

PLS 343

Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa

Week 3, Lecture 1:
Colonialism in Africa

Recap

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

Plan for this week

- Colonization of Africa
- Three key questions:
 - What explains Africa's late colonization?
 - What was the nature of the colonial state in Africa?
 - What have been the impacts of colonization in Africa?

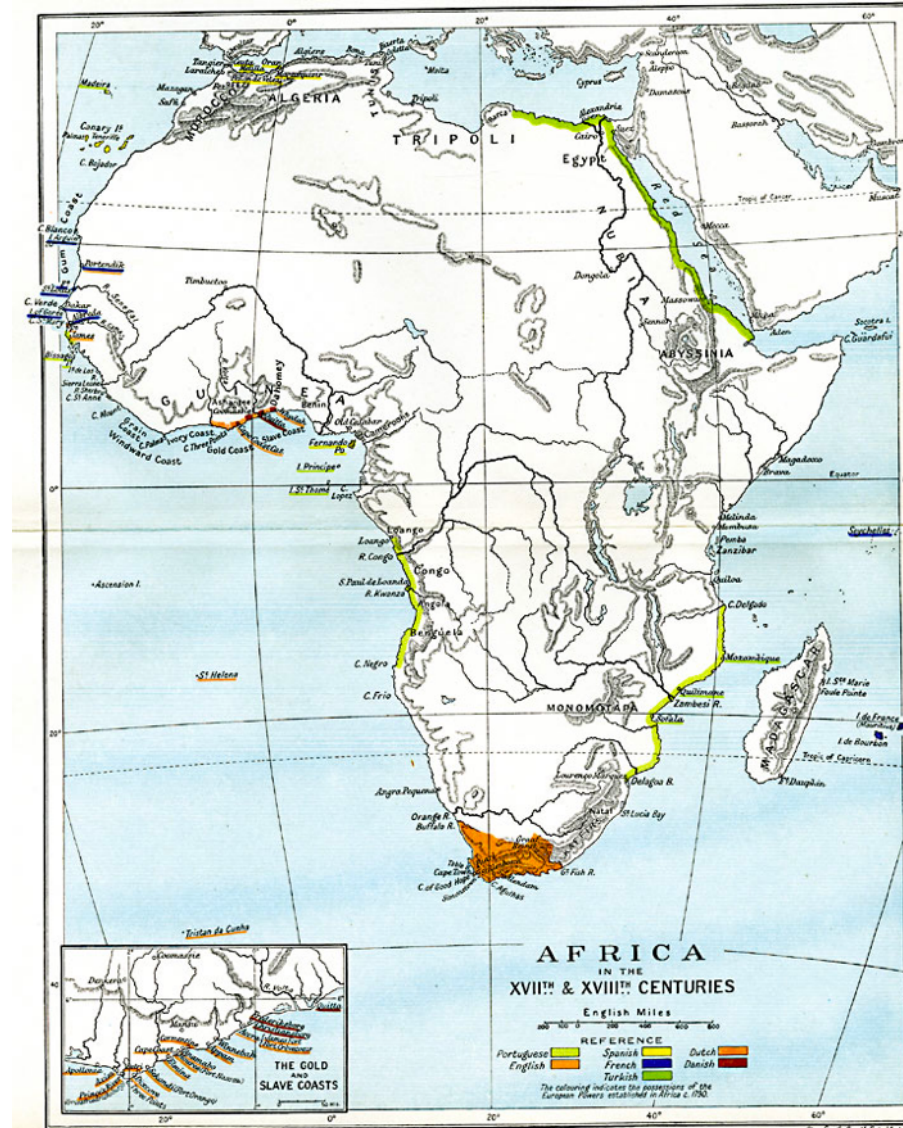
Plan for today

- Colonization of Africa
- Two of the key questions:
 - What explains Africa's late colonization?
 - What was the nature of the colonial state in Africa?

