

**Part II:
Legacies of the State Role in Mediating Risk in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire**

Chapter Four

The Legacies of the Colonial Administrative State in Constructing the Citizen, Family and Community Role

The informal institutions of reciprocity differed in puzzling ways in these similar Akan villages on either side of the Ghana-Cote d'Ivoire border. More people were participating and exchanging significantly higher quantities of help but to a narrower group of social ties in the Ivoirian region than in the Ghanaian one.

But the variation in informal reciprocity was not the only surprise I found during my stay in these four villages. Elders in these regions told very different stories about the village chiefs during the colonial era and how they responded to the hard times of the Great Depression. In the Ghanaian villages, elder respondents recalled how their chiefs were powerful and, at times, even organized resistance to disliked British colonial policies. In contrast, in the Ivoirian villages, older residents remembered their chiefs as representing French colonial interests, frequently describing the chiefs' participation in conscribing forced labor.

As I conducted my fieldwork, I then recognized legacies of the past in the different response to everyday problems in the two regions. In the Ghanaian villages, residents approached the village-level unit committee and/or the village chief to resolve an urgent problem. Meanwhile, in the Ivoirian villages, people reported a problem to the sous-préfet, located over an hour away, or sought even more distant advice from a "big man" in Abidjan.

In this next part of the book, I analyze the connections between these puzzling differences in state-building and reciprocity. I argue that fundamentally different historical experiences of state-building in political administration, social policy and agricultural policy have produced surprising local variation in informal institutions of reciprocity in these villages. Despite sharing many common pressures over time, the Ghanaian and Ivoirian states have

pursued historically different roles in the mediation of risk vis-à-vis these rural regions, with profound effects on the local cultures and politics.

To begin Part Two, Chapter Four explores the long-term legacies of the states' differing approaches to political administration in these regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Political administration includes how to administer, govern, and maintain basic order and security in the community. It involves determining who in the society has the power to make decisions. As such, the comparative analysis of the different approaches and experiences of political administration in these two regions is the essential starting point for this book's explanation. In this chapter, I compare the basic differences in the concepts of the state role, nature of the society to be governed, and the organization of the family, and how those differences were experienced on an everyday basis in these two regions over time. I explore how these contrasting histories of political administration were linked to remarkable differences in the informal institutions of reciprocity in these regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.

Beginning in the late 1880s, during the colonial era, the British and French had contrasting normative views about who they were governing, and how best to go about doing it. (*See Table 4.1.*) The differing perspectives held by the British and French on the nature of citizenship, the family, and community led to the construction of different types of formal state administrative institutions, and ultimately different social and agricultural policies (discussed in more detail in Chapters Five and Six), in a complex iterative process over time. Thus, despite similar overarching goals and objectives, the British administrative system in colonial Ghana ended up looking quite different than that organized by the French in colonial Côte d'Ivoire. The British developed a more decentralized system, where the colonial state interacted indirectly vis-à-vis different ethnic communities, while the French established a strongly, centralized administration, where the colonial bureaucracy intervened more directly to govern what the French perceived as future individual citizens living in nuclear families.

Table 4.1 Divergent Normative Frameworks of British and French Colonial Administrative Rule

Normative Viewpoints	BRITISH IN GHANA	FRENCH IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE
Role of state in economy	Liberal	Statist
Organization of state	Decentralized	Centralized
Nature of society to be governed	Ethnic communities	Individual subjects/potential citizens
Nature of family	Extended family system	Nuclear family system
Impact of political administration on informal institutions of reciprocity	Diversification of reciprocal ties across wider lineage village and ethnic group within rural areas	Concentration of reciprocal ties within nuclear family and proximate extended family linking to urban capitals

Nearly one hundred years later, in the early 1980s, despite similar pressures from international financial institutions to decentralize, the Ghanaian and Ivoirian state's approach to political administration has continued to diverge. In Ghana, the government has attempted to devolve decision-making to the district and even village level whereas in Cote d'Ivoire, rhetorical efforts to decentralize have thinly concealed an outward extension of central state authority over the outlying areas, never allowing any direct village-level decision-making.

In this chapter, I show how the local experience of these differences in formal state administrative policies shaped the informal institutions of reciprocity. In the later chapters of Part Two, I proceed by examining how these different experiences in politically governing local communities early in the 20th century critically shaped the subsequent construction of the state apparatus for social service delivery and agricultural policy in the colonial Gold Coast (renamed Ghana at independence) and Côte d'Ivoire.

Pre-Colonial State Building: Similar Norms and Formal Institutions from the Ashanti Kingdom in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire

Early European explorers to Africa drew barren maps that detailed only the nascent European trading presence on the coastal geography but left the continent's interior essentially void. Certainly, a few lions and elephants were drawn wandering around the vast empty territory, but none of the indigenous political boundaries were depicted. Later missionaries and colonial officials would similarly describe Africa as lacking centralized states, emphasizing in the narratives sent back to Europe how Africans lived so primitively in small villages.¹

But, state building in Africa did not begin with European colonialism. Nor were the underlying norms of the state, family and community established then. In fact, a long history of state building pre-dates the colonial presence.² The Akan peoples had migrated to the forest regions of what is now central Ghana in the 13th century A.D. and were organized as small states. Later, around the 17th century, the Asante kingdom was involved in countless wars with the Denkyira and various other Akan sub-groups, attempting to enlarge its borders and consolidate power over subjects.³ Indeed, these conflicts provoked several groups to flee from the central part of Ghana in the 17th century to what is now the more western part of Ghana and eastern Côte d'Ivoire.

