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# Things Fall Apart? Missions, Institutions, and Trust

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African History Through the Lens of Economics

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# Why Trust?

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- Social scientists increasingly recognize the importance of trust
  - Related to broader concept of social capital
  - Link to cooperative attitudes
  - Some important works: Banfield (1958); Coleman (1990); Putnam (2000)
- Kenneth Arrow (1972) notes that:  
*Virtually every transaction has an element of trust*
- Herbert C. Kelman (2005) adds:  
*Trust is a central requirement for the peaceful and effective management of all relationships—between individuals, between groups, and between individuals or groups and the organizations and societies to which they belong.*

# Social Benefits of Trust

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- Economic growth linked to trust across countries (Knack and Keefer, 1997; Algan and Cahuc, 2010)
- It promotes cooperative behaviour (Gambetta, 1988)
- Reduces conflicts, lowers transaction costs (Meyerson, Weick and Kramer, 1996; Kelman, 2005)
- Proper functioning of democracy and governance (Banfield, 1958; Putnam, 2000)

**Note:** Trust encourages cooperative behaviour, and cooperative behaviour increases trust (Rohner et al., 2013).

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Trust: Equilibrium belief in the probability of cooperation (Greif & Kingston, 2011)

- Sustained by community activities, institutional constraints, norms

Christian missions introduced new beliefs, norms, and alternatives to “village” life; changed the rules organizing pre-colonial societies

Conflict between the “old” and the “new” could have altered cooperation with pre-colonial norms and induce lower cooperation and trust over time

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At the same time, could have increased trust through education and acculturation to new institutions

Separate countries depending on indirect vs direct colonial rule

- Indirect rule: Governance through pre-colonial authorities (Crowder, 1964; Delavignette, 1950)
- “Conflicts” due to missions would have been more differentiated under indirect rule

## Example from Fiction

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*He says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs bad... Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe, 1958, Chapter 20).*

This is fiction representing reality

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A colonial administrator in Northern Nigeria investigating allegations of conflict between Christians and traditionalists in a 1911 village remarked that:

*...members of a tribe, among whom the Sudan missionaries are working, appeared to have gained the impression that conversion to Christianity meant complete emancipation from the orders of their Chiefs and, in some cases they behaved in a way that was calculated to cause considerable trouble in the locality. The Chief, naturally incensed at the behaviour of his subjects, appears to have ordered the demolition of certain huts which have been built to serve the purposes of worship. –From Colonial Reports cited in Barnes (1995, emphasis mine)*

## Example 2

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Another colonial administrator writes in 1930 that:

*I have no hesitation in saying that the native converts are a constant source of trouble, owing to the fact that they consider themselves superior to the Chiefs orders; time after time troubles arise from this cause –(Barnes, 1995, p. 417)*



## Example 3

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A Chief in colonial Malawi complained to the District Commissioner that members of the Watchtower sect were making it difficult for him to govern and maintain social ties. He complained that the missionaries were “agitating our sons”:

*We do not like it, sir, together with all our headmen who replied the same word, "we do not like it at all." ... The reasons why we do not like it are these— 1) they have not help to government [sic], they do not offer themselves for war work; 2) they do not respect their country and their chiefs; 3) they send women on long journeys to preach without the consent of their husbands; 4) they do not keep well their dead relatives.—(Fields (1982)*

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Hypothesis is:

- Decrease in cooperative behaviour under traditional institutions leads to lower levels of interpersonal trust today

Two things are key here:

- Breakdown of traditional norms, beliefs, and participation, due to missionary influences
- Conflict between traditional norms and institutions and new Christians

Provide empirical evidence of these changes

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Use information from a variety of data sources:

- Data on primary mission locations from Roome (1925)
- Combine with map of ethnic homelands from Murdock (1959)
- Information on missionary investments in health, education, and the printing press (Cagé & Rueda, 2016).
- Interpersonal trust: Relatives, Neighbours, members of their ethnic groups, and other groups
- Trust in Formal Institutions: Police, Formal courts, and Locally elected officials
- Numerous Controls: Geography, climate, ethnic group characteristics, disease condition, historical trade connection, exposure to the slave trades, latitude/longitude, population density, early development.

