



African Economic History Newsletter **Issue #54, May 2022**

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, seminars or organize a panel for an upcoming conference, please send a message to johanf@sun.ac.za 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

BOOK YOUR FLIGHTS!

15th Annual Meeting of the African Economic History Network (AEHN) Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC), October 13-14, 2022

The African Economic History Network (AEHN), in association with the Research Institute of Text Analysis and Applications (IATEXT) and the Faculty of Geography and History at ULPGC, announce a Call for Papers for the 15th Annual Meeting of the African Economic History Network (<https://iatext.ulpgc.es/en/AEHN2022>).

The conference theme is "Crossroads in African Economic History". The Canary Islands being at a geographic crossroads between Africa, Europe and America has a long tradition for intercontinental exchange. In the frame of this conference, we hope it will become a place for encounters and exchanges of ideas, approaches (including international comparative approaches), methods and sources.



ULPGC
Universidad de
Las Palmas de
Gran Canaria

The conference will be held on 13-14 October 2022 in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain. The plan is to organize the meeting on campus at ULPGC. Due to Covid-19 and the uncertain times we currently live in, we may have to decide to hold the meeting in a hybrid mode (online and in person). A final decision regarding the format will be made and communicated as soon as possible.

For further inquiries please contact daniel.castillohidalgo@ulpgc.es (co-Organizer)

Host Committee
Dr. Daniel Castillo Hidalgo, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
Dr. Dácil Juif, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid

Gran Canaria official tourism video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ud9ZUBjHC8>

JOIN US IN BLOEMFONTEIN!

Bootcamp for Early Career Academics. 13 to 15 September 2022.

Geraldine Sibanda and Alessandra De Cola are organising a 'Bootcamp for Early Career Academics', to be held in Bloemfontein from 13 to 15 September 2022. The aim of the bootcamp is to provide a mentorship platform to young African academics, and its theme for 2022 will be 'Money and Monetary Institutions in Africa'. For more information, contact alessandro.decola11@gmail.com.

OR IN TIMBUKTU!

The Timbuktu Manuscripts are now available online.

<https://artsandculture.google.com/project/timbuktu-manuscripts>

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.

Stephen Broadberry and Leigh Gardner. [Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1885-2008: Evidence from Eight Countries](#) (19 March 2022)

Sub-Saharan Africa has been absent from recent histories of long-run growth owing to a lack of data from before 1950. In this paper, new annual estimates of GDP per capita for eight African economies from the period since 1885 raise new questions about characterizations of the region’s economic performance.

Damilola Adebayo. [The ILO and the Making of Labour Policies in Colonial Nigeria](#) (1 March 2022)

To what extent were labour policies in late colonial Africa influenced by the activities of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)? By analysing Nigeria from 1930-1960, as opposed to the empire-wide or regional focus of the extant literature, this article finds that the ILO, despite its institutional constraints, exercised indirect influence on labour relations in Nigeria through the trade unions. Thus, the article emphasises the significance of local contexts to a more nuanced understanding of the ILO’s influence in colonial Africa.

Abel Gwaindepi. [Fiscal Capacity in ‘Responsible Government’ Colonies: the Cape Colony in Comparative Perspective, 1865-1910](#) (14 February 2022)

To assert their self-rule and autonomy, settlers in settler colonies have often proved willing to shoulder unusually high tax burdens. Was this generalized through the British Empire, or was South Africa different? I argue that the Cape Colony’s fiscal path diverged from those of other British settler colonies already in the late 19th century. This was a consequence of a larger indigenous population and economic policies that discriminated against this population, resulting in weaker fiscal capacity.

Jörg Baten, Michiel de Haas, Elisabeth Kempter and Felix Meier zu Selhausen. [Educational Gender Inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Long-Term Perspective](#) (10 February 2022)

To what extent did sub-Saharan Africa’s 20th century schooling revolution benefit boys and girls equally? Analyzing consecutive birth cohorts in 21 sub-Saharan African countries over the 20th century, we find that gender gaps first rose and then declined as education expanded. Gender gaps are lower in southern Africa and in districts with early 20th century missionary presence and which are more accessible (located on the coast, or connected to railroads).

Get in touch!