Since the colonial rulers drew the current borders of the African state somewhat arbitrarily, pre-colonial experiences with state building were highly varied within each country case. The frontiers of pre-colonial states did not coincide with colonial territories. In fact, many kingdoms, political alliances, and ethnic groups stretched across the new boundaries. This is precisely the case in the regions of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire where the research for this book was conducted. In both regions, most residents belong to the overarching Akan ethnic group and trace their origins back to the Asante empire, having fled conflict in search of a peaceful territory to

¹ Crowder (1968: 12) makes the argument that this view of Africa as anarchic was an important justification for the imposition of colonial rule and expansion of missionary activity.

² African historians first examined the written archival records of the various colonial powers so initial scholarly attention focused on the African encounter with colonialism. A second generation of African historians has combined sources including oral histories, missionary records, newspapers, and travel writing to analyze state formation in earlier pre-colonial periods. See McCaskie 1995 and Wilks 1993.

³ McCaskie 2007.

settle. The migrant groups that settled in each country then established a centralized kingdom based on a hierarchy of chieftancy. In both cases, some form of loose political alliance was maintained with the Asante kingdom, which continues even today.⁴

Even though there is less known about the pre-colonial norms of the state, family and community in these areas, McCaskie has argued convincingly that the Asante state played a role in shaping the operation of kinship in Akan society in precolonial times.⁵ Paralleling this book's argument for the more contemporary period, McCaskie emphasizes the interaction between kinship and the state over time. This argument stands in contradistinction to earlier anthropological work that predicted the disappearance of kinship institutions with the centralization of the state.⁶ McCaskie does indeed acknowledge the highly coercive interventions of the centralizing Asante state, highlighting the resultant tensions between the normative principles of communal egalitarianism associated with the lineage in contrast to the individualistic emphasis on accumulation espoused by the state.

But McCaskie also shows how the Asante state rarely legislated in areas that challenged the *aman mmu*, or the “immemorial custom that ordered a community.” Furthermore, where the Asante state had challenged customary actions by the lineage, these measures actually strengthened “jural corporateness by clarifying its boundaries and so underscoring its central, non-negotiable integrity.” Similarly, McCaskie demonstrates how access to citizenship in the Asante state was bound up with lineage membership and

⁴ Notably, when the Asantehene, or Asante king, died during my fieldwork stay, the village chiefs and local paramount chiefs all traveled to Kumasi to attend the funeral.

⁵ There are a few anthropological studies that attempt to analyze the pre-colonial structures of state power, but rarely do they discuss state formation in terms of norms. On the Agni in Cote d'Ivoire, see Perrot (1982). On the Asante in Ghana, see Wilks 1993; Busia 1951; Ackah 1988; and Rattray 1923;1929. McCaskie does attempt to tackle what he calls anthropologists' questions about culture and beliefs of the Asante in pre-colonial time. See in particular McCaskie 1983 and 1995.

⁶ McCaskie 1995: 74-143.

further, how the state managed to structure whether and how individuals were incorporated into the lineage.

In the case of Asante citizens the state acted, on the one hand, as the guarantor of the *principle* of jural corporateness. But on the other hand, the state constantly intervened in the definitions accruing to individual cases and kin networks within the *facts* of jural corporateness. It continually adjusted the parameters of legal status in relation to its own project, recasting people in a succession of more or less privileged roles *inside* jural corporateness, while at the same time retaining final rights of arbitration over the boundaries of incorporation and expulsion.⁷

McCaskie's work thus presents a convincing argument that even the pre-colonial patterns of state formation interacted with and reshaped the informal institutions of reciprocity at the village level.

What is unique about this study's case selection, however, is that we are able to essentially control for pre-colonial culture and politics by comparing Akan groups that have similar cultural backgrounds and political histories vis-à-vis the Asante state. Like McCaskie, I argue that pre-colonial politics did matter for the development of local norms, but, in these two cross-border regions, the political histories were so similar that the effects on the informal institutions of reciprocity were most likely analogous. I thus proceed by concentrating on how more recent periods of state building since the colonial era have shaped notions of kinship and community.⁸

Colonial State Building: Contrasting British and French Approaches to Political Administration

With the onset of the colonial era, key differences in state formation began to emerge between these two regions. The political institutions designed by the British and the French to

⁷ McCaskie 1995: 90.

⁸ The study is obviously facilitated during the colonial period by the existence of written colonial records maintained in the archives. While the majority of records found are written by colonial officials either based in the colonies or at times in the metropole, many of the documents referenced in the book cite the dialogue or correspondence of Africans or are actually written by Africans themselves. Nevertheless, it is always important to problematize who is writing or collecting the documents, for what audience, and for what purpose.

administer their new colonies differed in remarkable ways. While the British promoted a more indirect, socially mediated relationship between the citizen and the state, the French advocated a direct relationship.⁹ While these differences are inadequately described by the classic (and contested) typology of “indirect” and “direct” rule in Anglophone and Francophone Africa, it is an equally unsatisfactory oversimplification to conclude that since both the British and the French at times relied on chiefs, the systems were virtually the same.¹⁰ I am not reifying old-fashioned stereotypes of colonial rule, but instead examining the kinds of administrative policies that were actually on the ground and how they were perceived by indigenous Africans at various points in time.¹¹ The goals of the British and French colonial systems were conceptualized differently by the colonial rulers and experienced differently by African societies.¹² These fundamental contrasts in the British and French colonial conceptions of the state and citizenship were experienced even more intensely at the village level with the significant expansion of the central state after 1940.¹³ My argument is that these differences in the ways that the British and French built the formal administrative institutions of the colonial state stimulated variation in the informal institutions of reciprocity.

