

PLS 343

Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa

Week 2, Lecture 2:

Precolonial Africa—state-making and slave trade

Recap

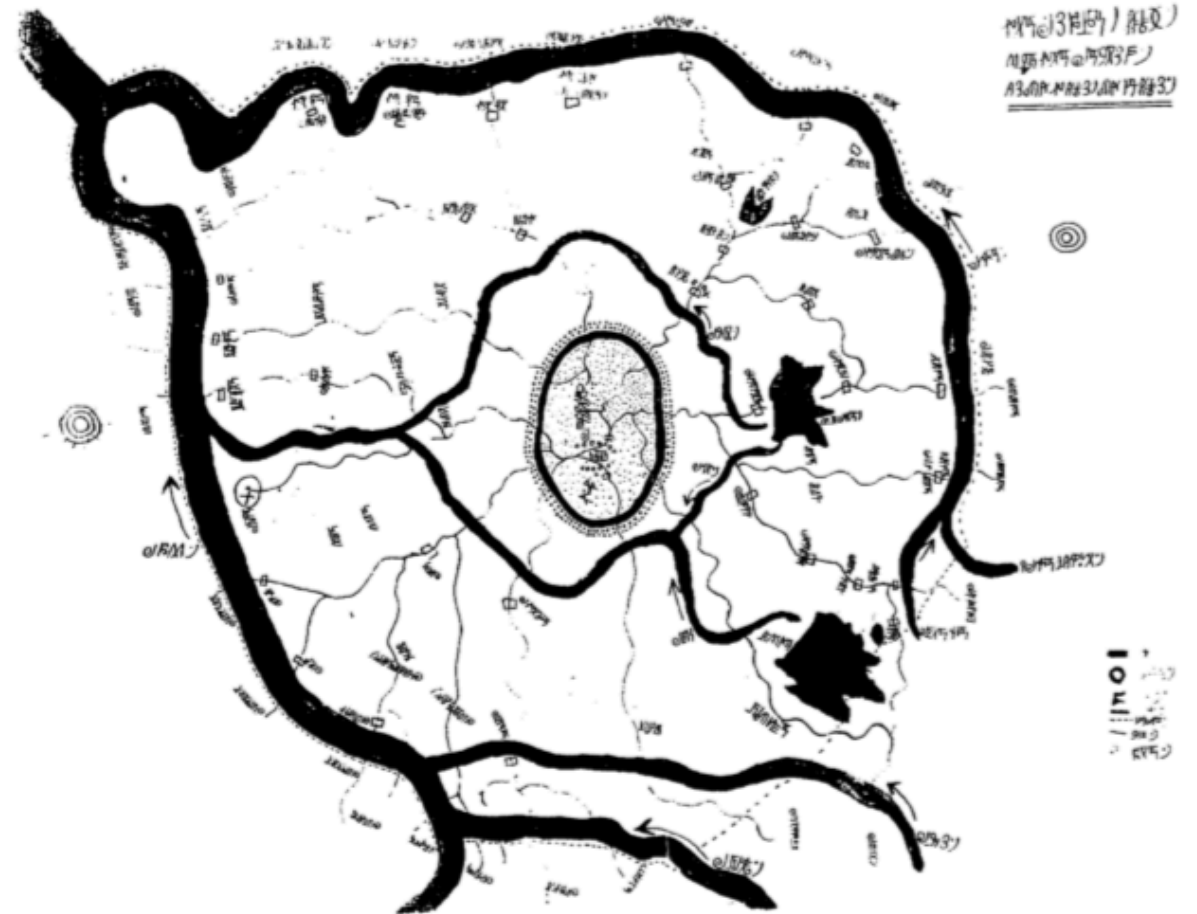
- Variation:
 - Governance systems
 - Levels of centralization
 - Geographic reach
- Mostly limited capacity to govern

Plan for today

- Causes of limited governing capacity
- Long-term legacies of precolonial politics
- Slave trade and its consequences

Political power in precolonial Africa according to Herbst

- Power “as a series of concentric circles radiating out from the core”



Political power in precolonial Africa according to Herbst

- “[S]tates rose and fell, expanded and contracted, largely in relation to the amount of coercion they were able to broadcast from the center.”