Key concepts

- Colonialism (and neocolonialism)
- Colonization (and decolonization)
- Imperialism
- Empire

Early European colonization



Early European colonization: trading outposts

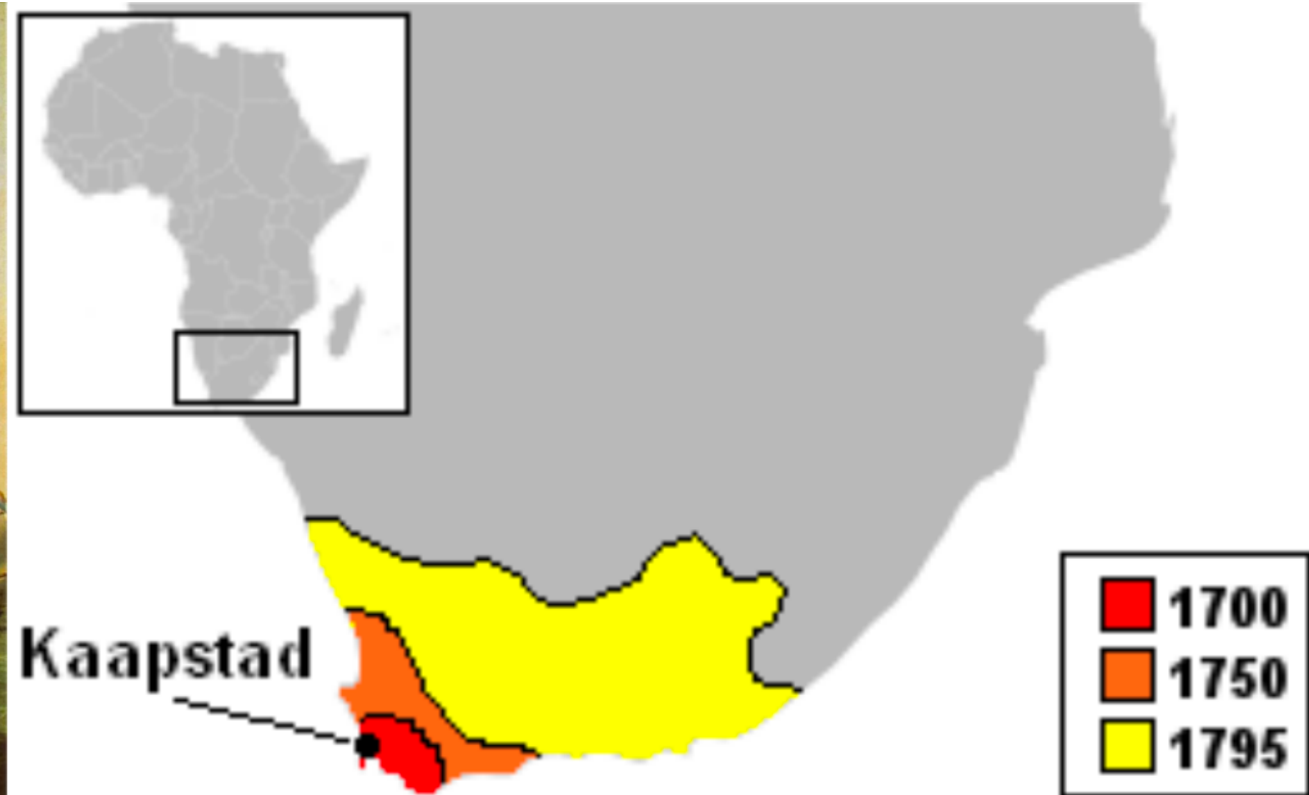


Elmina Castle

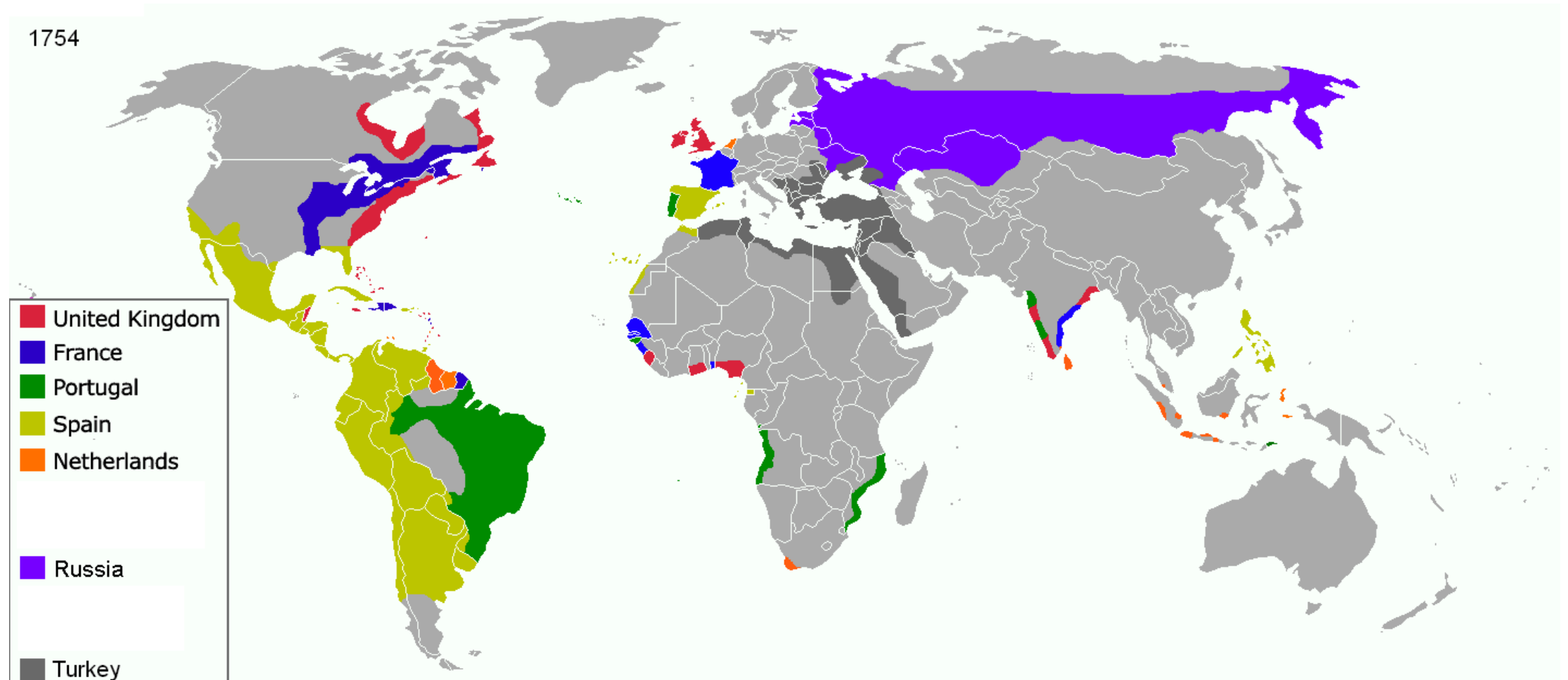


Osu Castle (Fort Christiansborg)

Early European colonization: the birth of settler colonialism



Early European colonization: late start



What explains Africa's late colonization?

- What explains the limited reach of European colonialism in Africa before the Scramble for Africa?
- What explains the Scramble for Africa?

What explains the limited reach of European colonialism in Africa before the Scramble?



Disease environment
(especially malaria)



