

Part I: The Transformation of Informal Institutions of Social Reciprocity in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire

Chapter One

Introduction

African political economies are not always and everywhere in crisis. Indeed, over the past one hundred years, the countries of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa have been considered, at different points, successful models of democratic and economic development. We cannot understand the varied paths of the Ghanaian and Ivoirian political economies by solely focusing at the macro-level on state weakness, or, by exclusively concentrating at the micro-level on the deficits of social capital or missing institutions. In this book, we travel to similar villages in the countryside on either side of the Ghana-Cote d'Ivoire border to see how the history of people's experience of state-building has fundamentally transformed economics and politics from the ground up.

A little over a hundred years ago, prior to European colonial rule, an outsider traveling to the four Akan villages selected for this study in the forest zone of West Africa would have found communities with very similar political histories, economies, social organization and cultures. As the Asante Empire began to centralize and expand in the mid-17th century in what is now Ghana, these Akan groups resisted incorporation.¹ Instead, they chose to migrate further westward of the Asante capital of Kumasi to what is now the southwestern part of Ghana and the southeastern part of Cote d'Ivoire. (*See Map 1.1.*) The Akan peoples in these fieldsite villages thus shared similar village chieftancies, matrilineal family systems, and customary systems of land tenure,

¹ A variety of Akan peoples had migrated to what is now Ghana around the 13th century AD. The Akan linguistic group includes the Akuapem, the Akyem, the Asante, the Baoule, the Brong, the Fante and the Nzema peoples of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. They were organized as small states until a few groups began to centralize and expand their kingdoms, most notably, the Asante Empire. By 1874, the Asante Empire included over 100,000 square kilometers and approximately 3 million subjects. See, for example, Ivor Wilks 1993, 1975; T.C. McCaskie 2001, 1995; K. Arhin 1976; and M. Fortes 1969.

inheritance and justice.² Even today, village residents of these Akan regions continued to identify as “one family,” avowing that they fundamentally shared the same precolonial history, politics and culture.

[INSERT FIGURE 1.1 HERE – MAP OF FIELDSITES IN SIMILAR REGIONS OF COTE D’IVOIRE AND GHANA]

Yet, when I arrived in these villages in 1998-1999, I found striking differences in the local politics and cultures. In particular, I was surprised by the extent and types of variation in the informal institutions of social reciprocity and indigenous notions of citizenship. First, informal reciprocity – the ways that village residents exchanged help and social support with their nuclear and extended family, clan, friends, neighbors, ethnic group or others - was quite different in the Akan areas now on either side of the Ghana-Cote d’Ivoire national border. In the Ghanaian region, fewer people were exchanging any kind of help at all, and when they did, it was a much lower level of support. The village residents in the Ghanaian region gave a little bit of help to a much wider array of social ties, particularly friends. In contrast, in the Ivoirian region, greater numbers of village residents gave more significant amounts of help, but this was given to a much narrower group of people, particularly members of the immediate nuclear family.

Second, local conceptualizations of citizenship also differed in remarkable ways in these two similar Akan regions. In the Ghanaian region, village residents articulated a community-oriented notion of citizenship whereas in the Ivoirian region, villagers described an individualized, entitlement-based sense of citizenship. Furthermore, the Ghanaian patterns of citizenship and politics seemed to facilitate the resolution of ethnic conflict at the grassroots whereas the Ivoirian patterns magnified the salience of ethnic cleavages upward to the national level.

²For example, see Firmin-Sellers’ (1996) comparative analysis of the development of land tenure systems in the same two regions as this book.

None of the donors, policymakers or scholars I had interviewed beforehand in the capital cities of Accra and Abidjan would have predicted such divergence between these analogous regions in what are today the separate countries of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. These experts on the ground as well as the existing scholarship did draw attention to the profound differences between *other* subnational regions within the two countries, for example, expected differences between the more Muslim, patrilineal Northern regions of each country and the more Christian, matrilineal Southern regions.³ But even in making those distinctions, the assumption was reinforced that these cross-border Akan regions should be more alike than different. And, yet, the differences I found on the ground between these Akan villages were striking.

This book seeks to answer two connected questions. First, why did the informal institutions of reciprocity differ in such surprising ways in similar Akan villages on either side of the Ghana-Cote d'Ivoire border? If Ghanaian and Ivoirian villagers from these cross-border regions indeed considered themselves to be "one family," then it is puzzling why they helped their families, friends, and neighbors in such distinctive ways. Then, second, what were the consequences of these different informal institutions of reciprocity for the practice of citizenship? If their pre-colonial cultures and political histories were so similar, why did Ghanaians and Ivoirians from these regions conceptualize citizenship and participate in local and national politics so differently?

I argue that diverse histories of colonial and post-colonial state formation have stimulated these puzzling local-level differences in the informal institutions of social reciprocity and citizenship in rural Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. In 1884, competing to expand their colonial empires, the European powers met in Berlin and agreed among themselves to carve "this magnificent African cake" into pieces.⁴ With little knowledge of pre-colonial African political

³ In a study of another region in southern Ghana, Polly Hill (1963) argued that different ethnic culture and lineage systems resulted in varied structures of collective organization for agricultural production.

⁴ King Leopold of Belgium is credited with describing Africa in this way prior to the Berlin Conference. Hochschild 1998: 58.

systems or cultural differences, colonial rulers created highly heterogeneous, multi-ethnic states. For example, Côte d'Ivoire now encompasses as many as 60 different language groups while Ghana includes at least 35 language groups.⁵ In many instances, these arbitrary colonial boundaries unwittingly split ethno-cultural groups into two separate nation-states. This is indeed the case for the Akan groups described above; culturally and politically similar to begin, they now live on either side of the Ghana-Côte d'Ivoire national border. Through this comparative study, we are able to see how the historical and political process of building a nation-state from the colonial era to the present was experienced differently on the ground and profoundly shaped the informal institutions of reciprocity.

In order to understand the puzzling variation in informal reciprocity at the local level, we must consider the historical construction of the state role in mediating risk in three different policy areas: 1) political administration; 2) social infrastructure and service delivery; and, 3) economic policy in agriculture. (*See Table 1.1.*)

⁵ The number of language groups is actually a subject of debate and supports Posner's (2005) argument that formal state institutions can shape the range of social identities available. In Ghana, the 1960 census recorded over 100 different language and cultural groups. Today, only 9 are state-sponsored languages, and 26 others remain as non-official languages. This evidence suggests a process of state-supported consolidation similar to what Posner found in Zambia.

Table 1.1.

How History of State Formation in Region Stimulates Divergence in Informal Reciprocity

State Role in Mediating Risk	Description of state role	Level of Risk Mediation by State	Variation in History of State Formation in Region	Effect on Informal Reciprocity
1. Political Administration (chapter 4)	Political construction of the state role vis-à-vis the family and citizen.	B/A GHANA Low	B/A GHANA Decentralized colonial and post-colonial administrative state that only supplements preexisting extended family and community systems.	B/A GHANA More diversified reciprocity.
		ABENG COTE D'IVOIRE High	ABENGOUROU REGION COTE D'IVOIRE Centralized colonial and post-colonial administrative state generates high expectations that state supports individual citizens in nuclear families.	ABENGOUROU COTE D'IVOIRE More concentrated reciprocity.
2. Social Service Delivery (chapter 5)	General provision of state infrastructure and delivery of social services to subsidize health, education, and alleviate poverty.	B/A GHANA Low	B/A GHANA A historically longer investment in social services is eroded earlier by unstable and low quality service provision since late 1960s so lower expectations of service utilization when state retrenched in mid-1980s.	B/A GHANA Lower quantity of reciprocity exchanged. More diversified reciprocity.
		ABENG COTE D'IVOIRE High	ABENGOUROU REGION COTE D'IVOIRE A shallower investment in social services historically but more stable and higher quality since late 1960s until mid-1990s generating higher expectations of service utilization when state retrenched.	ABENGOUROU COTE D'IVOIRE Higher quantity of reciprocity exchanged. More concentrated reciprocity.
3. Economic Policy (chapter 6)	Economic policy interventions to support production, mediate market volatility, and tax productivity.	B/A GHANA Low	B/A GHANA State intervenes actively in agricultural policy to monopolize purchasing and extract very heavily from export crop production stimulating shift to short-term, labor-intensive vegetable production for domestic markets.	B/A GHANA More diversified reciprocity in particular among young.
		ABENG COTE D'IVOIRE Medium	ABENGOUROU REGION COTE D'IVOIRE State intervenes in agricultural policy but allows some private purchasing, more moderate taxation of export crop production and facilitates labor in-migration supporting expansion of long-term investments in land-intensive cocoa and coffee production for export markets.	ABENGOUROU COTE D'IVOIRE More concentrated reciprocity that links older and younger generations.