British Colonial Administration

In general, in the colonial territory of the Gold Coast, the British authorities built a highly decentralized administrative organization that was based on the existing structure and authority of

⁹ While I could probe endlessly backwards to locate the origins of these colonial norms in prior social structures or institutions in the metropole, for the purpose of this analysis, it is sufficient to say that these divergent normative frameworks were shaped by the particular social and political histories of each colonial power. See Young’s (1994:99-100) brief comparison of differences between British and French (and other) state formation in Europe with their approach to colonial administration in Africa.

¹⁰ While many contemporary scholars would acknowledge the social, economic and political impact of colonialism on African societies, there is a range of views on how these processes unfolded, in particular with regard to the degree of African agency vis-à-vis the colonial state project. See Ekeh 1975; Berry 1993; Cooper 1996; Young 1994.

¹¹ Crowder (1968: 171-172) acknowledges that Britain had a dominant tendency of indirect rule and France of assimilation (direct rule) but that there was no one official policy given the complexity of governing Africa. Nevertheless, he argues that the difference between British and French administration was not one of “degree” but much more profound. (234)

¹² See Firmin-Sellers 2000.

¹³ See Cooper 2002.

chieftancy and predicated on a conception of subjects belonging to ethnic, tribal communities. I argue in this section that the distinctive British approach to colonial state-building reinforced the diversification of the informal institutions of reciprocity.

Following the Portuguese who arrived first in 1471, the British established several slave forts along what was then known by Europeans as the Gold Coast. Throughout most of the 19th century, the Asante state attempted to expand its rule and promote its own trading interests, repeatedly battling with the British merchants and government.¹⁴ By 1821, the British government eliminated the African Company of Merchants who had operated there and formally established the British Gold Coast. Over the next several decades, control of the Gold Coast settlements would revert back and forth between the British merchants and the crown government. During this period, the British would take over the coastal territories controlled by the Danish (1850) and then the Dutch (1871).¹⁵ During the last quarter of the 19th century, the British turned their attention to conquering the interior, which led to four wars with the Asante state (1863-64; 1873-74; 1893-94; and 1895-96).¹⁶ The coastal areas became an official crown colony in 1874. Then, after defeating a final Asante rebellion and extending control over the Northern Territories, the British established the entire Gold Coast as a British colony under the authority of the British Governor in 1902.

With Asante resistance restrained and the Asantehene monarch in exile, British colonial administration was expanded and strengthened earlier than in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire.¹⁷ Since the mid-1800s, the British had established increasing judicial and legislative authority over the coastal areas but now the coast, Asante, and Northern Territories were unified under one central administration. Nevertheless, the character of British colonial administration continued to be highly decentralized. For example, since 1874, the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance had essentially

¹⁴ Ward 1958.

¹⁵ On the rivalry between European powers to establish control and confirm boundaries in Africa, see Packenham 1991.

¹⁶ Crowder 1968: 143-150.

¹⁷ The British forced the Asantehene Prempeh I into exile in 1896.

established the minimal interference by the colonial officials in the political affairs of the Colony chiefs. According to this legislation, indigenous authorities could enact by-laws, organize tribunals, and administer justice in minor cases.

After the 1930s, the approach to colonial administration in the Gold Coast was heavily influenced by the writings of Lord Lugard, the High Commissioner and later Governor of Nigeria in the early 1900s and author of the British policy of “indirect rule.”¹⁸ The British goal was to establish a colonial system that was able to “adapt as far as possible the indigenous African institutions”, i.e., chieftancy, for administrative goals.¹⁹ Lugard had argued that this system of indirect rule was efficient economically and politically. First, economically, fewer European personnel were required in the hinterlands as the British relied on indigenous political institutions to govern. Second, politically, the British system drew on the preexisting legitimacy of the chieftancy structure to govern, thereby reducing the opposition to British rule.

Several key legislative acts highlight how the British incorporated chieftancy structures into their system of colonial administration in the Gold Coast as well as how they sometimes intervened to modify them.²⁰ In 1925, provincial councils of chiefs were established in all three territories. In 1927, the British regulated and attempted to strengthen the authority of the chiefs and councils with the Native Administration Ordinance. In 1935, the Native Authorities Ordinance unified the central and native administrations, establishing that native authorities were appointed by the British Governor but giving them extensive power at the local level.

In the Gold Coast, methods of taxation also remained highly decentralized and “customary” through the chief’s management of “native treasuries.” While early on the chiefs were not required to collect taxes directly from their subjects to give to the Colony, they also had no local budgets allocated from the colonial government. Instead, they governed through the

¹⁸ Lugard 1926.

¹⁹ Ghana National Archives 1938.

²⁰ Crowder (1968: 169) distinguishes between Lugard’s “interventionist indirect rule” which sought to improve indigenous institutions and his successors “non-interventionist rule” which allowed indigenous institutions to develop along their own lines. See also Boone 2003: 146-149.

customary mechanisms of collecting tribute and selling stool (chiefly) lands. It was only in 1939 that the British expanded their regulatory control over the chiefs' collection and management of tax revenue through the Native Treasuries Ordinance and in 1944 that the British required chiefs to impose direct taxation through the Native Authority Ordinance.²¹ The implementation of direct taxation occurred significantly later than in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire.

