

African Economic History Network Newsletter

Issue #70 May 2026

The AEHN newsletter keeps you informed about the latest news and upcoming events in African economic history.

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If you would like to publicise your research, achievements, seminars, events, or a panel for an upcoming conference, please email leone.walters@uct.ac.za, and I will include your news in our quarterly round-up.

Leoné Walters
on behalf of the African Economic History Network

Network updates

AEHN 19TH ANNUAL MEETING

University of Gothenburg
23-24 October 2026

The 19th Annual African Economic History Network (AEHN) Meeting, in collaboration with the Unit for Economic History at the University of Gothenburg, will be held at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, on 23-24 October 2026.

Accepted authors have been notified, and the programme will be published in due course.

For more information, please visit the [19th Annual Meeting of the African Economic History Network page](#).

Organising committee:

Klas Rönnbäck
Stefania Galli
Kondwani Happy Ngoma
Bezawit Abebe
Giulia Martini



FRONTIERS IN AFRICAN 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.

Please contact the editors (Rebecca Simson, Jeanne Cilliers and Michael Chanda Chiseni) to discuss possible posts.

Rural Capitalists and the Uneven Paths of Development in Colonial Africa Prince Young Aboagye, Ellen Hillbom and Sascha Klocke

Who benefited from agricultural commercialization in colonial Africa? Using social tables for three African economies, we identify a small group of rural capitalists who captured disproportionate gains. We demonstrate how their strategies of accumulation varied across contexts and shaped divergent and often unequal development trajectories.

The Men Who Ran Stellenbosch: Colonial Elites in the Eighteenth-Century Cape Leoné Walters, Johan Fourie and Robert Ross

What did economic and political power look like in the eighteenth century Cape Colony—and who held it? In our study of the Stellenbosch–Drakenstein district between 1720 and 1810, we trace the rise of an affluent settler gentry and show how their economic power was bound to local political authority. Drawing on newly digitised annual tax censuses (the opgaafrolle) and annual lists of heemraden (the settlers appointed to district judicial and administrative boards), we examine the economic and political landscape that underpinned the resilience of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) rule at the Cape.

AEHN WORKING PAPER SERIES

The AEHN welcomes submissions to our Working Paper Series. AEHN Working Papers in African Economic History are intended to disseminate research results to other scholars in order to encourage discussion and suggestions before journal publication. The papers have not undergone peer review but were published at the discretion of the Board of the AEHN. AEHN Working Papers are also available via RePEc/IDEAS.

Potential working papers should be directly submitted to one of the editors: Leigh Gardner (l.a.gardner@lse.ac.uk) and Felix Meier zu Selhausen (f.p.meierzuselhausen@uu.nl).

News and announcements

CALL FOR PAPERS

Workshop The Economics of Demographic Shocks in the Long Run

Wageningen University
29-30 October 2026

Keynote Prof. Guido Alfani (Bocconi University and CEPR)

Organiser: Daniel Gallardo Albarrán (Wageningen University and CEPR)

The workshop "Economics of Demographic Shocks in the Long Run" will take place on 29-30 October (2026) at Wageningen University. The event aims to bring together researchers working at the intersection of demographic change and long-run economic development, drawing from fields such as economic history, economics, historical demography, political economy, and population studies.

We welcome submissions on any time period and geographic region. Papers are being sought on topics including, but not necessarily limited to:

- The economic consequences of demographic shocks such as epidemics, famines, wars, and migration waves
- The mechanisms through which population shocks shape factor markets and labor supply
- Institutional development and political economy responses to demographic change

Application

You can apply by submitting the following via the CEPR website: a short CV (2 pages max.), a title, and a 500-word abstract. You may submit a full paper as well, but this is not mandatory. **The deadline for replies is 26 June 2026. We cannot accept submissions received after this date. The organisers will notify prospective participants in July 2026 of their decision.**

Scientific Committee: Daniel Gallardo Albarrán (Wageningen University and CEPR) and Kalle Kappner (Humboldt University)

If you have questions about the event, you can contact Daniel Gallardo Albarrán (Wageningen University and CEPR) at daniel.gallardoalbarran@wur.nl.

Financial support of the Dutch Research Foundation and the Posthumus Institute is kindly acknowledged.

How to apply

Authors who are CEPR affiliated or already have a CEPR profile can upload their submission by:

Going to <https://hub.cepr.org/> and logging in

After you have logged in, go to <https://hub.cepr.org/event/5239>

Click on "Step 1: Apply" OR If you have been pre-registered as you are connected to a relevant programme area click on "Change registration details"

Under "Apply to Attend" click "Yes"

Tick the boxes that apply to you

Tick "Would you like to submit a paper?", upload your paper and input the requested information

Click "Submit form" to complete the submission.

Authors who are not CEPR affiliated or do not have a CEPR profile can upload their submission by:

Creating a new profile here <https://hub.cepr.org/user/register>

Going to <https://hub.cepr.org/> and logging in

After you have logged in, go to <https://hub.cepr.org/event/5239>

Click on "Step 1: Apply"

Under "Apply to Attend" click "Yes"

Tick the boxes that apply to you

Tick "Would you like to submit a paper?", upload your paper and input the requested information

Click "Submit form" to complete the submission.

If you have any difficulty applying, please email [Jemila Benchikh](mailto:jbenchikh@cepr.org), Senior Events Officer at jbenchikh@cepr.org with the subject header "The Economics of Demographic Shocks in the Long Run".

Uppsala Centre For Business History (Ucbh) Workshop

Corporate Finance and Organization in Transition

Uppsala University

3 - 4 September 2026

The Uppsala Centre for Business History (UCBH) in collaboration with the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) invites you to participate in the third Uppsala Workshop in Financial and Business History. The workshop will take place at Uppsala University, Ekonomikum, Sweden, 3 - 4 September, 2026.

This is the third and final workshop in a series held at intervals over several years. This third installment of the series will focus on the theme "Corporate Finance and Organization in Transition". The history of corporate finance and organization has re-emerged as a central concern of business history, as firms across advanced and emerging economies navigate successive waves of industrialization, globalization and de-globalization, financialization, privatization, and re-regulation. A long line of scholarship has traced how the modern corporation acquired its characteristic form, from the separation of ownership and control identified by Berle and Means (1932) and the rise of managerial capitalism charted by Chandler (1977, 1990), to the comparative study of bank-based and market-based systems of industrial finance (Gerschenkron, 1962; Cameron, 1967; Fohlin, 2007). More recent work has pushed these questions in new directions. La Porta, López-de-Silanes, Shleifer and Vishny (1997, 1998) reframed cross-country differences in corporate finance as functions of legal origin; Rajan and Zingales (2003) documented the "great reversals" in financial development over the twentieth century; and Morck (2005) and Franks, Mayer and Rossi (2009) have shown how institutional change shapes both the evolution of ownership and the structure of corporate control.

Yet much of this literature remains concentrated on Anglo-American and large Continental cases, leaving the Nordic, Central and Eastern European, and emerging market experiences comparatively under-studied. Transitions between legal regimes, between bank-based and market-based finance, between private, family, and state ownership, and between national and transnational regulation of capital markets as well as the banking system have received uneven attention across countries, industries, and time periods. Episodes of upheaval such as the interwar crises, the postwar expansion of managerial capitalism, the deregulation and privatization waves of the 1980s and 1990s,

and the post-2008 re-regulation offer fertile ground for comparative and single-case historical work (e.g. Calomiris & Haber, 2014; Quinn & Turner, 2020).