These divergent histories of state formation not only shape the nature of reciprocity operating on the ground, but also influence how local groups and communities define citizenship and then choose to engage and interact with the state on an everyday basis. (*See Figure 1.2.*)

My thesis is that a more centralized and expansive role for the colonial and post-colonial state in Cote d'Ivoire ironically stimulated a greater volume of informal reciprocal exchange during the late 1990s. But, this reciprocity was more heavily concentrated on the nuclear family. This pattern of informal reciprocity in this region of Cote d'Ivoire strengthened the development of a uni-ethnic, entitlement-based notion of citizenship that extended out from the village up to the national capital. In contrast, in the Ghanaian region, a more decentralized and restricted role for the colonial and post-colonial state was associated with a much lower volume of informal reciprocal exchange. In this region in the late 1990s, neither the central state nor informal social relations were providing a very robust social safety net, particularly for the very young and very old. Yet, the reduced central state support had spurred a diversification of informal reciprocity across different social ties in the Ghanaian region. This diversification of reciprocity among the nuclear, extended family and importantly, friends of various ethnic, gender, and class backgrounds reinforced a more multi-ethnic duty-based conception of citizenship focused on the local, village political community in this region of Ghana.

[INSERT FIGURE 1.2 HERE]

My argument thus highlights both costs and benefits – social, economic, and political -- of the different histories of state formation in each case. The book does not conclude simply that a *particular type* of state intervention had ideal consequences on all fronts. Rather, the book's contribution is to emphasize the nuances of how colonial and post-colonial states have transformed informal reciprocity and citizenship in different ways over time.

Much of the recent literature on institutions or social capital downplays the role of state legacies in transforming informal social institutions and political culture however. For theorists of the new institutions or social capital, a focus at the micro-level occludes a structural analysis of the historical role of the state. I argue that these perspectives are insufficiently political and as a result mistakenly characterize Africa as more homogeneous than the empirical reality shown here. On the other hand, historical institutionalists have often overemphasized the historical development of formal state institutions, such as different constitutional and electoral rules, at the national level, and have hence missed important interactions at the micro-level -- in particular, the role of informal institutions.

The existing scholarship that does examine both the state and the informal social and political institutions at the local level has portrayed the interaction in relatively dichotomous terms as a zero-sum relationship. The dominant theme is that the African state is weak.⁶ Some scholars have suggested that as states weaken, vibrant informal networks grow and expand.⁷ Others have theorized the causal story in reverse: that the existence of strong informal networks allows the option of refusing to be subordinated and thus weakens the state from below.⁸ In contrast, I draw theoretical inspiration from disciplinarily diverse literatures on institutions and agrarian change to show how the colonial and post-colonial state has had profound effects on

⁶ See Herbst 2000; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Bayart et.al. 1999; and Olowu and Wunsch 1990.

⁷ See Chazan 1983; Azarya and Chazan 1987; Dei 1992; Cheru 1997; Pellow and Chazan 1986; MacGaffey 1991; and Tripp 1997. See Karen Hansen (2004) for a critique of the idealization of the informal economy by donors and policymakers.

⁸ See Hyden 1980; Bayart 1993, 1999; and Reno 1998.

village social institutions and political cultures.⁹ Based on intensive fieldwork in these regions, I use an historical and ethnographic analysis of micro-level interactions to empirically investigate *how* the history of state power has varied and actually mattered at the village level.¹⁰ The construction of the colonial and post-colonial state does not necessarily destroy informal reciprocity wholesale. Rather, the different legacies of state-building are the key determinants in the *transformation* of informal institutions of social reciprocity and citizenship over time and in particular places in rural Africa.

By uncovering local patterns of social and political exclusion and the ways that rural people were linked (or not) to the broader, national political system, we begin to shed light on one of the most troubling and important puzzles in the region.¹¹ Why, after decades of political instability and economic collapse, has Ghana emerged as a model of democratic consolidation while the post-independence stability and prosperity of the “Ivoirian miracle” has been shattered by the outbreak of ethno-regional civil war? Both Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire shared very similar ethnic, religious and regional divisions, where a mostly Christian, Akan South has dominated a more impoverished, largely Muslim North in the economic and political realms. Ironically, however, faced with similar, overlapping cleavages, local ethnic conflict has had very different consequences for the nation. Fortunately, the majority of the book’s data was collected in the field from October 1998-October 1999 immediately prior to the outbreak of political violence in Côte d’Ivoire. In fact, the fieldwork in Côte d’Ivoire was completed just one month prior to the first coup d’état and collapse of the long-dominant PDCI regime.¹² This book thus provides a

⁹ Scott 1976,1985; Bates 1989, 1990, 1997; Hyden 2006; Watts 1983; Boone 2003 and Mamdani 1996.

¹⁰ Fieldwork was conducted in January 1994, April-August 1997, and October 1998-October 1999 in two similar villages of Tano District in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana and in two similar villages in the Abengourou region of Côte d’Ivoire. Fictional names are used for these villages in the footnotes to protect the anonymity of the sources.

¹¹ Social exclusion is conceptualized here more broadly as a process of being marginalized or left out of social relationships, not simply formal citizenship status within the nation-state as frequently theorized in the literature on the advanced industrialized countries (Gore et.al. 1995).

¹² A series of coup d’états derailed the Ivoirian political system beginning in the winter of 1999. By 2002, the country had exploded into a violent civil war. Finally in March 2007, the rebels and central government reached a peace agreement that aimed to hold new elections by November 2008. By October 2008, the

snapshot of a culture on the brink of civil war, illuminating key differences in the nature of local-level social exclusion and the interpretation of democratic citizenship.

Puzzling Contrasts in Informal Social Reciprocity and Indigenous Notions of Citizenship in Similar Regions of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire

A brief comparison of the early morning breakfast routine in two similar villages in each of these Akan regions of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire poignantly reveals the unanticipated differences in the informal institutions of social reciprocity and indigenous notions of citizenship. The existing scholarship did not predict these differences.

Weak but Diversified Informal Social Reciprocity and Community-Oriented Citizenship in Ghanaian Region

In the Ghanaian villages, in what was historically a cocoa region, many young farmers had switched recently to a more back-breaking and volatile new cash crop: tomatoes. Before the sun had even arisen, many of the younger parents, aunts, uncles and cousins left home to water their new tomato farms. As a result of the early morning labor required to farm tomatoes, there was no one left at home to cook for the extended family. Most of the multi-family courtyards and outdoor cooking areas were eerily quiet. The youngest and the eldest were on their own, left with coins to buy their early morning meals at a number of informal eating spots around the villages. Typically, the women cooking at these “chop shops” bustled while children squatted alone – a few feet apart from each other – on small wooden benches eating their breakfast without talking.

Elder men from the dominant Akan ethnic group lamented their loneliness and economic vulnerability, contending that the extended family system had weakened markedly in recent decades. The quantitative *amount* of social reciprocity exchanged was not very high in the Ghanaian villages – rarely enough to cover even one child’s school fees, or to handle one medical emergency. But what really concerned these Akan elders was the rise of the new “empire of the

requisite timetable for demobilization, voter registration, and state redeployment in rebel areas was proving difficult to achieve. In early November 2008, the elections were cancelled. The new timetable for elections is November 2009 but already skepticism exists whether they will take place. UNIRIN (2008, 2009).

young,” where youth, both from Akan and non-indigenous, minority ethnic groups, and both male and female, wielded newly-attained wealth and power in the village. Many complained that the very young and old were increasingly left out.

The variation in reciprocity at the local level shaped the contrasting ways that Ghanaians in these regions thought about citizenship and participated in politics from the village all the way up to the nation-state. Village residents in these regions of Ghana mentioned much more frequently their duty to provide communal labor as something they owed to the state. Ethnic minorities often participated as elected leaders on village committees to help resolve village problems. As a result, ethnic grievances were mediated for the most part at the grassroots, and ethnic conflict has not been projected onto the nation.¹³ Ghana has had the chance to consolidate its democracy without being torn apart by ethnically-based political mobilization and violence. Indeed, since permitting multi-party politics in 1992, Ghana has held five relatively peaceful national elections, including a nonviolent transfer of political power from the formerly authoritarian incumbent to the main opposition party in 2000, as well as another alternation of power after an extremely tight run-off in December 2008.

Stronger but More Narrowly Concentrated Informal Social Reciprocity and Individualized Notions of Entitlement in Ivoirian Region

Notwithstanding their shared pre-colonial Akan culture, the informal institutions of reciprocity differed in surprising ways in the Ivoirian villages when compared to the Ghanaian ones. The morning routine had not changed there, like it had in Ghana. The continued predominance of cocoa production in this region of Côte d’Ivoire meant that at least a few female family members remained at home to cook breakfast and care for the extended family’s young and old in the Ivoirian villages. Very few prepared food “chop shops” were open for business in this region of Cote d’Ivoire as most everyone shared their meals in larger, extended family

¹³ Morris MacLean 2004b.

courtyards. The Akan elders in Cote d'Ivoire did not share the same worries and complaints as they did so often in the Ghanaian region.