The British approach to political administration was based on their view of African subjects as culturally distinct. In contrast to the French policy of assimilation, the British did not envision the residents of the Gold Coast as potential, future British citizens. Rather, their African subjects were seen as members of separate cultural groups, with unique languages, customs and political institutions. As a result, the British dedicated significant time and resources for colonial anthropologists and administrators to study, understand and classify the different tribal groups in each colonial territory. Cooper highlights how the "ideological power of 'tribe'" shaped other colonial policies, in particular, British migrant labor policies in the early 20th century.²²

So how was the British approach to political administration actually experienced at the local level in this region of Ghana? And how might this experience of state formation have influenced the informal institutions of reciprocity? Posner has shown how British colonial policies had long-term legacies that continue to shape the nature of political identities and conflict in contemporary Zambia. This book similarly analyzes the nature of colonial administration and traces the effects on political culture today. Oral histories that I collected reveal that many of the local people thought of their village chiefs during the colonial period as "powerful."²³ Another Ghanaian elder described chiefs as "leaders [and] spokesmen for the people...the chiefs *were* the local government."²⁴ In general, older respondents from the Ghanaian regions highlighted colonial era chiefs as the dominant, primary and exclusive authority figures; not subservient

²¹ Crowder 1968: 224.

²² Cooper 1996: 49-50.

²³ Interview (anonymous) by author. Barima, Ghana, 12 February, 1999.

²⁴ Interview (anonymous) by author. Barima, Ghana, 7 February, 1999.

auxiliaries to the colonial officials as articulated in the Ivoirian region across the border. Even when chiefs and commoners came into conflict over land rights or the use of native treasuries, Ghanaians in this region continued to look to the local political institutions of chieftancy to resolve these issues.

A crisis period that sheds light on the political dynamics between the colonial state, chieftancy, and other societal groups is the cocoa hold-up of 1936-37. In the Gold Coast, the chiefs played a significant role in a farmers' movement to refuse to sell cocoa to the European buyers who were perceived as colluding to suppress the local producer price.²⁵ The chiefs' used the Akan cymbal-like instrument called the "gong-gong" to spread the news of the hold-up throughout their villages and enforce unified action among cocoa farmers. The chief's use of the "gong-gong" was pivotal to the success of such a grassroots opposition to the colonial power. Today, elderly cocoa farmers still remember their fathers and uncles piling their cocoa beans in the village center and burning it in accordance with the chief's edict.²⁶

The British approach to political administration served to validate and strengthen the role of indigenous "tribal" political institutions, including participation in tribally-based relations of reciprocity. The British central colonial state was not intervening directly to mediate risk for its subjects; rather, its minimal interventions clarified the importance of maintaining ties and membership in one's ethnic or tribal community. In all likelihood, the less nuanced understanding of tribes in the Gold Coast developed by the British reinforced the salience of affiliation with a broader ethnic community for reciprocal social support as opposed to the lineage or immediate nuclear family. Later in the chapter, I will show how these legacies of British colonial administration can be seen in subsequent attempts at political reform in the contemporary era.

French Colonial Administration

²⁵ Interview with elderly cocoa farmers by author. Makwan, Ghana, 7 April, 1999.

²⁶ Interviews (anonymous) by author. Barima, Ghana, 7 February, 13 February, 19 February, and 4 March, 1999, and Makwan, Ghana, 7 April and 13 April, 1999.

Overall, the French approach to colonial administration was highly centralized based on a gradual extension of central bureaucratic control and decision-making. The French style of direct administration was predicated on a conception of subjects as individuals who had the potential to evolve and assimilate as future French citizens. Here, I will argue that the French approach to colonial state formation stimulated an emerging trend toward concentrating the informal institutions of reciprocity on the nuclear family.

Like in the Gold Coast, the Portuguese were the first to arrive in Cote d'Ivoire in the 1460s. Unlike the Gold Coast, however, Cote d'Ivoire's harbors were not preferred by Europeans, and so European contact was less intense, and the slave trade less devastating. Only in the middle of the 19th century did France take a more sustained interest in securing a commercial monopoly of trade along the coast. At that point, France began to negotiate agreements with local chiefs and then sought to conquer the interior. Nearly a decade after the Berlin Conference, Gabriel Angoulvant wrote that in 1893: "The Ivory Coast belonged to us, but only in the eyes of foreign powers."²⁷ Angoulvant later became Governor in 1908 and solicited approval from the Governor-General William Ponty to initiate a full-scale military conquest of Cote d'Ivoire. In the fieldsite region of Cote d'Ivoire, the French negotiated treaties with the Agni kingdoms early on.²⁸ "Pacification" of the rest of Cote d'Ivoire was difficult and prolonged, however, with resistance continuing until 1917. Elders in this region of Cote d'Ivoire still spoke admiringly of Samory Toure's legendary battles with the French. The French military subjugation of much of the interior of Cote d'Ivoire was achieved at a huge cost, including the loss of numerous lives, the destruction and reorganization of many villages, displacement of populations, imposition of war

²⁷ Gabriel Angoulvant, *La Pacification de la Cote d'Ivoire, 1908-1915: Methodes et Resultats* (Paris: 1916) as cited in Crowder (1968: 109).