Inaccessibility /
distance



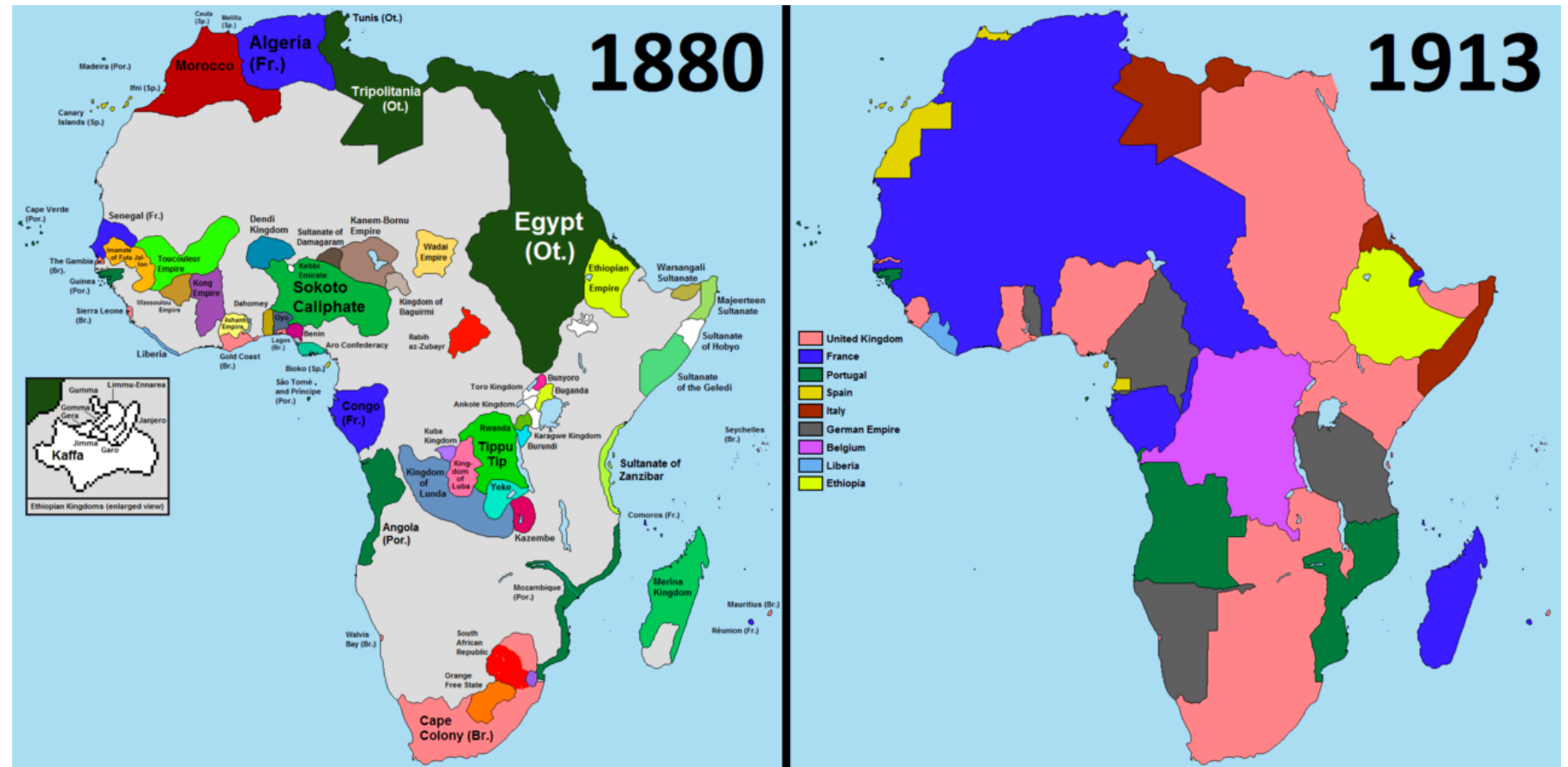
Relative lack of
established states
(complicating
conquest)



Inaccessibility +
poor agricultural
yields

The Scramble for Africa

- Berlin Conference, 1884-1885 + bilateral agreements between colonial powers



What explains the Scramble for Africa?



Quinine
prophylaxis



Steamboats



Maxim guns



European
balance of
power



Shortage of
cotton



Local
officials'
initiatives

What explains the Scramble for Africa?

- Governance innovation —> reduction of cost through either indirect rule or subsidization of European colonial officials' salaries by locals:
 - “French West Africa's colonization took only 0.29 percent of French annual expenditures, including 0.24 percent for military and central administration and 0.05 percent for French West Africa's development. For West Africans, the contribution from French taxpayers was almost negligible: mainland France provided about 2 percent of French West Africa's revenue. In fact, colonization was a considerable burden for African taxpayers since French civil servants' salaries absorbed a disproportionate share of local expenditures.”