The above different patterns of informal reciprocity shaped the ways that Ivoirians thought about their role as citizens and engaged with the state in everyday politics. Since Ivoirian reciprocity was more narrowly concentrated on the nuclear and immediate extended family, Ivoirians were less connected to the larger village community through social interaction. Ivoirians frequently struggled to think of one thing that they might owe the state, but very readily rattled off a long list of rights, almost always private goods that would be consumed entirely by individuals as opposed to shared by the community as a whole. Ethnic minorities had little voice in resolving local issues, and inter-ethnic conflicts were quickly passed to the next level of a highly centralized government to decide. Not only were young, non-indigenous Muslim groups excluded increasingly from economic gains, they were locked out from the local political game. These ethnic grievances have been channeled upward, where they then have threatened to undermine the very unity of the nation.

Current Theoretical Explanations

Already, this brief look at everyday life in villages in similar regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire reveals unanticipated differences. To investigate these empirical puzzles in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, I will ground my argument in a multi-disciplinary literature broadly oriented toward understanding institutions and agrarian change.¹⁴ While recent scholarly attention to social capital and institutions has reaffirmed the value of analyzing the micro-level, politics and history remain under-theorized. Robert Bates similarly critiques the new institutionalists for failing to adequately theorize politics.¹⁵ Bates summarizes:

¹⁴ See Hall and Taylor (1996) for a review distinguishing between the three schools of institutional theory (i.e., the new institutional economics, historical institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism). See also DiMaggio 1998.

¹⁵ Bates (1997: 40-1.)

The image conveyed in the new institutionalism is that of economic actors, frustrated in their efforts to transact in markets, structuring non-market institutions that will enable them to transcend their dilemma and thereby attain welfare-enhancing outcomes. The reality is that non-market institutions are often created in the legislature or the court room or by economic actors who anticipate the appeal of others within such political arenas... In attempting to construct an economic theory of non-market institutions then, the new institutionalism commits major errors of omission: it underplays or ignores the importance of politics.¹⁶

Bates thus highlights the need to address both the relative power of different political groups who contest the choice between different non-market institutions with different distributional consequences as well as the role of the state in shaping the political setting where that struggle takes place.¹⁷ I argue that it is vital to add a deeper appreciation for politics and history to our institutionalist analysis in order to predict and understand the variation that exists on the ground.

Conceptualizing the Informal Institutions of Reciprocity

Before proceeding, it is important first to define the informal institutions of reciprocity at the center of this study. Reciprocity was relatively ignored in the political science literature until social capital attracted a flurry of scholarly attention.¹⁸ In fact, this new interest in social capital has expanded beyond academia to be embraced by powerful development organizations. The World Bank, in particular, has organized several conferences and published numerous edited volumes on the conceptualization and relationship of social capital to development.¹⁹ Most recently, World Bank attention has been dedicated to trying to measure social capital quantitatively.²⁰

While none of these scholars and practitioners agrees on a single definition of social capital or theory of social capital's origins and causal effects, Robert Putnam's work continues to

¹⁶ Bates (1997: 42)

¹⁷ For a similar point about how the state shapes political preferences, see also Weyland (2002a: 75).

¹⁸ On social capital, see Lin 2001; Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 1993, 2000; Coleman 1988, 1990 and Bourdieu 1986. Anirudh Krishna (2002: 4) uses the concept of social capital but emphasizes the role of informal associations and mutual support networks in his work on India. Some of the theoretical work on civil society overlaps with that on social capital but has focused more on formal organizations than the informal social relations under analysis here. See, for example, Varshney 2002; Berman 2001; and Bratton 1989.

¹⁹ See Naryan et.al. 2003; Grootaert and van Bastelaer, eds., 2002a, 2002b; Dasgupta and Serageldin, eds 2000.

²⁰ See Grootaert et.al. 2004.

be the most frequently cited.²¹ Putnam defines social capital as “the connections between individuals and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness.”²² Like Putnam’s, many definitions of social capital emphasize social relationships and norms of reciprocity as a key component, but the lack of clarity in this loaded concept of social capital undermines the measurement and analysis of reciprocity. The editors of a World Bank volume on social capital launched a similar critique of this lack of definitional clarity arguing that “a concept that encompasses too much is at risk of explaining nothing.”²³

A major weakness of the current use of social capital is that the attention to local social relations and culture is almost always divorced from a broader structural analysis of the political economy.²⁴ Fine has made one of the most incisive critiques of how this “plump and benevolent” definition of social capital is too “fungible” and can be applied to anything anywhere, thus obscuring the real power and conflict involved in the political economy of development.²⁵

My conceptualization of reciprocity is quite different and intentionally emphasizes politics and history. I deliberately choose not to use the term social capital in this book. Instead, I draw on recent scholarly debates in anthropology to develop a more dynamic and contextualized approach.²⁶ I employ the most minimalist definition of reciprocity to allow an investigation of if, how, and when exchanges take place and change in particular places and historical moments. I do not assume whether these norms and relations of reciprocity have positive consequences for

²¹ The editors of a World Bank volume concluded that: “...social capital means different things to different people.” Dasgupta and Serageldin 2000: x.

²² Putnam 2000:19.

²³ Grootaert et.al. 2002b: 5.

²⁴ One important exception is Manfred Steger’s (2002) immanent critique of Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* which argues that globalization is actually a more powerful explanation for the decline in social capital in the U.S. See also Peter Evans (1996) work on the synergy between the state and social capital.

²⁵ Fine 2003, 2001.

²⁶ In an excellent historical overview of the literature, David Graeber (2001) concludes that anthropologists still have not resolved their dilemmas about theories of value. Key classic works are Malinowski (1950), Mauss (1954), and Levi-Strauss (1969). The scholarly discussion continues today with work by Strathern (1988), and important critiques by Weiner (1980, 1992) and Gregory (1982). See also works by economic sociologists such as Granovetter (1985) and Blau (1964) on social networks and social exchange. There is of course a voluminous anthropological literature on kinship. On the nature of Akan kinship in Ghana, see work by Rattray (1923, 1929) and Fortes (1950, 1969) and critique by McCaskie (1995). See also Nukunya (1992) on the family in Ghana, and Vimard (1987, 1993) on the family in Cote d’Ivoire.

societal cohesion, economic growth or democracy.²⁷ In particular, I show how broader structures of state power may fundamentally shape local reciprocity in a dialectical, back-and-forth interaction over time.²⁸ This politically and historically contextualized approach allows a more effective measurement of reciprocity and then facilitates the subsequent empirical investigation (rather than assumption) of the consequences for citizenship and democracy.²⁹

Hence, reciprocity is defined here simply as long-term ties of exchange, or give-and-take, between individuals and groups over time. The number and type of people involved in exchanges is open and potentially dynamic. The reciprocal arrangements may include nuclear and extended family, friends, neighbors, other villagers, members of the same or different ethnic groups, etc.³⁰ Furthermore, the exchanges may involve people who live in different localities across geographic space. For example, some village residents reported financial help they received from uncles who lived in larger, urban areas. Surprisingly, international remittances from family members living overseas were not significant in either region.³¹ Exchanges are also not simple, dyadic relationships between two individuals at one time period, but may involve multiple triangulations across generations. Platteau makes a compelling argument that these informal institutions are guided by a norm of “balanced reciprocity” over the long-term.³² As such, an element of uncertainty exists for participants as they invest in and negotiate their social relationships.³³

Building on Goran Hyden’s recent typology of the “economy of affection,” I characterize an individual’s overall pattern of reciprocal relations as 1) horizontal versus vertical; and, 2)

²⁷ Fine (2003) and Levi (1996) critique Putnam and other social capital theorists for assuming that these networks are inherently positive and neglecting the potentially “unsocial” dark side.

²⁸ Tarrow (1996) critiques Putnam for making social capital in Italy seem quite insulated from state power.

²⁹ Adcock and Collier 2001.

³⁰ My conceptualization of reciprocity would include rotating savings groups or “tontines” among friends or neighbors. On tontines in Cameroun, see Henry et.al. 1991 and Janin 1995.

³¹ In Manuh’s (2006) excellent edited volume on international migration, Addison (2006: 119) reports that remittances from Ghanaians were bigger and more stable than foreign aid and foreign direct investment since 1990. In the same volume, Mazzucato et.al. (2006: 150-151) find that international remittances are geographically concentrated in the regions of Ashanti and Greater Accra and are more likely to be received by richer individuals and households.

³² Platteau 1997: 767-768.

³³ Bates 1990.

diversified versus concentrated.³⁴ First, more horizontal reciprocity involves people of similar age, wealth, and/or power whereas more vertical reciprocal relations are between people of vastly different age and political/economic resources. Although the horizontal and symmetrical nature of reciprocal exchange between kin and friends is often romanticized, the vertical and asymmetrical patterns of exchange between the rich and the poor predominate.³⁵ Second, I consider to what extent individuals spread their reciprocity over a large number of different types of social relationships.³⁶ Thus, reciprocity relations are more diversified when individuals spread their gift giving relatively equally among a large number of diverse social categories and more concentrated when reciprocity is focused on a fewer number of specific social relations.

