# Power and Persistence: The Indigenous Roots of Representative Democracy*

Jeanet Bentzen[†]

Jacob Gerner Hariri[‡]

James A. Robinson[§]

October 27, 2017

**Abstract**

This paper documents that indigenous democratic practices are associated with contemporary representative democracy. The basic association is conditioned on the relative strength of the indigenous groups within a country; stronger groups were able to shape national regime trajectories, weaker groups were not. Our analyses suggest that institutions are more likely to persist if they are supported by powerful actors and less likely to persist if the existing power structure is disrupted by, e.g., colonisation. Our findings contribute to a growing literature on institutional persistence and change.

[†]Corresponding author. Department of Economics, University of Copenhagen, jbe@econ.ku.dk.
[‡]Dept. of Political Science and Dept. of Economics, University of Copenhagen, jgh@ifs.ku.dk.
[§]Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago, jamesrobinson@uchicago.edu

What are the origins of representative democracy? Modernisation theory, arguably the dominant perspective on the causes of democracy, holds that participatory government is a by-product of economic development (e.g., Schumpeter 1942, p. 296; Lerner 1958, p. 60; Lipset 1959). Other scholars argue that democracy cannot be accounted for only by processes occurring after the industrial revolution (e.g., Downing 1989, 1992; Acemoglu *et al.*, 2008; Hariri 2012; Bentzen *et al.*, 2017). In line with these scholars, we also find roots of representative democracy that are deeper than modernity (and modernisation theory): We demonstrate that premodern democratic practices in indigenous societies – specifically, leadership succession by election or communal consensus – robustly predicts contemporary representative democracy at the national level. However, the ability of indigenous groups to shape subsequent regime developments is conditioned on their relative strength; politically stronger units were able to shape national institutions, weaker units were not.

The article contributes to the question about the role of history in explaining contemporary outcomes (e.g., Nunn 2009; Spolaore and Wacziarg 2013). History continues to shape the modern world through many channels, one of which is institutional persistence.[1] Yet while there is growing evidence of institutional persistence (e.g., Acemoglu *et al.*, 2001; Greif 2006; Fenske 2013), there is ample evidence also of institutional change: Autocracies regularly democratise, democracies regularly fall, and countries sometimes change their constitutions. But why are institutions sometimes persistent and sometimes not? Our findings suggest that the underlying distribution of power in a society shapes the degree of institutional persistence. Institutions are humanly devised constraints that shape social interaction (North 1990) and, because they are humanly devised, institutions reflect the distribution of power in a society at the time of their creation (as well as the interests and the ideas of the actors that created them). In a sense, institutions are frozen power relations. In general, this suggests that institutions are more likely to persist, and

---

[1]Another is through cultural persistence, itself mediated by, for example, intergenerational transmission of norms and values within families or through education (e.g., Voigtlander and Voth 2012; Guiliano and Nunn 2017).

continue to matter, if they are backed by powerful actors. In the context of indigenous institutions, it suggests that these are more likely to continue to shape contemporary outcomes if they were backed by powerful indigenous groups. Conversely, they are less likely to matter in countries where the indigenous distribution of power was upset (as was the case in the European settler colonies).

This finding contributes to the growing literature on the premodern roots of contemporary outcomes. There is evidence that indigenous institutions matter for current economic development (e.g., Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2013; Dippel 2014; Alsan 2015) and public goods provision (Gennaioli and Rainer 2007). This article complements these earlier findings in showing that indigenous institutions matter also for countries' institutional development. While there is agreement that premodern centralisation matters for contemporary outcomes, this article focuses on a different institutional characteristic of indigenous groups – how leaders were selected (i.e., how citizens access the state, not how the state is organised) – and shows that this dimension of premodern political structure also has consequences for the contemporary world. We qualify the existing literature in showing that the ability of indigenous groups to shape national-level outcomes is conditioned by their relative strength *vis-à-vis* the other groups in a country.

Guiliano and Nunn (2013) also found a positive association between indigenous democratic practices and representative democracy.[2] Their analysis does not, however, condition on the relative strength of indigenous groups. We show that the institutions of the relatively powerful groups tend to persist and influence national institutions, while those of weaker groups do not. We further show that the basic association between indigenous democracy and modern democracy, that does not condition on relative strength of indigenous groups, is not robust to including regional fixed effects. This suggests that it might reflect unobserved geographical or deeper historical factors that, to a first approximation, affect all countries in a region equally. Another important difference between this study and Guiliano and Nunn (2013) is the method of aggregating from indigenous groups to

---

[2]The analyses that make up this article were undertaken before the publication of Guiliano and Nunn (2013) and before any of the authors of this study became aware of that work.

the country leve (as explained at some length in fn 8).

Lastly, the article speaks to the more specific question about the link from premodern democratic practices to modern, representative democracy. There is qualitative evidence that proto-democratic institutions of medieval Europe facilitated the development of modern democracy (Blum 1971a; Blockmans 1978; Downing 1989, 1992; Ertman 1997). To take a few examples, Dahl (2000) traced contemporary Norwegian democracy to the premodern assemblies, the *tings*, and Downing (1988) traced the ancestry of the Swedish national parliament to informal village assemblies. It is not obvious that a similar link would exist also outside Europe, since representative democracy is commonly seen as a European invention, traced to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England. In this vein, Adam Przeworski (2010, p. 20) for example writes that "it is easy to find elements of democracy in ancient India, medieval Iceland, or precolonial Africa, but the implication that modern polities in these places owe something to their own political traditions is farfetched. Indeed, modern Greek democracy has no roots in the democracy of Ancient Greece. English constitutional monarchy had more impact on modern Greek political history than Athens did." This article shows that there is nothing particularly "European" about the historical link from early subnational institutions to modern national institutions; on the contrary, the European experience seems to generalise well outside the continent.

Our analyses rely on Murdock's (1967) Ethnographic Atlas as well as the Standard Cross Cultural Sample (Murdock and White 1969) to measure rules of leadership selection in 854 indigenous societies located within the borders of 104 current countries. We code indigenous societies as proto-democratic if leaders were selected by election or consensus and undemocratic otherwise. We use Polity IV to measure contemporary democracy at the country-level. We employ three different proxies for the relative strength of indigenous political units. The first is the relative size of the indigenous groups within a country, where larger groups are assumed to have more power, all else equal. Consistent with this hypothesis, we document that the institutions of larger ethnic groups are associated

4

with national regime developments while those of smaller groups are not. The second proxy is the complexity of the indigenous settlement. We show that only the institutions of groups with relatively complex settlement patterns are associated with contemporary democracy. The third proxy is a group's proximity to the capital. We find that only the institutions of groups located close to the capital are associated with subsequent regime developments. This latter finding confirms the notion that political influence and power in many countries are disproportionately centered in the capital (e.g., Bates 1981, Herbst 2000).

For all measures of political power, we document a substantively relevant and statistically significant association between indigenous rules for leadership succession and contemporary national institutions, but only for the powerful indigenous groups. Figure 1 illustrates that the association between current and indigenous democracy depends on the political strength of the indigenous group. The figure shows the simple correlation between current democracy scores and indigenous democracy aggregated to the country level, i.e. the degree of persistence of democratic institutions. The aggregation is done across all societies (blue bars) and only the politically strong societies (orange bars). A strong society is defined here as one with 1000 inhabitants or more (Appendix Figures A1 and A2 show the same picture with the two other measures of political power). The first two bars show that when we look at the world as a whole, there is a positive association between contemporary and indigenous democracy: Countries with a more proto-democratic indigenous history are more democratic today. Furthermore, the correlation increases from 0.32 in the full sample to 0.48 when zooming in on the powerful groups. The positive association does not, however, on average obtain when we compare countries within continents (the next four blue bars). In particular, there seems to be no association between indigenous and contemporary democracy in Africa and America. Yet when we zoom in on powerful indigenous groups (orange bars), the average positive association between indigenous and national institutions re-emerges. In addition, the correlation is always larger among the strong groups compared to the full sample, indicating

that persistence is negligible among the weaker groups.

The figure also illustrates that the apparent persistence in institutions (found by e.g, Giuliano and Nunn 2013) is only driven by a fraction of the societies in the sample (here: 79 societies, but for the other power measure used, this ranges between 284 and 376 societies). The institutions of the majority of the societies in the sample did not persist to current times.

The fact that the correlation is smallest for Africa, even among the strong groups, is consistent with the idea that events that upset the indigenous power distribution (here: European colonisation) likely reduces the persistence of institutions, a point which we investigate further empirically.

Figure 1: Current and Indigenous Democracy across Continents
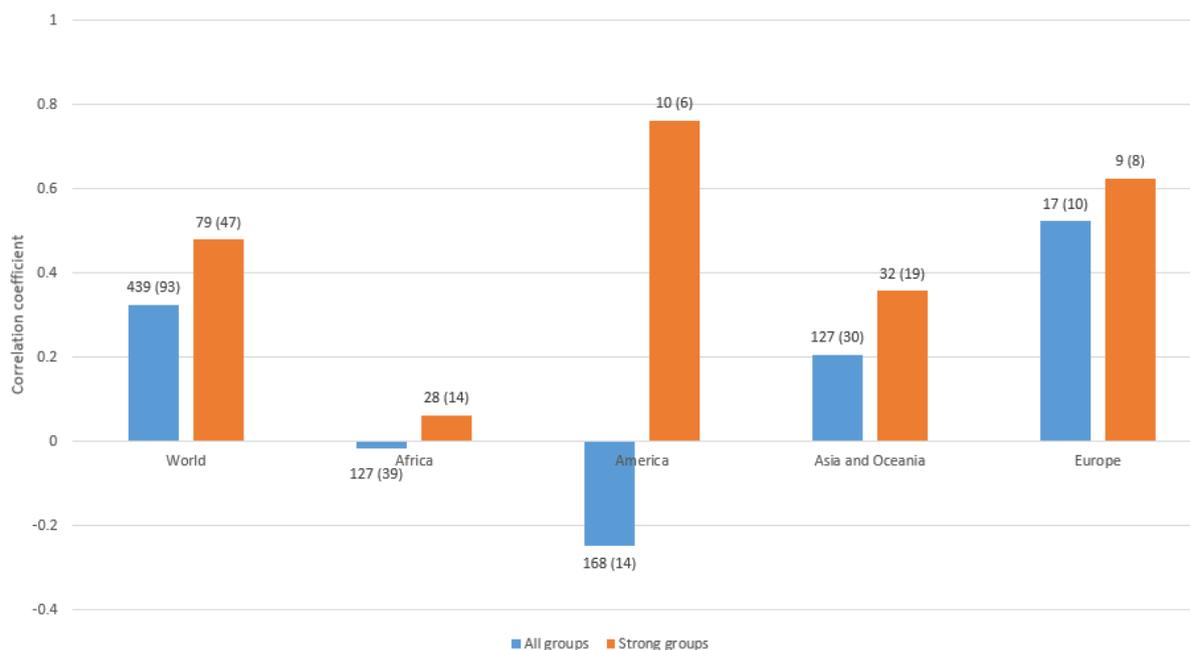


*Notes.* The figure shows the correlation between the mean polity2-scores and mean indigenous democracy across countries by continents. Blue bars represent the entire sample with information on both indigenous and contemporary democracy and societal size (439 societies in 93 countries), while orange bars represent averages across only the powerful indigenous groups, indicated by being inhabited by 1,000 persons or more (79 societies in 47 countries). The numbers at the end of each column indicate the number of societies (countries in parenthesis) that the correlation is based on.

The regression analyses explore this basic association in detail. They show that the asso-

ciation between current and indigenous democracy for powerful societies is statistically significant, obtains for three different proxies for political power, and is robust to a broad set of controls, including historical European influence and colonisation, geographical controls, as well as a set of common correlates of democracy. In general, the magnitude of the correlation doubles when we focus the analysis on the powerful societies compared to the entire sample. The association obtains in each quarter century between 1900 and 2000. As expected, we also show that the association between indigenous democracy and current democracy disappears in the European settlement colonies where the dominant position of the settlers severed the link from indigenous to contemporary institutions. Similarly, we find that the persistence of these indigenous institutions is reduced in countries outside Europe with a larger share of Europeans and in countries with a longer period of colonial rule.

Examining the effect of local ethnic institutions on national institutions is potentially complicated by endogeneity. In principle, one might worry that historical institutions at the country level would affect both indigenous democratic practices and current democracy. Here, however, it should be emphasised that the societies that are recorded in the Ethnographic Atlas were chosen exactly because they had not had contact (or only very limited contact) with Europeans or with national institutions (Murdock and White 1969, 340). We show, also, that all results hold even after accounting for detailed measures of colonisation and are robust to removing the societies that were measured most recently (i.e. those societies where the likelihood of contact with national institutions and/or Europeans is the largest). In addition, we explore the historical determinants of indigenous rule, and include the relevant variables as controls in our analysis to guard against omitted variable bias. To alleviate concerns that unobservables confound our conclusions, we use generalised sensitivity analysis (Imbens 2003; Harada 2013) and show that, for omitted factors to explain our findings, these would have to show an exceptionally strong association with both national and local institutions.

We discuss four causal channels. First, the existence of local assemblies provided a

source of resistance against the state. Popular assemblies could facilitate coordination and collective action and allow local communities to raise resources (or even a local militia) to oppose the state. This argument is much in line with the large literature that sees the origins of representative institutions as the outcome of a bargain between a revenue-seeking ruler and society (e.g., Tilly 1975; Bates and Lien 1985; Hoffman and Rosenthal 1997). Second, subnational democratic institutions might affect regime developments by teaching citizens locally the mores of democracy. This view is associated with Tocqueville (2000 [1835]) who famously likened participatory local government to a "primary school for democracy". Third, proto-democratic practices might provide modern democratic reformers with a narrative of historical continuity and, thus, help to legitimize reforms. Fourth, the dynamics of institutional path dependence may explain the mapping of subnational institutions into national institutions.