²⁸ Boone (2003: 182) argues that colonial conquest was prolonged because a history of precolonial decentralization made it difficult for the French to find central rulers who could sign treaties and negotiate peaceful trading relationships. An exception was the treaties signed between the French and the Agni kingdoms of Sanwi, Moronou and Indenie.

finer on tribes, and imprisonment of rebels.²⁹ As a result, the expansion of French colonial administration did not commence until much later than in the Gold Coast.

Whereas in most of Cote d'Ivoire, the French adopted a policy of "direct rule" and appointed new agents of the central state to govern the rural areas, in the fieldsite region, the French worked with the existing Agni chiefs.³⁰ In a similar vein, in most of Cote d'Ivoire, the French ignored preexisting ethnic or linguistic boundaries and defined canton districts arbitrarily based on central administrative efficiencies rather than local cultural meanings. In contrast, in the fieldsite region, the French canton borders actually overlapped with meaningful, precolonial Agni state boundaries.³¹ Despite these differences however, *the way* the French worked with the Agni chiefs differed profoundly from the British style of indirect rule. The Agni chiefs served primarily as a mouthpiece for the new central administration, not as functioning sovereigns with their own bases of authority. The objective of the colonial authorities was to use chiefs as "representatives of French sovereignty" or "indispensable auxiliaries" to spread the influence of the central government.³² Governor-General Van Vollenhoven articulates this perspective in his circular on indigenous chiefs on August 15, 1917:

The Commandant de Cercle alone gives orders; only he is responsible. The native chief is only an auxiliary instrument...they have no power of their own of any kind, for there are not two authorities in the cercle: French authority and native authority; there is only one...The native chief never speaks, never acts in his own name, but always in the name of the Commandant de Cercle and by formal or tacit delegation from the latter.³³

Decision-making hence was not delegated to the local chiefs, but rather increasingly centralized after 1895 where the Governor of Cote d'Ivoire had to coordinate and seek approval for actions

²⁹ Crowder 1968: 111.

³⁰ This point is highlighted by Boone (2003:183-184) who demonstrates the necessity of looking at subnational experiences of state formation.

³¹ Zolberg 1964: 53.

³² French National Archives 1932-47; Alexandre 1970: 64.

³³ Governor-General Joost van Vollenhoven, "Circulaire au sujet des chefs indigenes," Dakar, August 15, 1917, reprinted in *Une Ame de Chef: Le Gouverneur J. van Vollenhoven* (Paris: 1920), p. 207 as cited in Crowder 1968:187-88.

from the Governor-General of the whole French federation of West Africa, based in Dakar.³⁴ In fact, the use of Agni chiefs to promote such ignominious French policies as forced labor and direct taxation actually undermined the preexisting legitimacy of these rural elites.³⁵

In stark contrast to the legislation passed within the Gold Coast giving chiefs greater autonomy, the relevant legislation for the colony of Cote d'Ivoire was usually made by decree by the Minister of the Colonies based in Paris, promulgated by the Governor-General based in Dakar and Lieutenant-Governor in Abidjan, and then implemented by the *Commandements de Cercle* at the local level. At every level of the bureaucracy, the people making and carrying out decisions were French. Several decrees passed after 1902 increased the authority of the Governor-General and gave him greater control over local administration throughout the West African Federation, including Cote d'Ivoire. In particular, the Governor-General in Dakar had federal control over budgeting, economic development, justice, and military operations. Indeed, for most of this period, the colonial heads of government were titled "Lieutenant-Governors" and only redesignated as "Governors" in 1937.³⁶ The only avenue for Ivoirian representation in decision-making was through the Superior Council of Colonies, again based in Paris, to which each colony sent one delegate.³⁷

The French authorities also implemented a highly centralized system of direct taxation much more rapidly in Cote d'Ivoire than in the Gold Coast whereby individuals paid a personal tax directly to the central state representative. The objective of direct taxation was not only to generate revenue for colonial administration but also to force Ivoirian subjects to increase production of cash crops. The comparative impact of the different styles of colonial administration was not lost on the French either. Indeed, French colonial authorities attributed

³⁴ Crowder 1968: 176-77.

³⁵ Firmin-Sellers 2000.

³⁶ Crowder 1968: 180.

³⁷ The colony of Senegal also had a Deputy of Senegal that was sent to the Chamber of Deputies in Paris since 1914.

the exodus of Akan people along the border of Côte d'Ivoire into the Gold Coast to the differences in their respective methods of taxation.

The French approach to political administration in Cote d'Ivoire was based on a very different view of their African subjects and societies than the British in the Gold Coast. The French in Cote d'Ivoire emphasized the *potential* universal equality of men as individuals, rather than the cultural differences between ethnic and cultural groups as was done in the Gold Coast. On the one hand, the French could conceive of Africans as becoming full-fledged citizens in the future; on the other, this was predicated on the extermination of African language, culture and law and the inculcation of French language, culture and law. As a consequence of this French policy of selective assimilation, French administrative institutions were built to encourage the evolution of individual citizens living in smaller, nuclear families. In the next chapter, I will show how this contrasting normative framework of the individual citizen, family and community has created profound differences in social policy.

The experience of this French approach to political administration in this region of Cote d'Ivoire is reflected in the oral histories I collected in the field site villages. Many older inhabitants characterized the chief during the colonial era as “the representative of the state here,” who convened meetings to disseminate information from the central government.³⁸ Many elderly Ivoirians also mentioned how the chief worked with the colonial authorities to satisfy their demands for forced labor, a brutal aspect of colonial state formation.