Trust data from Afrobarometer (Rounds 3 and 4, 19 Countries);  
Control Variables from a variety of sources

# Historical Missions and Trust

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The central finding is that in countries under indirect rule:

- Negative relationship between historical exposure to missions and trust in relatives, neighbours, members of same ethnic group, and others
- This is not the same for countries governed directly

Focus is on countries that were governed under indirect rule  
*Indirect rule: Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Lesotho, Botswana, Liberia. Exclude English-speaking southern Africa*

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## Several checks:

- Check results remain including other southern Africa (South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia)
- Dropping individual countries from classification of indirect rule
- Account for exposure to the slave trades (Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011)
- Rule out fixed ethnic characteristics using ethnic groups common to both types of colonies
- Use approach in Oster (2017) to show unobservables have to be thrice as important as observables
- Negative effects not driven by specific mission investments
- Holds for Catholic and Protestant missions
- Not due to “contact with Europe”: distance to coast, mission investments, exclude groups within 200, 300, 400 *km* of coast, railway contact, early explorers

# Missions and Traditional Norms

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Use data from Afrobarometer and Pew Religion Surveys (2009) to show that historical exposure to missions is associated with changes in beliefs and participation in traditional activities. These include:

- Contact with traditional leaders
- Belief in juju
- The use of traditional healers
- Participation in traditional rituals
- Ownership of traditional objects
- Acceptance of polygamy

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# Change in Norms and Social Conflict: Example 4

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A colonial administrator writes in 1930 that:

*Occasional disturbances have taken place in the Southern Provinces between bands of persons calling themselves Christians and their Pagan neighbours, in which it would appear that the Christians have been interfering with festivals, or mocking at forms of Pagan worship, and in one case at least, there was some loss of life in the resulting fray. –(Barnes, 1995)*

Provide evidence of social breakdown next.

# Missions and Social Change: Data

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Collect information on change in prisons and prison population between 1903 and 1928 in Nigeria from Colonial Blue Books

Restrict attention to native authority prisons

Also collect data on other measures of local economic development: hospitals, government schools, rail stations, and townships, military posts

Is increased missionary activity associated with increased uncooperative behaviour in the colonial period?

- Compare evolution of prisons/prison populations in otherwise similar areas using growth in missions between 1903 and 1928



# Missions and Prisons: 1903 v 1928

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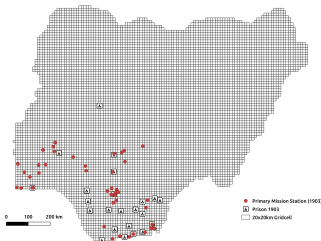


Figure: Missions and Prisons in 1903

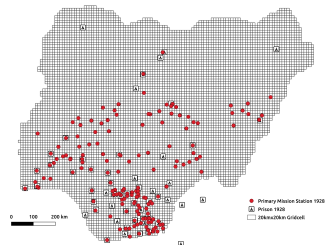


Figure: Missions and Prisons in 1928

# Missions and Upheaval in the Past

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### Assumption:

- Within an ethnic homeland and state, and accounting for early prisons (1903), future location of a mission station was as good as random [▶▶ Evidence Here](#)

### We find that:

- An increase in missions is associated with an increase in number of native authority prisons and prisoners [▶▶ Results Here](#)
- Note that the expansion of prisons indicates a breakdown in traditional methods of control

# Robustness: Missions, Native Prisons and Prisoners

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Further show robustness to:

- Controlling for other development measures: hospitals, railway, government schools, urbanization
- Restricting to areas within 40 *km* of missions
- Restricting to places with prisons in 1928: only looking at prisoner population
- Restricting to places without missions in 1903: controlling for early selection/development
- Show that results are not driven by early urbanization or future planned missions
- Unobservables need to be twice as important as observables for the estimates to disappear

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We also provide more evidence in support of the mechanism:

- Results are found for both ethnic ancestry and current location
- Not primarily due to religious teaching:
  - Found for Christians and Muslims
  - Global data from the World Values Survey do not show that Christians are less trusting
- Also show that results are not driven by colonial experiences: no reduced trust in formal colonial-era institutions [▶▶ Results Here](#)