We invite researchers who investigate different aspects of the historical interplay between corporate finance, ownership, and organizational change. Papers can be comparative or focus on specific country, industry, or firm-level cases. Our idea is to bring together current historical research on finance, organization, and the firm, and to give researchers and PhD students a chance to have their work in progress discussed in a workshop environment. The organizers will provide two nights of accommodation and meals during the workshop, and there will be no fee for attending. Limited funding to cover travel costs may also be available for outstanding applications, in particular from junior scholars.

If you are interested in participating, please submit a 500-word paper abstract, along with your affiliation and contact details, no later than 31 May 2026. Decisions regarding acceptance will be communicated around 15t June, 2026.

Scientific committee: Ann-Kristin Bergquist, Anders Ögren, Marius Liebold (all Uppsala University), and Simon Billinger (Stockholm School of Economics).

For any remaining questions, please contact the scientific committee via ucbhworkshops@ekhist.uu.se.

Due to a technical issue with the university's IT infrastructure, the upload portal we shared earlier is currently unreliable. **Please submit all materials by email to ucbhworkshops@ekhist.uu.se instead.**

World Economic History Congress 2028

Montevideo
24-28 July 2028

The International Economic History Association (IEHA) has opened the first Call for Sessions for the 2028 World Congress. The theme of the Congress is World Powers and Conflicts, but submissions are welcome on the economic and social histories of all places and periods. We especially encourage sessions that adopt a comparative perspective across countries or regions.

Sessions may be proposed by any member of the international economic history community, whatever their institutional affiliation or status, as well as by scholars in related disciplines.

The submission deadline is September 14, 2026. The selected sessions will be announced on December 18, 2026.

For more details about the call for sessions, go to: <https://wehcmontevideo2028.org/call-for-sessions/>



FRESH meeting 2026

Transport, Infrastructure, and Long-Run Development: Historical Evidence

Università di Roma Tor Vergata
28-29 September 2026

On 28-29 September 2026, the Department of Economics and Finance at the University of Rome Tor Vergata will host a FRESH meeting on Transport, Infrastructure, and Long-Run Development: Historical Evidence.

The purpose is to create the opportunity for graduate students and early-stage researchers to present and discuss their work in an environment especially focused on constructive feedback and support. The keynote speaker for this meeting will be James Fenske, Professor of Economics at the University of Warwick.

Meeting Overview

Economic historians have long studied transport and infrastructure as drivers of long-run development, while the frontiers of data, measurement, and causal identification in this field continue to expand. This workshop brings together recent, yet unpublished research at the intersection of economic history and quantitative methods, covering new data sources, the simulation of historical transport costs, and the link between infrastructure and outcomes beyond trade. Papers on any period or region are eligible.

The meeting includes the presentation of approximately 10 papers. Accepted papers will receive 45 minutes each (30 minutes for presentation and 15 for discussion). Lunch on both days and dinner on the 28th will be provided by the local hosts; invited speakers should cover travel and accommodation themselves and are strongly encouraged to arrive on September 27th.

Paper Submission

Researchers interested in presenting should send an abstract of max. 500 words and/or a well-developed research question, as well as a brief (1–2 page) CV to RomeFresh2026@gmail.com in one single PDF file. Early career scholars and researchers from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in academia are especially encouraged to apply.

Important deadlines:

- 12 June 2026: Deadline for submissions
- 26 June 2026: Presenters will be notified of acceptance
- 28–29 September 2026: Meeting at Tor Vergata, Italy

This meeting is organized by Roberto Chimento, Carlo Ciccarelli, and Enzo Pozza, in association with the Frontier Research in Economic and Social History series (FRESH). For more information about FRESH meetings, please see <https://ehes.org/fresh-meetings/>

This meeting is made possible thanks to funding made available by DEF Tor Vergata and the European Historical Economics Society (EHES).

Call for papers for a Special Edition in Economic History of Developing Regions (EHDR) on Economic Shrinking in Development

Economic shrinking—defined as a year of negative per capita income growth—is a recurrent yet understudied feature of long-run economic development, both in the past and in the present. Economies differ in the frequency and severity of economic shrinking they experience, as well as in their ability to cope with it. While growth processes and structural transformation have been extensively examined, the causes, consequences, and governance of economic shrinking remain comparatively unexplored. The aim of this special issue is to place economic shrinking at the centre of inquiry, inviting fresh perspectives from economic history, development economics, political economy, and related fields.

We invite theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions that advance the understanding of economic shrinking and its role in broader development dynamics. Submissions may investigate shrinking from multiple perspectives, including: growth accounting, institutional change and policy responses, demographic pressures, technological capability and innovation, macroeconomic fragility, public finance constraints, external shocks, conflict, climate events, or long-term historical patterns. Comparative and cross-country approaches are welcome, as are studies that prioritise temporal depth and case study experiences. Papers examining how people and governments have responded to economic shrinking, especially in terms of their expectations, views on inequality, and well-being, are also welcome.

We encourage contributions that examine shrinking not only as a macroeconomic outcome but also as a social, institutional and political process. Papers may explore how societies absorb, adapt to, or transform through shrinking; how social capabilities evolve in the face of downturns; or how governance and policy strategies mitigate the frequency, duration, or depth of shrinking episodes. We also welcome methodological contributions, including approaches to measuring shrinking, identifying its regimes, or linking descriptive and causal analyses.

The special issue seeks contributions covering a wide range of geographic and historical contexts, with no restriction on time period or income level. The only restriction is that the contributions need to concern developing countries in the Global South (understood by the journal as countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia). Both cross-country and country-specific studies are of interest, as are North/South comparisons and analyses combining qualitative historical evidence with econometrics, archival work with quantitative reconstruction, or mixed-methods designs. We particularly encourage submissions from early career and female scholars, as well as researchers from developing countries.

For enquiries regarding suitability, scope, or fit with the special issue, please contact the guest editors.

Submission Instructions

Authors are invited to submit by 1st September 2026 an extended abstract of approximately 1500 words to the guest editors summarizing the research question, data, proposed methods for the analysis, and preliminary results (optional) in sufficient detail to warrant an evaluation. Each proposal will be reviewed for scientific merit and feasibility. Proposals will be selected on the basis of three criteria:

- **Relevance to the research project**
- **Strength of theoretical or empirical contribution, and**
- **Clarity of writing**

Around 10 proposals will be selected and provided with feedback from the editors, along with an invitation to submit full draft papers for a workshop scheduled for April 2027.

The workshop will be held either online or on site at the University of Manchester, depending on available funding. Authors will then be invited to submit full papers to the journal's submission system by 1 June 2027. All submissions will undergo double-blind peer review in accordance with the journal's standards. The journal's editorial team will after peer review make all final decisions on special issue content. Publication is expected in Spring 2028.

Special Issue Editor(s)

Martin Andersson, University of Lund
martin.andersson@ekh.lu.se

Antonio Savoia, University of Manchester
antonio.savoia@manchester.ac.uk



OPPORTUNITIES

Postdoc in Economic History *Linköping University*

Apply by 25 May 2026

Work assignments

Employment as a postdoctoral researcher in economic history is available at the Division of Economics in the Department of Management and Engineering. The position is linked to the VR funded research project 'Birthing Inequity: Legacies of Colonial Maternal Health and Child Welfare Services in Africa'. The project investigates the long-term impact of British colonization on maternal and child health in former colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa. It bridges the colonial and post-colonial periods in two phases: (1) mapping colonial-era investments in maternal and child welfare services, training of local health personnel, and policy variation across colonies using archival sources; and (2) measuring the persistent and dynamic effects of this historical health infrastructure on contemporary maternal and child health outcomes, drawing on microdata from IPUMS-DHS and the like. The project combines qualitative and quantitative methods and contributes to economic history, historical demography, and the history of global health. The postdoctoral researcher will work in this project in collaboration with other project members. The specific focus will be determined through consultation between the hired candidate and the division. Your tasks will include:

- Contributing to one or both phases of the project depending on your profile and interests.
- Independent and collaborative research, contributing to the collection and/or analysis of archival and/or quantitative data.
- Co-authoring articles of high scientific quality in respected peer-reviewed scientific journals within the field of economic history.
- Actively participating in seminars, discussion groups, and other activities organized within the division.
- Presenting research findings at conferences and research seminars.
- Serving as a competence resource within your area of expertise for the division.
- Utilizing opportunities for teaching and supervision when they support career development and align with the research direction.