One broad implication of our findings is that modern regimes may be more deeply grounded in indigenous societies than previous theories have suggested. Much of the literature on comparative regime development outside Europe has focused on the colonial legacies, effectively treating indigenous political history as secondary. Our results suggest a more prominent role for indigenous history. Prescriptively, our findings suggest that external reformers' capacity for regime-building should not be exaggerated. While our results suggest an indigenous grounding of national regimes, they also show that weaker groups are not generally able to influence a country's regime trajectory. They therefore call for caution before too much potential for change is attached to local regime dynamics.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses potential channels through which indigenous institutions might affect national ones. Section 3 describes the data, and section 4 shows the basic correlations. In section 5 we discuss how institutions at the level of the ethnic group are aggregated to the country-level and propose to attach more weight to "powerful" groups. We illustrate the argument using case studies from the Ashanti in Ghana and the Buganda kingdom in Uganda. Sections 6 and 7 show that the our findings are robust to measuring democracy at earlier points in time and

to various measures of colonization, but that the association, as expected, disappears in European settler colonies. Section 8 performs additional robustness checks and addresses endogeneity concerns. The final section concludes.

# 1 From Indigenous Assemblies to Representative Government

Even if representative democracy is a modern European invention (e.g., Przeworski 2010, p. 3; Narizny 2012), democratic practices such as popular assemblies, leadership succession by election, and public deliberation are neither modern nor European. On the contrary, such practices have been found in societies that antedate the modern state in most parts of the world.[3] If such early democratic practices were not unique to Europe, neither, perhaps, were their impulse towards popular government? How, then, could the existence of proto-democratic indigenous practices have influenced a country's political regime trajectory.

First, it is an integral part of the process of state formation that states seek to eradicate competing institutions (e.g., Tilly 1985; Spruyt 1994). If societal actors are relatively strong, state makers may be forced to concede rights to societal representatives (e.g., Bates and Lien 1985; Levi 1988; North and Weingast 1989; North 1990; Ertman 1997; Finer 1997, e.g. p. 1036; Hoffman and Rosenthal 1997; Stasavage 2003, 2010). Many factors have been argued to shape the relative bargaining power of societal actors and state makers, including the existence of indigenous or local government (e.g., Downing 1992; Ertman 1997) and the cohesiveness of local societies (e.g., Blum 1971b, p. 164-5; Boone 2003, p. 22). The existence of local government allowed communities to coordinate actions *vis-à-vis* the state, and the right to tax allowed them to mount the resources needed to oppose state power. Thus, Ertman (1997, 22) argued that local assemblies

---

[3]A few examples, listed in Muhlberger and Paine (1993), include the *kampong* assemblies of Malaysia, the councils of the Amerindian confederacies, the *gumlao* of the Kachin in Burma, the Maori *hapus*, the *kokwet* of the east African Sebei, the *panchayats* of India, and the *kgotla* of the Tswana in Botswana. See, also, Sen (2003) and Sabetti (2004)

provided "the resources needed to mount an effective defense [...] against overweening royal ambition: A ready-made forum in which all of the local elite could meet and discuss a common course of action; financial resources such as local taxes; and even armed forces in the form of the local militia." As well, the proto-democratic nature of the assemblies likely increased the cohesiveness of indigenous societies and thus their ability and citizens' willingness to take concerted action against the state.[4] In Latin America, the *cabildos* (town councils) of colonial Spanish America serve to illustrate. Here, men of some social standing could participate in local government (e.g., Diamond et al. 1989, p. 3) and elect leaders (Finer 1997, p. 1387). In matters of importance, the local council convoked the public in *cabildos abierto* (public assemblies); it was at such public assemblies that collective resistance and the wars of independence against the Spanish Crown were begun in Argentina and Venezuela in 1810.[5]

Turning to the second channel, local assemblies with popular participation and elected leaders may also affect national regime trajectories by forming citizen attitudes. This effectively constitutes a feedback loop from (local) institutions to culture to (national) institutions. The idea is naturally associated with de Tocqueville who saw participatory local government as a training school where citizens could develop democratic mores (e.g., 2000 [1835], p. 46): "Municipal institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to knowledge; they place it within reach of the people; they give the experience of the peaceful exercise of it and habituate them to make use of it. Without municipal institutions a nation may give itself a free government, but it does not have the spirit of liberty." A contemporary perspective on the merits of local government was given in 2005 by Wen Jiabao, then Premier in China, stating that "if the Chinese people can manage a village, I believe in several years they can manage a township" (Gilley 2013, p. 406).

Thirdly, proto-democratic indigenous institutions may provide democratic reformers with a narrative of historical continuity, which lends legitimacy to reform. To illustrate,

---

[4]Boone (2003, ch. 3) used the Diola society in southern Senegal to show how horizontally cohesive groups can exhibit a considerable capacity for collective action.

[5]Specifically, the *cabildo abierto* in Buenos Aires on May 22, 1810, and in Caracas on April 19, 1810.

the idea of a Scandinavian proto-democracy was first invoked in public discourse in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in the 1930s to counter the totalitarian ideological currents of Communism and Fascism (Jakobsen 2010, p. 322). Similarly, in early 20th century England, the Anglo-Saxon polity was said in Encyclopedia Britannica to provide "all the constituent parts of parliament" (Esposito and Voll 1996, p. 22). According to Esposito and Voll (ibid.), such "reconceptualisations of premodern institutions played an important role in the development of democratic attitudes in Europe." Tradition and historical continuity brings legitimacy, which may induce people to struggle for democracy and support it once it is there.

Lastly, the link from indigenous institutions to national ones may also be a result of path dependence: Political institutions can be highly persistent; once in place, they are hard to change. This is empirically well documented (e.g., Putnam 1993; Acemoglu *et al.*, 2001), and many mechanisms have been proposed to explain this fact. The argument here concerns institutional persistence from one polity (the ethnic group) into another, which contains the first (the state). The dynamics of path dependence are likely to be more prevalent if the two polities, the state and the ethnic group, are more congruent. This was the case, for example, in the Scandinavian countries.

In summary, proto-democratic institutions may provide an impetus to toward national democratic institutions as a source of resistance against repressive state power, as a training school for democratic practices and ideals, by legitimising democratic reforms, and by the dynamics of path dependence. These channels are, of course, mutually compatible.

# 2    Data

To measure the existence of early democratic institutions at the level of the ethnic group, we use the Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock 1967) and the Standard Cross Cultural Sample (SCCS) (Murdock and White 1969). The Atlas holds data on a broad set of characteristics

for 1265 societies across the globe.[6] It was published in successive instalments of the journal *Ethnology* from 1962 onwards. The original coding was done by Yale Professor of Anthropology George Peter Murdock based on the ethnographic sources listed in the notes to each instalment in *Ethnology*. About a fifth of the original codings were checked by graduate students and collaborators (Murdock 1967, 110), and the data have been updated and corrected many times since its first publication in 1967 (e.g., Gray 1999; Peregrine 2003). It seems fair to say that the Ethnographic Atlas is now becoming a standard reference in social science research (e.g., Englebert *et al.*, 2002; Gerring *et al.*, 2011; Nunn and Wantchekon 2011; Alesina et al. 2013; Giuliano and Nunn 2013).

For each society, the information in the Atlas reflects "the earliest date for which satisfactory ethnographic data are available or can be reconstructed [in order to] avoid the acculturative effects of contacts with Europeans" (Murdock and White 1969, p. 340). For all ethnic groups, the sources describing each society were "chosen so that cultural independence of each unit in terms of historical origin and cultural diffusion could be considered maximal" (ibid., abstract). The data have thus been recorded to reflect characteristics that predate modern statehood as well as European contact.[7] The distribution of the years each society was measured is shown in Appendix Table A2.

Information on early democratic institutions at the level of the ethnic group was coded using the variable *Succession to the office of the local headman* (v72 in the Ethnographic Atlas and variable v276 in SCCS). Societies are coded as democratic if leaders are selected by election or consensus and undemocratic otherwise. Table 1 shows the distribution of the categories of local leadership succession in the data. The main results are robust to using other definitions of local democracy (see Appendix Table A5).


[Table 1 about here]

---

[6]The SCCS is a subsample of 186 more thoroughly investigated societies from the Ethnographic Atlas.
[7]Murdock (1966) motivates the creation of the Ethnographic Atlas with reference to personal and linguistic biases in ethnographic research including, e.g., a propensity to consult sources in English. While this does not prove that the Atlas is *not* biased towards, say, proto-democratic societies, it does show that the whole endeavour to construct the Atlas was undertaken in part, at least, to alleviate such biases from ethnographic research.

The dependent variable is contemporary democracy, measured using the 21-point scaled variable *polity2* from Polity IV. To avoid having short spells of regime instability affect the results, polity2 is averaged over the post-Cold War period (1990-2010). The results presented are robust to splitting up the time period, to using the Freedom House measure of democracy, and to using 25-year intervals between 1900 and 2000 (Table 7 and Table A15 in the Appendix).

Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of the 903 ethnographic societies with information on indigenous democracy. The indigenous societies are represented by dots; the green ones are coded as democratic, red ones are coded as undemocratic. The colouring of countries represents the dependent variable, contemporary democracy. Darker green is more democratic.

*Figure 2. Indigenous Democracy and Representative Government*
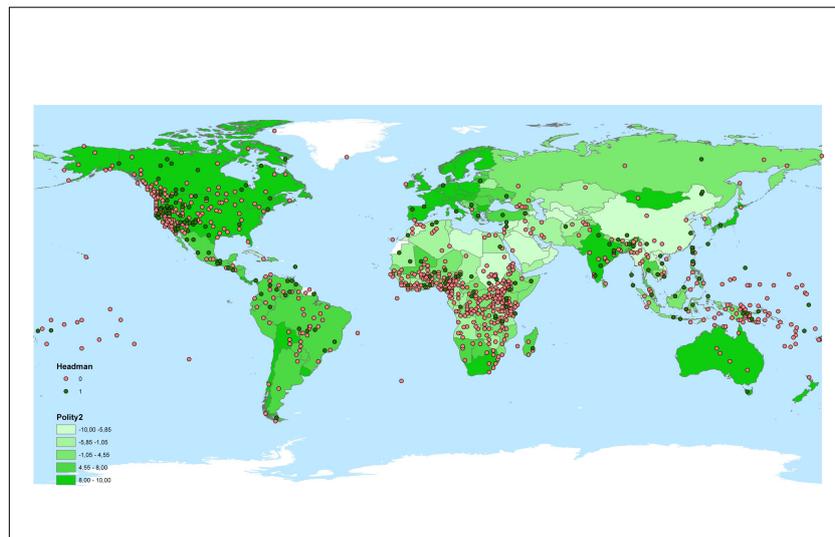


*Notes.* The dots show the 903 ethnographic societies with information on indigenous democracy. The darker dots represent indigenous democracy, where the local headman was selected by means of elections or communal consensus. Countries are coloured to represent contemporary democracy (1990-2010) as measured by Polity IV.

The figure reveals regional clustering. For example, the proportion of ethnic societies with local democracy is comparatively large in Europe (62% of all societies in Europe are

13

coded as democratic) and in North America (31%) and comparatively limited in Africa (9 percent). Thus, the map immediately suggests that between-regional variation would drive a positive association between indigenous democracy and contemporary political regimes.

## 2.1 Aggregating Indigenous Institutions to the Country-Level

We define a society as belonging to a given country $c$ if it was located within the current borders of country $c$, based on the latitude and longitude of the ethnographic society. To aggregate democracy of the ethnic group to the country level, we take two approaches. First, we calculate a simple measure of average indigenous democracy in country $c$ as the share of societies within that country's current borders, where leadership succession is by election, formal or informal consensus. Formally, $indig_c = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{s=1}^{N} indig_{sc}$ for all $N$ societies $s$ within country $c$, where $indig_{sc}$ is a dummy equal to 1 if society $s$ had rules for leadership succession by either "election or formal consensus" or "informal consensus", zero otherwise. Note that this approach weighs all groups within a country equally, implicitly assuming that the groups in a country mattered equally for subsequent regime developments. We relax this assumption in section 5, where we instead weigh each society by its political strength. Details and discussion of the aggregation of indigenous societies to the country-level can be found in Appendix Section 2.[8] This leaves us with a sam-

---

[8]Instead of matching the society to the current country within which it lies, Giuliano and Nunn (2013) match each ethnic group to a language group. They then calculate the country average by weighting each ethnic group with the current population-size of the language group, such that ethnographic societies belonging to larger language groups are given more weight. These language groups can be quite broad, and the implicit assumption is that indigenous institutions are identical within language groups (even across several countries). The issue, in a nutshell is whether it is justifiable to assume that ethnic groups within the language family have identical political systems? In the modern world it does not seem justified to assume that political systems are identical within language groups – as witnessed by, e.g., the differences in the political systems of North - and South Korea, East - and West Germany, or between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Giuliano and Nunn do not make the assumption concerning modern political units, but only for premodern political units. Yet, here, the anthropological consensus seems to caution against this assumption. In Barnard and Spencer's "Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology", the authors write that in the 1940s the field of anthropology abandoned the "so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, that the structure of a language determined our conceptualisation of the world." (Barnard and Spencer 2002, p. 412). Also, the renowned anthropologists, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940, p. 3), warned that "[i]t is well to bear in mind that within a single linguistic or cultural area we often find political systems which are very unlike each other in many important

14

ple of 854 ethnic societies located within 104 current country borders for which we have information on both indigenous and contemporary democracy.