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NEW RESEARCH IN AFRICAN ECONOMIC HISTORY

In press

Stefania Galli, Dimitrios Theodoridis and Klas Rönnbäck. [Economic inequality in Latin America and Africa, 1650 to 1950: can a comparison of historical trajectories help to understand underdevelopment?](#) **Economic History of Developing Regions.**

The present article provides a comparative review of historical economic inequality in the two most unequal regions of the world, namely Latin America and Africa. This contribution examines novel studies that provide quantitative estimates of income and/or wealth inequality in the two continents in terms of sources, methods, results and interpretations, focusing on the period 1650 to 1950. The article shows that although scholars in the two regions have often employed similar methodologies, their results are far from conforming to a uniform pattern. The present review highlights how scholars of Latin America and Africa tend to remain geographically isolated, failing to capture the learning opportunities stemming from the work of their continental counterparts in terms of both sources and methods.

Mattia Bertazzini. [The effect of settler farming on indigenous agriculture: Evidence from Italian Libya.](#) **Economic History Review.**

What effect did the settlement of European farmers have on the indigenous agricultural sector during the colonial period? On the one hand, European immigrants imported skills and capital but, on the other, they took control of local resources. By looking at the short-term effect of Italian farming in colonial Libya, I shed new light on this question. Through regression analysis on a novel village dataset covering the entire country, I show that, in 1939, proximity to Italian farms was associated with significantly lower land productivity relative to distant locations. Lower yields can be explained by the adoption of land-extensive cultivation techniques, implemented by indigenous farmers to counteract a labour drain operated by Italian farms through factor markets. The combined mitigating effect of monetary wages and land-extensive farming only partially compensated for the fall in income linked to reduced land productivity.

Now in print

Remi Jedwab, Felix Meier zu Selhausen and Alexander Moradi. **The economics of missionary expansion: evidence from Africa and implications for development.** **Journal of Economic Growth.**

How did Christianity expand in Africa to become the continent's dominant religion? Using annual panel census data on Christian missions from 1751 to 1932 in Ghana, and pre-1924 data on missions for 43 sub-Saharan African countries, we estimate causal effects of malaria, railroads and cash crops on mission location. We find that missions were established in healthier, more accessible, and richer places before expanding to economically less developed places. We argue that the endogeneity of missionary expansion may have been underestimated, thus questioning the link between missions and economic development for Africa. We find the endogeneity problem exacerbated when mission data is sourced from Christian missionary atlases that disproportionately report a selection of prominent missions that were also established early.

Remi Jedwab, Felix Meier zu Selhausen and Alexander Moradi. The economics of missionary expansion: evidence from Africa and implications for development. *Journal of Economic Growth*. 27 (2022), 149-192.

Toyomu Masaki. Indian guinée cloth, West Africa, and the French colonial empire 1826–1925: Colonialism and imperialism as agents of globalization. *Economic History of Developing Regions*.

This study focuses on the global trade of guinée cloth mainly produced in French India and exported to French West Africa from 1826 to 1925. The article first re-examines the guinée cloth and its role in the western Sahel. Second, it argues that the guinée produced in the French factories established in French India was costly but of poor quality. Consequently, a similar type of cloth made in Europe began replacing the guinée in the Senegalese market in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, the producers of the guinée in the French empire supported protective measures, although merchants and relevant governments did not always share this opinion. Furthermore, the unstable political climate of the early French Third Republic promoted frequent changes in the trade policy on guinée cloth. Consequently, in addition to the traditional route from Saint Louis, Senegal, the article demonstrates that the export of Indian guinée began through more protected routes in northern Africa and was then distributed within the wider region of West Africa. Even the Méline Tariff opened the guinée producers in French India to new markets. Through the guinée cloth trade, this study demonstrates how colonialism and imperialism could lead to globalization.

Masaki, Toyomu. "Indian guinée cloth, West Africa, and the French colonial empire 1826–1925: Colonialism and imperialism as agents of globalization." *Economic History of Developing Regions* 37, no. 2 (2022): 101-127.

Francisco J. Marco-Gracia and Johan Fourie. The missing boys: Understanding the unbalanced sex ratio in South Africa, 1894–2011. *Economic History of Developing Regions*.

At the beginning of the twentieth century in South Africa, the sex ratio for black children under five years was one of the lowest ever recorded. Sex ratios also differed markedly by racial group. Those for white children remained almost invariable, with more boys than girls, while black children had a clear majority of girls, a situation that the literature has almost completely overlooked. The reasons are still not completely clear. Although sex ratios at birth show more births of boys than girls, boys' mortality was higher than girls' mortality. Why boys' mortality was so high and why, as a consequence, the twentieth-century under-five sex ratio for black children was so skewed towards girls, a ratio much lower, for example, than the sex ratios of pre-industrial European countries, remains unanswered. We suggest several possible explanations. The most likely explanation, we argue, was a preference for girls.