In further contrast with the experience of the Gold Coast, in Côte d'Ivoire, when cocoa prices fell during the 1930s, no local movement was organized to resist.³⁹ In several documents reporting on this period, colonial officials proudly note that Côte d'Ivoire had not been confronted with any of the serious difficulties plaguing their neighbor in the Gold Coast,

³⁸ Interviews (anonymous) by author. Kyere, Côte d'Ivoire, 14 July, 1999.

³⁹ One villager did remember that during the depression of the 1930s, the government did not buy any cocoa so it stayed in the fields for the next year. A few interviews stimulated memories of a time when the villagers burned the cocoa fields themselves. This seems to have occurred later however, at the insistence of the French colonial authorities during World War II when the state was unable to buy or export cocoa.

attributing the difference to Ivoirian chiefs' relative lack of power and prestige.⁴⁰ Rather than protest visibly, Ivoirian farmers left their cocoa plantations untended and turned their attention towards food crops.⁴¹ According to one elderly farmer, not until "a paper came from France telling the farmers to take up cocoa again" did they go and weed their plantations.⁴² Again, the farmer highlights how the French colonial state had centralized all decision-making and authority within the bureaucracy.

The French colonial officials' approach to political administration served to strengthen the role of the central state as the arbiter of order or insecurity. The French concentrated the power to make decisions and allocate resources in the urban capitals of Abidjan, Dakar and Paris. At the same time, the use of chiefs to implement French policies of forced labor and direct taxation undermined more severely the precolonial legitimacy of similar indigenous political institutions in the Ivoirian region than in the Gold Coast. The highly interventionist French colonial state reinforced the importance of individuals maintaining or improving their status as individuals vis-à-vis the central bureaucracy rather than their village chieftancy. The salience of the village community or broader ethnic group was diminished as the relevance of the immediate nuclear family and lineage structure increased. In this way, the French patterns of political administration spurred the move toward concentrating the informal institutions of reciprocity on a narrower conception of the nuclear and proximate extended family but linking outside of the village to the urban capitals. In the second half of this chapter below, I turn to how these colonial legacies continue to influence political administration and reciprocity today.

Post-Colonial State Building: Continued Variation in this Region of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire

Since the colonial period, the political regimes in both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire have changed radically several times, yet the very different patterns of state formation in these regions

⁴⁰ Senegalese National Archives 1938.

⁴¹ Ivoirian National Archives 1905-33.

⁴² Interview (anonymous) by author. Opanin, Côte d'Ivoire, 28 September, 1999.

have remained relatively constant. Political institutions tend to remain more decentralized and socially mediated in Ghana, while remaining relatively centralized and bureaucratic in Côte d'Ivoire. To begin, even the process of decolonization differed dramatically. In informal conversations, elder respondents characterized the process of decolonization as less highly centralized in Ghana than in Cote d'Ivoire.⁴³ Elders in the Ghanaian villages grounded Kwame Nkrumah's leadership and his fight for independence more firmly within the political arena inside Ghana rather than in Britain. Often they highlighted how Ghana was the very first nation in Africa to obtain independence in 1957. In contrast, elders in the Ivoirian villages singularly highlighted Houphouet-Boigny's leadership in his role as Deputy in Paris. Frequently, they would speak admiringly of Houphouet's status as a full citizen of France working in Paris as critical to his ability to challenge French colonial policies. With the exception of Guinea-Conakry, which famously refused to participate, Cote d'Ivoire was granted independence in 1960 at the same time as the rest of the federation of French West Africa.

The first two decades of state-building after independence also differed along similar dimensions. Initially in Ghana, President Kwame Nkrumah attempted to re-centralize politics with the declaration of a single-party state in 1964 and the concentration of power in the Office of the President.⁴⁴ The slogan of the time famously pronounced: "The CPP is Ghana; Ghana is the CPP." Despite these efforts to centralize power and stabilize the country, Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) was more quickly challenged and overthrown by a military coup d'etat in 1966. Nkrumah's regime was followed by a series of quickly overturned republics and juntas, with no regime lasting more than three years. Joseph Ayee has argued that successive political regimes throughout the post-colonial period have attempted to reform through further decentralization.⁴⁵ Ayee cites eight different Commissions and Committees that proposed

⁴³ These comments were made informally in everyday interactions that were unrecorded or in comments before/after official interviews.

⁴⁴ See Owusu.

⁴⁵ Ayee 2004, 1994.

decentralization reform between 1967 and 1983.⁴⁶ This era of rapid turnover ended with the longer period of authoritarian rule by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings from 1981 until 1992. During the early 1980s, Rawlings espoused a populist rhetoric and encouraged popular participation and self-government through local committees. Drawing on insights from both Crook and Ayee, I argue that these two decades of massive political instability and insecurity hindered Ghanaian state capacity overall, making it difficult to centralize or decentralize the formal institutions of the state. The British colonial legacy of state formation can be seen more in the repeated *attempts* to decentralize rather than in the actual formal institutional outcome.