# 3  Basic Correlations

Table 2 reports coefficients from OLS regressions of contemporary democracy on a country's history of indigenous democracy corresponding to the following equation:

$$D_c = \alpha + \beta indig_c + \mathbf{X}'_c \delta + \epsilon_c \tag{1}$$

where $D_c$ is contemporary democracy in country $c$, $indig_c$ is the share of democratic ethnic societies in country $c$, and $\mathbf{X}'_c$ is a vector of controls. The coefficient of interest is $\beta$, which measures the association between local indigenous institutions and national institutions.

[Table 2 about here]

Column (1) documents a highly significant, unconditional association of 4.09 between contemporary democracy and a history of indigenous democratic institutions. This suggests that if Angola or Kazakhstan ($indig_c = 0$) had had the same level of indigenous democracy as, say, Italy ($indig_c = 1$), one should expect contemporary democracy to be 4.09 polity2-units higher, all else equal.

Column (2) controls for the (absolute) value of latitude. This is informed by Jared Diamond's argument that, throughout history, technological and institutional diffusion were easier at similar latitudes where the length of the day and climate were not drastically different (Diamond 1997, ch. 10). This specification compares countries along the

---

features." In the classical work by Edmund Leach (1964), "Political Systems of Highland Burma", the author finds very different political systems (the egalitarian "Gumlao"-type and the more autocratic "Gumsa"-type) within the same Kachin ethnic (and language) group. More examples are given by, e.g., Collis (2012, p. 228ff) who finds that "language plays only a minor role when looking for similarities in social and political systems" after studying the American Plains, the Bantu, and the Celts. Agyeman (1987, p. 142) presents evidence from Ghana.

historically important East-West axis rather than the disparate experiences of the North to the South. Column (3) controls for the "approximate time level to which the ethnographic data pertains" (Murdock 1967, p. 116), since local institutions measured earlier might be different from those measured later. Column (4) adds a control for historical development, proxied by settlement complexity. In line with Alesina et al. (2013) and Nunn and Wantchekon (2011), we proxy development by the variable "Settlement Patterns" (variable v30 in the Ethnographic Atlas and v234 in the SCCS), which measures the permanency and density of settlements ranging from "Nomadic or fully migratory" to "Complex settlements" on an 8-point scale. Column (5) adds a control for historical political centralisation. Many scholars have found state building and early democratic institutions to be positively related, in both medieval Europe (e.g., Tilly 1975) and precolonial Africa (e.g., Bates 1983). Since early political centralisation seems conducive to contemporary development (e.g., Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2013), it might also confound our analyses. In line with Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2013) and Gennaioli and Rainer (2007), we measure political centralisation by the variable "Jurisdictional hierarchy" (variable v33 in the Ethnographic Atlas), which measures the degree of jurisdictional hierarchy beyond the local community. It is an ordered variable ranging from 0 to 4 indicating the number of jurisdictional levels in each society above the local level. A 0 indicates stateless societies, 1 and 2 indicate petty and large paramount chiefdoms (or their equivalent), 3 and 4 indicate large states.[9] The correlation between centralisation and current democracy is negative, but this is entirely explained by cross-regional differences (column 10). Comparing countries at similar levels of latitude, timing of the ethnographic data collection, societal complexity and political centralisation does not affect the coefficient of interest.

The results in columns (1)-(5) are consistent with those presented by Giuliano and Nunn (2013), despite the differences in aggregation techniques, control variables and

---

[9]Gennaioli and Rainer (2007) construct a dummy, which takes the value 1 when "jurisdictional hierarchy" equals 2 or more, and zero otherwise. We include this dummy in Appendix Tables A6-A9 with no change to the results.

the time-frame in which contemporary democracy is measured. The magnitude of the estimated association is even quite similar. Guillano and Nunn's estimates range from 2.0 to 3.6 and ours lie between 2.8 and 4.11; the intervals are statistically indistinguishable.

Unlike Giuliano and Nunn (2013), the remainder of Table 2 (and the rest of the estimations in our analysis) includes a full set of regional dummies.[10] Figure 2 suggested that the proportion of ethnic groups with proto-democratic institutions is not evenly distributed geographically: The highest proportion of ethnic groups with leadership succession by election or consensus was found in Europe; the lowest was found in Africa. When regional fixed effects are included, the coefficient measures the average intra-regional correlation, effectively comparing European countries to other European countries, and so on. This cuts the estimated association in half and it is no longer statistically significant at conventional levels. The analyses that exclude region fixed effects are vulnerable to unobserved factors that affect all countries in a region similarly. Such factors include culture, deeper historical conditions, biogeographical conditions, or intra-regional diffusion. These unobserved factors may explain both indigenous and modern representative democracy.

# 4 Whose Indigenous Institutions Matter?

We now relax the assumption that all groups within a country matter equally for its political regime dynamics. Some groups are inevitably more powerful than others and better able to influence the national regime trajectory. In North America, for example, European settlers were more powerful than the indigenous groups and better able, therefore, to impose their preferred institutions on the country as a whole: The ideological origins of the American Revolution and the Constitution were European ideals, transmitted to the new world with the European settlers (Bailyn 1967). While some of the native groups in North America had popularly selected leaders (e.g., the Commanche and the Navajo),

---

[10]The regions included are sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, North America, South America, and the Middle East and North Africa.

and others did not (e.g., the Cheyenne), the European settlers were powerful enough to ignore the institutions of the native American groups.[11] Similar examples come from Ukraine in the late 19th century, where villagers elected their own district leader, but attempts at regime change from below were crushed by the tsar (Gilley 2013, p. 397) and China, where initiatives for township elections were brought to a halt by the government (ibid., p. 397). These examples illustrate how subnational institutions that are not backed by sufficiently powerful groups do not map into national institutions.

To illustrate in a little more depth the claim that institutions that are backed by powerful groups are more likely to affect national-level institutions, consider the cases of the Ashanti group in Ghana and the kingdom of Buganda in Uganda. The first case illustrates that a powerful indigenous group with proto-democratic practices can be instrumental in introducing national-level democratic institutions; the second case illustrates how a powerful ethnic group with non-democratic institutions can frustrate the development of national-level democracy.

***Case 1: The Ashanti and modern democracy in Ghana*** In precolonial Ghana, the Ashanti was the dominant ethnic group – militarily, politically, and culturally (Wilks 1989; McCaskie 1995). The Ashanti group was centralised and proto-democratic, with a popularly selected ruler. If the community no longer approved of the ruler, he could be removed by the assembly.[12] It attests to the regional influence of the Ashanti that some of the other ethnic groups in the territory of historical Ghana, under the influence of the Ashanti, also adopted the practice of popularly selected leaders (Bourret 1960, p. 11). In 1867, the British government formed the Gold Coast Colony, and the relationship between the Ashanti and the British was generally conflictual (K.G. 1950, p. 111-2). In the wake of unrest over British policies in 1948, the British governor set up a commission on institutional reform in Ghana, the so-called Coussey Commission. Later that year, the

---

[11]Indeed, the Founders ignored not only the native American institutions, but the native American people. They were conceived of as citizens of their own separate nations, not as citizens of the U.S. Even in 1868 when freed slaves were granted full citizenship rights, native Americans were explicitly excluded from U.S. citizenship unless they paid taxes.

[12]"Destooled", a reference to the Golden Stool, the traditional throne of the Ashanti chief.

Commission produced a report with official recommendations for constitutional reform. The report emphasised the traditional institutions of the Ashanti and how these should form the basis of a modern democratic system: "Democratic principles in the main underlie the traditional institutions of this country. No chief, for example, speaks as the head of his state except with the consent of his councilors who are the acknowledged representatives of the people. To talk of democratic principles is, therefore, not to introduce a new idea." (Great Britain, Colonial Office 1948, p. 15, par. 81). And also: "There is no intrinsic disharmony between the indigenous institutions of the Gold Coast and the imported Western representative system. For the purposes and methods of the indigenous and the imported institutions are the same: both embody the representative principle, and both are governed by discussion." (Great Britain, Colonial Office 1948, p. 8, par. 27). Three years later, many of the recommendations from the Coussey Commission were embodied in Ghana's 1951-constitution, which introduced a legislative assembly consisting of members elected by popular vote and an executive council with a majority of local ministers who were responsible to the legislative assembly (Bourett 1960, p. 171). During the discussions in the Commission, the demand for democratic institutions was voiced in particular by the Ashanti (Great Britain, Colonial Office 1948, p. 22, par. 138). The constitution of 1951, which was requested by the Ashanti and influenced by their traditional institutions, marks the inauguration of modern representative democracy in Ghana (and is, indeed, coded as the first year of modern representative democracy in Ghana in the Varieties of Democracy project, e.g., Lindberg and Boylan (2012, p. 8)).[13]

*Case 2: The kingdom of Buganda and the lack of democracy in Uganda*
To illustrate how powerful ethnic groups with non-democratic institutions can influence national institutions in a non-democratic way, consider the case of the Buganda kingdom in Uganda. The Buganda kingdom was the most important and most powerful political unit in the territory of precolonial Uganda. After British colonisation in 1894, the Uganda protectorate was carved into four provinces, of which Buganda maintained a privileged

---

[13]Other democracy indices, including Polity IV, do not code Ghana until 1960.

position with the British (Apter 1986, p. 9). Buganda was a hereditary monarchy, claiming an unbroken line of more than 37 kings (Dinwiddy 1981). In the early 1950s, negotiations concerning the political structure of postcolonial Uganda gathered pace, and the Buganda Constitutional Committee maintained that "it was inconceivable for a Kiganda society to exist without a king" (ibid.). During this period, therefore, the monarchy in Buganda did everything possible to frustrate the development of democratic institutions in Uganda – "obstructing the evolution of party politics and boycotting both the elections in 1958 and in 1961" (Mugaju 1988, p. 87-89). Buganda feared that the central government of Uganda would become powerful at the expense of the traditional king of Buganda (Apter 1986, p. 17) and that the strengthening of the country's democratic institutions would endanger the traditional institutions of the monarchy (Dinwiddy 1981, p. 503). In the early 1960s, Buganda therefore worked to achieve independence from Uganda. Politics in Uganda was largely Buganda-vs-the rest, and the deep resentment of president Obote in Buganda likely facilitated the military coup in 1971, which ushered in the brutal dictatorship of Idi Amin (Apter 1995; Kaneyhamba 2010, p. 109).

There is, as illustrated, qualitative evidence to suggest that the institutions of powerful groups are relevant to national institutional developments and that, conversely, the institutions of non-powerful groups are not. While the idea is theoretically straightforward, measuring the relative power or influence of indigenous groups is not. We propose three different proxies for groups' relative political power. Before describing the individual measures, we introduce the empirical model and aggregation techniques.

## 4.1 Aggregation Based on Power

To introduce the empirical model, assume initially that we have information on current democracy at the level of indigenous societies, $D_{sc}$. Let the indicator variable $P_{sc}$, defined according to either of the three power measures described in detail below, equal one if the society is powerful, zero otherwise. To investigate whether the association between

indigenous and national institutions is conditioned on societies' relative power, consider the following equation:

$$D_{sc} = \alpha + \beta_1 indig_{sc} + \beta_2 indig_{sc} \times P_{sc} + \gamma P_{sc} + \mathbf{X}'_{sc}\delta + \epsilon_{sc} \qquad (2)$$

If indigenous democracy is positively associated with current democracy in politically influential societies, we expect that $\beta_2 > 0$. Yet by construction, contemporary national democracy does not vary at the level of the indigenous groups, but only at the country level. Therefore, we aggregate all variables to the country-level and obtain the following:

$$D_c = \alpha + \beta_1 indig_c + \beta_2 indig_c^p + \gamma P_c + \mathbf{X}'_c\delta + \epsilon_c \qquad (3)$$

where $D_c$ is contemporary democracy in country $c$, $indig_c = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{s=1}^{N} indig_{sc}$ is the share of democratic indigenous societies in country $c$, calculated across all indigenous societies in country $c$. $indig_c^p = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{s=1}^{N} indig_{sc} \times P_{sc}$ is the share of democratic societies among the powerful societies only. $P_c$ measures the fraction of powerful societies in country $c$. Note that including this fraction takes care of the concern that the particular power measure has an independent effect on contemporary democracy. In order to estimate the significance of the association between current democracy and indigenous democracy among politically powerful societies, one needs to estimate the significance of the composite estimate $\beta_1 + \beta_2$. Instead, we estimate the equivalent model to get a direct estimate of the association of interest:

$$D_c = \alpha + \beta_3 indig_c^p + \beta_4 indig_c^{np} + \gamma P_c + \mathbf{X}'_c\delta + \epsilon_c \qquad (4)$$

where $indig_c^{np} = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{s=1}^{N} indig_{sc} \times (1 - P_{sc})$ is the share of democratic societies among the "non-powerful" indigenous societies. Being "powerful" and "non-powerful" is defined such that their sum spans all societies in the sample for which information on societal power is available. Now, the estimate of interest, $\beta_3$ measures the direct impact of indigenous democracy in politically influential societies. Appendix Section 2 explores alternative ways

of aggregating the data; weighting by societal power, aggregating exclusively across the powerful societies, and shows placebo regressions for the less powerful only (Tables A3 and A4). The aggregation method where "weaker" societies are excluded from the sample may be more useful for scholars applying our results. We will stick with the method described above, since the alternative aggregation method assumes that the weak societies have no influence. Our approach allows us to test empirically whether this is indeed the case.

