougall. What is a firm census in a developing country? An answer from Ghana.

A burgeoning literature in economics uses firm census data to provide explanations for the very large differences in income per capita across countries. Much of this literature takes for granted that the coverage of firm censuses across and within countries is similar. In this paper we use data from four Ghanaian firm censuses conducted between 1962 and 2014 to show that the coverage of each census was very different. Treated as is, the four censuses show dramatic and unbelievable changes in the scale of manufacturing production in Ghana over this period. As a result, we examine and document important changes in what undertaking a “firm census” has meant over 50 years in Ghana, as well as documenting variation in the coverage of firm censuses from several other African countries. We show that it is possible to obtain a believable evolution of the firm size distribution in Ghana over the period for which we have firm microdata, but that this requires substantial work to understand how the coverage of each firm census has varied over time. Our paper shows that the coverage of firm censuses both within and across countries can differ quite dramatically, and that this can impact research that uses firm census data.


Francisco Marco-Gracia and Johan Fourie. Missing boys: Explaining South Africa’s unbalanced sex ratio, 1894-2011

At the beginning of the twentieth century the sex ratio for South Africans differed markedly according to racial group. Those for white South Africans remained almost invariable, with more boys than girls, while black South Africans had a clear majority of girls, a situation that the literature has almost completely overlooked. This high proportion of black girls was also present in most sub-Saharan countries. The reasons are still not completely clear. Sex ratios at birth show more births of boys than girls. Boys’ mortality was higher than girls’ mortality. But that does not explain why the twentieth-century black sex ratio was much lower than the sex ratios of pre-industrial European countries. We test several possible complementary explanations. The anomaly was caused, we argue, by a combination of higher mortality of boys and a preference for girls.


We empirically assess the effect of historical slavery on the African American family structure. Our hypothesis is that female single headship among blacks is more likely to emerge in association not with slavery per se, but with slavery in sugar plantations, since the extreme demographic and social conditions prevailing in the latter have persistently affected family formation patterns. By exploiting the exogenous variation in sugar suitability, we establish the following. In 1850, sugar suitability is indeed associated with extreme demographic outcomes within the slave population. Over the period 1880-1940, higher sugar suitability determines a higher likelihood of single female headship. The effect is driven by blacks and starts fading in 1920 in connection with the Great Migration. OLS estimates are complemented with a matching estimator and a fuzzy RDD. Over a linked sample between 1880 and 1930, we identify an even stronger intergenerational legacy of sugar planting for migrants. By 1990, the effect of sugar is replaced by that of slavery and the black share, consistent
with the spread of its influence through migration and intermarriage, and black incarceration emerges as a powerful mediator. By matching slaves' ethnic origins with ethnographic data we rule out any influence of African cultural traditions.


**Philip Roessler, Yannick I. Pengl, Robert Marty, Kyle Sorlie Titlow and Nicolas van de Walle. The Cash Crop Revolution, Colonialism and Legacies of Spatial Inequality: Evidence from Africa.**

We empirically assess the effect of historical slavery on the African American family structure. Our hypothesis is that female single headship among blacks is more likely to emerge in association not with slavery per se, but with slavery in sugar plantations, since the extreme demographic and social conditions prevailing in the latter have persistently affected family formation patterns. By exploiting the exogenous variation in sugar suitability, we establish the following. In 1850, sugar suitability is indeed associated with extreme demographic outcomes within the slave population. Over the period 1880-1940, higher sugar suitability determines a higher likelihood of single female headship. The effect is driven by blacks and starts fading in 1920 in connection with the Great Migration. OLS estimates are complemented with a matching estimator and a fuzzy RDD. Over a linked sample between 1880 and 1930, we identify an even stronger intergenerational legacy of sugar planting for migrants. By 1990, the effect of sugar is replaced by that of slavery and the black share, consistent with the spread of its influence through migration and intermarriage, and black incarceration emerges as a powerful mediator. By matching slaves' ethnic origins with ethnographic data we rule out any influence of African cultural traditions.


**Daniel de Kadt, Johan Fourie, Jan Greyling, Elie Murard and Johannes Norling. The causes and consequences of the 1918 influenza in South Africa.**

We study the demographic and economic correlates of the 1918 influenza or ‘Spanish flu’ that killed an estimated 6% of South Africa’s population. While the pandemic has received some attention in South African historiography and from social scientists in other contexts, little is known about its long-term impact on the country. Bringing together data from a range of new sources, including population and agricultural censuses, household surveys, and the voters’ rolls, we provide analyses that show, first, the factors that (do and do not) predict ‘flu mortality across South Africa’s magisterial districts, and, second, suggest some important consequences of the ‘flu. Our results reveal a large but short-lived demographic shock, and detectable, if small scale, long-term economic consequences.