As postdoc, you will principally carry out research. A certain amount of teaching may be part of your duties, up to a maximum of 20% of working hours.

Qualifications

To be qualified to take employment as postdoc, you must have been awarded a doctoral degree or have a foreign degree that is deemed to be equivalent to a doctoral degree. This degree must have been awarded at the latest by the point at which LiU makes its decision to employ you.

It is considered advantageous if your doctoral degree is no older than three years at application deadline for this job. If there are special reasons for having an older doctoral degree – such as taking statutory leave – then these may be taken into consideration.

We are seeking applicants who have a PhD in economic history or related discipline (e.g. economics, economic geography, demography, statistics, history).

The successful candidate must demonstrate a high level of research expertise, evidenced by the quality of their PhD dissertation and/or publications. Documented experience with data management and statistical analysis in Stata or R, GIS, and spatial econometrics is required. Experience working with colonial archival sources and a research interest in African history are highly meriting. The evaluation will also consider personal qualities such as a willingness to collaborate, academic

independence, and strong communication skills. Full proficiency in spoken and written English is required.

The workplace

You will be employed at the Division of Economics within the Department of Management and Engineering. The department conducts undergraduate education, doctoral training, and research within both the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Faculty of Science and Engineering. It comprises several divisions, of which the Division of Economics operates primarily within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and has approximately 30 employees. The division has a broad and important teaching mission, including education in the Master of Science in Business and Economics programme, the International Business and Economics Programme, the Master's Programme in Economics, the Bachelor's Programme in Political Science and Economics, as well as standalone courses.

[The Division of Economics](#) encompasses several research profiles, but is united by three overarching principles that shape its research environment: a strong commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration; a problem-driven research agenda that addresses pressing societal challenges in collaboration with actors outside academia; and a clear emphasis on policy-relevant research aimed at translating findings into actionable insights.

The employment

This post is a temporary contract of two years with the possibility of extension up to a total maximum of three years. The position as a postdoc is full-time.

Start date: September 1, 2026, or as per agreement.

Salary and employment benefits

The university applies individual salaries.

More information about employee benefits is available [here](#).

Union representatives

Information about union representatives, see [Help for applicants](#).

Application procedure

Apply for the position by clicking the “Apply” button. Your application must be received no later than May 25, 2026.

Applications and documents received after the date above will not be considered.

Please attach your selected research publications electronically, in pdf or word format, in the application template. Research publications, e.g. monographs, which cannot be sent electronically should be sent in three sets by mail to the University Registrar at Linköping University, University Registrar, S-581 83 Linköping, Sweden. The publications must be received by Linköping University no later than the deadline for application.

Please note that printed publications will not be returned. They will be archived at Linköping University.

In the event of a discrepancy between the English translation of the job announcement and the Swedish original, the Swedish version shall take precedent.

We welcome applicants with different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives - diversity enriches our work and helps us grow. Preserving everybody's equal value, rights and opportunities is a natural part of who we are. Read more about our work with: [Equal opportunities](#). We look forward to receiving your application!

Linköping university has framework agreements and wishes to decline direct contacts from staffing- and recruitment companies as well as vendors of job advertisements.

Contact persons

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Professorship of Economic History

The Department of Economics, in association with Nuffield College, intends to appoint the Professor of Economic History

Apply by 25 May 2026

This statutory professorship offers an exceptional opportunity to provide academic leadership in one of the world's foremost centres for research in economics and economic history. Applications are invited from candidates in any area of economic history. You will be an internationally recognised scholar with an outstanding record of research and publication, and you will play a leading role in shaping the future direction of economic history at University of Oxford and beyond.

You will provide intellectual and strategic leadership across research, teaching, and doctoral supervision, contributing to the Department's academic community and to the MPhil in Economics and the MPhil/MSc in Economic and Social History. You will maintain a research programme of the highest international quality, develop innovative research agendas, attract significant external funding, and lead collaborative initiatives within the University and with external partners. You will contribute to academic governance and leadership within the Department, and to undergraduate and graduate teaching, supervision, examining, and academic administration. You will also play a central role in mentoring research students and early career colleagues.

As a Fellow of Nuffield College, you will contribute to the academic life and governance of the College, including graduate supervision, participation in the Economics Group, and service on the Governing Body.

You will demonstrate an outstanding international reputation in economic history or related fields, supported by an excellent publication record in leading peer-reviewed journals. You will have the ability to lead research and teaching at the highest level, generate significant research income, contribute to the long-term development of the discipline, and work effectively and collegially with others. A strong commitment to the supervision and development of students and junior colleagues is essential. The ability to engage effectively with non-academic audiences would be an advantage.

The University of Oxford is committed to equal opportunity and to fostering an inclusive academic community. We welcome applications from individuals from all backgrounds. Appointment will be made on merit, with the ability to perform the duties of the post as the primary consideration.

The closing date for applications is 12.00 noon on Monday 25 May 2026. Interviews are expected to be held on Friday 26 June 2026. We encourage you to arrange an informal discussion with the Head of Department, Johannes Abeler (johannes.abeler@economics.ox.ac.uk). All enquiries will be treated in strict confidence and will not form part of the selection decision.

NEW ECONOMIC HISTORY PODCAST

CAGE Economic History Podcast

Learning from the past to inform our future

Series 1: The Great Divergence and the making of the modern world

Why did Western Europe become the richest region of the early modern world? Was the rise of the West powered by colonisation, inventions, or something else entirely? And what happened to the medieval might of China and India?

This podcast series searches for explanations to why Western Europe and North America emerged as the most affluent and technologically advanced regions of the modern world.

We talk to leading experts in the field about their theories of why this happened to get some insights into how what is known as the "Great Divergence" has an impact on world events today.

The topic is approached with balance and breadth, exploring everything from colonialism and fossil fuels to science, technology and parliamentary politics.

This series consists of five podcast episodes of 45-60 minutes each along with written summaries, graphs, links, and other useful resources for anyone interested in finding out more on the topics.

The Great Divergence podcast series is produced by the CAGE Research Centre in collaboration with the On Humans Podcast.