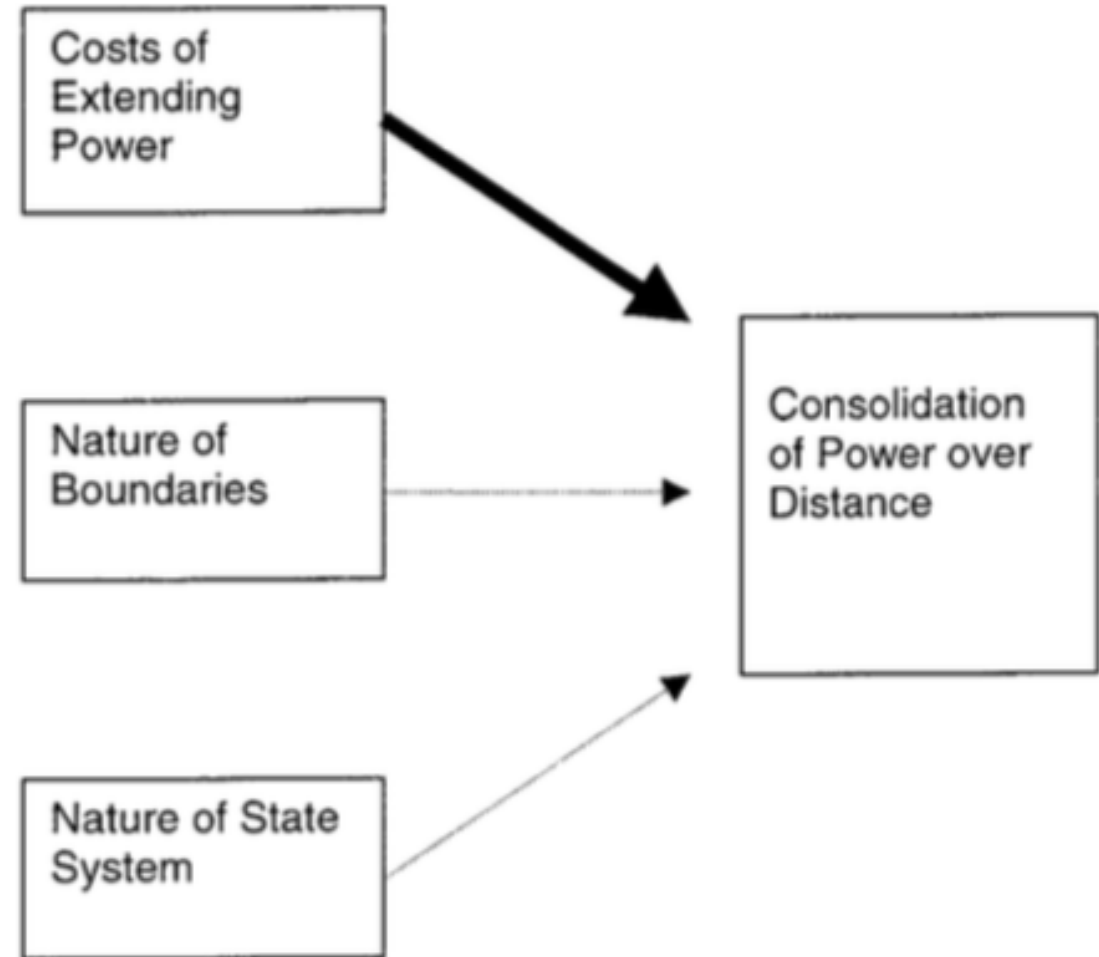


Figure 2.1. Paths to State Consolidation in Precolonial Africa

Contemporary impacts of precolonial politics

- Public goods / services:

- E.g. Michalopoulos, S., and E. Papaioannou. 2014. "On the Ethnic Origins of African Development: Chiefs and Precolonial Political Centralization." *Academy of Management Perspectives* 29 (1): 32–71.

- Private goods:

- E.g. Bandyopadhyay, Sanghamitra, and Elliott Green. 2016. "Pre-Colonial Political Centralization and Contemporary Development in Uganda." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 64 (3): 471–508.