• Huillery, Elise. 2014. "The Black Man's Burden: The Cost of Colonization of French West Africa." *The Journal of Economic History* 74 (1): 1-38.

Varieties of colonial rule

- Chartered companies
- Direct rule
- Indirect rule
- Settler colonialism

Varieties of colonial rule: chartered companies

- Dutch East India Company —> Cape Colony
- British South Africa Company —> Rhodesia
- Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company —> Congo Free State —> Belgian Congo



Varieties of colonial rule: direct rule



Varieties of colonial rule: indirect rule

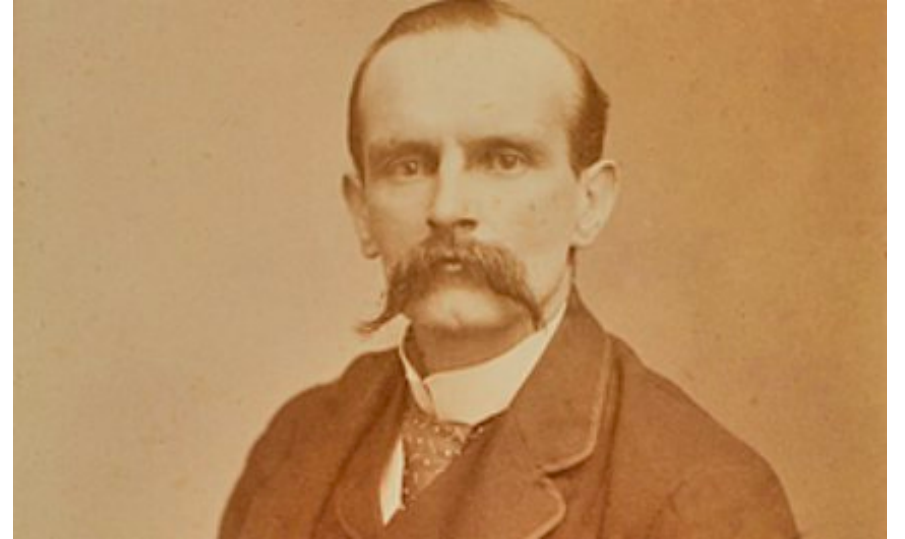
- Mahmood Mamdani:

- “Like all colonial powers, the British worked with a single model of customary authority in precolonial Africa. That model was monarchical, patriarchal, and authoritarian.”

- George Padmore:

- “The chief is the law, subject to only one higher authority, the white official stationed in his state as advisor. The chief hires his own police . . . he is often the prosecutor and the judge combined and he employs the jailer to hold his victims in custody at his pleasure. No oriental despot ever had greater power than these black tyrants, thanks to the support which they receive from the white officials who quietly keep in the background.”

- Padmore, George. 1936. *How Britain Rules Africa*. London: Negro Universities Press: 317.