New research in African economic history

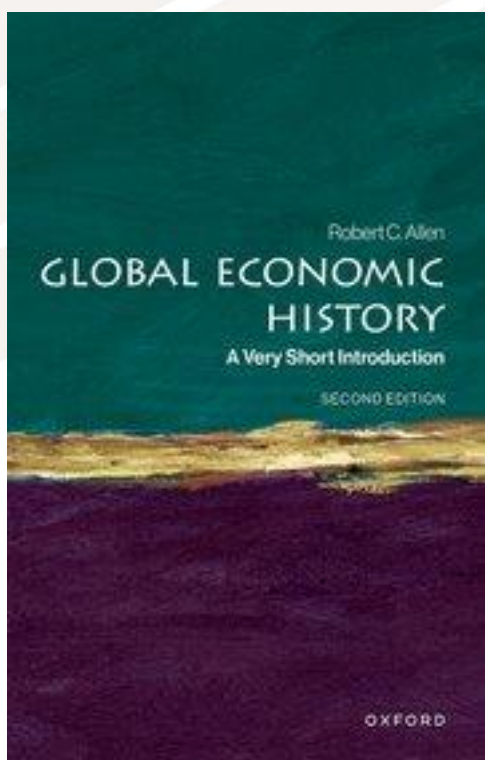
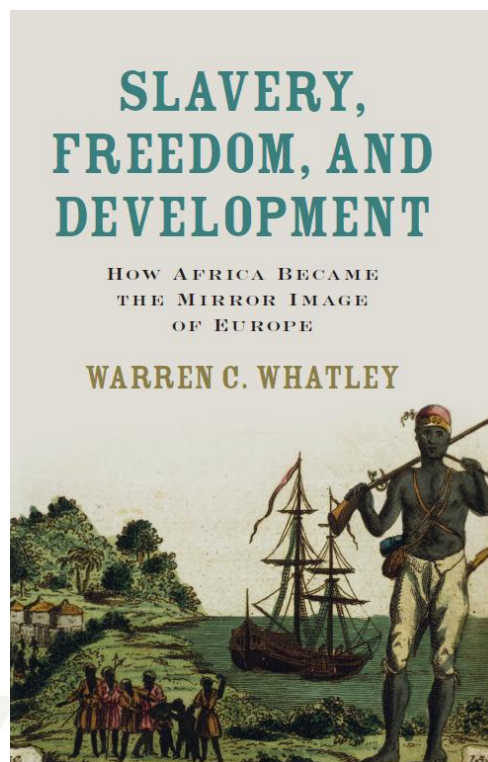
FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF

Slavery, Freedom, and Development

How Africa Became the Mirror Image of Europe

Warren C. Whatley

In this innovative reinterpretation of the economic history of Africa and Europe, Warren C. Whatley argues that freedom from Western-style slavery is the origin of modern Western economic growth. Such freedom was achieved around the 13th century in Western European Christendom by making enslavement among European Christians a sin but still a recognized property right and form of wealth. After 1500, the triangular trade in the North Atlantic integrates the slave and free sectors of expanding European Empires, spreading freedom and development in Europe and slavery and underdevelopment in Africa. Whatley documents when the slave and/or free sectors drove the expansion of Empire, and how exposure to slave trades in Africa spread institutions and norms better suited to capturing and trading people – slavery, polygyny, ethnic stratification and inherited aristocracies – some of the mechanisms through which the past is still felt in Africa today.



Global Economic History

A Very Short Introduction (new edition)

Robert C. Allen

Why are some countries rich, and some poor? Does this status persist throughout time, and if so, why? How can a country escape poverty?

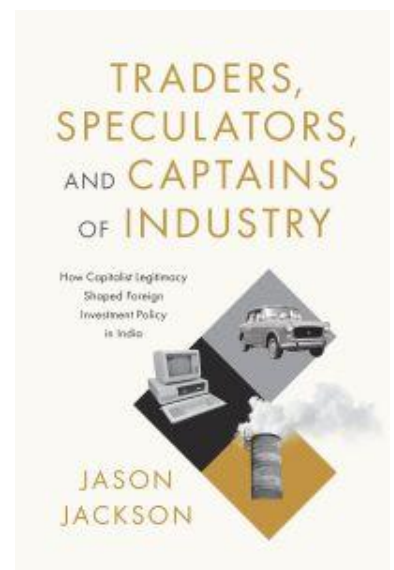
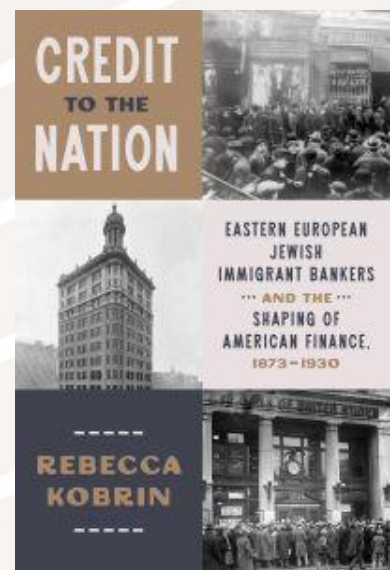
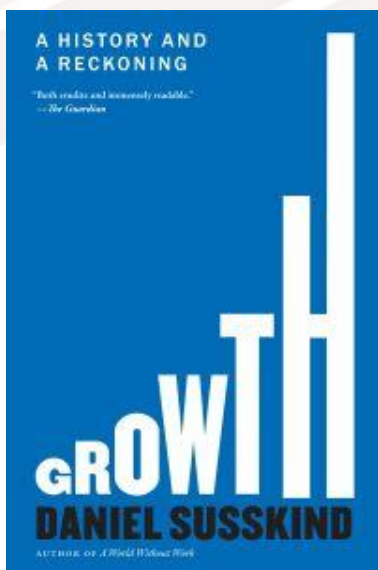
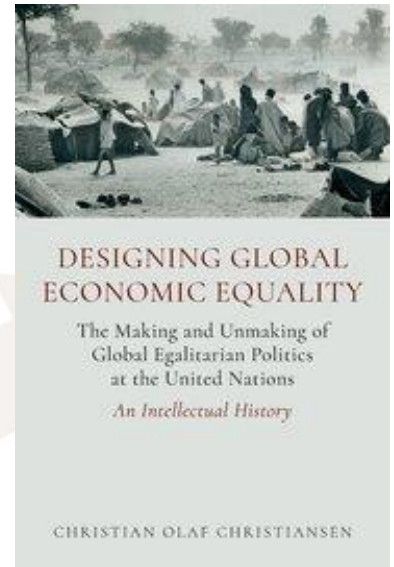
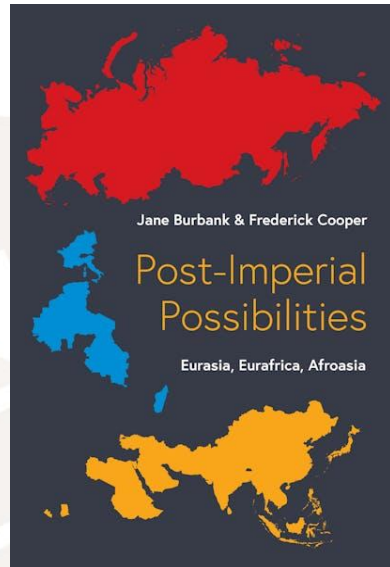
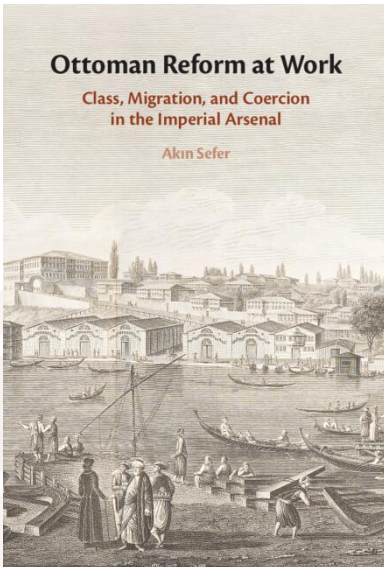
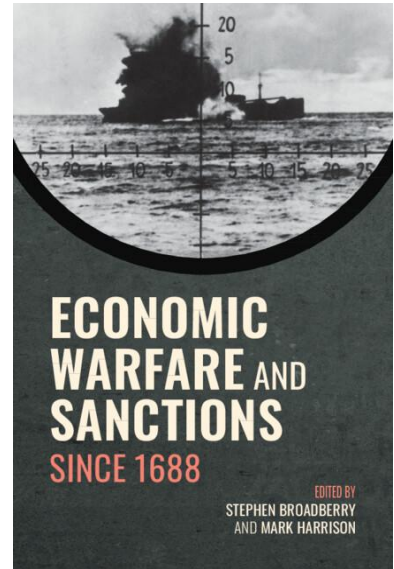
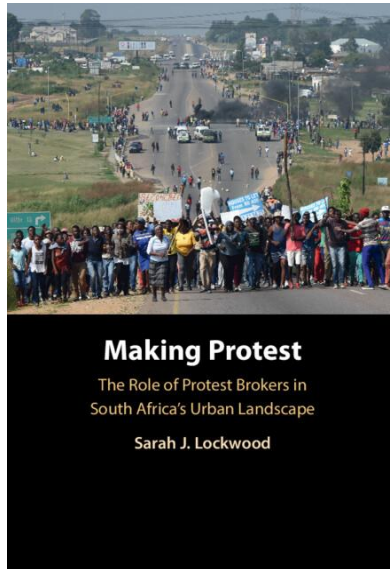
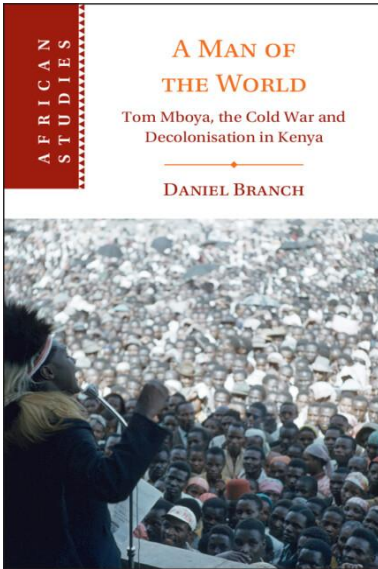
In this Very Short Introduction, Robert C. Allen explores the interplay of geography, globalization, technological change, economic policy, and institutions, to show how they have determined the wealth and poverty of nations around the world. Using historical examples to analyse the factors that have influenced growth, he exposes what has caused the unequal world we live in today, focusing on recent changes in equality and world economic disruption.