**Anthony Atkinson. The distribution of top incomes in former British West Africa.**

This paper explores what can be learned about the upper tail of the income distribution in the British West African colonial territories, exploiting the administrative statistics on the operation of the colonial personal income tax. These statistics covering the middle of the twentieth century have definite limitations, but then little is known about the distribution of income in the colonies at that time. In historical studies of the development of the economy of Ghana (previously the Gold Coast), for
example, the absence of adequate data is a constant theme: "poor statistics conspire to prevent even the roughest estimates of the overall distribution of the national income" (Killick, 1978, page 80) or "data on income distribution in Ghana are not readily available" (Huq, 1989, page 56). Writing about four countries, including Ghana and Nigeria, Phillips (later Commissioner of the Ministry of Finance in Ogun State in Nigeria), concluded that "studies of income distribution in these countries have been thin on the ground; in the few analyses that exist, size distribution has received very scant attention … in most respects, long time-series data are hard to come by".


The next generation

Prince Young Aboagye.

Prince Young Aboagye successfully defended his PhD in Economic History, titled: Inequality and Uneven Development in Ghana (230 p), at the Department of Economic History, Lund University, on 3 April 2020. Information about his research is available on this link.

George Forji Amin.

George Forji Amin successfully defended his PhD in International Law, titled: Encountering Underdevelopment: International Law, Capital Accumulation and the Integration of Sub-Saharan Africa into the World System (1492-1900), at the Faculty of Law, University of Helsinki, on 18 June 2020. The thesis abstract is available here. (340 pages)

Domenico Cristofaro.

Domenico Cristofaro successfully defended his PhD in African History titled: "Between African planning and colonial intervention: the process of urbanization in Bolgatanga, Ghana (1896-1939)", at the Department of History and Cultures, University of Bologna, on 23 March 2020. The thesis abstract is available on this link. (254 pages)

Stefania Galli.

Stefania Galli defended her thesis in economic history, titled: "A Black Utopia? Social Stratification in Nineteenth Century Colonial Sierra Leone", at the School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, on 12 April 2019. The thesis frame and abstract is available via this link.

‘The next generation’ is a new section in the Newsletter. Please send us details of your successfully defended PhD related to the field of African economic history and we will post it here.
UPCOMING EVENTS IN AFRICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY

Workshops and conferences

The 15th Annual Meeting of the African Economic History Network has been postponed to 2021.

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XIX World Economic History Congress

Due to the many difficulties raised by the coronavirus pandemic, the Paris WEHC is postponed to 2022. It will take place on July 25-29, 2022.

In addition, the deadline of the 2nd call for sessions initially planned for June 30, 2020 is postponed to September 15, 2020. For more information visit: http://www.wehc2021.org/.

Seminars and talks

Economic History of Developing Regions Virtual Seminar

After a very successful virtual economic history seminar series focused on scholars from developing countries, a second seminar series is planned to start in September. If you want to contribute, please email James Fenske. The schedule, including speakers, titles, times, and Zoom links, will be announced here:

LEAP Webinar series

The LEAP seminar series are on Wednesdays at 16:00 (GMT + 2).

Upcoming speakers include Ellora Derenoncourt (UC Berkeley, 12 August), Amy Rommelspacher (Stellenbosch, 19 August), Dozie Okoye (Dalhousie, 26 August), Tinashe Nyamunda (Northwest, 2 September), Trevon Logan (Ohio State, 9 September), Laura Channing (Cambridge, 16 September), Patricia Funjika (Pretoria, 23 September), Levi Boxell (Stanford, 30 September), Chanda Chiseni (Lund, 14 October), Felix Meier zu Selhausen (Wageningen, 21 October) and Martine Mariotti (ANU, 28 October).

If you would like to join in, please send an email to Nobungcwele Mbem.
OPPORTUNITIES IN AFRICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY

Bursaries: Stellenbosch University

Masters and Honours bursaries available

Want to be at the frontier of new methodological innovations in History?
Want to study the lives of people often neglected in historical sources?
Want to be part of an exciting team of international scholars?

Then join us at Stellenbosch in 2021 and contribute to the Biography of an Uncharted People!

Applications must be accompanied by:

1. Proof of excellent academic performance (university transcripts required)
2. A recommendation letter from a supervisor/lecturer and
3. A letter by the candidate detailing their reasons for pursuing a graduate qualification in History and the reasons for choosing this project.

Please send all correspondence to leap@sun.ac.za. Applications close by 18 September.
Please visit www.unchartedpeople.org for more information about the project.

Biography of an Uncharted People, 2015-2022,
History Department, Stellenbosch University
Address: Private Bag X1,
Matieland 7602, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 21 8084177
Fax: +27 (0) 21 8085369
E-mail: leap@sun.ac.za
Web: www.unchartedpeople.org

www.aehnetwork.org