For now, the vector $X'_c$ includes only the exogenous controls from Table 2; region fixed effects, absolute latitude and average year of measurement. In later sections, we show robustness to a broad set of controls.

Below we describe each of the power-measures used. The models below differ only with respect to the definition of power, $P_{sc}$. All the measures yield qualitatively identical results. Summary statistics for the proxies of power and other key variables are shown in Appendix Table A1. Furthermore, Appendix Table A10 shows that the three power measures are positively correlated as expected, but do seem to capture rather different aspects of power; pairwise correlations range from 0.1 to 0.44. Table A11 shows that results are robust to various combinations of the three power measures.

### Group Size as Proxy for Political Power

The preferred measure of political power of the indigenous groups is their average size in terms of population. All else equal, groups that are more numerous are likely to have more power than less numerous groups. Here, $P_{sc}$ equals one for "large" societies, zero otherwise. The definition of large is described below. $indig^p_c$ thus measures the share of democratic societies among the large societies in country $c$, while $indig^{np}_c$ measures the share of democratic societies among the small societies in country $c$. The sum of "large" and "small" societies span the entire sample.

To define "large" and "small", we use the categorical variable "Mean size of local communities" (variable v31 from the Ethnographic Atlas and variable v235 from the SCCS). It is an ordered variable ranging from 1 to 8 indicating the mean size of local communities. 1 indicates "Fewer than 50 members", 2 "50-99", 3 "100-199", 4 "200-399",

5 "400-1000", 6 "1,000 without any town of more than 5,000", 7 "Towns of 5,000-50,000", and 8 indicates "Cities of more than 50,000 members". By this measure, both the Ashanti and the Buganda kingdom are considered powerful.

We allow "large" to vary across all categories of the variable from groups of 50-99 or more to groups of 50,000 or more. Table 3 shows these increments in columns (3)-(9). Panel A reports the results from analyses without region fixed effects, Panel B reports results from analyses with region fixed effects. The table shows that indigenous democracy in powerful groups is correlated with contemporary democracy, irrespective of which cutoff-level for "large" societies we use. Furthermore, in the regressions including region fixed effects, indigenous democracy in the weaker groups has not left an imprint on contemporary democracy. Column (2) also includes the linear interaction with the mean size of indigenous groups, which is positive as expected, but insignificant, which is also expected as the individual categories of the variable are far from continuous.


[Table 3 about here]


In the robustness checks that follow, we choose the cutoff in column (7); societies of 1,000 inhabitants or more. This yields the best description of the data, as measured by $R^2$.[14]

One caveat of the size-based measure of power is that the sample reduces to 93 countries. Instead, the sample size increases to 104 when using the latter two measures of power.

### Settlement Complexity as Proxy for Political Power

The next measure of power of indigenous groups is the level of settlement complexity. The idea is that more developed societies are also more complex and better able to

---

[14]To choose the optimal cutoff level, we face one complication in particular; the model includes two variables which are consistently insignificant in Panel B; the share of large societies ($P_c$) and the share of democratic societies among the small groups ($indig_c^{np}$). Indeed, we expect the latter to be insignificant, which will reduce $R^2$, which makes $R^2$ in the models shown in Table 3 rather useless. Excluding either the share of large societies, average indigenous democracy in small societies or both produces the same result; using the cutoff of 1,000 inhabitants or above yields the highest $R^2$

influence national institutions. Now, $P_{sc}$ measures whether an indigenous society, $s$, is defined as complex or not according to the particular cutoff, and likewise $P_c$ measures the share of complex societies in country $c$. $indig_c^p$ measures the share of democratic societies among the complex societies in country $c$, while $indig_c^{np}$ measures the share of democratic societies among the remaining societies in country $c$.

Societal complexity is measured on an eight-point scale indicating the settlement patterns of the indigenous society. 1 indicates "Nomadic or fully migratory", 2 indicates "Seminomadic", 3 indicates "Semisedentary", 4 indicates "Compact but impermanent settlements", 5 indicates "Neighbourhoods of dispersed family homesteads", 6 indicates "Separated hamlets, forming a single community", 7 indicates "Compact and relatively permanent settlements", 8 indicates "Complex settlements". We allow the definition of $P_{sc}$ to vary in increments from "Nomadic or fully migratory" or more to "Complex settlements". Again, it should be noted that both the Ashanti and the Buganda kingdom are in the highest category and, thus, clearly powerful according to this measure.

Table 4 reports the results, where the simple relation between average indigenous democracy across all groups within a country and contemporary democracy is shown in column (1). Column (2) shows the linear interaction between the ordered complexity variable and indigenous democracy, while columns (3)-(9) shows results for the increments of the complexity variable.


[Table 4 about here]


In column (3), all societies that are more complex than "Nomadic or fully migratory" are defined as politically strong. Moving towards the right in the table, the definition of "politically strong" is gradually tightened, until column (9) where only societies that are coded as having complex settlements in the Atlas are defined as politically strong. The table shows that the indigenous institutions in relatively complex societies are associated with contemporary national institutions, whereas those in less complex societies are

24

not. This suggests that more developed indigenous groups were better able to influence national regime trajectories.[15] In the analyses that follow, we used the specification in column (8), since this provides the best description of the data as measured by $R^2$.

### *Proximity to the capital as Proxy for Political Power*

Usually, a country's capital is home to its highest political offices and decision-making authority. It is home also to the means of coercion and law enforcement (or the adminis-tration of it) and the central bureaucracy. Physical proximity to this centre of authority likely increases political influence (e.g., Ades and Glaeser 1995, p. 198f; Herbst 2000; Olsson and Hansson 2011; Campante *et al.*, 2013).[16] This is so because, first, the threat of violence or rebellion is less urgent from a distance, and groups' ability to exchange force for political influence should thus increase with their proximity to the capital. Second, since influential public offices are concentrated in the capital, public officials are likely to be recruited from the groups located in the vicinity of the capital. Third, groups closer to the capital are better able to monitor what happens there. The state, therefore, is likely to be more responsive to the demands of groups living closer to the capital. Finally, the location of the capital is itself endogenous to an underlying distribution of power among different groups in a country. The dominant group, we argue, is likely to set up the institutional infrastructure in its own vicinity. In Uganda it illustrates the underlying power distribution that Kampala, the capital in the Buganda kingdom, later became the capital of Uganda.

In many European colonies, capital cities were externally imposed: Colonisers cen-tralised authority in capitals that were either built from scratch or relocated to a new city that met better the logistical needs of the colonial power.[17] However, capitals were

---

[15]In column (9) the estimated association remains positive, but insignificantly so. This is likely due to the small number of complex settlements in our data (only about 3 percent of the societies in our sample are coded as complex settlements)

[16]Herbst (2000) and Olsson and Hansson (2011) focus on the projection of power *from* the capital, arguing that the state's ability to brodcast power decreases with the distance from the capital. Campante, Do, and Guimaraes (2013) and Ades and Glaeser (1995) focus on how distance matters for the ability to project influence *into* the capital. Our perspective is the latter.

[17]Lusaka, Nairobi, and Harare were all, for example, built *de novo*, whereas, e.g., Lagos and Accra were upgraded to capitals by the British.

also the locus of power in colonies. Thus, the relocation served to weaken the ties between the capital-region and the rest of the country, and Europeans often only made limited efforts to extend the power and political reach of the capital into the countryside. Politics in former colonies is therefore widely regarded as being disproportionately centered on the capital (e.g., Bates 1981; Herbst 2000). This capital-bias often continued into the post-colonial period (e.g., Bates 1981; Bratton and de Walle 1992; Alence 2004). Regardless of whether countries were colonised or not, we hypothesise that societies located closer to the capital are better able to affect a country's regime trajectory than groups located further away. The association between national political institutions and indigenous institutions should thus increase when we zoom in on indigenous groups located closer to the capital. In Ghana, Accra expanded and became important only with colonisation (Arn 1996, p. 416-19). After the city became a trading hub, it was conquered by the Ashanti who were located close enough to, first, circumscribe the indigenous coastal societies and, later, simply take control of Accra (ibid., p. 425).

Let $P_{sc}$, described in detail below, equal one if the society is located "close" to the capital, zero otherwise. $indig_c^p$ is the share of democratic indigenous societies among societies located close to the capital city, while $indig_c^{np}$ is the share of democratic societies among the remaining societies.

In Table 5, we allow "close to the capital city" to vary at increments of 100 kilometers ranging from a distance of within 100 kilometers to within 1,000. In the few cases where a capital was relocated, we focus on the contemporary capital.[18] The capital of interest here must have served as capital at the moment in which the foundations of a political regime are laid. And since we focus on the contemporary regime, we focus also on the contemporary capital. The idea is that if an ethnic group is close to the capital today, it is likely to have been so for a period long enough to have exerted influence on a country's regime development.

---

[18]In our sample of 104 countries, seven capitals have moved since 1960. These are Cote d'Ivoire (Abidjan to Yamoussoukro in 1983); Kazakhstan (Almaata to Astana in 1997); Malawi (from Zomba to Lilongwe in 1974); Myanmar (Rangoon to Naypyidaw in 2005); Nigeria (from Lagos to Abuja in 1991); Pakistan (Karachi to Islamabad in 1974); Tanzania (Dar es Salaam to Dodoma in 1996).

The location of the capital might reflect, not only the underlying power distribution or the needs of the colonial power, but also unobserved variables that are themselves related to a country's political regime.[19] Note that these concerns are already accounted for by controlling for the share of societies located within x km of the capital city. To alleviate such concerns further, Tables A6-A9 in the appendix shows robustness of our results to a large set of society-level controls that might plausibly be related to capital location (including, e.g., distance from the ethnic group to the country centroids, top the ocean, or to another ethnic group, political centralisation, soil quality, and population size). And in the analyses below, all models include the following controls in addition to the baseline controls (absolute latitude and average year of measurement): A control for (log of) the country area, since democratic rule may be more viable in smaller countries (e.g., Dahl and Tufte 1973; Stasavage 2010) and since indigenous groups are closer to the capital in smaller countries.[20] Further, since many capitals are located close to the ocean, which may improve the prospects for democracy by facilitating economic integration with the outside world, we control for the average distance to the coast across all ethnic groups within a country. Lastly, since the measure is based on the societies located "close" and "far" from the capital as defined in each column, we control for the share of ethnographic societies located "close" to the capital.[21] Table 5 shows the results.

[Table 5 about here]

The table documents that the indigenous institutions of societies located in the proximity of a country's capital are more strongly associated with its national institutions than are

---

[19]It could be, for example, that a colonial power builds the capital close to an ethnic group whose political structure is relatively centralised (as this facilitates indirect rule). The degree of political centralisation of ethnic groups in a country might be correlated with the rules for leadership succession in an ethnic group and plausibly affect a country's political regime (e.g., via modern economic development to which premodern centralisation is positively related, cf, e.g., Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2013)

[20]Campante *et al.*, (2013) show that capital isolation is associated with misgovernance. Controlling for the natural log of the average distance of a country's ethnographic societies to its capital instead of country size does not affect the results in Table 5.

[21]Results are robust to excluding either of these controls.

the institutions of societies located further away. Column (1) shows the key coefficient from full model from Table 2. Column (2) adds to this an interaction between the groups' indigenous institutions and their distance from the capital. The interaction is negative as hypothesized, showing that the association between indigenous institutions and national institutions decreases with groups' distance from the capital. Column (3) shows that the indigenous institutions of ethnic groups located within 100 kilometers of the capital are significantly and positively correlated with national institutions; institutions in societies located further away are uncorrelated with national institutions. Columns (4)-(12) increase the threshold in increments of 100 km until 1,000 km is reached.

The results in Table 5 are thus consistent with the discussion above; if political power and the ability to shape the subsequent national regime trajectory are centered on the capital, we should expect the estimated coefficient to increase for ethnic societies located in relative proximity to the capital. In the rest of the paper, we use the specification in column (6) where "close" is defined as being within 400 kilometres of the capital. As measured by $R^2$, this specification provides the best fit with the data.[22]

To corroborate that relative proximity to the capital captures relative political power across ethnic groups, we checked if countries' leaders at independence disproportionately come from ethnic groups that are located relatively close to the capital. The idea is that more powerful ethnic groups are more likely to supply the country's leader than are less powerful groups. Across our sample of 31 African countries for which ethnic leadership data were available (Soumahoro, 2015), we found that leaders' ethnic groups are located closer to the capital than the average ethnic group.[23] Average proximity for leaders' ethnic group is 296 kilometres (s.d. = 236), the average for other ethnic groups is 438 kilometres

---

[22]Note that the results are not driven by societies within 100 kilometres of the capital; excluding these (48) societies does not alter the conclusion (results available upon request).

[23]In 26 countries we were able to match the leaders ethnicity directly to an ethnic group. In an additional 10 countries, we matched a leader's birth place to the closest ethnic group. For 11 countries, we were able to match leaders to ethnic groups according to both methods; reassuringly, for all 11 countries both methods yield the same match. Five countries in our sample only have one ethnic group; that of the leader. These countries were excluded from the analysis, since there were no groups with which to compare the proximity of the leader's ethnic group.

(s.d. = 261).[24] These results suggest that relative proximity to the capital is a useful measure of relative political influence across ethnic groups.

To sum up, across all three proxies for political power of the indigenous groups, the contemporary regimes correlate only with average indigenous institutions across the powerful groups. Indigenous institutions of the remaining societies has not left an imprint on contemporary institutions.