New to this Edition:

Highlights recent changes in inequality and world economic disruption

Chapter 7: Africa

Other new books in economic history



ARTICLES

Gender inequality in urban British Africa: Evidence from Anglican marriage registers

Economic History Review

Felix Meier zu Selhausen and Jacob Weisdorf

We examine the colonial origins and evolution of gender inequality in mission schooling and formal labour force participation across six cities in British colonial Africa, using marriage register data for some 30,000 Anglican brides and grooms well-positioned to benefit from colonial educational and employment opportunities. The spouses' signature literacy and occupational statistics reveal growing gender gaps during the early colonial period, both in access to mission schools and formal work. The gender gap in formal work was much more extensive than that in schooling, peaking in the 1930s but then rapidly declining again, helped by the *Africanisation* and *feminisation* of the British colonial public service towards decolonization. Women's alternatives to formal labour differed markedly across urban British Africa, with the majority of West African brides engaging in informal income-generating activities, in contrast to their East African peers, who were primarily devoted to homemaking. We attribute these regional differences to women's greater economic agency in precolonial West Africa, which persisted despite the Victorian gender ideals promoted by missionaries.

Belgian financial elites and destructive entrepreneurship in King Leopold's Congo free state

Economic History Review

Marc Deloof

This study investigates the role of financial elites in the Congo Free State (CFS). An analysis of director interlocks between firms operating in the CFS and Belgian banks listed on the Brussels Stock Exchange (BSE) reveals that the Belgian financial establishment was a crucial contributor to large, capital-intensive CFS ventures from the start, contradicting the idea that business in the CFS was driven by a few rogue financiers. Whilst the number of CFS firms was small and their economic importance was limited, almost all the large financial firms, including the Société Générale de Belgique, had two or more CFS firm directors on their board. Financial firms were much more involved in large CFS ventures than in other similar Belgian firms operating abroad.

Regional Elite Numeracy Formation in Sub-Saharan Africa During the 17th to 19th Century and Its Path-Dependent Relationship with Today's Health Outcomes

The Journal of Development Studies

Caroline Namubiru and Joerg Baten

Is there a relationship between early elite numeracy and today's health outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa? Using subnational data from 44 countries, we find that regions with higher elite numeracy during the 17th to 19th centuries now have higher life expectancy and lower malaria prevalence. We employ an instrumental variable approach utilising proximity to historical centre as an exogenous source of variation in elite numeracy diffusion. We supplement this with robustness checks controlling for African-region fixed effects, numeracy levels today and choice of century. The relationship persists even after including historical, geographical, and contemporary covariates, including GNI per capita, slavery intensity, colonial infrastructure, historical population density, coastal proximity, natural resource endowments, and current population distribution. To isolate the effect of European influence in the relationship, we examine the effect of colonial missions, and our findings suggest that African elite numeracy formation still plays a crucial role. We investigate the various channels of path dependence and find that elite numeracy has a persistent and independent relationship with current health outcomes, although early numeracy patterns did not entirely predetermine regional health differences.

Levels of Legibility: Roles and the Flow of State Information in French Morocco

Social Science History

Benjamin Kaplow

How do state actors interpret and share information? Theories of the state have long recognized the role of legibility – *the modes and practices by which states render society and nature knowable through intervention and information collection* – in constructing and maintaining state power. Yet, research has only begun to explore the processes by which information is created and diffused within state administrations. Drawing upon theories of agency relations in states, this article explores how administrators' communicative practices shape knowledge and legibility. Through examining memos, legislative studies, and draft legislation for decrees recognizing water rights in the French Protectorate in Morocco, I identify a set of common patterns in the construction of bureaucratic information as it moves from street-level administrators to central officials. In analyzing these patterns, I demonstrate how administrators' obligations and their understandings of the state's political projects determined not only how French officials collected information, but what they communicated to others. As information moved across administrative levels, officials iteratively changed information. Joining critiques and extensions of legibility theory that emphasize the role of non-state actors in the construction of state knowledge, I argue that we must also attend to *intra*-state dynamics. In tracing communication and information, I demonstrate that information is iteratively constructed by state agents according to their administrative position and transformed by its particular bureaucratic routes. Modeling legibility and the development of state knowledge requires attending to administrators' agency, their relationships with each other, and their understanding of the state's goals.

Leaving the “Fourth Shore”: The effect of Italian farmers' expulsions from post-colonial Libya, 1930–2005

Explorations in Economic History

Mattia Cosma Bertazzini

Numerous Italian farms were established in colonial Libya during the 1920s and 30s, but Italian settlers were expelled in two steps: from Cyrenaica (East) in 1942, and from Tripolitania (West) in 1970. I study the consequences of these expulsions and, through their lenses, of the presence of Italian skilled farmers on the agricultural sector of 20th century Libya. Leveraging newly assembled district-level data on agricultural production, I estimate two separate triple differences that combine unaffected Italian districts and Libyan ones to build a credible counterfactual. The removal of Italian farmers led, in both cases, to a relative reduction in the level of commercialization and a return to the production of traditional field crops. The abandonment of particular farming practices, such as irrigated commercial crops, explains this pattern.

Racial disparities in human capital: Numeracy in South Africa, 1850–1980

Economic History of Developing Regions

Francisco J. Marco-Gracia, María Carmen Pérez-Artés and Amy Rommelspacher

South Africa prior to 1994 constitutes a paradigmatic case of entrenched racial segregation and state-sanctioned discrimination. Black, Coloured, and Asian populations were systematically relegated to a subordinate status compared to the dominant White minority. Drawing on direct statistical sources, such as censuses and national budgets, this study explores long-term disparities through the lens of numeracy, a proxy for basic arithmetic skills. We analyse numeracy levels by race across cohorts born between the 1850s and the 1980s, with a particular focus on the Black population, given its demographic predominance. A key contribution is to document heterogeneity by province of residence, alongside gender and birth cohort. Our results show clear and persistent gaps in numeracy by race and gender, with Black individuals and women consistently disadvantaged. Notably, numeracy levels indicative of full numeracy were not attained by the Black population until the 1960s cohort, more than a century after White individuals had reached that threshold. Strikingly, we also find comparatively high numeracy levels in the homelands; while data-quality concerns remain, this pattern is consistent with scholarship on African agency and locally sustained educational initiatives.