Marco-Gracia, Francisco J., and Johan Fourie. "The missing boys: Understanding the unbalanced sex ratio in South Africa, 1894–2011." *Economic History of Developing Regions* 37, no. 2 (2022): 128-146.

Warren Whatley. How the International Slave Trades Underdeveloped Africa. *Journal of Economic History*.

I use newly-developed data on Africa to estimate the effects of the international slave trades (circa 1500–1850) on the institutional structures of African economies and societies (circa 1900). I find that: (1) societies in slave catchment zones adopted slavery to defend against further enslavement; (2) slave trades spread slavery and polygyny together; (3) politically centralized aristocratic slave regimes emerge in West Africa and family-based accumulations of slave wealth in East Africa. I

discuss implications for literatures on long-term legacies in African political and economic development.

Whatley, Warren. "How the International Slave Trades Underdeveloped Africa." *The Journal of Economic History*, 82, 2, June 2022, pp. 403–441.

Federico Tadei. Colonizer identity and trade in Africa: Were the British more favourable to free trade? *Economic History Review*.

It has often been claimed that the structure of export trade between Africa and Europe during the colonial period depended on the colonizer's identity, with the British relying on free trade and the French, in contrast, employing monopsonistic policies. However, due to the lack of systematic data on colonial trade, this claim has remained untested. This study uses recently available data on export prices from African colonies to estimate monopsonistic profit margins for British and French trading companies. The results challenge the view of the British colonizers as champions of free trade. The level of profit margins was determined much more by the local conditions in Africa (history of trade and the presence of European producers) than by the identity of the colonial power. The British did not necessarily rely on free trade more than the French and did so only when implementing monopsonies was not a viable option.

Tadei, Federico. "Colonizer identity and trade in Africa: Were the British more favourable to free trade?." *The Economic History Review* 75, no. 2 (2022): 561-578.

Michiel de Haas. Reconstructing income inequality in a colonial cash crop economy: five social tables for Uganda, 1925–1965. *European Review of Economic History*.

This study contributes to an expanding literature on historical African inequality, presenting five social tables and income inequality estimates for Uganda between 1925 and 1965. I find that income inequality was mostly stable and overall low compared to other African colonies. Decomposition reveals important underlying fault lines and shifts. Income gaps between the African majority and a tiny Asian and European income elite accounted for a large share of overall inequality. Over time, inequality among Africans increased. Income from self-provisioning was a major equalizer in Uganda's economy, which was characterized by land abundance and widespread smallholder cultivation of labor-intensive export crops.

de Haas, Michiel. "Reconstructing income inequality in a colonial cash crop economy: five social tables for Uganda, 1925–1965." *European Review of Economic History* 26, no. 2 (2022): 255-283.

Jörg Baten and Kleioniki Alexopoulou. Elite violence and elite numeracy in Africa from 1400 CE to 1950 CE

How can we trace early African development? The share of rulers' known birth year has been identified as an indicator of elite numeracy in African regions since 1400, and the share of murdered rulers allows us to gain insights into interpersonal violence behaviour of African elites. From this emerges a dynamic picture of quantitative African history: the absence of elite violence and high elite numeracy developed jointly in sub-Saharan Africa. Some African regions, such as today's Ethiopia and Angola, took the lead in early development but also experienced severe declines. Development in Africa was, on average, later than in Northwestern Europe.

Baten, Joerg, and Kleoniki Alexopoulou. "Elite violence and elite numeracy in Africa from 1400 CE to 1950 CE." *European Review of Economic History* 26, no. 2 (2022): 155-184.

Working Papers

Sascha Klocke. [Skill, Race, and Income Inequality in the Wage Sector in British Tanganyika.](#) **African Economic History Network.**

In the literature on wages and income inequality in colonial sub-Saharan Africa, two recurrent themes can be observed: high racial inequality between European colonisers and the colonised African population and high skill premiums, a measure of the ratio of skilled to unskilled wages. For colonial Africa, these high skill premiums have usually been relegated to a mere confirmation of the frequent complaints over skilled labour shortages by colonial officials. Elsewhere, however, they have been identified as an important driver of income inequality, an indicator of human capital formation, and a predictor of long-run growth. Consequently, they warrant further investigation also in the colonial context. In this paper, I investigate the levels and trends in income inequality in the wage sector in British Tanganyika from c. 1920-60. It focuses on the role of skill premiums and racial discrimination, and highlights the complex interrelations between skilled labour supply and demand on the one hand as well as skill premiums and racial income differences on the other. I find that income inequality was, overall, high in the colonial wage sector, although it declined somewhat towards the end of the colonial period. While the overall trend in inequality was driven mostly by racial income differences, skill premiums played an important role, too. Moreover, part of the racial income differences did not stem from outright discrimination, but were linked to a persistent shortage of skilled labour and the resulting import of non-African skilled personnel. Underlying both high skill premiums and high racial income differences was the lack of educational provision for Africans by the colonial authorities. This failure to expand educational opportunities for Africans was also the principal barrier to African economic advancement in the wage sector, much more so than formal colour bars.