Contemporary impacts of precolonial politics

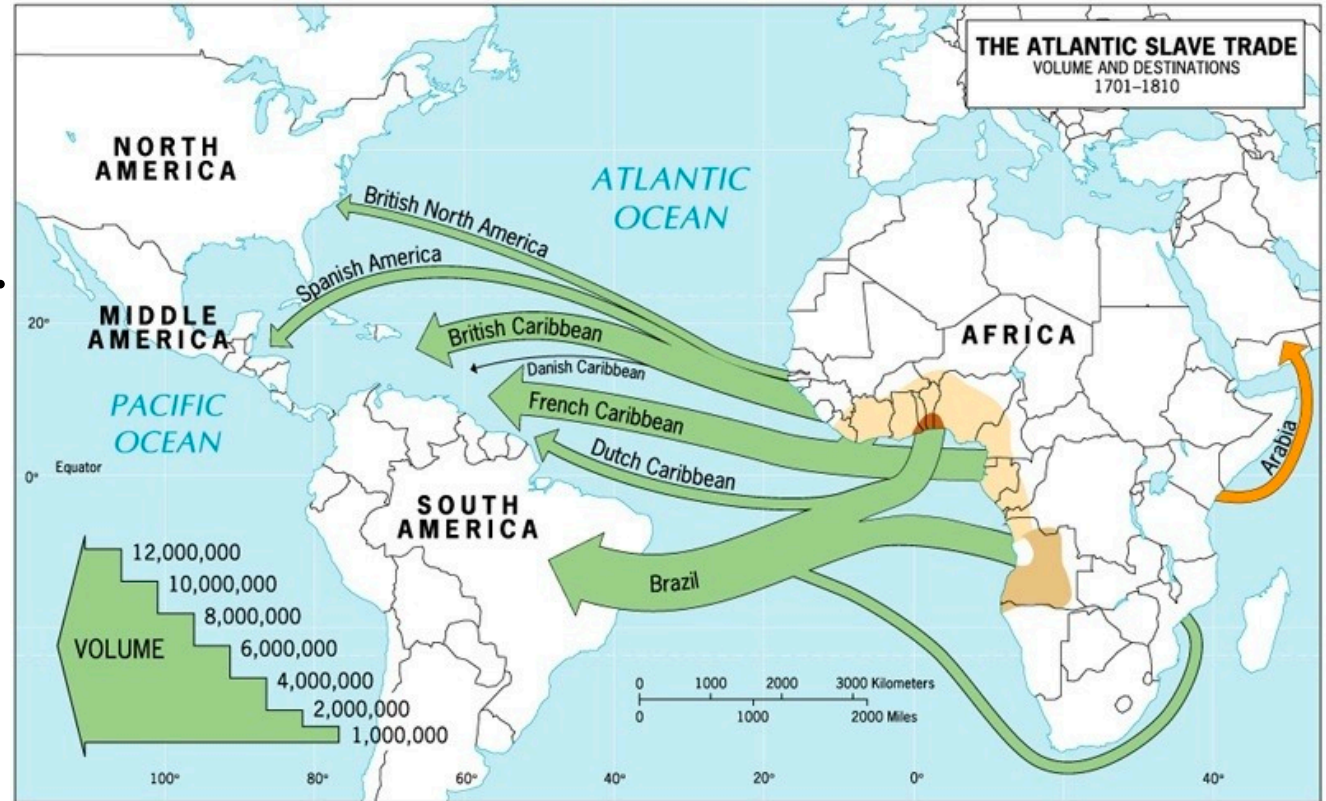


Contemporary impacts of precolonial centralization: mechanisms

- Development persistence
- Local legitimacy and accountability
- State power —> strong identities —> facilitation of cooperation
- Centralization —> strong leaders capable of negotiating with national governments