# 5  Outside Europe: Colonisation and Indigenous Democracy

Colonialism caused profound disjunctures in authority structures in most of the world outside Europe. Even if the colonial state rarely lasted more than a few centuries, it is not obvious that one can find deep continuities from precolonial indigenous institutions to contemporary, postcolonial institutions. Moreover, if representative institutions are a European invention, how can one trace it to indigenous institutions outside of Europe? In Table 6, we demonstrate that, outside Europe and after controlling for the influence of European colonisation, indigenous institutions are still associated with contemporary institutions – except in settler colonies where the indigenous power structures were permanently disrupted by the settlers. Political influence is proxied by group size in Panel A, settlement complexity in Panel B, and proximity to the capital in Panel C. The three proxies yield qualitatively identical results.

[Table 6 about here]

The first column shows the result on the reduced sample that excludes Europe; the association between contemporary democracy and the share of democratic indigenous

---

[24]Similar results obtained when we included only the 22 countries where leaders' ethnicity could be matched directly to an ethnic group.

societies across the powerful societies is larger in this sample, but not significantly so. Column (2) adds a control for precolonial state development. Hariri (2012; 2015) shows that precolonial state development was a historical impediment to the development of democracy, because of the way it shaped European colonisation. If local democracy was an obstacle to political centralization (Ertman 1997, p. 22) and political centralization was an historical obstacle to the transmission of institutions and ideals from Europe, this could be driving our findings. Column (2) shows that the result is robust to comparing countries at similar levels of precolonial state development.

Much work has established that geographical factors can shape (indigenous) institutional choices (e.g., Alsan 2013; Bentzen *et al.*, 2017) as well as colonial experiences (e.g., Acemoglu *et al.* 2001; Nunn and Puga 2012). Controlling for a set of geographical variables in column (3), however, leaves the coefficients of interest unchanged. Controlling for precolonial population density in column (4) (cf. Acemoglu *et al.* 2002) does not affect the parameter of interest either.

Columns (5)-(8) include, in turn, a dummy for countries that were colonized, a set of colonizer fixed effects, colonial duration of European colonial rule, and colonial duration of European or Soviet colonial rule. Column (8) thus also excludes Russia from the sample. None of these controls change the coefficients of interest. Column (9) controls for European language fraction as yet another proxy for European influence. In column (10) we control for the extent of 'indirect rule' in colonial governance. Under indirect rule, colonial powers ruled through existing institutions, which often reinforced the traditional authority structures (e.g., Boone 2003) or destroyed participatory, traditional institutions (e.g., Ashton 1947; Mamdani 1996).[25] As expected, the extent of indirect colonial rule is negatively associated with contemporary democracy, although insignificantly. But the coefficients on indigenous democracy remain positive and highly significant in Panels A-C.

---

[25]The indirect rule variable is based on the original measure of indirect rule by Lange (2004), extrapolated by Hariri (2012, p. 476) using European language fraction.

# 6 Persistence and Change

If our findings are an indication of institutional persistence, we expect our results to hold also for national-level democracy at earlier points in time. Since the Polity IV democracy measure is available for relatively few countries prior to 1960, we supplement this analysis with data from the newly constructed index from the ambitious V-DEM ("Varieties of Democracy")-project (Coppedge *et al.*, 2011).[26] For both the V-DEM and the Polity IV measures we regress average democracy in the four quarter-centuries between 1900 and 2000 on indigenous democracy. The results are shown in Table 7, where each panel represents one power measure. In addition to the baseline controls and continent fixed effects, for the two early periods, the set of controls also includes the fraction of European language speakers as a measure of European colonisation. The reason is that the two early periods are measured during European colonisation, and European language fraction is an indication of the extent of European settlement and the form of rule (e.g., direct *versus* indirect rule), both of which are correlates of subsequent democracy.[27] Table 7 shows that the association between modern, representative democracy as measured by V-DEM and indigenous democracy in the powerful societies is significant and positive across all three definitions of power across all periods, except the period 1925-1950 when power is measured by societal complexity and proximity to the capital. With the democracy measure from Polity IV, the association is positive and significant only in the two sub periods between 1950 and 2000. The insignificance in the first two sub-periods does not seem a large concern, given the much smaller sample (37-47 observations), combined with the fact that these regressions include a total of 11-13 control variables. Table 7 shows some indication that the association between national and indigenous democracy increases in later periods. This is consistent with the idea that colonisation caused a rupture in the link from precolonial to modern institutions: As time since colonisation

---

[26]We use V-DEM's measure of electoral democracy, *polyarchy*, as this is closest in spirit to the conceptualisation in Polity IV.

[27]The variable is positive and highly significant in all specifications, which suggests that it does reduces some of the noise in the historic democracy measures.

passes, there is some indication that the association is strengthened.


[Table 7 about here]


Thus, the results confirm the story of persistence; institutions of powerful indigenous groups tend to persist over time, while the institutions of less powerful groups do not. This result obtains also when we account for historical migration patterns. Instead of the share of powerful democratic societies within a country's borders, Appendix Table A12 uses a weighted average of the share of powerful democratic powerful societies in the countries of origin of the population of the country in question, using the Putterman-Weil Migration Matrix (Putterman and Weil 2010). To illustrate, according to the matrix, Argentina consists of 44% Italians, 30% Spaniards, and a mix of people from different countries. Thus, Argentina's migration-adjusted indigenous democracy variable equals 44% that of Italy's indigenous democracy, 30% that of Spain's, and so on. The results are robust to this correction. In fact, the coefficient of interest is larger for the migration-adjusted measures compared to the unadjusted measure used throughout, although the difference is not significantly larger. The Putterman-Weil correction further serves as an out-of-sample check, as we obtain information on additional countries that consist of foreigners from countries with information on indigenous institutions. Across all three power measures, our results are strengthened when adding these additional countries to the sample.

We argued in the introduction and showed in Section 5 that societies with less powerful groups will see less persistence in their indigenous institutions. As a corollary, institutions are less likely to persist in societies that have been colonised, experienced a massive influx of settlers, or had outside powers impose a political system. Thus, we expect to find less institutional persistence in countries with more intense experience of colonisation. Table 8 shows the results investigating whether persistence is reduced when looking at three different measures of intensity of colonisation; colonies with European settlement

(columns 1, 4, and 7), the fraction of the population speaking a European language (columns 2, 5, and 8), and duration of outside rule by either the European colonial powers or the the USSR (columns 3, 6, and 9). Throughout, the persistence of indigenous institutions falls when the relative power of the groups that support the institution is reduced by external influence.

[Table 8 about here]

In general, these results confirm that institutions of powerful indigenous groups persist over time, but as expected to a lesser extent when the continuity from premodern to modern has been disrupted by an outside force.

# 7 Robustness

Table 9 compares countries at similar levels of a number of common correlates of democracy. Lipset (1959, 80) found that "economic development carries with it the political correlate of democracy". It is possible thus that indigenous democracy is associated with modern representative democracy through economic development. Columns (1), (5), and (9) show that the basic association is robust to controlling contemporary economic development, independent of which power measure is used (consistent with the finding in Acemoglu *et al.*, 2008).

[Table 9 about here]

Protestant Christianity has been argued to be conducive to democracy (e.g., Bruce 2006), and Islam has been argued to be inimical to it (e.g., Huntington 1993, 40). If Protestant individualism was conducive to participatory political institutions at both a local and a national level (and Islam the opposite), the association we have uncovered would be spurious, driven by culture. Columns (2), (6), and (10) however, reject this view: If anything

33

the association is strengthened when the influence of religion is partialled out. Columns (3), (7), and (11) control for societal heterogeneity, which is commonly seen as inimical to democracy. If countries with a higher proportion of democratic indigenous societies are more homogenous, this would bias upwards the estimated coefficients. Columns (3), (7), and (11) show that this is not the case, however. Lastly, columns (4), (8), and (12) control for natural resources in the form of oil per capita. At all levels of political order, the availability of natural resource rents raises the cost of sharing power. Yet as shown in columns (4), (8), and (12), this does not drive our basic conclusion.

To grasp the importance of indigenous institutions relative to these other major determinants of democracy, Appendix Table A13 shows the beta coefficients of the results in Table 8. Depending on the measure of power, the estimate on indigenous democracy in powerful societies ranges from half the size to nearly double the size of the estimate on GDP per capita. Likewise, our estimate of interest ranges from 50 pct to 84 pct that of the estimate of oil barrels per capita. Thus, the estimated effect found in this paper compares very well to other well-established correlates of democracy.

Appendix Table A13 performs additional robustness checks. The model in column (2) excludes countries in Europe as well as the European offshoots (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA). If the link from early institutions to national democracy is particular to Europe (as argued by, e.g., Downing [1992, p. 18ff] and consistent with Figure 2), these countries could be driving the finding. Yet, for all three measures of political power, the conclusion remains unchanged; indigenous democracy in politically strong societies is positively associated with current democracy levels, also outside Europe and neo-Europe.

The historical span of the data in the Ethnographic Atlas is wide: The first percentile is 1570 BC; the 99th is 1960 AD. In columns (3) and (4) of Table A13 we exclude in turn the earliest decile and latest decile to see if the basic conclusion obtains also for a more temporally focused sample. We exclude societies recorded early since early information is presumably less precise and because the assumption that ethnographic societies have not

relocated since they were coded in the Atlas seems more demanding for these societies. Excluding the late decile is more a check for reverse causality, which should be more of an issue among the societies where the ethnographic information was recorded later. Columns (2) and (3) show that our results are robust to excluding these societies.

Finally, in columns (5) and (6), we exclude influential observations, identified using Cook's D and leverage, respectively. In both cases, the coefficient on local democracy remains positive and significant for politically strong groups.

Indigenous selection rules are not, of course, assigned randomly and to partially alleviate concerns that the causes of indigenous proto-democracy might also affect national-level democratic institutions, Tables A6-A9 in the appendix control for a broad set of society-level factors that risk confounding our analysis. However, there is little agreement in the anthropological literature on the causes of proto-democratic practices (Greenbaum 1971) Also, in zooming in on medieval Europe, Stasavage (2016) finds that early representative institutions arose essentially by accident. Still, scholars have proposed war (e.g., Kern 1948; Kokkonen and Sundell 2014), state building (Tilly 1975), or communal resources (Blum 1971b) as causes for early democratic institutions. In Tables A6-A9, we proxy war and risk of conflict by the remoteness of indigenous groups; we proxy state building by jurisdictional hierarchy, and we proxy communal resources by the importance of agriculture (and agricultural soil suitability). While many of these factors are associated with indigenous democracy, both unconditionaly and conditionally on the baseline covariates (Tables A6 and A7), most of them are unrelated to contemporary democracy (Table A8), and controlling for them does not change our results (Table A9).

As a last robustness check, we address the possibility that unobservable, omitted factors may confound the association between national institutions and indigenous institutions.[28] While the analyses above showed the association between indigenous - and contemporary democracy to be robust to a broad set of observable potential confounders, the

[28]Reverse causation is not a problem here as the Ethnographic Atlas scores ethnic groups before they have had contact with modern, country-level institutions or with Europeans (Murdock and White 1969, p. 340).

obvious limitation is that we cannot observe unobservables and cannot assess their con-founding effects. To understand if unobserved confounding could be driving our findings, we used the Generalized Sensitivity Analysis developed by Imbens (2003) and Harada (2013), depicted in Figure 3. This method simulates unobserved variables and asks how influential such variables would have to be in order to substantively change the estimated association between indigenous democracy and contemporary democracy.