Another important point of distinction in the conceptualization of reciprocity is not simply *who* is tied together, but what the nature of these ties is. These relationships have political value.³⁷ For example, gifts may be exchanged in return for political loyalty, votes and support. And, conversely, when social reciprocity is eroded, political loyalties may be undermined. Clearly, these reciprocal arrangements have economic benefits in terms of providing social insurance in high risk ecological environments or across the life cycle.³⁸ But scholars should not lose sight of the potential power differentials among givers and receivers, and the political value placed on fulfilling obligations. Again, by using a minimalist definition of reciprocity, I can explore the meaning of these relations of reciprocity to the participants themselves, rather than assuming a purely instrumental logic.

³⁴ Hyden (2006:78-83) contrasts vertical with lateral and open with closed in his typology.

³⁵ Polanyi (1944) romanticized horizontal reciprocity while Scott (1976:88); Hyden (1980, 2006) and Berry (1985) highlight vertical asymmetry.

³⁶ Several studies by agricultural economists have challenged the assumptions of unitary households and complete risk-sharing within families and communities in different parts of Africa. Udry and Conley (2004) characterize the networks in contemporary Ghana as “sparse” and surprisingly low-density. Kazianga and Udry’s (2006) study of Burkina Faso finds that even during a severe drought, there were almost no village-level risk pooling mechanisms, and that individuals relied almost entirely on self-insurance. Markus Goldstein (2000) emphasizes the lack of pooling of information and resources between husbands and wives in the same household in his study of another region of Ghana. Dercon and Krishnan (1996) find incomplete informal risk-sharing in their study of Ethiopia and Tanzania.

³⁷ See Scott 1976; Hyden 1980 and Watts 1983.

³⁸ Robert Bates (1990) has shown how investments made in children or cattle serve as old age insurance. See also Bates and Curry 1992.

Measuring the Informal Institutions of Reciprocity

So, if these relationships are so complex, contested, contingent and long-term, how can we hope to study reciprocity empirically? It would be useless to attempt to record a balance sheet of debts and credits between two people, or to try and map a holistic network at one point in time or space.³⁹ For this reason, the text refers to the *relations* of reciprocity, not networks. To shed light on these changing sets of norms and relationships, multiple methods of data collection were combined.

First, I documented the verbal articulation of normative beliefs about reciprocity. I define norms here as codes of conduct agreed upon as appropriate within a certain group.⁴⁰ For example, many villagers spoke of the reciprocity between the young and old as something that was just understood as a natural part of the cycle of life. As one woman explained, “I raised my children from when their teeth first came in. They also can help me until my teeth fall out.”⁴¹ She was expressing a norm of reciprocity here, emphasizing the long-term exchange between parents and their children.

Second, I listened carefully in interviews, focus groups and everyday conversations for evidence of norms being contested or enforced regularly with the sanctioning of inappropriate behavior as an informal institution. The breach of informal rules was not necessarily enforced by the central state but was often self-enforcing by the group through joking, gossip, social stigmatization, or even violence.⁴² One sanction that was cited by villagers as occurring more frequently in the recent past was the use of witchcraft to punish a young nephew or niece who had

³⁹ I thank Beth Buggenhagen for her point that attempting to represent reciprocity as a social network would give the complex and dynamic social relationships a “misplaced concreteness.”

⁴⁰ See Ostrom 2000 and Crawford and Ostrom 1995.

⁴¹ In-depth interview with elderly woman by author, Kyere, Côte d’Ivoire, 20 August 1999.

⁴² Scott (1985) explores non-violent sanctions in his analysis of “the weapons of the weak.” Bates (1989) argues that the less successful Kikuyu initiate the Mau Mau rebellion to reclaim their rights and punish the more successful Kikuyu who chose to withdraw from kinship networks.

succeeded but not helped his or her extended family member with needed financial support.⁴³ The rise in the frequency of sanctioning via witchcraft accusations in both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire might suggest that currently a struggle is being fought between individuals and groups over the underlying normative framework, a topic to be explored further in Chapter 3. This book reveals how African normative orders are contested and transformed at various rates and differentially for diverse groups within a society.

Finally, to analyze these unwritten and invisible norms and informal institutions, much of this book examines how individuals actually give and receive help from each other at the village level. For example, who did an elderly widow in Ghana turn to for help over the past year when she was sick and in need of medical attention? These relationships reflect normative frameworks and informal institutions. I collected information about the extent and structure of social exchanges among a randomly sampled group of villagers. Again, my approach differs from traditional social network analysis in that I do not conceive of these social relations as a network than can be mapped as a whole entity. Rather, I attempted to take a snapshot of the number and types of reciprocal exchanges in a particular context and to investigate the *meaning* of these individual ties.

Explaining Informal Institutional Change

So, how does the current literature explain such different changes over time in the informal institutions of reciprocity in these regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire? Like the scholarship on social capital, much of the new institutionalist literature has paid insufficient attention to politics. Douglass North has portrayed the evolution of the formal “rules of the game” such as property rights or contracts as an endogenous process emerging incrementally from individual interaction over time.⁴⁴ New institutionalists have viewed the impetus for the rise of

⁴³ On the rise of witchcraft accusations in different parts of Africa, see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Geschiere 1997; and Meyer 1995.

⁴⁴ North 1990.

non-market social institutions as a nearly automatic response to market failure.⁴⁵ Kenneth Arrow summarized the core argument well writing: “When the market fails to achieve an optimal state, society will, to some extent at least, recognize the gap, and non-market social institutions will arise attempting to bridge it.”⁴⁶ This process of institutional origins is starkly apolitical. Politics are only minimally acknowledged in the work of North and Jack Knight at the micro-level in terms of differences in individual bargaining power and distributional preferences.⁴⁷ Importantly, the state is largely absent in shaping the parameters for distributional conflict.⁴⁸

The new institutionalists hence see the informal institutions of reciprocity of the lineage, extended family system or village community in Africa as a response to the market failure to provide social insurance.⁴⁹ It is true that in most African economies, market-based insurance does not exist, thus individuals invest resources in these non-market institutions of reciprocal exchange in order to secure access to future support when in need.⁵⁰

It is not simply the failure of the market that stimulates the rise of these non-market social institutions of reciprocity, however, but also the failure of the public sector. Since most African states are also unable to provide security or social insurance, individuals turn to their families, lineage, ethnic group, or religious associations for social support.⁵¹ But, if the market failure for social insurance has been persistent and similar in both Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire, then why have

⁴⁵See for example, Greenwald and Stiglitz 1986. See also Dercon 2003 and Stiglitz 1986. Engerman and Sokoloff (2002) emphasized the role of initial factor endowments and geographic preconditions on the subsequent evolution of institutions. See also Greif (1992, 1997).

⁴⁶ Kenneth Arrow 1971:137.

⁴⁷ See North 1990: 16; and Knight 1992.

⁴⁸ Bardhan (2004: 14) also highlights how many new institutionalists narrowly consider the role of the state.

⁴⁹ Widespread market failures in credit in developing countries present similar problems and lead to underinvestment in education and health and efficiency-equity losses for the poor. See Dercon 2003; Deaton 1992; Stiglitz 2005.

⁵⁰ Sara Berry has shown how African farmers invest in and constantly renegotiate social institutions to insure access to land and labor and cope with economic failures. Berry 1989: 41-55. See also Berry 1993. Montiel et.al. (1993) examine the pooling of savings through credit societies where capital markets are absent or very weak.

⁵¹ Popkin (1979) shows how individuals turn to their churches or the opposition Communist party when the Vietnamese state fails to provide public works and secure property rights.

the reciprocity institutions (or responses to market failure) changed over time in such different ways in the two regions?

Theories about risk highlight potential sources of variation in the informal institutions used to cope with similar types of market failure.⁵² The basic intuition here is that if individuals or households faced higher levels of risk, they would develop strategies to spread that risk, for example, increasing investments in a broader social network.⁵³ The assumption here, of course, is that a diversification of social investments spreads risk by increasing an individual's access to resources across a broader range of social ties that are diversely positioned in the ecological, economic and political environment and are thus less likely to experience misfortune all at the same time. I explore this possibility along with the counterfactual, that diversification represents a reduction in the ability to cope with risk as reciprocity is exchanged with more and more distant and perhaps less reliable ties.

Several scholars have pointed out that one of the most important sources of risk is the natural environment. For example, where rainfall is more adequate and reliable, households face less risk and thus do less extensive pooling of their access to cattle.⁵⁴ Robert Bates has extended this argument to show how ecological risk combines with economic production to stimulate variations in kinship systems.⁵⁵ Thus, in forest ecological zones with high integration into world markets for high value exports, households face lower risks and thus favor more individualist accumulation of wealth and access to resources. In contrast, in savannah ecological zones with cattle herds, households face higher risks and as a consequence prefer greater pooling of wealth and collective access to resources.

⁵² For a review of the literature on risk management and coping strategies in rural developing countries, see Dercon 2002; Anderson 2001, and Morduch 1999. See also Platteau (1997) for a critical analysis of the normative basis and outcomes for informal risk-sharing arrangements.

⁵³ Shipton (2008) shows how the Luo of Kenya have developed several strategies, including investing in their lineage, as a way of spreading risk.

⁵⁴ Hukansson 1989.

⁵⁵ Bates 1990.