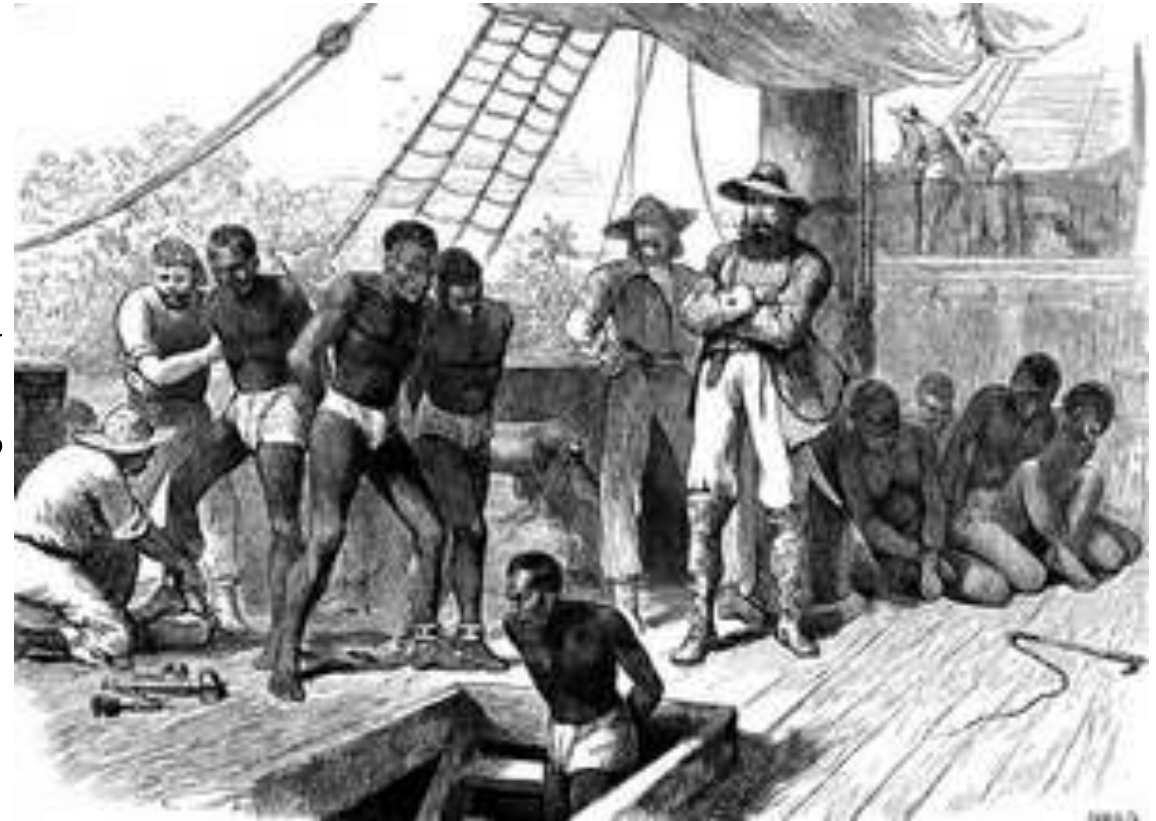
Slave trade

- Intra-African slave trade
- Arab slave trade:
~14 million people, 7th-19th c.
- Atlantic slave trade:
~8-20 million (12.8 million according to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database) people, 16th-19th c.



Impacts of slave trade in Africa

- Population reduction
- Insecurity
- Institutional disruption
- Reorientation (and potentially stagnation) of local economies



Impacts of slave trade in Africa

- Industrial Revolution
- Trajectories of economic and political development in the Americas
- Racism



Contemporary impacts of slave trade

- “If the slave trades had not occurred, then 72% of the average income gap between Africa and the rest of the world would not exist today, and 99% of the income gap between Africa and other developing countries would not exist.”
 - Nunn, Nathan. 2008. “The Long-Term Effects of Africa’s Slave Trades.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123: 139-176.
- Strong negative relationship between the intensity of slave trade among one’s ethnic ancestors and an individual’s trust in others today
 - Nunn, Nathan, and Leonard Wantchekon. 2011. “The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa.” *American Economic Review* 101 (7): 3221–52.

Takeaways

- Precolonial political systems:
 - Governance systems
 - Centralization
 - Geographic reach
 - —> State capacity
- Causes of state weakness
- Contemporary legacies of precolonial politics
- Slave trade and its consequences