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- Our study contributes to an understanding of the legacies of Christian Missions
- Helps to understand some differences in trust in African societies:
  - Emphasizes the sociocultural changes on African societies induced by missionary activities
- In indirect-rule countries, historical exposure to missions associated with lower trust, and engagement with traditional norms and institutions
- The evidence indicates that traditional institutions have not been adequately replaced

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THANK YOU!!  
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION  
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## Historical Missions and Trust

	(1) Trust Relatives	(2) Trust Neighbors	(3) Inter-group Trust	(4) Intra-group Trust
Indirect Rule Countries				
Missions per Area	-0.171* [0.0910]	-0.251** [0.111]	-0.320*** [0.118]	-0.375** [0.154]
Adjusted $R^2$	0.084	0.095	0.086	0.119
Observations	18969	18934	18817	9640
Non-Indirect Rule Countries				
Missions per Area	0.796*** [0.192]	0.796*** [0.243]	0.157 [0.220]	0.306 [0.286]
Adjusted $R^2$	0.143	0.121	0.088	0.155
Observations	18749	18678	18431	8402
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trade and Homogeneity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: \* $p < .1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Indirect rule: Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Lesotho, Botswana, Liberia. Exclude English-speaking southern Africa

## Missions and Traditional Norms

Use data from Afrobarometer and Pew Religion Surveys to show:

	(1) Contact Trad. Leader	(2) Believe in Juju	(3) Use Trad. Healers	(4) Participate in Trad. Rituals	(5) Own Trad. Objects	(6) Accept Polygamy
Missions per Area	-0.232** [0.0972]	-0.445** [0.190]	-0.433** [0.193]	-0.430* [0.237]	-0.185 [0.178]	-1.197*** [0.333]
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geoclimatic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjusted $R^2$	0.195	0.088	0.083	0.078	0.048	0.126
Observations	9647	9908	10156	10288	10239	10349

Note: \* $p < .1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Historical exposure to missions associated with decreased connection and agreement with traditional norms, beliefs, and practices.

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## Missions over Time: Balance Test

	Distance to lake	Distance to river	Distance to coast	Distance to port	Distance to border	Mean Elevation
Within 20km of Mission '28	-4541.5 [4058.7]	-1118.1 [1211.5]	-2986.2 [4210.3]	-3391.4 [3709.7]	5331.2 [4347.5]	21.07 [13.18]
	Ruggedness	Latitude	Precipitation (s.d.)	Temperature (s.d.)	Nutrient Availability	Crude Deposits
Within 20km of Mission '28	1.889 [3.446]	-0.0192 [0.0376]	-0.747 [1.568]	-0.000682 [0.00146]	0.0371 [0.0611]	-0.0236* [0.0138]
	Cocoa (kg/ha)	Cotton (kg/ha)	Groundnuts (kg/ha)	Oil Palm (kg/ha)	Pop.	Pop. Density
Within 20km of Mission in '28	0.0155 [0.0172]	-0.00565 [0.00556]	0.0169* [0.00991]	0.0275 [0.125]	1028.2*** [368.7]	11.83*** [4.228]
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Homeland FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dist to 1903 Prison	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7676	7676	7676	7676	7676	7676

Note: \* $p < .1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

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# Missions and Social Change in the Past

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Within 20km of Prisons in 1928			Total Prisoners Within 20km in 1928
Within 20km of Mission in 1928	0.205*** [0.0434]	0.202*** [0.0430]	0.170*** [0.0367]	74.73*** [20.29]
Within 20km of prison in 1903	0.314*** [0.0681]	0.308*** [0.0677]	0.190** [0.0752]	
Total prisoners within 20km in 1903				0.610*** [0.188]
Adjusted $R^2$	0.366	0.373	0.416	0.442
State FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnic Homeland FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geoclimatic Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Agric/Mineral Controls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	7676	7676	7675	7675

Note: \* $p < .1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

## Missions, Trust, Institutions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Local Council	Trust in Police	Courts	Factor Score for Trust: <b>Interpersonal</b>	<b>Formal Institutions</b>
Missions per Area	0.0948 [0.0639]	0.0498 [0.0941]	0.151** [0.0760]	-0.332*** [0.127]	0.170** [0.0788]
Adjusted $R^2$	0.165	0.196	0.119	0.101	0.219
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ethnicity Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Geographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trade and Homogeneity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	18141	18668	18213	17342	17342

Note: \* $p < .1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

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