This study's design compares two regions from similar ecological zones but finds surprising innovations in local economic production that do stimulate variations in the patterns of reciprocity. I build on Bates' insight to show how the nature of economic production is itself a response to the *historical* perception of risk vis-à-vis the central state. Risk comes not simply from nature, or from economic location, but also from the political relationships between the center and periphery. I will thus add to Mary Douglas' insistence that we understand how the social context shapes risk perception by analyzing the historical and political context of informal institutional change.⁵⁶ The informal institutions of reciprocity do not emerge ahistorically and apolitically – rather, the past history of state intervention profoundly shapes their origin and subsequent development over time.

Of course, historical institutionalists have long argued that the history of formal state institutions is critical to understanding cross-national differences in democracy, state capacity, and economic development.⁵⁷ In much of this work, the politics and history of the state role is indeed taken very seriously, as I argue it should be. The problem, however, is that this focus on formal, macro-level institutions has been at the expense of the consideration of informal, micro-level institutions. Even recent scholarly efforts to highlight the role of informal institutions in comparative politics have presented the interactions between formal and informal institutions as different sorts of zero-sum relationships.⁵⁸ Thus, Helmke and Levitsky's typology outlines four different types of formal-informal interaction: 1) complementary; 2) substitutive; 3) accommodating; and, 4) competing.⁵⁹ This typology of interactions is conceived as a potential rivalry between informal and formal institutions rather than a mutual transformation. This zero-sum conceptualization is reinforced further when scholars focus rather narrowly on the interaction

⁵⁶ Douglas 1985.

⁵⁷ Some examples of works that emphasize cross-national differences in formal institutions are Immergut 1992; Collier and Collier 1991; Berger and Dore 1996; and Thelen 2004.

⁵⁸ For a theoretical overview, see Gretchen Helmke and Stephen Levitsky 2004. In African politics, see Goran Hyden 2006; Dennis Galvan 2004; and Michael Bratton 2008.

⁵⁹ Helmke and Levitsky 2006:14.

of formal and informal institutions attempting to govern the same set of issues or operating in the same political/policy domain. In contrast, I advocate using a more holistic approach where formal institutions from very different policy domains actually shape the political struggle over the rewriting of the institutional rules.⁶⁰

The contemporary zero-sum conceptualization actually echoes the arguments of an earlier generation of comparative politics scholars who examined the interactions between the colonial and post-colonial state and the informal institutions of reciprocity. Goran Hyden, in his early work on the failure of “*ujamaa*” socialism in Tanzania, conceptualized peasant economies and the state in a zero-sum oppositional relationship.⁶¹ According to Hyden, peasants in Africa still had the ability to “exit” through their participation in the “economy of affection.”⁶² As a result, peasants wielded the power and rendered the state weak and impotent as a “balloon suspended in mid-air...punctured by excessive demands and unable to function.”⁶³ Much of the recent scholarship on the African state has followed in this vein characterizing local, informal social networks as powerful and capable of permeating or subverting a weak African state.⁶⁴

Later, scholars such as Naomi Chazan, Deborah Pellow and Aili Mari Tripp also depicted a zero-sum relationship between the African state and informal networks but with the causal arrow going in the opposite direction as Hyden.⁶⁵ These scholars argued that as the authoritarian state collapsed in the late 1970s and 1980s, informal voluntary associations and social networks surged to fill the gaps.

⁶⁰ Lauth 2000 and Helmke and Levitsky 2006. Galvan (2004) emphasizes an intentional bottom-up process of syncretism in rural Senegal where new institutions, cultures and identities are actually recrafted.

⁶¹ Hyden 1980.

⁶² Hyden 1980: 9.

⁶³ Hyden 1983: 19.

⁶⁴ Bayart 1993; Reno 1998; Oluwu and Wunsch 1990.

⁶⁵ Chazan 1983; Pellow and Chazan 1986, and Tripp 1997. See also George Dei 1992 and Janet MacGaffey 1991.

James Scott is one of the few theorists who portrayed the state as capable of profoundly influencing these informal social relations in rural areas.⁶⁶ His theoretical and methodological approach has inspired this book on many levels, but our arguments differ in an important way. Scott argued that, as the centralized colonial state and capitalist market expanded, the informal system of reciprocities among landlords and peasants in rural Southeast Asia eroded. When these long-term networks of reciprocity were undermined, peasants rebelled, or, more frequently, in the face of a strongly repressive state, they engaged in petty or symbolic protest, within the refuge of peasant popular culture.⁶⁷ In place of Scott's emphasis on the breakdown of the "moral economy", I show how moral economies are not necessarily disappearing everywhere in the same way or at the same rate.⁶⁸ Instead, these relations of reciprocity were frequently reconstituted, often including new types of members with varying implications for the structure of local and national power.⁶⁹ In the next section, I develop this argument about how the state and informal institutions of reciprocity actually *transform* each other over time.

The Argument

The book's argument is that variations in the history of state formation produced important differences in the reorganization of the informal institutions of reciprocity.⁷⁰ I move away from drawing a rigid dichotomy of rivalry between informal and formal institutions to a more dynamic conceptualization of transformation. In doing so, I call attention explicitly to the complex and overlapping relationships between formal and informal institutions and how the

⁶⁶ Scott 1976, 1985. Indeed, in Scott's more recent book *Seeing Like a State* (1998), he examines cases where local people were incapable of resisting an authoritarian state's high modernist designs.

⁶⁷ Scott 1985.

⁶⁸ Watts 1983 acknowledges the possible persistence of "moral economies" but highlights the production of rising inequality in his analysis of the political economy of famine in Northern Nigeria in the 1970s.

⁶⁹ In a classic debate with Scott, Samuel Popkin (1979) argued that the central state was not necessarily a threat to peasant community and welfare but actually an ally in the peasants' efforts to revolutionize the agricultural economy and gain freer access to markets.

⁷⁰ Outside of political science, a very small sub-group of studies have looked at the intersection of formal state policies and laws with the informal arrangements for what they term social security. See Benda-Beckmann et.al. 1988; Midgley 1994; and Hirtz 1995.

distinctions may be blurred as they are experienced on the ground.⁷¹ In many developing societies with lower levels of literacy (often a minority of the population) and strong oral traditions, it is not very useful to define all unwritten rules as informal.⁷² The key is not whether these rules are actually written but the degree to which knowledge of the rules is open, visible and transparent. Public codification is essential for formal institutions, but that codification process may be oral and not written.⁷³ The greater uncertainty and lack of transparency for informal rules also creates a larger opening for negotiation and contestation. Thus, where other scholars ground informal institutions very tightly to a glacial conceptualization of cultural change, I show how the process of informal institutional change, while not usually revolutionary, can be intensely political and relatively rapid, occurring within a span of a decade in the field site regions, not over centuries.⁷⁴

An example from Ghana may illustrate this more fluid conceptualization of formal and informal institutional rules. If a village resident had a dispute with another villager, there may be several sets of rules for how to resolve the conflict. Following the written constitution and legislation of the central state, the village resident could file a complaint to be heard by the elected village-level unit committee. This would be a formal institution enforced by the central state. The village resident could also decide to approach the village chief for help. There are specific rules on how to do this too, and everyone in the village knows them. While unwritten, these are highly formal rules that have been passed down orally for generations that specify who to contact, what type and amount of payment would be required, and how the resolution process

⁷¹ I found Dennis Galvan's diagram that highlights the overlapping of the various layers of the institutional superstructure and infrastructure very useful in thinking through my own conceptualization here. See Galvan 2004: 17. See also Ostrom 2005.

⁷² Most scholars distinguish informal institutions negatively by their lack of written codification and state-enforcement. See Helmke and Levitsky 2006:5; Hyden 2006; Platteau 1994, 1997; and, Lauth 2000:24.

⁷³ Mershon (1994: 50) similarly argues that informal rules are *typically* unwritten but highlights that they are "less visible and less explicit."

⁷⁴ According to North (1990), since most cultural changes are incremental, informal constraints only change on the margins over a long period of time, and thus lag behind changes in formal rules. Knight (1992) also emphasizes that informal rules tend to persist even after the formal rules are changed. Platteau (1994: 804) also concludes that history and cultural change move slowly; as a result, it will take multiple decades for "adequate" formal institutional change to improve economic outcomes.

would unfold. These are more than norms or “customs” because if the village resident did not abide by them, he or she would be sanctioned. As such, these are also formal institutions that are enforced by the local chieftancy. Finally, a village resident might be able to contact the village chief through his favored brother. There is also a commonly-shared understanding in the village that a gift of gin would be brought to the brother to open the dialogue. The rules for how to approach the chief through this brother are also unwritten but considerably less transparent and more fluid. For example, these informal rules may change if the brother lost favor with this chief, or with the installation of a new chief. In contrast, the formal rules for how to approach the chief are more akin to “oral constitutions” and would be less likely to change.⁷⁵ This book’s contribution is not to create a more precise taxonomy of informal rules, but instead, to highlight the blurred boundaries and interactions between rules that are more and less formal across different types of governance systems – that of the central state, chieftancy, lineage, village community, etc.