*Figure 3: The Potential Influence of Unobserved Confounders*
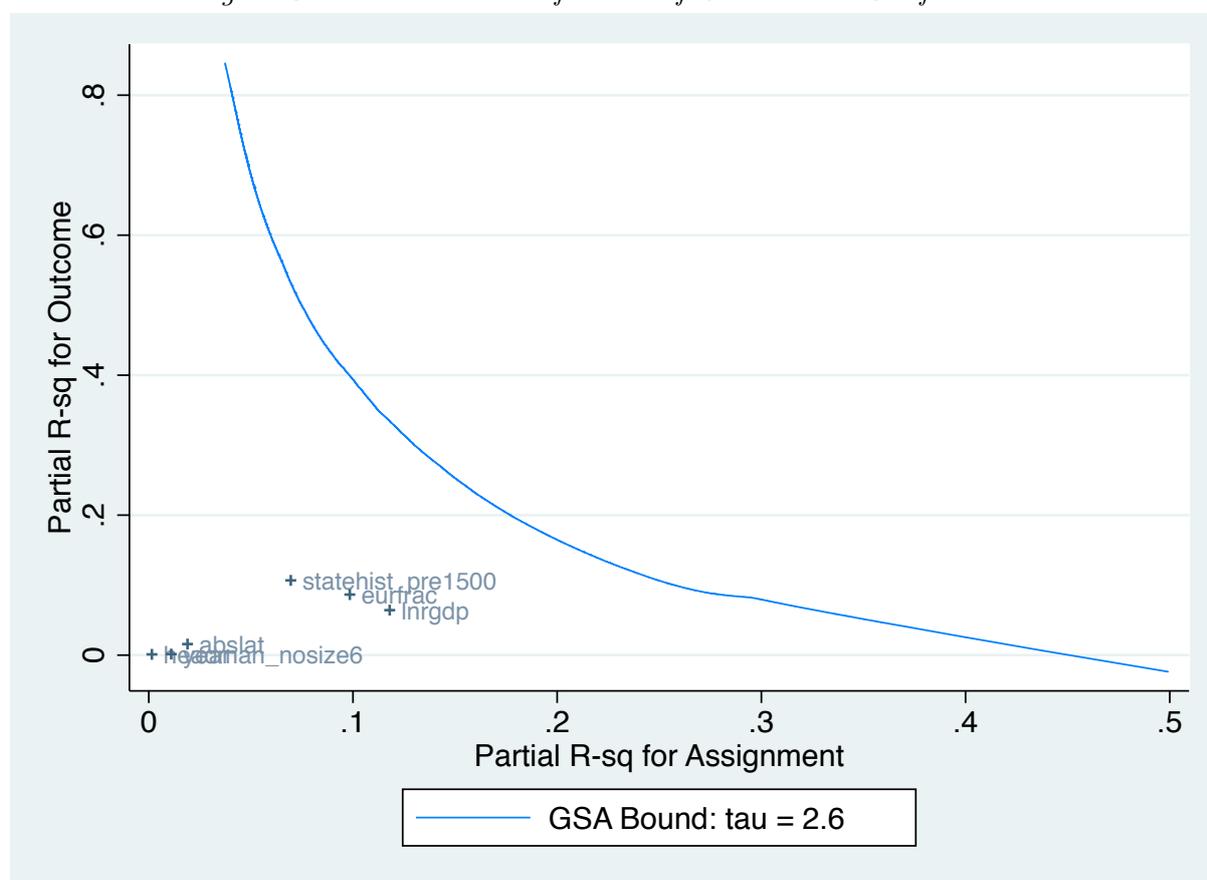


*Notes.* The figure shows the results of a generalized sensitivity analysis (Imbens 2003; Harada 2013). The plusses represent the covariates that were included when we estimated the association between indigenous democracy and contemporary democracy. These covariates are plotted according to their partial association with the dependent variable (contemporary democracy) on the vertical axis and with the regressor of interest (indigenous democracy) on the horizontal axis. The downward sloping curve shows how much a covariate (observed or unobserved) should be correlated with both indigenous and contemporary democracy in order to halve the observed association.

The downward sloping curve in Figure 3 shows the required partial association between an unobserved factor and contemporary democracy (vertical axis) and indigenous democracy

36

(horizontal axis) that would cut the coefficient of interest in half. The figure shows that an unobserved factor should explain more than twice as much of the variation in both indigenous and contemporary democracy than do our most influential observed covariates. Thus, much more influential than any of the existing theories of democracy pertaining to, e.g., GDP per capita, European language fraction, or precolonial state development. This strikes us as unlikely.

The Generalized Sensitivity Analysis does not rule out that omitted variables could explain our findings. It does show, however, that we would have to assume a very strong unobserved confounding effect for an unobservable factor to substantively change our findings. We performed a similar analysis to see if omitted variables could turn the estimated association insignificant at a ten percent level. The conclusion here was the same: The omitted variable in question would have to be much more strongly correlated with indigenous and contemporary democracy than any of the theoretically motivated variables considered thus far.

# 8   Conclusion

This article has documented a substantial and robust association between indigenous political institutions and contemporary national regimes: Territories where indigenous groups selected their leaders through elections or consensus are more likely to be democratic countries today. However, this basic association is conditioned on the relative strength of the indigenous groups within a country; stronger groups seem to have been able to shape national regime trajectories, weaker groups have not.

At the broadest level, our findings document the weight of history in explaining contemporary political outcomes and suggest that we ought to be careful to avoid accounting for these only by processes developing since the beginning of modernity. While there is ample evidence of both institutional persistence and institutional change, no unifying framework exists to explain why institutions sometimes persist and sometimes change

(and why history sometimes matters and sometimes does not). Our findings suggest that institutional persistence is more likely when the dominant position of the groups that support them also persists. Conversely, institutional change is more likely when the underlying power distribution is upset. This suggests a view of institutions as frozen power relations.

Moreover, our results show that – in addition to historical European influence – indigenous history also seems to have shaped the contemporary spread of democracy. Some observers have seen in Chinese village democracy a model for national democracy in China (e.g., Financial Times, January 30, 2013). Yet our results suggest caution here: Subnational institutions do not seem to translate into national institutions unless the subnational group in question is powerful enough to impose its institutions on the country as a whole. Thus, our findings indicate that institutional persistence only involves rather few societies (18-45% of the sample depending on the power measure used). The institutions of the majority of the societies in the sample did not persist to current times.

While we have emphasised the role of history, we do not want to suggest historical determinism in political regime developments. Our argument is clearly not that democracy cannot become consolidated in countries that did not have proto-democratic indigenous institutions. While the evidence suggests that indigenous institutions are an independently important factor in explaining contemporary regimes – it is not the only factor, nor is it the principal one.

This article has presented three ways in which proto-democratic indigenous institutions might shape subsequent regime developments. Future research should focus on tracing empirically the mediating mechanisms that link countries' national institutions to their indigenous ones. Furthermore, future researchers investigating persistence of institutions can exploit our finding that the weaker ethnic groups have not left an imprint on contemporary national institutions. Thus, when analysis focuses on persistent institutions, the analysis can be restricted to rather few societies.

Bentzen: University of Copenhagen, Department of Economics. Hariri: University of

38

Copenhagen, Department of Economics. Robinson: Harris School of Public Policy.

# References

[1] Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson (2001). 'The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation' *American Economic Review*, 91(5), pp. 1369-1401.

[2] Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson (2002). 'Reversal of Fortune: Geography and Institutions in the Making of the Modern World Income Distribution', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 107(4), pp. 1231-1294.

[3] Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared (2008). 'Income And Democracy', *American Economic Review* 98(3), pp. 808-842.

[4] Ades, Alberto F. and Edward L. Glaeser (1995). 'Trade and Circuses: Explaining Urban Giants', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 110(1), pp. 195-227.

[5] Alesina, Alberto, Paola Giuliano, and Nathan Nunn (2013). 'On the Origins of Gender Roles: Women and the Plough', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 128(2), pp. 469-530.

[6] Alsan, Marcella (2015). 'How and Why Liberal and Representative Politics Emerged in India', *American Economic Review*, 105(1): 382-410.

[7] Apter, David (1986): *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study in Bureaucratic Nationalism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[8] Apter, David (1995). 'Democracy for Uganda: A Case for Comparison', *Daedalus*, 142(3), pp. 155-190.

[9] Ashton, E.H. (1947). 'Democracy and Indirect Rule', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 17(4), pp. 235-251.

[10] Agyeman, Dominic (1987). 'Ethnicity, Social Class, and Education', in Ohre, W. (ed) *Kulturanthtropologie*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

[11] Barnard, Alan and Jonathan Spencer (2002). *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology.* London / New York: Routledge.

[12] Bates, Robert H. (1981). *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies.* University of California Press.

[13] Bates, Robert H. (1983). *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

[14] Bates, Robert H. and Donald Lien (1985). 'A Note on Taxation, Development and Representative Government', *Politics and Society*, 14, pp. 53-70.

[15] Bentzen, Jeanet, Nicolai Kaarsen, and Asger Wingender (2017). 'Irrigation and Autocracy', *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 15(1), pp. 1-53.

[16] Blockmans, W.P. (1978). 'A Typology of Representative Institutions in Late Medieval Europe', *Journal of Medieval History*, 4(1978), pp. 189-215.

[17] Blum, Jerome (1971a). 'The Internal Structure and Polity of the European Village Community', *The Journal of Modern History*, 43(4), pp. 541-576.

[18] Blum, Jerome (1971b). 'The European Village as Community: Origins and Functions', *Agricultural History*, 45(3), pp. 157-178.

[19] Boone, Catherine (2003). *Political Topographies of the African State. Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[20] Bourret, F. M. (1960). *Ghana: The Road to Independence: 1919-1957.* Stanford University Press.

[21] Bratton, Michael and Nicolas van de Walle (1994). 'Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa', *World Politics*, 46(4), pp. 453-489.

[22] Bruce, Steve (2006). 'Did Protestantism Create Democracy?', *Democratization*, 11(4), pp. 3-20.

[23] Campante, Filipe R., Quoc-Anh Do, Bernando V. Guimaraes (2013). 'Isolated Capital Cities and Misgovernance: Theory and Evidence', NBER Working PaperNo. 19028.

[24] Collis, John (2012). 'Reconstructing Iron Age Society' Revisited', in Moore and Armada (eds.) *Atlantic Europe in the First Millennium BC. Crossing the Divide*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[25] Dahl, Robert A. (2000). *On Democracy*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[26] Dahl, Robert Alan and Edward R. Tufte (1973). *Size and Democracy*. Stanford University Press.

[27] Dell, Melissa (2000) 'The Persistent Effects of Peru's Mining Mita', *Econometrica*, 78(6), pp.1863-1903.

[28] Diamond, Larry J., Jonathan Hartlyn, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.) (1989). *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.

[29] Diamond, Jared M. (1997). *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.

[30] Dindwiddy, Hugh (1981). 'The Search for Unity in Uganda: Early days to 1966', *African Affairs*, 80, pp. 1501-518.

[31] Dippel, Christian (2014). 'Forced Coexistence and Economic Development: Evidence from Native American Reservations', *Econometrica*, 82(6), pp. 2131-2165.

[32] Downing, Brian M. (1988). 'Constitutionalism, Warfare, and Political Change in Early Modern Europe'. *Theory and Society*, 17(1), pp. 7-56.

[33] Downing, Brian M. (1989). 'Medieval Origins of Constitutional Government in the West' *Theory and Society*, 18(2), pp. 213-247.

[34] Downing, Brian M. (1992). *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

[35] Englebert, Pierre, Stacy Tarango, and Matthew Carter (2002). 'Dismemberment and Suffocation. A Contribution to the Debate on African Boundaries', *Comparative Political Studies* 35(10), pp. 1093-1118.

[36] Ertman, Thomas (1997). *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[37] Esposito, John L., and John O. Voll (1996). *Islam and Democracy.* Oxford University Press

[38] Finer, Samuel E. (1997). *The History of Government from the Earliest Times.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[39] Fortes, Meyer and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1940). *African Political Systems.* Oxford University Press.

[40] Gennaioli, Nicola and Ilia Rainer (2007). 'The Modern Impact of Precolonial Centralization in Africa', *Journal of Economic Growth*, 12(3), pp. 185-234.

[41] Gilley, Bruce (2013). 'Democratic Enclaves in Authoritarian Regimes', *Democratization*, 17(3), pp. 389-415.

[42] Gerring, John, Daniel Ziblatt, Johan Van Gorp, and Julian Arevalo (2011). 'An Institutional Theory of Direct and Indirect Rule', *World Politics* 63(3), pp. 377-433.

[43] Giuliano, Paola and Nathan Nunn (2013). 'The Transmission of Democracy: From the Village to the Nation-State', *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings*, 103(3), pp. 86-92.

[44] Gray, J. Patrick (1999). 'A Corrected Ethnographic Atlas', *World Cultures*, 10(1), pp. 24-85.

[45] Great Britain Colonial Office (1948). *Goald Coast: Report to his Excellence the Governor by the Committee on Constitutional Reform 1949*. London, H.M.S.O.

[46] Hansen, Mogens Herman (2010). 'Introduction', pp. vii-xxxviii in *Démocratie Athénienne – Démocratie Moderne: Tradition et Influences*. Geneve: Entretiens sur L'Antiquité Classique 56.

[47] Harada, Masataka (2013). 'Generalized Sensitivity Analysis and Application to Quasi-experiments'.

[48] Hariri, Jacob Gerner (2012): 'The Autocratic Legacy of Early Statehood', *The American Political Science Review* 106(3), pp. 471-494.

[49] Hariri, Jacob Gerner (2015). 'A Contribution to the Understanding of Middle Eastern and Muslim Exceptionalism', *The Journal of Politics*, 77(2), pp.477-490.

[50] Herbst, Jeffrey (2000). *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

[51] Hoffman, Philip T. and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal (1997). 'Divided We Fall: The Political Economy of Warfare and Taxation', Mimeo, California Institute of Technology.

[52] Huntington, Samuel P. (1993). 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3), pp. 22-49.

[53] Imbens, Guido W. (2003). 'Sensitivity to Exogeneity Assumptions in Program Evaluation', *The American Economic Review*, 93(2), pp. 126-132.

[54] Jakobson, Uffe (2010). 'Inventions and Developments of Democracy: The Approach of Conceptual History', *European Political Science*, 9(3), pp. 316-327.

[55] Kern, Fritz (1948). *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

[56] K. G. (1950). 'The Gold Coast: Background to the Coussey Report', *World Today*, 6(3), pp. 110-119.

[57] Kokkonen, Andrej and Anders Sundell (2014). 'Delivering Stability —Primogeniture and Autocratic Survival in European Monarchies 1000-1800', *American Political Science Review*, 108(2), pp. 438-453.

[58] Lange, Matthew (2004) 'British Colonial Legacies and Political Development', *World Development*, 32(6), pp. 905-922.

[59] Leach, Edmund R. (1964): *Political Systems of Highland Burma: a Study of Kachin Social Structure*, London: Athlone Press.

[60] Lerner, Daniel (1958). *The Passing of Traditional Society*, New York: Free Press.

[61] Levi, Margaret (1988). *Of Rule and Revenue*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, Ltd.

[62] Lewis, I. M. (1961). *A pastoral democracy. A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa*, LIT Verlag Mnster.

[63] Lindberg, Staffan and Jennifer C. Boylan (2012). 'Ghana: A Country Report Based on Pilot-Study Data', *V-DEM Country Report Series*, 2, June 2012.