Who counts? Information capacity and the origins of education inequality in Morocco

Economic History Review

Gabriel Koehler-Derrick

Education drives economic growth. However, many developing countries are characterized by high variation in local education outcomes. This article argues that the expansion of public education in former colonies was shaped by the relative inclusivity of civil registration under colonialism, which determined local information capacity of the state at independence. Where information was low, governments were less likely to build schools, and enforcing policies such as compulsory education was more difficult. These theoretical claims are tested in Morocco, a lower–middle-income country and former French colony characterized by stark variation in local education outcomes.

Controlling company subsidiaries in the Global South: A comparative study of itineraries to and from mining sites in Chile and Congo

Economic History of Developing Regions

Kristin Ranestad and Véronique Pouillard

This paper analyses mining operations by multinational mining companies in Chile and Congo (1910s–1960s), focusing on methods to establish control over subsidiaries. It examines Andes Copper Company and Chile Exploration Company (Anaconda) in Chile and Union Minière du Haut-Katanga and Société Minière du Bécéka in Congo, and compares the role of travel and communication in managing operations. It identifies striking similarities in their approaches, including international expertise for ore prospecting and technical knowledge transfer, as well as North–South travel for supervision and strategic discussions. Communication differences were influenced by company-culture variations, as well as unique historical, social, and political backgrounds of each host country. Anaconda relied on experienced expatriate staff, certain local initiatives in Chile, and frequent mail correspondence. Belgian companies in Congo faced challenges due to colonial anxieties and limited local expertise – needing closer supervision, more site visits, and increased reporting.

Connected national capital: Corporations in colonial and independent Egypt

Journal of Development Economics

Cihan Artunç and Mohamed Saleh

We use a newly assembled dataset covering all Egyptian corporations, their founders, and political officeholders, to demonstrate the differential impact of political connections on firm performance across two distinctive political and economic contexts. Before Egypt's independence in 1922, political connections reduced firm profitability, as connected firms were perceived to be aligned with the anti-colonial, nationalist movement, unsettling investors. After independence, connections improved firm outcomes by granting preferential access to incorporation and shielding connected companies from competition. These dynamics reflect the shift from a laissez-faire colonial regime to a nationalist industrial policy that selectively favored politically connected firms.

Trajectories of border dispute between Ethiopia and the Sudan over the Humera-Metema (Al-Fashaga) region: colonial legacies and territorial contestations

Small Wars & Insurgencies

Alemayehu Erkihun Engida

This paper explores competing territorial claims and recurrent border disputes between Ethiopia and Sudan over the Metema-Humera (Al-Fashaga) region. Both countries have longstanding relations; however, recurrent border disputes arising from overlapping territorial claims and ownership of farmlands have shaped their relationships until today. Caused by contradicting positions over colonial boundary unilaterally demarcated by Anglo-Egypt, contesting territorial claims created complex geopolitical landscape in the border areas. Various actors have further complicated the border disputes. While Ethiopia preoccupied with war against TPLF in 2020, Sudan occupied the contested border regions. Ethiopia still took no immediate actions, but, deadlock and reclaim seem inevitable.

Bridging New Divides: Ethnic Linkages and Trade in Africa

South African Journal of Economics

Conrad Copeland

This paper studies the effects of ethnic linkages on trade between countries within Africa. I construct a digitised and geo-referenced dataset of historical ethnic territories for pre-colonial Africa. The empirical strategy exploits the role of historical ethnic territories in shaping the current distribution of ethnic groups across countries to estimate the impact of potential ethnic networks on modern trade flows with an instrumental variable framework. The impact of ethnic links is quite strong, with trade increasing by nearly two-thirds between countries that share a common ethnic group. Non-linearities in the results support the effect being driven by a few ethnic groups creating powerful links between countries despite often being minority groups.

Legacy Is Not Destiny: Historical Ethno-Linguistic Diversity and Contemporary Deforestation across Africa

Journal of African Economies

Iva Mihaylova

A vast literature on the effects of contemporary population diversity, frequently defined in terms of measures with ethnic and linguistic components, tends to highlight its negative consequences for contemporary real-world outcomes. Research on deforestation in this setting is scarce and has mostly taken a case-specific perspective. However, it only shows the visible 'tip of the iceberg' when it comes to deforestation by only focusing on contemporary population diversity. This study advances the argument that a historical perspective can illuminate the underlying drivers of deforestation. I focus on Africa due to its unprecedented deforestation and high population diversity. I show for the first time that historical population diversity, both originating centuries ago and more recently, accelerates contemporary deforestation. However, the ecological legacy of historic population diversity should not be understood as an irreversible destiny. Against this background, the study concludes with a discussion of how its findings can be used to improve Africa's forest management.

British Pragmatism or "Native" Inertia?: Agricultural Practice in Ilorin Emirate of Northern Nigeria, 1900–1939

African Economic History

Adeyinka O. Banwo

Discussion on Colonial agriculture in Northern Nigeria have generally focused on how British colonial government enforced its policy on cultivation of cash crops in the colonies to meet the needs of her industries in Britain. However, I argue that in Ilorin Emirate of Northern Nigeria, resistance from local farmers and climatic/environmental factors undermined efforts at cultivation of cash crops in the region. The British administrators found a compromise with local farmers. The colonial agricultural policy was reversed, and "Natives" returned to their initial choice as food farmers. In the course of time Ilorin Emirate transformed into the food basket of colonial Nigeria. This study was conducted using primary sources, which includes Colonial Office Records, files from the department of agriculture, memoirs of colonial political commissioners obtained from the Archives, and accounts from oral informants. This was utilized in conjunction with several secondary source materials obtained from published and unpublished writings.

Malaria Epidemics and Community Resilience in Setit Humera, Northwestern Ethiopian Borderland, 1950s–1974

Journal of Contemporary History

Alemayehu Erkihun Engida and Endris Ali Haider

Drawing on critical analysis of provincial archives and contemporary periodical sources, this paper examines malaria epidemics in Ethiopia's northwestern borderland region of Setit Humera, its broader socio-economic impacts on agricultural development, and community resilience, 1950s–1974. When the government launched private-owned mechanized agriculture in the late 1950s, Setit

Humera became a granary of commercial agriculture, attracting significant labor migrants from the highland districts of Begemidir, Simien, Eritrea, and Tigray. Settlement and labor migration were driven by crop failures and locust invasions in the highland districts. However, Setit Humera has been plagued by recurring malaria outbreaks and migrant laborers unfamiliar with the tropical climate of the Setit Humera border region became vulnerable to malaria. The rapid escalation of malaria led to a significant rise in mortality and morbidity incidences, causing extreme distress among the rural households in Setit Humera. The malaria epidemics caused not only mortality and morbidity but also impacted agricultural development as the outbreaks coincided with cultivation seasons. The government took insignificant actions to address malaria-induced factors, including improving access to healthcare. The high volume of patients, seasonal migration of laborers, access road problems, lack of medical inputs, and recurrent epidemic outbreaks made the intervention insufficient to address health demands.