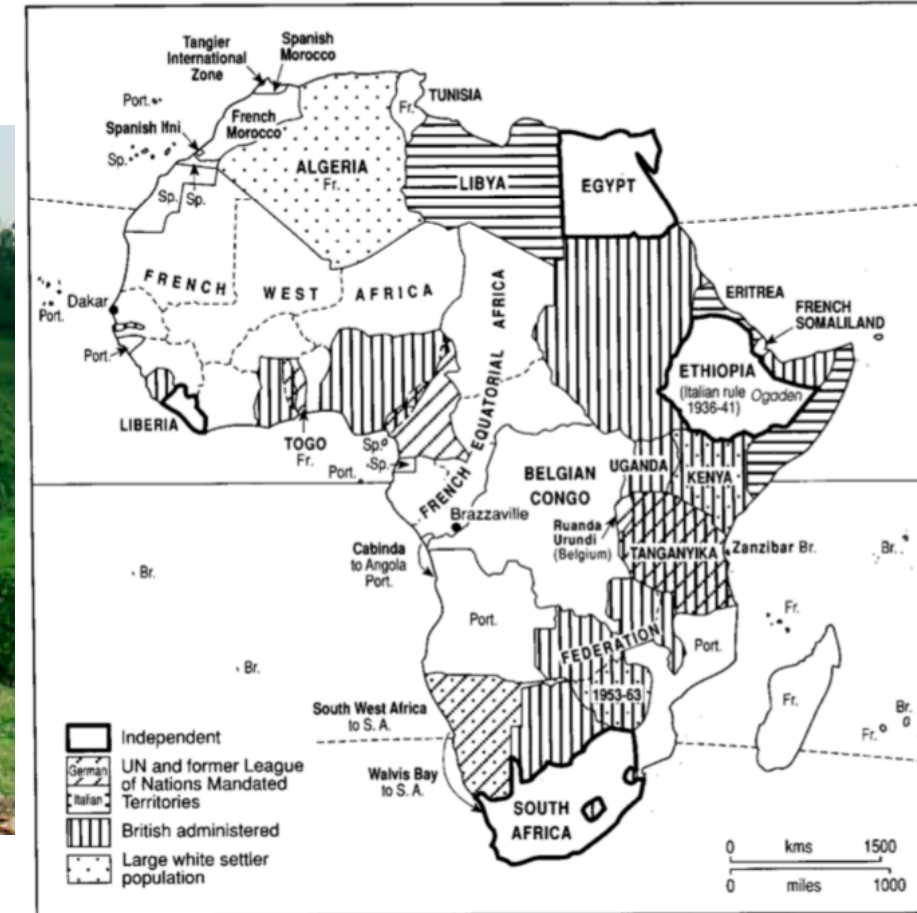
Frederick Lugard

Varieties of colonial rule: indirect rule

One of the first steps which Tufnell took in Karamoja was to establish chiefs. There was, however, no tradition upon which he could build, for the tribes of Karamoja were controlled by elders within the clan group. Tufnell was therefore forced to make his selection arbitrarily. The objective was to choose men of social standing, but who were not so old as to be physically incapable of carrying out their duties. Preference was given to Swahili speakers. Lopuko, who was made a chief in Bokora, says that he was appointed after he handed over two guns which he had obtained from the Abyssinians.² Presumably Tufnell decided that a man who could acquire two guns was not lacking in initiative. The chiefs were expected to keep their people in order, and to provide porters and food when called upon to do so. For their efforts they received irregular payments in cattle.

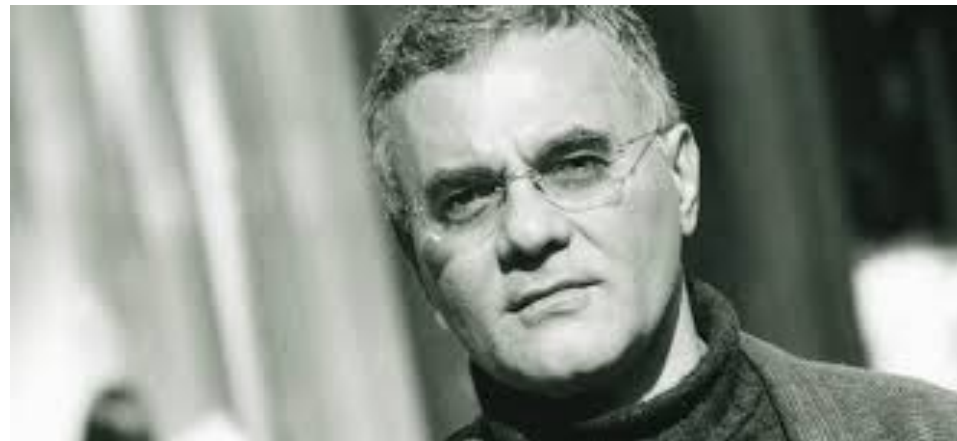


Varieties of colonial rule: settler colonies



Political power in colonial Africa

- Crawford Young: Bula Matari
- Mahmood Mamdani: hegemonic, bifurcated state and decentralized despotism
- Jeffrey Herbst: external sovereignty and administrative weakness of non-hegemonic states



Takeaways

- Late but rapid colonization
- Establishment of colonial states:
 - Variation
 - Contending perspectives