Building on insights from Catherine Boone’s work on the origins of state formation in West Africa, I argue against a distinctly “African” or even “Ghanaian” or “Ivoirian” pattern of state formation that would produce one, common pattern of reciprocity.⁷⁶ I agree emphatically with Boone’s point that the history of state formation varied in important ways across the continent, but even within countries across different subnational regions. The study compares the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana with the Abengourou region of Cote d’Ivoire.⁷⁷ My work engages with historical sources to unpack the causal mechanisms underlying institutional change.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ While not their primary purpose, Dunn and Robertson (1973) make a similar distinction between the “formal procedural rules” and the informal management of transactions within the stool councils in their study of Brong-Ahafo region.

⁷⁶ Boone 2003.

⁷⁷ Firmin-Sellers (1996) compares different communities in the same regions.

⁷⁸ This serious attention to history and subnational variation contrasts dramatically with work by Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2001) that neither investigates *how* colonial institutional legacies are transmitted over time, nor finds any significant variation across or within the entire continent of Africa. See also Acemoglu and Robinson 2006.

From my comparative historical analysis, I build a theory showing how particular aspects of the history of state formation might be expected to stimulate certain broad types of transformation in the informal institutions of reciprocity. (See *Table 1.1.*) The historical role that the state has played in mediating (sometimes magnifying) risk vis-à-vis individuals, families and communities in these regions shapes the transformation of the informal institutions of reciprocity in the contemporary period. The state mediates risk in three important, and often, unrecognized ways. To begin, the nature of the state institutions for political administration shape informal reciprocity. Here, the initial formation of central state institutions to govern the colonial territories entails a normative construction of what the state role is vis-à-vis the family and the citizen. The new formal political institutions of the central state did not necessarily crush or replace the preexisting rules wholesale.⁷⁹ Rather, the new formal state institutions and informal institutions transformed each other over time in a dialectical process of everyday interactions that differed in the two regions.⁸⁰ Thus, in this area of Brong-Ahafo, Ghana, the more decentralized colonial and post-colonial administrative institutions have been built on the idea that the state only supplements preexisting extended family and community systems of social welfare.⁸¹ The result of these more decentralized administrative institutions was a more diversified system of informal reciprocity. In contrast, in the Abengourou region of Cote d'Ivoire, the more centralized colonial and post-colonial administrative institutions stimulated higher expectations that the state provided more extensive social support to individual citizens in smaller, nuclear families. The result of this

⁷⁹ Political scientist Crawford Young (1994: 77-140) theorized the colonial state as the “Bula Matari” or crusher of rocks but I draw here on the perspective of legal anthropology. For useful reviews of legal anthropology’s contributions, see Moore 2001; and Merry 1988. See also von Benda-Beckman 1988; Rudolph and Rudolph 1967; Moore 1986.

⁸⁰ Elizabeth Colson (1974) for example highlighted how communities strategically navigated among the constraints and opportunities of overlapping formal state and informal institutions. Dunn and Robertson (1973) also emphasized the conflict, contestation and negotiation within and between “tradition” and “modern” over time in the Ahafo region of Ghana.

⁸¹ Posner (2005) makes a similar argument showing how the British colonial institutions of indirect rule in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) constructed tribal identities and created incentives for rural and urban Africans to invest in these tribal identities. For example, the British government had specific policies to encourage the maintenance of ties between urban migrants and their rural “tribal” communities in order to ensure access to a safety net when wage workers were unemployed or retired.

higher mediation of risk by the Ivoirian state was a more concentrated system of informal reciprocity. In this way, state formation is not only a political process in terms of negotiating the actual formal institutions for governance but also an intensely political process in constructing the normative conceptualization of what the state role should be vis-à-vis a certain type of citizen, family and community.

The second aspect of the state's role in mediating risk is perhaps more obvious and the least contentious of the three. Here, the actual day-to-day provision of infrastructure and delivery of social services to subsidize health, education and alleviate poverty is highlighted. Again, the conceptualization of the state role in mediating risk is broader here than a small number of development economists who have focused narrowly on how public "safety nets" might "crowd out" informal risk-sharing systems.⁸² I then argue somewhat counter-intuitively that a historically more active state role in mediating social risk actually stimulates a higher level of less diversified relations of reciprocity. This is clearly not a simple zero-sum relationship where state retrenchment or collapse leads automatically to a resurgence of informal networks and voluntary associations.⁸³ The economic crisis that began in the 1970s has basically continued for over two decades. And, what were initially theorized as short-term coping strategies have evolved in different ways over time in different localities.⁸⁴ In Abengourou region of Cote d'Ivoire, state investments in social service infrastructure and delivery began later than in colonial Ghana but were more stable and of a higher quality between the late 1960s until the mid-1990s. Because of the state's more active role in mediating social risk, the informal institutions of reciprocity were less diversified in Cote d'Ivoire than in Ghana. Furthermore, Ivoirians in this region had higher expectations of service utilization and drew on their reciprocity networks more intensely when the state retrenched in the mid-1990s. In contrast, Ghanaians had much lower expectations of

⁸² Dercon 2002: 155; Albarran and Attanasio 2002; and Attanasio and Rios-Rull 2000.

⁸³ See, for example, Chazan 1988; Azarya and Chazan 1987; Bratton 1994; Dei 1992.

⁸⁴ Guyer (2002) critiques this conceptualization of short-term coping strategies as inadequate for understanding the contemporary situation in urban Southern Nigeria.

what the state should or historically had done since the late 1960s. Moreover, after a longer period of economic instability during the 1970s, many Ghanaians had already diversified and then depleted their informal reciprocity assets.

The third component of the state's role in mediating risk in the economy is also rarely considered in combination with the first two. I argue that the history of the state role to support production, mediate market volatility and tax productivity shaped economic production decisions directly and the informal institutions of reciprocity indirectly. Thus, where states historically pursued highly extractive policies, individuals chose less land-intensive production strategies with shorter-term yields and subsequently diversified their investments in the informal institutions of reciprocity. This was the case in this region of Ghana. In contrast, in Cote d'Ivoire, the state historically pursued a more moderate level of taxation and facilitated labor in-migration which stimulated the expansion of long-term investments in cocoa and coffee production for export markets. As a result, the informal institutions of reciprocity in Cote d'Ivoire were more concentrated but continued to link the younger and older generations within extended family systems.

Overall, my argument highlights the need to examine historically all three of the above areas of state formation – political administration, social service delivery and economic policy – in order to understand how the state's role in mediating risk has shaped the construction and reconstruction of the informal institutions of reciprocity. Ironically, in Abengourou region of Cote d'Ivoire, a local experience of a strongly centralized state that actively mediated risk in all three areas actually stimulated a higher quantity of reciprocal exchange, but more narrowly concentrated on the nuclear family. Tradeoffs clearly existed in terms of the relative benefits of economic security versus political exclusion, tradeoffs that will be explored in more detail in the next stage of the argument.

Stage Two: How Variations in Informal Institutions of Reciprocity Shape Citizenship and Politics

In stage two of my argument, I show how this reorganization of the informal institutions of reciprocity in turn shapes the ways that Ivoirians and Ghanaians conceptualized citizenship and practiced politics at the local and national levels.⁸⁵ I hypothesize that differences in the history of public policies in three key areas – political administration, social service delivery, and agriculture -- shaped and reconstituted local patterns of reciprocity which then reshaped the boundaries of political community and exercise of citizenship. This indirect pathway through social relations reinforced the policies' direct interpretive effects on ideas of political membership, local perceptions of government, and the meaning of indigenous civic obligations.⁸⁶ The direct and indirect effects of state policies on citizenship in the two regions are depicted in Figure 1.1.

The claim is significant in its linkage of social and political inclusion and exclusion, but it must be duly qualified. The hypothesis is not that the changing informal institutions of reciprocity are the *only* causal factor influencing local individuals' views on their rights, duties and avenues for participation in politics. Rather, the idea is that they are an extremely important and heretofore understudied set of factors in a longer causal chain. Thus, key differences in the historical patterns of state formation are influencing local practices of citizenship and politics through an *indirect* path of the transformation of informal reciprocity.⁸⁷

In contrast to most of the existing literature on citizenship, I seek to investigate the very boundaries of the political community or communities (plural). I want to know not simply *how* the nation is imagined, but *what* is imagined by *whom*. Benedict Anderson's work on the

⁸⁵ In her study of rural China, Lilly Tsai (2007) examines how informal institutions of moral obligation within solidary groups then increase the likelihood of public service provision where there is no avenue for democratic mechanisms of accountability. My work remains more focused on how these informal institutions of reciprocity shape the political participation of the village residents themselves rather than the political elites.

⁸⁶ See Pierson (1993) and Landy (1993) on interpretive effects of policies on mass publics.