David Canning, Marie Christelle Mabeu and Roland Pongou. [Colonial Origins and Fertility: Can the Market Overcome History?](#) **University of Ottawa Working Paper.**

Can market incentives overcome the long-term impact of historical institutions? We address this question by focusing on the role of colonial reproductive policies in shaping fertility behavior in Africa. Exploiting the arbitrary division of ancestral ethnic homelands and the resulting discontinuity in institutions across the British-French colonial borders, we find that women in former British areas are more likely to delay sexual debut and marriage, and have fewer children. However, these effects disappear in areas with high market access, where the opportunity cost of childbearing appears to be high irrespective of colonizer identity. This heterogeneous impact of colonial origins is robust across different measures of access to international and domestic markets. Examining causal mechanisms, we collect archival data on colonial reproductive laws and policies to conduct an event-study analysis. We find that the effect of colonial origins on fertility is entirely driven by differences in the timing of colonial population policies and their lasting impact on the use of modern methods of birth control. We find little evidence that the fertility effect of British colonization operates through education or income. While British colonization is linked to higher female education, this occurs mainly in areas with higher market access while the fertility effects do not. Again, while income levels differ, the fertility gap between British and French colonies opened prior to 1980, whereas the income gap only opened after 1990. Our analysis highlights the heterogeneous nature of the colonial origins of comparative fertility behavior, and implies that economic incentives may overcome historical determinism.

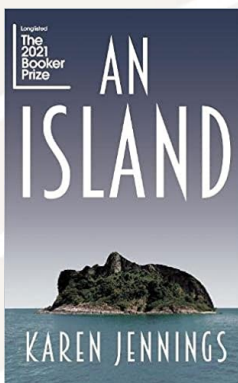
Jeanne Cilliers, Erik Green and Robert Ross. [Did it pay to be a pioneer? Wealth accumulation in a newly settled frontier society.](#) *Lund Papers in Economic History.*

While wealth-holding patterns in rural areas have been well studied, the link between initial conditions, prospects for wealth accumulation, and the persistence of inequality at an agricultural frontier is less clear. On the one hand, the frontier is thought to have had a levelling effect, with the availability of cheap land acting as an equalizer. On the other hand, land rents, accumulated during the settlement process, are thought to have the opposite effect. In this paper, we contribute to the debate on inequality in pre-industrial societies using a unique dataset that allows us to identify different wealth-accumulation strategies in an agrarian frontier society: the Graaff-Reinet district in South Africa's Cape Colony between 1786-1850

Kilishi Abdulhakeem. [Looking Backward and Thinking Forward: A Discussion of over Fifty Years Economic Performance of Nigeria.](#) *University of Ilorin Working Paper Series.*

This paper evaluates economic performance of Nigeria over the past half a century and this was juxtaposed with other countries like South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Botswana. Trends analysis using graphs was employed. The analysis reveals that Nigeria's economic performance relative to the aforementioned countries was disappointing over the past half century. Comparing the statistics of input factors, it was clear that the income divergence between Nigeria and Korea and Singapore cannot be explained by geographical factors non colonial history rather it is due to differences in investments and quality of institutions. It is therefore concluded that for Nigeria to rewrite her economic history in the second half of the century, conscious and solemn actions must be taken to increase investment in physical and human capitals and improve the quality of institutions such as rule of law, control of corruption, regulatory qualities and political institutions.

Fiction



Karen Jennings. *An Island.*

A young refugee washes up unconscious on the beach of a small island inhabited by no one but Samuel, an old lighthouse keeper. Unsettled, Samuel is soon swept up in memories of his former life on the mainland: a life that saw his country suffer, then fight for independence, only to fall to a cruel dictator; he recalls his own part in its history.

Longlisted for the 2021 Booker Prize. Karen Jennings has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Kwazulu-Natal and is now a postdoctoral student at LEAP.

Send us your new non-fiction and fiction titles that relate to African economic history and we'll post it here.