The Ovambo Genocide: The Portuguese Military Campaign in Southern Angola, 1915

The Journal of African History
Arturo Zoffmann Rodriguez

At the turn of the twentieth century, Portugal launched armed campaigns to subdue its African colonies, following the example of neighbouring powers. The Ovambo peoples of southern Angola mounted strong resistance to Portuguese encroachment. Lisbon's anxieties were compounded by the German presence in South West Africa. In late 1914, the Ovambo seized upon the Portuguese military defeat by German forces to lead an unprecedented uprising. Portugal retaliated in mid-1915 with a large-scale campaign that employed systematic terror. These tactics caused a famine that killed tens of thousands and arguably constituted genocide. This article examines the 1915 campaign in southern Angola, focusing on the devastating impact of Portuguese repression. It reflects on the links between colonialism, violence, and genocide, and considers the political reverberations of this violence in metropolitan Portugal.

WORKING PAPERS

The IMF's World Revenue Longitudinal Database: 2026 Update

Fayçal Sawadogo, Kiran Rimal, Maria Sarrabayrouse, Uzochukwu Alutu, Grace Ashley and Jia Chen

This note presents the key updates and revenue development highlights of the 2026 version of the IMF's World Revenue Longitudinal Database (WoRLD), a comprehensive dataset that tracks government revenue trends since the early 1980s, using the classification of the Government Finance Statistics Manual. With data for 195 countries, including 191 IMF member countries, WoRLD provides policymakers, researchers, and the public with invaluable insights into the evolution of the level and composition of revenues and tax revenues. Key updates for the 2026 publication include extending country coverage to Aruba and Liechtenstein and time coverage to 2024.

Transplanting company law: Shareholder protection in the Cape Colony

Philip Fliers, Lloyd Melusi Maphosa and John D. Turner

In this paper, we examine the transplantation of British company law into the Cape Colony in the late nineteenth century. The Cape Colony Companies Act of 1892 was like its British counterpart in that it provided minimal investor protection. This meant that promoters were free to choose the level and types of shareholder safeguards in their company's articles of association. We analyse the shareholder protection offered in the articles of Cape Colony companies established in the decade after 1892. We find that Cape companies offered higher protection than British ones. They were also much more likely to adopt the gold-standard blueprint articles of association from the Act's appendix. We find that companies adopting these blueprint articles had more diffuse ownership but lower survival rates, suggesting trade-offs between investor protection and corporate longevity in the Cape Colony.

Histories that matter: The case for applied economic history

Christopher L. Colvin and Johan Fourie

We define applied economic history as the systematic use of historical reasoning to address economic policy problems. Building on work in applied history, we argue that economic history contributes to policy not by offering ready-made lessons, but by disciplining the narratives and analogies that policymakers and the public use. Unlike conventional economic history, which begins with a past episode and asks explanatory questions, an applied approach starts from a current problem and works backwards to identify relevant historical parallels. Selecting cases, however, is only the first step: their policy relevance depends on the narratives through which they are interpreted and put to use. We synthesise work from narrative economics, organisational history, and media and memory studies to clarify how historical narratives are conceptualised as shaping beliefs and behaviour, but also how they mislead when stripped of context. Applied economic history therefore requires careful narrative construction, standards for comparison, attention to difference as well as similarity, and transparency about uncertainty. We conclude by outlining how changes to training, incentives, and institutions could support engagement by economic historians with policymaking.

The Legacy of the Catholic Missionary Sisters: Effects on Women's Human Capital in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Pablo Álvarez-Aragón, Jean-Marie Baland, Catherine Guirkingner and Paola Villar

This paper examines the long-term impact of Catholic missionary nuns on women's human capital in the Democratic Republic of Congo. By using newly digitized historical data on Christian missions, recent demographic surveys, and administrative data on schools and healthcare facilities, we analyze the lasting effects of the missionaries' presence, focusing on gender-specific outcomes. While both Catholic and Protestant missions influenced educational attainment, the presence of Catholic nuns significantly enhanced these effects, especially for girls. Proximity to Catholic missions is also associated with better health outcomes. Beyond education and health, exposure to missions with nuns delays marriage, reduces polygamy, and increases women's decision-making power within households. However, the negative effects on female labor force participation likely reflect the enduring influence of the "Christian household" model promoted during the colonial period. Overall, Catholic missionary nuns played a decisive role in shaping women's outcomes, with effects that remain visible more than a century later.

Economic and Institutional Interpretations of Things Fall Apart: A Political Economy Analysis of Pre-Colonial and Colonial Transformation in Igbo Society

Samuel Asuamah Yeboah

This study examines Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) as a literary representation of institutional and socio-economic dynamics in pre-colonial and colonial African societies. While previous scholarship has primarily focused on cultural identity and colonial critique, this paper interprets the novel through the combined lenses of institutional economics, political economy, and behavioural economics to investigate how governance structures, cultural norms, and individual incentives shaped economic behaviour and social stability within Igbo society. Using a qualitative textual-economic analysis, key narrative events were coded and analysed in relation to indigenous institutions, agricultural production, and colonial intervention. The findings reveal that pre-colonial Igbo institutions effectively coordinated economic activity and maintained social cohesion, while the introduction of colonial institutions generated institutional displacement, social fragmentation, and economic disruption. Behavioural factors, including leadership rigidity and social identity, further mediated responses to institutional change. The study contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship by demonstrating that literary texts can illuminate historical and economic processes, offering insights for contemporary governance and development policy in African contexts. These findings underscore the importance of integrating traditional institutions, aligning development initiatives with cultural norms, and promoting adaptive leadership to enhance institutional resilience and socio-economic development.

Demographic Pressure, Emancipation and Selection into the Great Trek

Johan Fourie and Calumet Links

Households that migrate after a political crisis are not always those most directly harmed by it. We link Voortrekker genealogical records to the 1825 Cape Colony census using machine learning record linkage, obtaining 558 accepted Voortrekker–census links that correspond to 536 unique matched census households. Those households are compared to 9,884 non-Voortrekker households. What distinguished Trekkers from stayers was household composition: Voortrekker households were larger, with more children and more working-age men. Wealth was statistically indistinguishable between migrants and stayers. Within districts, Trekkers held fewer slaves and produced less wheat and wine, the profile of pastoral frontier families pressing against the limits of available land. Using slave compensation records, we find no evidence that households with larger emancipation losses were more likely to trek. In Hirschman's (1970) framework, exit was exercised not by those most aggrieved but by those for whom exit was cheapest: large, land-hungry households whose demographic circumstances made the interior's grazing land the obvious destination. These findings offer the first individual-level quantitative evidence for the demographic-pressure interpretation of the Great Trek, and a direct test of the emancipation hypothesis that has been impossible until now.

Running Towards: Labour Market Incentives for Runaway Slaves in the British Cape Colony, 1830–1838

Karl Bergemann, Gabriel Brown and Johan Fourie

Recent scholarship on slave escapes has increasingly emphasised economic motivation, but few studies have empirically investigated how market incentives influenced the decision-making of enslaved individuals during transitions from coerced to wage labour. This paper fills that gap by exploring whether runaway slaves at the British Cape Colony were driven by the desire to improve their labour market opportunities as slavery gave way to emancipation. To answer this question, we construct a novel dataset of 689 runaway advertisements published between 1830 and 1838, drawn from two major colonial newspapers, and link these records to individual-level valuations compiled at the time of de jure emancipation in December 1834. Using both difference-in-differences and regression discontinuity in time analyses, we find that escapes increased markedly among higher-valued, more productive enslaved individuals immediately after de jure emancipation, rising by over 100 per cent relative to the pre-emancipation average. These escape attempts gradually declined, however, as de facto emancipation approached in 1838. Our results suggest that enslaved individuals responded rationally to shifts in labour market conditions, challenging the conventional view of escape as solely a reaction to harsh treatment. By quantifying the relationship between institutional change and labour coercion, this paper contributes directly to theoretical debates on how market incentives shape behaviour under conditions of economic unfreedom.