[64] Lipset, Seymour Martin (1959). 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy', *The American Political Science Review*, 53(1), pp. 69-105.

[65] Mamdani, Mahmood (1996). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism.* Princeton University Press

[66] McCaskie, T. C. (1995). *State and Society in Pre-colonial Asante.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[67] Michalopoulos, Stelios and Elias Papaioannou (2013). 'Pre-colonial Ethnic Institutions and Contemporary African Development', *Econometrica*, 81(1), pp. 113-152.

[68] Mugaju, J. B. (1988). 'The Illusions of Democracy in Uganda, 1955-1966', in Walter Oyugi et al. (eds) *Democracy Theory and Practice in Africa*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

[69] Muhlberger, Steven and Phil Paine (1993). 'Democracy's Place in World History', *Journal of World History*, 4(1).

[70] Murdock, George Peter (1966). 'Cross-Cultural Sampling", *Ethnology*, 5(1), pp. 97-114.

[71] Murdock, George Peter (1967). *Ethnographic atlas*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

[72] Murdock, George Peter and Douglas R. White (1969). 'Standard Cross-Cultural Sample', *Ethnology* 8(4), pp. 329-369.

[73] North, Douglass and Barry Weingast (1989). 'Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-century England', *Journal of Economic History*, 49(4), pp. 803-832.

[74] North, Douglass (1990). *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge University Press.

[75] Narizny, Kevin (2012). 'Anglo-American Primacy and the Global Spread of Democracy: An International Genealogy', *World Politics*, 64(2), pp. 341-373.

[76] Nunn, Nathan (2009). 'The Importance of History for Economic Development', *Annu. Rev. Econ.*, 2009(1), pp. 165-92.

[77] Nunn, Nathan and Diego Puga (2012). 'Ruggedness: The Blessing of Bad Geography in Africa', *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 94(1), pp. 20-36.

[78] Nunn, Nathan and Leonard Wantchekon (2011). 'The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa', *American Economic Review*, 101(7), pp. 3221-52.

[79] Olsson, Ola and Gustav Hanson (2011). 'Country size and the rule of law: Resuscitating Montesquieu', *European Economic Review*, 55(5), pp. 613-629.

[80] Peregrine, Peter (2003). 'Atlas of Cultural Evolution', *World Cultures* 14(1), pp. 2-88.

[81] Przeworski, Adam (2010). *Democracy and the Limits of Self-Government.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

[82] Sabetti, Filipo (2004). 'Local Roots of Constitutionalism', *Perspectives on Political Science*, 3(2), pp. 70-78.

[83] Sen, Amartya. (2003). 'Democracy and Its Global Roots', *The New Republic*, October 6 2003.

[84] Soumahoro, Soulaymane (2015). *Three Essays in Political Economy* http://hdl.handle.net/11244/14595.

[85] Spolaore, Enrico and Romain Wacziarg (2013). 'How deep are the Roots of Economic Development', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 51(2), pp. 325-369.

[86] Spruyt, Hendrik (1994). *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

[87] Schumpeter, Joseph A. (1942). *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy.* New York: Harper and Brothers.

[88] Stasavage, David (2003). *Public Debt and the Birth of the Modern Democratic State: France and Great Britain, 1688-1789.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[89] Stasavage, David (2010). 'When Distance Mattered: Geographic Scale and Development of European Representative Assemblies', *The American Political Science Review*, 104(4), pp. 625-643.

[90] Stasavage, David (2016). 'Representation and Consent: Why They Arose in Europe and Not Elsewhere', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19, pp. 145-62.

[91] Tilly, Charles (1975). 'Western-State Making and Theories of Political Transformation', in C. Tilly (ed.): *The Formation of National States in Western Europe.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[92] Tilly, Charles (1985). 'War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime', in Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol (eds.): *Bringing the State Back In.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[93] Voigtländer, Nico and Hans-Joachim Both (2012). 'Persecution Perpetuated: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Semitic Violence in Nazi Germany', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(3), pp. 1339-1392.

[94] Wilks, Ivor. 1989. *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: the Structure and Evolution of a Political Order.* London: Cambridge University Press.

*Table 1. Succession to the Office of the Local Headman*

|  | Obs |
|---|---|
| Patrilineal heir | 406 |
| Matrilineal heir | 98 |
| Appointment by higher authority | 42 |
| Senority or age | 29 |
| Influence, wealth or social status | 41 |
| Election or other formal consensus | 100 |
| Informal consensus | 86 |
| Absence of any such office | 101 |
| Total | 903 |

*Source.* The variable is constructed from variables v72 from the Ethnographic Atlas and v276 from the SCCS.

Table 2. OLS-Regressions of Contemporary Democracy on Indigenous Democracy

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Dependent variable is mean polity2 1990-2010* | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy | 4.09*** | 2.98** | 2.96** | 2.80* | 4.11*** | 1.46 | 1.90 | 1.96 | 1.82 | 1.85 |
| | (1.40) | (1.35) | (1.34) | (1.43) | (1.38) | (1.44) | (1.47) | (1.44) | (1.38) | (1.40) |
| Absolute latitude | | 0.11*** | 0.11*** | 0.12*** | 0.16*** | | 0.10*** | 0.10*** | 0.11*** | 0.12*** |
| | | (0.03) | (0.03) | (0.03) | (0.03) | | (0.04) | (0.04) | (0.04) | (0.04) |
| Average year | | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | | -0.00 | -0.00 | -0.00 |
| | | | (0.00) | (0.00) | (0.00) | | | (0.00) | (0.00) | (0.00) |
| Societal complexity | | | | 0.13 | 0.37 | | | | 0.22 | 0.23 |
| | | | | (0.35) | (0.33) | | | | (0.31) | (0.32) |
| Jurisdictional hierarchy | | | | | -1.67*** | | | | | -0.03 |
| | | | | | (0.60) | | | | | (0.72) |
| Observations | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |
| R-squared | 0.07 | 0.16 | 0.16 | 0.16 | 0.22 | 0.38 | 0.42 | 0.42 | 0.42 | 0.42 |
| Region FE | No | No | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

*Notes.* All models include a constant term. The regions included in columns (6)-(10) are sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and the Middle East and North Africa. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

*Table 3. Contemporary and Indigenous Democracy Varying the Size of the Ethnic Group*

| | | | Size of society, $c$ | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 50-99 | 100-199 | 200-399 | 400-1,000 | 1,000-5,000 | 5,000-50,0000 | More than 50,0000 |
| Dependent variable: Mean polity2 1990-2010 | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| Panel A: Excluding region fixed effects | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy | 4.01*** | 3.43 | | | | | | | |
| | (1.35) | (3.70) | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy x size | | 0.29 | | | | | | | |
| | | (0.59) | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy in groups | | | 4.46*** | 4.07*** | 3.06* | 4.08** | 5.31** | 6.07** | 8.03** |
| of size >= $c$ | | | (1.39) | (1.52) | (1.58) | (1.95) | (2.26) | (2.40) | (3.31) |
| Indigenous democracy in groups | | | -1.42 | 2.94 | 5.16* | 4.15* | 3.39 | 3.58* | 3.61* |
| of size < $c$ | | | (3.98) | (2.93) | (2.62) | (2.40) | (2.18) | (2.15) | (2.10) |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Observations | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 |
| R-squared | 0.19 | 0.21 | 0.24 | 0.21 | 0.19 | 0.19 | 0.20 | 0.21 | 0.22 |
| Region FE | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Panel B: Including region fixed effects | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy | 3.62** | 1.51 | | | | | | | |
| | (1.52) | (3.00) | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy x size | | 0.36 | | | | | | | |
| | | (0.52) | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy in groups | | | 3.74** | 4.28** | 3.46* | 3.79* | 4.70** | 4.28* | 5.30* |
| of size >= $c$ | | | (1.54) | (1.74) | (1.86) | (2.05) | (2.26) | (2.42) | (3.06) |
| Indigenous democracy in groups | | | -2.57 | 0.29 | 2.36 | 1.50 | 0.79 | 1.42 | 1.51 |
| of size < $c$ | | | (3.03) | (2.05) | (1.96) | (1.86) | (1.86) | (1.84) | (1.89) |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Observations | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 |
| R-squared | 0.44 | 0.44 | 0.45 | 0.44 | 0.45 | 0.44 | 0.44 | 0.44 | 0.44 |
| Region FE | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

*Notes.* All models include a constant term, controls for absolute latitude, and timing (the average year to which the ethnographic information in a country pertains). Column (2) also includes a control for average society size in a country (the categorical size variable), while columns (3)-(9) include controls for the share of large societies according to the particular cutoff level. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

Table 4. Contemporary and Indigenous Democracy Varying the degree of Settlement Complexity

| Dependent variable: Mean polity2 1990-2010 | | | Level of settlement complexity, $c$ | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Semi-nomadic | Semi-sedentary | Compact, impermanent | Dispersed homesteads | Single community | Compact permanent | Complex settlement |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| **Panel A: Excluding region fixed effects** | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy | 2.96** | -3.09 | | | | | | | |
| | (1.34) | (4.39) | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy x complex | | 0.98 | | | | | | | |
| | | (0.67) | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy in groups with complexity level >= $c$ | | | 3.57** | 4.01*** | 3.81*** | 3.70*** | 3.01** | 3.86** | 11.66** |
| | | | (1.41) | (1.30) | (1.34) | (1.34) | (1.38) | (1.52) | (4.79) |
| Indigenous democracy in groups with complexity level < $c$ | | | -3.11 | -3.35 | -2.07 | -1.43 | 1.31 | -1.40 | 2.18 |
| | | | (3.03) | (3.59) | (3.70) | (3.73) | (3.65) | (3.05) | (1.43) |
| Observations | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |
| R-squared | 0.16 | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.17 | 0.17 | 0.18 | 0.18 |
| Region FE | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| **Panel B: Including region fixed effects** | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy | 1.96 | -4.12 | | | | | | | |
| | (1.44) | (3.62) | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy x complex | | 1.02* | | | | | | | |
| | | (0.58) | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy in groups with complexity level >= $c$ | | | 2.38 | 3.17** | 3.16** | 3.09** | 2.69* | 3.74** | 3.67 |
| | | | (1.56) | (1.42) | (1.46) | (1.46) | (1.55) | (1.57) | (4.69) |
| Indigenous democracy in groups with complexity level < $c$ | | | -2.91 | -3.26 | -2.77 | -2.38 | -1.38 | -3.52* | 1.93 |
| | | | (1.92) | (3.22) | (3.13) | (2.96) | (2.21) | (2.12) | (1.45) |
| Observations | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |
| R-squared | 0.42 | 0.44 | 0.43 | 0.44 | 0.44 | 0.44 | 0.44 | 0.46 | 0.42 |
| Region FE | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

*Notes.* All models include a constant term, controls for absolute latitude, timing (the average year to which the ethnographic information in a country pertains). Column (2) also includes a control for average society complexity in a country (the categorical complexity variable), while columns (3)-(9) include a control for the share of societies above complexity level c as a share of all societies within a country. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

*Table 5. Contemporary and Indigenous Democracy Interacted with Distance from the Capital*

| Dependent variable: Mean polity2 1990-2010 | | | Distance, $d$, from the capital (in kilometers) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 100 | 200 | 300 | 400 | 500 | 600 | 700 | 800 | 900 | 1000 |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) |
| Panel A: Excluding region fixed effects | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy | 3.36** | 16.72*** | | | | | | | | | | |
| | (1.33) | (5.52) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy x (ln) distance from capital | | -2.53** | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | (1.10) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy within $d$ distance from capital | | | 5.54*** | 5.43*** | 5.87*** | 6.53*** | 5.96*** | 4.93*** | 4.75*** | 4.46*** | 3.65** | 3.64** |
| | | | (1.71) | (1.50) | (1.41) | (1.36) | (1.34) | (1.35) | (1.35) | (1.31) | (1.42) | (1.41) |
| Indigenous democracy outside $d$ distance from capital | | | 2.00 | 0.57 | -0.55 | -3.12 | -3.75 | -3.78 | -3.91 | -5.69 | -0.43 | -0.66 |
| | | | (1.70) | (2.36) | (2.37) | (2.27) | (2.61) | (3.97) | (4.12) | (6.77) | (8.39) | (8.88) |
| Observations | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |
| R-squared | 0.26 | 0.31 | 0.27 | 0.28 | 0.30 | 0.35 | 0.33 | 0.29 | 0.29 | 0.29 | 0.26 | 0.26 |
| Region FE | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Panel B: Including region fixed effects | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy | 2.14 | 13.78*** | | | | | | | | | | |
| | (1.38) | (4.73) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy x (ln) distance from capital | | -2.22** | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | (0.95) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy within $d$ distance from capital | | | 4.09** | 3.72** | 4.18*** | 4.69*** | 4.15*** | 3.55*** | 3.65*** | 3.35*** | 2.40* | 2.34* |
| | | | (1.75) | (1.46) | (1.38) | (1.26) | (1.26) | (1.30) | (1.32) | (1.21) | (1.41) | (1.39) |
| Indigenous democracy outside $d$ distance from capital | | | 0.89 | -0.07 | -0.92 | -2.90 | -2.90 | -3.59 | -4.36 | -7.90 | -2.26 | -1.72 |
| | | | (1.73) | (2.17) | (2.23) | (2.18) | (2.74) | (3.40) | (3.51) | (5.55) | (7.57) | (7.86) |
| Observations | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 | 104 |
| R-squared | 0.47 | 0.50 | 0.48 | 0.48 | 0.50 | 0.53 | 0.51 | 0.49 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.48 | 0.47 |
| Region FE | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