⁸⁷ The direct path between the history of state formation and citizenship are explored by Mamdani (1996). He examines the effects of the bifurcated state on citizenship in Uganda and South Africa.

construction of nationalism has been hugely influential in highlighting the social construction involved in identifying as a larger national community.⁸⁸ I certainly highlight the constructed nature of political identity but I pay explicit attention to the development of political communities at other non-national levels, for example, the construction of sub-national and/or trans-national communities.⁸⁹ By expanding the focus beyond the parameters of the nation-state, we can also consider the possibility of simultaneous identification in more than one community. This builds explicitly on Peter Ekeh's earlier theoretical work highlighting the existence of and tension between the primordial and civic publics.⁹⁰

My hypothesis linking state formation and changing patterns of informal reciprocity to divergences in indigenous conceptions of citizenship is again unconventional. Most of the existing literature focuses on the effects of more traditional political science variables such as the role of the state in guaranteeing rights (T.H. Marshall); the development of capitalism (Marx); the character of local government and voluntary associations (Toqueville); and, the rise of transnationalism or multiculturalism (Held and Archibugi; Kymlicka, et.al.)⁹¹

But, in contrast to Marshall's theory, in Africa, social rights appear to have preceded civil and political rights, and then each set of rights has been, at various points, fully revoked or partially compromised. While civil and political rights were formally accorded to all Africans at independence in the early 1960s, a lot of political attention was focused on social rights, in particular, the right to obtain an education and to a lesser extent health care.⁹² Less than one

⁸⁸ Anderson 1983.

⁸⁹ On subnational identities, Posner (2005) examines how institutions, in particular, party system rules, shape which type of ethnic cleavage is mobilized, i.e., language, tribal, religious, racial, etc. On transnational political networks and identities, see Keck and Sikkenk 1998 and Archibugi and Held 1995.

⁹⁰ Ekeh 1975.

⁹¹ Marshall 1950. See Marx's early essay "On the Jewish Question" (1843) for a discussion of the distinction between the rights of man and the rights of citizen, in Tucker (1978: 40-46). See also "Capital" (Tucker: 438); "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (Tucker: 486-491); and "The German Ideology" (Tucker: 170-174). On Tocqueville, see (1835: 71; 1840: 115-119). On supranational citizenship, see Archibugi and Held 1995. On multiculturalism, see Young 1989; Kymlicka 1995; and Kymlicka and Norman 2000.

⁹² See Ndegwa (1998:358) on how different development paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s supported the expansion of social rights in Africa.

decade later, in many of the newly independent African countries, civil and political rights were quickly lost as military officers launched coup d'états and established authoritarian regimes.⁹³ In the current neoliberal era, many African countries have reinstated multi-party democratic systems where civil and political rights are officially guaranteed but the retrenchment of the welfare state undermines the fiscal basis for social rights as they have been conceived in the past. Again, citizenship rights did not simply progress in one linear, universal direction but, rather, there were multiple, contingent patterns.

While this study pays careful attention to how reciprocity may bridge, in Ghana, or overlap with, in Cote d'Ivoire, class differences, the development of class consciousness does not appear to be the primary, explanatory factor for differences in local citizenship identities and political practice as Marx argued. Furthermore, the two cases share the same level of capitalist development and degree of incorporation into the global capitalist economy, yet, we see striking differences in the ways that local people perceive their political community and relationship to the state.

Of the above four potential rival explanations for Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire's divergence in local citizenship and political practice, Tocqueville's theory is the most difficult with which to contend. In fact, I have argued elsewhere that the nature of associational life does differ in important ways in these regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire and contributes to differences in the resolution of ethnic conflict.⁹⁴ Again, my argument here is not that differences in the relations of reciprocity are the only determinant of citizenship. Rather, the variation in the patterns of reciprocity is a key factor that combines with the experience gained in local political associations and in local political institutions over time to shape indigenous concepts of citizenship.

⁹³ The first post-independence coup d'état occurred in tiny Togo in January of 1963. Coups or military regimes were subsequently experienced in Benin and Congo-Brazzaville in 1963; Uganda and Gabon in 1964; Zaire and Benin again in 1965. But it was the military's ouster of President Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and President Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigeria in 1966 that shocked the world. The rest of the 1960s and 1970s continued to be a period of great political instability in much of sub-Saharan Africa.

⁹⁴ Morris MacLean 2004b.

Finally, more recent theories about the growth of trans-national institutions and/or the rise of multiculturalism since the 1980s do not explain the puzzling variations seen in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Divergence exists during similar time periods of transnationalism and multiculturalism. Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire participate in similar fashions in regional and international political institutions. Furthermore, the make-up and political mobilization of cultural groups within both nation-states are roughly similar. When ethnic groups have mobilized differently in Cote d'Ivoire, it is to demand political control of the nation, not special minority rights within the nation. These differences in ethnic politics are more tightly linked to the variation in the social patterns of reciprocity and exclusion than the politics of multiculturalism.

My two-stage argument reveals the important causal linkages between the variations in the history of state formation, informal institutions of reciprocity, and citizenship. I reject the notion that the African state is uniformly weak or failed, and that informal institutions are the *only* rules that matter on the ground. I also reject the idea that the colonial state barely touched African societies or is no longer relevant to African cultures today. But I go beyond a simple story of path dependent colonial legacies to focus squarely on the repeated interactions between African states and societies over time in the mediation of risk. I demonstrate in rich empirical detail the role of history and politics in this iterative process of informal institutional change.

Research Design and Methodology

Matched Case Research Design

My arguments are developed by employing an innovative matched case design and using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This research design compares the political history of two similar regions on either side of the Ghana-Côte d'Ivoire border. These comparative cases were very carefully selected in order to control for such key causal factors as: culture, geography, economic production, poverty levels, and level of infrastructure.

What is particularly unique about this design is the possibility of controlling for pre-colonial culture. These two regions both belong to the same overarching Akan ethno-cultural group that was arbitrarily divided by the colonial border at the turn of the 20th century.⁹⁵ These pre-colonial cultural systems still remain highly salient in everyday life in the contemporary period and might be expected to affect local norms and informal institutions of social reciprocity.

In addition to this shared culture, the cases selected share many other similarities on the international, national, regional and village levels. First, both countries share similar positions in the international political economy. Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire both served as coastal trading posts for various European powers as early as the 16th century; experienced over a half-century of European colonization (by the British in Ghana and the French in Côte d'Ivoire); gained independence in 1957 and 1960 respectively; continued the export of cash crops even after colonial rule; suffered from desperate debt burdens by the late 1970s; and were pressed to adopt World Bank/IMF economic reform by the early 1980s and multi-party political systems in the early 1990s.

Second, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire share many similarities at the national level. They are both relatively small countries with young, predominantly rural populations and similar indicators of poverty, social infrastructure, and social development.⁹⁶ (*See Table 1.2.*) They also both have similar ethnic and religious composition that overlap with regional infrastructural inequalities. Thus, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire both have a predominantly Akan (the most populous ethnic group), Christian south that has received greater investments in economic and social infrastructure in comparison to a predominantly non-Akan, Muslim North.

⁹⁵ See Dunning (2008) on the strengths and limitations of such natural experiments.

⁹⁶ The one striking difference in social indicators in Table 1.2 is the declining life expectancy in contemporary Cote d'Ivoire. This will be explored further in Chapter 5 but most likely is caused by an increase in HIV/AIDS rates rather than a significant difference in social service infrastructure.

Table 1.2 Similar Country Cases: A Comparison of Basic Indicators in Late 1990s

Basic Indicators	GHANA	CÔTE D'IVOIRE
Population	18.9 million	14.7 million
GDP per capita based on PPP (1998)	\$1,661	\$1,881
Gini coefficients, 1991-96	Urban 34	Urban 39
	Rural 36	Rural 33
Area under permanent crop production in thousands of hectares (1980)	1,900	1,955
Rural population as percentage of total (1998)	62.6%	54.8%
Life expectancy at birth (years in 1980)	53	53
Life expectancy at birth (years in 2006)	60	48
Primary school enrollment (1980)	79%	75%
Literacy Rate (2000)	71%	61%
Age 0-14 as percentage of total population	43.6	43.9
Age 65+ as percentage of population	3.1	2.7

Source: World Bank (2001a; 2007); UNESCO (2007);

Of course, one key difference at the national level is the level of political stability after independence. After becoming the first African nation to obtain independence in 1957, President Kwame Nkrumah was ousted by coup in 1966. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, Ghana was devastated by a series of coup d'états and authoritarian regimes that practically collapsed the economy. In comparison, since its independence in 1960, Cote d'Ivoire's economy and infrastructure had boomed during three decades of stable leadership under President Houphouët-Boigny and his hegemonic Parti Democratique de Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI). This difference will be explored in later chapters through the analysis of the experience of state policies over time.

Third, the regions selected, the region of Brong-Ahafo in the western part of Ghana, and the department of Abengourou in the eastern section of Côte d'Ivoire, share many important commonalities. To begin, they are approximately the same distance (from 4-6 hours drive) from the national capital and thus have experienced similar levels of exposure to “Western” education, culture and infrastructure that emanated from the coasts upward.⁹⁷ They have analogous geographies; started exporting cocoa at similar periods; share similar pre-colonial political systems; and, continue to be predominantly populated by the same Akan ethnic groups who maintain a loose political alliance to the current Ashanti kingdom. On a broader scale, these regions represent areas that are ethnically diverse with relatively long histories of involvement in cash crop agriculture for international export.