In Côte d'Ivoire, a one-party state was quickly established by President Houphouët-Boigny and his Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), and the French colonial legacy of strengthening a central bureaucratic administration continued unabated.⁴⁷ President Houphouët-Boigny and the senior PDCI leadership designated party chairman at every level down to the smallest village and maintained power practically unchallenged throughout the 1980s. Richard Crook has emphasized the Ivoirian bureaucracy's distinctive level of state capacity and administrative effectiveness in implementing policies for taxation, infrastructural development and agricultural production.⁴⁸

Varied Implementation of Similar Decentralization Initiatives since the 1980s

As in the earlier post-colonial period, the formal state institutions for political administration continue to diverge in this region of Cote d'Ivoire and in Ghana in the contemporary period of the 1980s and 1990s. Ironically, in both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, the state has pursued an official policy of decentralization since the 1980s. They share a common rhetoric that espouses the creation of new institutions that more effectively link state and society, empowering people to make decisions and promote community planning and development at the local level. These reform initiatives coincided with donor pressure to adopt structural adjustment

⁴⁶ Ayee 2004: 19-21.

⁴⁷ Zolberg 1964.

⁴⁸ Crook 1989.

programs in order to improve governance and accountability. The simultaneous moves toward political liberalization begun in the late 1980s also served to reinforce this effort at decentralizing the state apparatus.⁴⁹ Despite these common objectives and pressures, however, the design and implementation of decentralization varied significantly in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.⁵⁰

Ghana: Decentralization to the Villages from the 1980s

In Ghana, decentralization began in earnest in 1988-89 with the creation of 110 District Assemblies. The District Assembly constituted the political body for each district and meets two to three times a year to discuss local revenue collection, the allocation of the District Assembly Common Fund, and other projects. The local population elected 70 percent of the District Assembly membership while the ruling government, in consultation with the traditional authorities and other interest groups, appointed 30 percent.

Beginning in 1998, the state created an even more locally oriented institution, the Unit Committee. Unit Committees were composed of village (or neighborhood in the urban areas) residents. Again, the ruling government appointed one-third of the representatives, while the rest were popularly elected. The committee usually met twice a month to deliberate and decide local community development issues. Villagers could also request a meeting to review a particular case or urgent problem.

One of the responsibilities given to the unit committee was to organize communal labor to maintain and develop community infrastructure. The mobilization of communal labor formerly was the sole privilege of the chief, but now, some unit committees used the "gong-gong" to call groups to work early in the morning. These public announcements usually began by acknowledging the village chief -- a way of recognizing his enduring authority in the community. The unit committee also mobilized the local people to pay their taxes. While village chiefs

⁴⁹ These different types of authoritarian regimes both began to liberalize in the late 1980s due to a combination of domestic pressures and international events. See Widner 1994; Bratton and Van de Walle 1992.

⁵⁰ See the comparative analysis of recent decentralization efforts in Crook and Manor 1998.

historically levied fines, the central government has experienced perennial difficulties with tax collection, and thus aimed to increase compliance through the unit committee. Overall, despite some limitations and handicaps, Ghana's decentralization program was much further advanced than that in Côte d'Ivoire, reflecting divergent colonial histories about how the state should be constructed.

Cote d'Ivoire: Extending the Central Bureaucracy to Rural Areas

Despite official rhetoric, "decentralization" in this region of Cote d'Ivoire was closer to what several Ivoirian officials termed "deconcentration," consisting primarily of extending the central bureaucracy to new areas, with little change in the mechanisms for popular participation. The first part of the government's two-pronged initiative was to create more *sous-prefectures* (an administrative unit equivalent to a county in the U.S.) to lessen the distance between each village and the administrative capital. Some villagers may spend all day at considerable expense traveling to and fro, and the *sous-prefet* is only able to tour each village perhaps once a year. The second part is a program of rural "communalization" where a council would be elected to deliberate the concerns of all of the villages in the commune. The president of this council would not be elected but rather appointed by the *sous-prefet*, himself an appointed civil servant. Furthermore, the rural commune would still encompass a sizable population and geographic area with only 10-15 members as elected representatives.

In contrast to Ghana, in Côte d'Ivoire, no electoral representation existed at the village level. The comments of villagers recently included in an expanded commune demonstrate local awareness that the new arrangements were still a far cry from village representation and participation.⁵¹ To one villager in Côte d'Ivoire, decentralization meant that his village "now belongs to the 'commune' of the regional capital" and is thus eligible for infrastructural

⁵¹ One of the fieldsite villages was included in the regional capital commune while the other was to be included under the authority of a new *sous-prefecture* within the next two years.

developments such as a youth center and a rural health clinic.⁵² Another older Akan man explained that the chief “was in agreement with the commune” in order to facilitate the construction of the above community centers.⁵³ Neither of these comments indicated a genuine devolution of planning and participation at the local level, but rather emphasized the vertical and clientelistic nature of linkages between the village and central government (to be discussed in further detail in Chapter 7).

Furthermore, both of these initiatives were moving rather slowly at the time of the fieldwork. Most authorities explained that the process was “too expensive” as each new *sous-prefecture* required office buildings, residences, telephone connections, etc. Official explained that it takes time to “create more civil servants”.⁵⁴ Several government officials admitted that the decentralization program had not “descended to the villages” and that, as of yet, no big change had occurred.⁵⁵

While decentralization did not bring new village institutions in Côte d’Ivoire as it did in Ghana, neither had the existing village authority of chieftancy been revitalized. Following the French colonial legacies of the past, the chief today in Côte d’Ivoire was both less autonomous and less integral to central state government than in Ghana. Echoing the French colonial rhetoric seen earlier, state civil servants continued to consider village chiefs to be “the auxiliaries of the administration.”⁵⁶ Villagers reported that since the current chief “doesn’t take decisions by himself,” but deferred to the central government authorities in Abengourou, he “loses dignity.”⁵⁷ In contrast, in Ghana, local and national government continued to consult chiefly authority before making decisions, and many disputes continued to be resolved in the traditional court of the village chief. In sum, the French colonial legacy of direct, top-down state intervention and the

⁵² Interview (anonymous) by author. Kyere, Côte d’Ivoire, 14 July, 1999.