Selective Inclusion and Colonial Institutions: Rethinking the Settler–Extractive Distinction in Long-Run Development

Don Sanjewa Alwis

The institutional approach to development typically classifies colonial institutions as inclusive or extractive. This categorization is based on formal design. This classification often overlooks how rights and protections were distributed within societies, assuming access rather than measuring it. This paper develops a Selective Inclusion framework, arguing that colonial regimes frequently built formally capable institutions while restricting access for indigenous and majority populations. To operationalize this idea, I construct a Partial Access Index (PAI) measured at independence for a sample of 62 former colonies. The index codes access in four domains: political franchise, access to executive constraints, legal uniformity, and educational-economic participation. Descriptive evidence reveals a Settler Colony Paradox: countries commonly treated as benchmarks of inclusive institutions often exhibited substantial exclusion of non-settler populations. Empirically, higher institutional access is associated with lower long-term income inequality. Robustness checks, including jackknife and region-exclusion tests, confirm that this relationship is not driven by outliers. The pattern is non-linear and region-specific. Latin America exhibits high inequality under partial inclusion. Sub-Saharan

Africa exhibits high inequality under low access. These findings suggest that formal institutional strength can coexist with restricted access, and that who is included matters as much as what institutions exist. The distinction of institutional form from institutional access clarifies the persistent distributional consequences of colonial rule.

Diamond artisanal mining and trafficking in the South Kasai region of the Congo during the decolonization period (1957–1964)

Véronique Pouillard and Kristin Ranestad

This paper examines the diamond extraction and commerce in South Kasai, a key diamond-producing region in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Focusing on the late colonial years through the post-independence militarization of the province in 1964, the article examines the role of the multinational firms Forminière and Bécéka in consolidating control over diamond resources. Drawing on archival materials from both firms, held in the Sibeka archives (after the postcolonial renaming of these operations), we analyze how these firms exploited Congo's extractive institutions, contributing to violence and state fragility. Shortly after the Congo gained independence on June 30, 1960, South Kasai declared secession from the new republic and remained a semiautonomous entity until 1962. Despite the ban on artisanal mining by the multinationals present in the region and by the South Kasai provincial authorities, clandestine mining increased and started fostering the cross-border trade in diamonds, creating alternative circuits of commerce outside the monopoly of the De Beers international cartel. Against this backdrop, our findings show a 'cycle of repression', in which multinational management employed corruption, local exploitation, and violent measures to suppress artisanal mining and maintain dominance. We argue that the transition to independence intensified legal pluralism and informal mining cultures, undermining state authority and reinforcing the 'resource curse' framework. The paper contributes to debates on natural resources, extractive institutions, and conflict, offering a microhistorical perspective on diamond mining and its implications for Congolese governance.

The geography of intergenerational mobility in South Africa

Aarifah Razak

This paper examines the geography of intergenerational income mobility in South Africa across districts and metropolitan municipalities as well as historically disadvantaged former-homelands. South Africa's high inequality has a geographical dimension (spatial inequality), shaped by a long history of spatially implemented discrimination. Consequently, with the degree of disparate development and access to resources, where children grow up in South Africa strongly influences their prospects.

Between Public Duty and Private Profit: Government Officials and Real Estate Investments in the Cape Colony, 1897–1902

Munashe Chideya and Johan Fourie

Between 1897 and 1902, despite formal prohibitions, Cape Colony civil servants and politicians invested in private real estate joint-stock companies. Using Cape company records, civil service registers, newspapers and government correspondence, this article reconstructs these investments and traces how parliamentary procedures, especially private bills for railways, harbour works and water rights, were leveraged to inflate land values for personal gain. Across eight companies, twenty-two politicians and seven civil servants invested 57,907 pounds, representing 23.17 per cent of the total paid-up capital. While civil servants, who invested 1,770 pounds of the total, were largely passive investors, politicians, who invested 56,137 pounds, dominated capital subscriptions and occupied directorates, shaping legislation and land-use policy. Case studies of the Milnerton Estates and Saldanha Bay companies reveal that such conflicts of interest were publicly debated but poorly contained. This article argues that real estate speculation illustrates how enterprise and state power co-produced colonial urban space in the Cape.

Inequality in the Cape Colony, 1685–1844: New Measures, New Evidence

Johan Fourie

South Africa has one of the highest levels of inequality globally. This paper shows that such inequality is not a recent development. Using several newly transcribed datasets from the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth-century Cape Colony, I calculate historical wealth inequality across different groups and regions. The sources – including tax censuses, probate inventories, slave valuation rolls and Khoe mission settlement records – offer rare insight into the structure of preindustrial society, allowing for comparisons over time and across settler, enslaved and Khoe households. I go beyond the Gini coefficient by computing the Theil index, the Palma ratio and bootstrapped confidence intervals. The results reveal persistently high levels of within-group inequality and highlight the concentration of productive resources across all groups with available data. The corrected basket Gini for the Stellenbosch-Drakenstein district rises from approximately 0.74 in the 1690s to approximately 0.89 by the late eighteenth century, before dipping slightly in the early nineteenth century; the Theil index peaks above 3.6 in the late eighteenth century before falling sharply; and the Palma ratio reaches extreme values – exceeding 3,000 in some decades – revealing a large assetless population. Including enslaved people as zero-asset households pushes the Gini above 0.95, comparable to Caribbean slave economies. In international perspective, the Cape Colony ranks among the most unequal preindustrial societies for which quantitative evidence exists. The evidence suggests that severe economic inequality has long been a defining feature of South African society.

Cash Crops, Settlement Patterns, and Indigenous Population Growth: The Role of Wine in Colonial Algeria (1900–1950)

Laura Maravall, Sergi Basco and Jordi Domènech

This paper examines how export-oriented settler agriculture shaped the spatial distribution of indigenous populations in colonial Algeria. By the early twentieth century, Algeria had become one of the world's largest wine producers and the principal supplier of wine to metropolitan France. We construct a commune-level panel dataset combining census measures of the indigenous population with indicators of viticultural intensity derived from agricultural reports. Exploiting variation in early exposure to viticulture across communes, we show that indigenous population growth became increasingly concentrated in high-viticulture areas from the late 1920s onward, with divergence intensifying during the Great Depression. This pattern is consistent with in-migration driven by the relatively continuous labor demand of viticulture—unlike more seasonal crops—followed by reduced outward mobility as alternative employment opportunities contracted. These findings indicate persistent spatial differences in population growth across communes. This study provides systematic quantitative evidence linking the labor demands of settler monoculture to the spatial concentration of indigenous populations in colonial Algeria.

Colonial Rule and Religious Change: Evidence from Africa's Colonial Borders

Hector Galindo-Silva

The European colonization of sub-Saharan Africa drove a massive shift from indigenous religions to Christianity, yet the channels through which this transformation occurred remain poorly understood. Using a geographic regression discontinuity design at colonial borders in sub-Saharan Africa, I find that Christian adherence is substantially higher under French and Portuguese direct rule than under British indirect rule -- a gap that implies a correspondingly greater persistence of traditional religions where indirect rule prevailed. Neither mission presence nor pre-colonial political centralization can account for the discontinuity. Instead, the evidence points to the disruption of the inherited social order as the key channel: where direct rule eroded rigid traditional social structures, Christianity -- which bypassed hereditary boundaries -- expanded to fill the void; where indirect rule preserved them, indigenous religions endured. These findings shed light on the dynamics of religious identity change and how it was shaped by colonialism.