Finally, the fieldsite villages were carefully chosen based on extensive discussions with regional and local government officials. Two villages from each region were selected based on how well they represented the larger region as well as their similar population sizes, agricultural economies, and level of economic, social and political organization. These villages were all relatively remote and somewhat difficult to access. They were between 20 minutes to an hour's ride from the regional or even district capitals and at least three miles off any major paved road on a bumpy dirt road. Despite the distance and rough road, all of the villages received “taxi” service several times daily, even during the rainy season.

A matched case research design demands this sort of rigorous selection of fieldsites in order to control for many alternative explanations of the variations in informal reciprocity and citizenship. The study essentially controls for many aspects of ethnic culture, pre-colonial political history, levels of wealth and integration into the global economy, and levels of education and exposure to “Western” culture. In this way, the role of different patterns of state formation and histories of policymaking during the colonial and post-colonial periods are revealed and

⁹⁷ This research design essentially controls for the main explanatory factors of modernization theory. See, for example, Lerner 1958 and Apter 1965.

highlighted. While the data for this book remains limited to specific regions of each country, precisely because these fieldsite villages and regions were chosen explicitly for their common pre-colonial history, culture, ecology and economies, the differences that exist today can reasonably be supposed to represent important qualitative differences between the two countries. The fact that the villages chosen were such a distance from the coast and national capitals makes it even more interesting to witness distinct national differences between these two particular regions. In many places throughout the text, I refer in shorthand to the differences between Ghanaians and Ivoirians to facilitate the flow of the text for the reader. I am not making the claim that the patterns of informal reciprocity, citizenship or everyday politics would look similar in all other regions of Ghana or Cote d'Ivoire. Other regions would vary both in their pre-colonial culture, geography, and political economy as well as in their experience of state formation over time. Hence, those regions would undoubtedly have different starting points as well as different processes of institutional transformation.

Multi-Method Approach

Qualitative and quantitative methods were combined to collect data on the experience of state formation and the nature of reciprocity and citizenship at the local level. In order to comprehend complex processes of social, economic and political transformation over the past one hundred years, the project required nearly two years of intensive fieldwork at the village level. I lived full-time in the four fieldsite villages in order to participate in and supervise all of the data collection. While there was often no running water or electricity, the village residents did everything possible to make my stay welcoming and comfortable. In each village, it was often remarked that I was the first white person to have spent the night. My full-time presence allowed me to participate and observe the everyday activities of the village, including buying food at the village market or kiosks, walking to help collect water, attending producer cooperative meetings, paying my respects at village funerals, visiting the schools, eating at various villagers' homes and local "chop shops," attending all of the different church services, going to weed a neighbor's

farm, etc. This rich ethnographic observation was invaluable in three ways. First, my ethnographic observations yielded significant data in its own right; I discovered things by participating and observing that I did not learn by asking questions. Second, this ethnographic data helped provide the context for interpreting other data sources I was collecting. And, third, my participation in village activities facilitated a rapport with most village residents that undoubtedly increased the validity of my other data sources.

Although I speak a basic level of Asante Twi (one of the Akan languages spoken in Ghana and closely related to Agni, the Akan language spoken in Côte d'Ivoire), I worked very closely with two research assistants in each country.⁹⁸ Almost all of the interviews were conducted in the respondent's first language, usually Twi or Agni.⁹⁹ Each day, I would take turns accompanying one of the research assistants while the other did their rounds independently.¹⁰⁰ We lived and ate all of our meals together so I was able to monitor the work as it was completed very closely. The research assistants not only helped with translating and conducting interviews but participated in discussions about how to interpret what we were discovering. They also played critical roles throughout the field research in making sure that our entry and stay in the village did not create any problems or pose a burden to anyone.¹⁰¹

Much of the key data is drawn from a survey of approximately 100 individuals in each of the four fieldsite villages. I used a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique to select the samples in each village, which is explained in more detail in the Appendix. One explicit objective

⁹⁸ The assistance of Kweku Dickson, Faustina Sottie and Ernest Appiah in Ghana and Celestin Mian and Fulgence Kanga in Côte d'Ivoire is very gratefully acknowledged.

⁹⁹ Each of my research assistants was able to speak more than one language so we were always able to communicate with any respondent. Many of the interviews with non-indigenous migrant farmers were conducted in Dioula or Hausa.

¹⁰⁰ The survey questionnaire recorded the particular research assistant who conducted the interview as well as whether I was present or not. No systematic interviewer bias was revealed in the statistical analysis. This is discussed in detail in chapter 2.

¹⁰¹ For example, the research assistants helped me make arrangements to ensure a safe water supply for our team. They also helped communicate our wish to provide plenty of extra money to the people designated to cook our meals.

of this stratified sampling methodology was to ensure adequate numbers of women and non-Akan survey respondents since they could have systematically different patterns of reciprocity.

In addition to the structured survey questionnaire, in-depth interviews and oral histories were conducted with a wide range of respondents, including but not limited to: the village chief, village elders, queenmother and royal family members, local political leaders, local party representatives, teachers, health care providers (including traditional birth attendants and herbalists), local religious leaders, local cooperative or other association leaders, youth leaders, and informal savings organizers or moneylenders. Extensive in-depth interviews were also conducted with officials from various government, non-governmental and donor organizations in the local, district, regional and national capitals. I used a question guide for the in-depth interviews but essentially followed the respondent's cues and conversation flow.

In each village, I also organized a women's and a men's focus group. The focus groups were separated by gender so that each group would talk more freely. Men and women often ate, worked and socialized separately in the villages, and older men would tend to dominate public gatherings. The focus groups were generally held late in our three month village stay so that we had a sense of who to invite, and the participants were more familiar with us. We invited a group of 8-10 people who had a diversity of roles in the village, for example, teacher, non-indigenous migrant farmer, local politician, elder or sub-chief, church leader, youth leader, wealthy farmer, etc. We aimed to assemble a small group of people who we thought to be relatively lively, articulate and well-respected in the village in order to create an amiable atmosphere for discussion. There were only a couple of participants who attended but surprised us by never seeming comfortable enough to talk. We held the focus groups either late in the afternoon or in the early evening after people had returned from farm and immediately before or after supper had been prepared. The participation rate was approximately 75%, with participation slightly higher

for men than women.¹⁰² One of the research assistants facilitated the focus group using a question guide but again followed the flow of the discussion. The other research assistant taped the discussion and took written notes to aid in the subsequent transcription.

Finally, to look at how reciprocity and citizenship have changed over time, I also analyzed archival sources and collected oral histories. The archival research was conducted in Accra, Sunyani, Kumasi, Abidjan, Dakar, Paris and London. Reflecting the different colonial administrative approaches, most of the relevant British colonial records were more localized and available in Accra, Ghana whereas almost all of the French colonial records were centralized in the national repository in Paris, France. Since most of these archival sources were written from the perspective of the colonial rulers, I also made substantial use of oral histories from village residents. In this way, I was able to collect information about individual, family and village responses to earlier periods of economic crisis, for example, the Great Depression of the 1930s or the brushfires of the 1980s.

Plan of the Book's Arguments

My objective is to explain why reciprocity and citizenship differ so profoundly in two such similar regions of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. The next two chapters of the book illuminate the variation in the informal institutions of reciprocity. In chapter two, we gain entrée inside four different African villages in order to document quantitatively with original survey data important differences in the informal institutions of reciprocity in these regions of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Despite a nearly identical cultural landscape, the chapter systematically documents puzzling contrasts in the levels of giving, extent of participation and structure of social ties in informal social support networks among village residents in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

¹⁰² The group meeting had a lower participation rate than individual interviews because they were less accommodating of last-minute changes in individual schedules and plans. I also think that some individuals were slightly more intimidated to participate in front of others in a group meeting. There was probably a gender bias in that more women were intimidated than men which partially explains the higher male participation. The other part of the explanation is that men generally had more free time at home.

In chapter three, the differences in the local relations of reciprocity are explored using qualitative data and analysis. The chapter challenges accepted stereotypes about Africa, in particular, the vibrancy of the extended family system and cohesion of village reciprocity, by examining local discourses on the meaning of these concepts.

The second section of the book focuses on how different histories of the state formation in the mediation of risk have transformed and stimulated the above variations in informal reciprocity. Chapter Four highlights how the variation in the degree of administrative centralization since the colonial era has stimulated differences in the structure of informal reciprocity in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Chapter five traces differences in the institutional histories of state social service delivery to explain the surprising differences in the quantitative values of social support given in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. In chapter six, a more recent divergence in the structure of the relations of reciprocity in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire is explained in terms of the state's historical role in mediating economic risk through agricultural policies and changing local-level production strategies.

The third section of the book analyzes the far-reaching consequences of contrasts in informal reciprocity for citizenship. Chapter seven examines how these striking changes in the role of the state and informal institutions of reciprocity shape indigenous notions of citizenship and political participation. As the state redefines its role in political administration, the provision of social services, and the regulation of agriculture, the boundaries of family and community are contested and redrawn at the local level in different ways in the two cases. Finally, the book concludes by examining how this empirical study has helped build new theories with potential relevance beyond the boundaries of these small, African villages in West Africa.