*Notes.* All models include a constant term, controls for absolute latitude, timing (the average year to which the ethnographic information in a country pertains), country size (log), average distance to the coast from each ethnographic society (log). Column 2 also includes the (log) average distance to the capital, while columns (3)-(12) include the share of societies located "close" to the capital city according to the particular cutoff level. Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

## Table 6. Indigenous Roots and colonialism

| Dependent variable: Mean polity2 1990-2010 | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Panel A. Political power proxied by society size** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy in soc | 6.46** | 6.58** | 7.07** | 6.79** | 6.29** | 6.68** | 6.33** | 6.26** | 7.40*** | 7.84*** |
| with 1000 or more inhabitants | (2.59) | (2.61) | (3.15) | (2.60) | (2.56) | (2.63) | (2.64) | (2.72) | (2.73) | (2.61) |
| Indigenous democracy in soc | 1.17 | 0.84 | -2.69 | -0.05 | 1.02 | 1.52 | 1.74 | 1.70 | -0.02 | -0.13 |
| with 1000 or more inhabitants | (1.91) | (1.79) | (2.56) | (1.72) | (1.84) | (1.98) | (1.94) | (1.97) | (1.74) | (1.75) |
| Precolonial state development | | -5.05** | | | | | | | | |
| | | (2.11) | | | | | | | | |
| p-value of geo controls | | | [0.003] | | | | | | | |
| Population density 1500 | | | | 0.09 | | | | | | |
| | | | | (0.09) | | | | | | |
| Colony | | | | | -0.99 | | | | | |
| | | | | | (2.15) | | | | | |
| p-value of colony controls | | | | | | [0.580] | | | | |
| Colonial duration | | | | | | | 0.01** | | | |
| | | | | | | | (0.00) | | | |
| Colonial duration incl USSR | | | | | | | | 0.01** | | |
| | | | | | | | | (0.00) | | |
| European language fraction | | | | | | | | | 1.64 | |
| | | | | | | | | | (1.93) | |
| Indirect rule | | | | | | | | | | -3.44 |
| | | | | | | | | | | (2.52) |
| Observations | 84 | 82 | 62 | 80 | 84 | 84 | 84 | 83 | 81 | 82 |
| R-squared | 0.38 | 0.43 | 0.47 | 0.42 | 0.39 | 0.41 | 0.42 | 0.41 | 0.42 | 0.42 |
| **Panel B. Political power proxied by society complexity** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy in | 4.74** | 4.83** | 6.64*** | 4.59*** | 4.65** | 4.94*** | 5.42*** | 5.31*** | 5.00*** | 5.06*** |
| compact or complex soc | (1.85) | (1.91) | (2.10) | (1.67) | (1.82) | (1.80) | (1.82) | (1.84) | (1.86) | (1.85) |
| Indigenous democracy in | -3.39 | -2.36 | -8.87*** | -2.95 | -3.34 | -2.71 | -3.23 | -3.21 | -3.26 | -3.43 |
| less than compact soc | (2.17) | (2.45) | (2.23) | (2.17) | (2.20) | (1.99) | (2.15) | (2.15) | (2.21) | (2.20) |
| Observations | 95 | 90 | 66 | 90 | 95 | 94 | 95 | 94 | 90 | 91 |
| R-squared | 0.40 | 0.44 | 0.45 | 0.45 | 0.40 | 0.42 | 0.44 | 0.44 | 0.43 | 0.44 |
| **Panel C. Political power proxied by proximity to the capital** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy within | 5.27*** | 5.19*** | 7.78*** | 5.40*** | 5.04*** | 5.53*** | 5.39*** | 5.34*** | 5.44*** | 5.51*** |
| 400 km of capital | (1.70) | (1.73) | (2.77) | (1.72) | (1.64) | (1.75) | (1.67) | (1.69) | (1.80) | (1.76) |
| Indigenous democracy outside | -3.01 | -1.85 | -4.60 | -3.62 | -3.17 | -3.13 | -2.27 | -2.30 | -2.75 | -2.92 |
| 400 km of capital | (2.58) | (2.86) | (3.09) | (2.43) | (2.49) | (2.50) | (2.71) | (2.74) | (2.69) | (2.65) |
| Observations | 95 | 90 | 66 | 90 | 95 | 94 | 95 | 94 | 90 | 91 |
| R-squared | 0.47 | 0.49 | 0.43 | 0.50 | 0.47 | 0.49 | 0.49 | 0.48 | 0.48 | 0.48 |

*Notes.* All models include a constant term, controls for latitude, timing (the average year to which the ethnographic information in a country pertains), region fixed effects, and controls for the share of powerful societies within each country according to the particular power measure. Panel C also includes controls for (log) country area and (log) distance to the coast. The geographical controls in column (3) are ruggedness, average temperature, average precipitation, a dummy for landlocked countries, and share of the country area located within 100 km of the coast. The colonizer fixed effects in column (6) are dummies for English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and other European colonies. The model specifications in Panels A, B, and C, are identical except that political power is proxied by size of the society in panel A, societal complexity in

*Table 7. Persistence*

| Dependent variable | (1)<br>V-dem | (2)<br>V-dem | (3)<br>V-dem | (4)<br>V-dem | (5)<br>polity | (6)<br>polity | (7)<br>polity | (8)<br>polity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Years | 1900−25 | 1925−50 | 1950−75 | 1975−00 | 1900−25 | 1925−50 | 1950−75 | 1975−00 |

**Panel A. Political influence proxied by society size**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indigenous democracy in soc | 0.138** | 0.150** | 0.377*** | 0.277*** | 3.989 | 5.469 | 8.385** | 7.182*** |
| with 1000 or more inhabitants | (0.054) | (0.066) | (0.107) | (0.092) | (4.582) | (4.989) | (3.607) | (2.237) |
| Indigenous democracy in soc | -0.005 | -0.015 | 0.039 | -0.058 | -4.124 | -6.046 | 2.860 | -0.936 |
| with less than 1000 inhabitants | (0.040) | (0.037) | (0.050) | (0.061) | (3.169) | (5.876) | (1.934) | (1.552) |
| Observations | 78 | 82 | 84 | 89 | 37 | 43 | 81 | 89 |
| R-squared | 0.738 | 0.666 | 0.537 | 0.652 | 0.709 | 0.249 | 0.405 | 0.606 |

**Panel B. Political influence proxied by society complexity**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indigenous democracy in | 0.073* | 0.050 | 0.166** | 0.114 | -1.901 | -3.178 | 4.410* | 4.443*** |
| compact or complex soc | (0.043) | (0.051) | (0.078) | (0.071) | (2.766) | (2.969) | (2.545) | (1.672) |
| Indigenous democracy in | -0.071 | -0.034 | 0.137* | -0.021 | -6.587* | 0.403 | 3.833 | -1.006 |
| less than compact soc | (0.050) | (0.042) | (0.070) | (0.074) | (3.823) | (9.186) | (3.138) | (2.034) |
| Observations | 86 | 90 | 92 | 97 | 41 | 47 | 90 | 98 |
| R-squared | 0.728 | 0.635 | 0.488 | 0.625 | 0.671 | 0.227 | 0.382 | 0.589 |

**Panel C. Political influence proxied by proximity to the capital**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indigenous democracy within | 0.078** | 0.047 | 0.146** | 0.168*** | -3.943 | -0.928 | 3.834* | 4.679*** |
| 400 km of capital | (0.036) | (0.050) | (0.060) | (0.062) | (2.563) | (3.491) | (2.201) | (1.522) |
| Indigenous democracy outside | -0.055 | -0.009 | 0.156 | -0.030 | -1.225 | -4.043 | 4.163 | 0.658 |
| 400 km of capital | (0.043) | (0.047) | (0.098) | (0.093) | (4.416) | (5.244) | (3.227) | (2.442) |
| Observations | 86 | 90 | 92 | 97 | 41 | 47 | 90 | 98 |
| R-squared | 0.725 | 0.638 | 0.536 | 0.659 | 0.714 | 0.342 | 0.435 | 0.595 |

*Notes.* All models include a constant term, controls for latitude, timing (the average year to which the ethnographic information in a country pertains), region fixed effects, fraction of powerful societies defined according to the particular measure of power, and fraction of the population who speaks a European language. Panel C also includes controls for (log) country area and (log) distance to the coast. The model specifications in Panels A, B, and C, are identical except that political power is proxied by size of the society in panel A, societal complexity in B, and proximity to the capital in panel C. Robust

## Table 8. Disturbance of Persistence

| Dependent variable: Mean polity2 1990-2010 | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Measure of power | | Size | | | Complexity | | | Capitals | |
| Disturbance | settlecol | eurfrac | duration | settlecol | eurfrac | duration | settlecol | eurfrac | duration |
| Indigenous democracy x influential society | 6.67** | 7.37** | 8.87** | 6.07** | 5.84** | 6.28** | 5.94*** | 6.20*** | 8.17*** |
| | (2.65) | (3.02) | (3.59) | (2.46) | (2.47) | (2.71) | (2.08) | (2.15) | (2.70) |
| Indigenous democracy x non-influential society | 1.22 | -0.23 | 1.22 | -3.93* | -3.57 | -2.89 | -2.45 | -2.68 | -2.43 |
| | (2.02) | (1.73) | (2.06) | (2.17) | (2.22) | (1.85) | (2.67) | (2.75) | (2.51) |
| Indigenous democracy x influential society x disturbance | -18.92* | -22.22* | -0.06** | -6.67* | -4.58 | -0.01 | -5.45* | -6.31* | -0.02* |
| | (11.18) | (11.81) | (0.03) | (3.37) | (3.52) | (0.01) | (3.04) | (3.49) | (0.01) |
| Observations | 84 | 81 | 83 | 93 | 89 | 93 | 93 | 89 | 93 |
| R-squared | 0.45 | 0.42 | 0.49 | 0.46 | 0.43 | 0.50 | 0.51 | 0.48 | 0.54 |

*Notes.* All models include a constant term, controls for all parts of the interaction, region fixed effects, absolute latitude, timing (the average year to which the ethnographic information in a country pertains), and the share of powerful societies within each country according to the particular power measure. Columns (3), (6), and (9) also include dummies for colonial powers. Columns (7)-(9) also include controls for (log) country area and (log) distance to the coast. Europe is excluded from the sample across all columns, while Russia is also excluded in columns (3, (6), and (9). Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***,**, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.

*Table 9. Controlling for Alternative Drivers of Democracy*

| Powerful society defined by: | Society size 1000 or more | | | | Settlement compact or complex | | | | Distance to capital < 400 km | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) |
| Dependent variable: Mean polity2 1990-2010 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Indigenous democracy in powerful society | 3.75* | 4.50* | 5.39* | 4.96** | 3.37** | 3.61** | 3.97** | 3.10** | 4.49*** | 4.87*** | 5.26*** | 4.77*** |
| | (2.15) | (2.54) | (2.71) | (2.40) | (1.55) | (1.70) | (1.71) | (1.53) | (1.38) | (1.38) | (1.45) | (1.24) |
| Indigenous democracy in non-powerful society | 0.14 | 1.16 | 0.92 | 0.74 | -3.16 | -0.98 | -2.54 | -2.82 | -3.46* | -1.57 | -1.93 | -3.81* |
| | (1.88) | (1.95) | (2.02) | (1.84) | (2.20) | (2.48) | (2.98) | (2.21) | (1.95) | (2.27) | (2.50) | (1.93) |
| (log) GDP per capita 2000 | 1.68*** | | | | 1.20** | | | | 0.62 | | | |
| | (0.53) | | | | (0.48) | | | | (0.48) | | | |
| Protestant share 2000 | | -0.41 | | | | 2.12 | | | | 4.31 | | |
| | | (4.83) | | | | (4.35) | | | | (4.35) | | |
| Muslim share 2000 | | -3.14 | | | | -2.67 | | | | -2.23 | | |
| | | (2.44) | | | | (2.38) | | | | (2.02) | | |
| Ethnic fractionalization | | | -5.36 | | | | -2.74 | | | | -1.76 | |
| | | | (4.27) | | | | (3.70) | | | | (3.27) | |
| Linguistic fractionalization | | | 3.45 | | | | 1.67 | | | | 2.03 | |
| | | | (3.78) | | | | (3.16) | | | | (2.64) | |
| Religious fractionalization | | | -1.79 | | | | -0.45 | | | | 1.07 | |
| | | | (2.32) | | | | (2.19) | | | | (2.04) | |
| Oil (1000 barrels) 2000 per capita | | | | -23.23** | | | | -18.07*** | | | | -16.23*** |
| | | | | (10.86) | | | | (6.06) | | | | (4.56) |
| Observations | 89 | 90 | 88 | 89 | 99 | 100 | 96 | 99 | 99 | 100 | 96 | 99 |
| R-squared | 0.51 | 0.47 | 0.48 | 0.47 | 0.51 | 0.49 | 0.48 | 0.50 | 0.58 | 0.56 | 0.54 | 0.59 |

*Notes.* The political power in a society is defined as having 1000 inhabitants or more in columns (1)-(4), being compact or complex settlements in columns (5)-(8), and being located within 400 km of the current capital in columns (9)-(12). All models include controls for latitude, timing (the average year to which the ethnographic information in a country pertains), region fixed effects, and the share of powerful societies within each country according to the particular power measure. Columns (9)-(12) also include controls for (log) distance to the ocean and the area of the country. All models include a constant term (not reported). Robust standard errors in parentheses. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 1, 5, and 10 percent levels.