⁵³ Interview (anonymous) by author. Kyere, Côte d’Ivoire, 17 July, 1999.

⁵⁴ Interview (anonymous) by author. Abengourou, Côte d’Ivoire, 5 August, 1999.

⁵⁵ Interviews by author. Ministry of Interior, DGCT, Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, 18 June, 1999.

⁵⁶ Interview (anonymous) by author. Abengourou, Côte d’Ivoire, 5 August, 1999.

⁵⁷ Interview (anonymous) by author. Kyere, Côte d’Ivoire, 12 July, 1999.

British colonial legacy of indirect, mediated state interaction continued to be reflected in the varied implementation of decentralization reform initiated in both countries in the 1980s and 1990s.

**Conclusion:
Different Histories of Political Administration Produce Divergence in the Structure of Informal Institutions of Reciprocity**

This chapter has begun to reveal how cross-national differences in the approach to political administration were actually experienced differently on the ground over time in similar regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. In this way, I start to unpack the causal mechanisms underlying "country" differences highlighted in the first section of the book's quantitative analysis.

What had been similar precolonial experiences of state formation began to diverge in important ways during the colonial period in these two regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. In the Ghanaian region, the British colonial approach to political administration was much more decentralized. The experience of state action at the local level was mediated substantially through the preexisting indigenous institutions of chieftancy. The legacies of the British colonial administration were evidenced in the numerous, repeated attempts to adopt decentralization reforms since independence. In particular, since the late 1980s, a nation-wide decentralization program has increased village participation in decision-making through the creation of a new system of village-level Unit Committees as well as District Assemblies.

In contrast, in the Ivoirian region, the French colonial approach to political administration was highly centralized. The state intervened more forcefully and directly at the village level, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the precolonial institutions of chieftancy. Where the British colonial state was built on the particularistic notion of tribal ethnic communities, the French colonial state was constructed around a more universal concept of individual citizens living in nuclear families. The legacies of the French colonial administration were witnessed in

the continued centralization of the single-party state since independence. Even when a program of decentralization reform was officially adopted in the 1980s, the results in this region of Cote d'Ivoire differed remarkably from what was observed in Ghana. Ivoirian decentralization was more accurately described as a slow extension of the central state bureaucracy out into the regional capitals and larger towns. Rural residents of the smaller fieldsite villages reported that nothing at all changed for them.

These divergent patterns of political administration initiated during the colonial era and continuing today have shaped the informal institutions of reciprocity in two ways – directly and indirectly. First, the different patterns of political administration shaped the structure of reciprocity directly through peoples' everyday interactions with the state. These different kinds of everyday interactions and experiences of the state in the fieldsite villages shaped the way people conceived of their own identities as well as the meanings they attached to citizenship, family and community.

In the Ghanaian region, the decentralized nature of formal state administrative institutions validated the continued authority of the preexisting village chieftancy as well as the new unit committees to resolve disputes and mobilize communal labor at the village-level. The nature of these everyday interactions with the state reinforced the salience of maintaining membership in broader lineage, ethnic and village communities within the village itself. As a result, the informal institutions of reciprocity in the Ghanaian region were more diversified, meaning a greater allocation of help was given to a wider variety of social ties including the nuclear family, extended family, friends and others. In the Ghanaian region, the central state was not perceived as the primary player in mediating risk in the village. And as a result, reciprocity appeared to be more locally-oriented in the Ghanaian region, again focused primarily on maintaining social relationships within the village.

In the Ivoirian region, the centralized nature of formal state administrative institutions continued to undermine the role of village chiefs and did not facilitate any village-level decision-

making or communal self-help. The character of the central state's interventions spurred the village residents in the Ivoirian region to conceive of themselves more readily as individual members of smaller, nuclear families or more narrowly delimited extended families. The informal institutions of reciprocity had become more concentrated on a narrower group of social ties, with the priority clearly given to the immediate nuclear family. To the residents of these rural villages in Cote d'Ivoire, the central state appeared to be the singularly dominant player in mediating risk. Thus, in the Ivoirian region, reciprocity was more externally-oriented and focused on accessing the political and economic resources of the central state itself, with village residents linking to "big men" in the regional and national capitals.

The second way that these different histories of political administration have shaped the informal institutions of reciprocity is indirectly. The formal institutions of political administration were not only experienced on an everyday basis directly, but also, indirectly through the formulation of public policies and the provision of services in other realms. Thus, the formal state institutions for how to administer and maintain basic order in the political system shaped the way the state expanded and intervened in additional policy areas. This chapter's comparative analysis of the underlying conceptual differences about the fundamental role of the state, the nature of the individuals or communities to be governed, and the organization of the family will serve as the foundation for the subsequent analysis of state formation in two additional policy areas. In the next two chapters, I show how these contrasting approaches to basic political administration shaped the history of state formation in the areas of social and agricultural policy with important implications for informal reciprocity.