

**Informal Institutions of Reciprocity and  
Citizenship in Rural Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire**

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### **Abstract**

This paper seeks to explain puzzling differences in indigenous notions of citizenship and political participation in very similar regions of neighboring Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Based on original survey research and in-depth interviews at the village level, I show how the boundaries of political community are contested and redrawn at the local level in different ways in the two cases. In the Ghanaian region, village residents described a more community-oriented notion of reciprocity with the local government, while in the Ivoirian region, respondents expressed a more individually-oriented sense of entitlements from the central state. I argue that this variation in the nature of citizenship and the everyday practice of politics is shaped not only directly by the formal institutions of the state over time, but also indirectly through the changing informal institutions of reciprocity. The paper concludes by considering the implications of these regional differences for the long-term sustainability of democracy at the national-level in both countries. In Ghana, local politics are more salient, and conflict is resolved at the grassroots whereas in Côte d'Ivoire, political claims are exercised through a more vertical and national clientelist system, projecting conflict upward to the national capital. Overall, the paper emphasizes the importance of informal institutions in the study of sustainable democracy.

## **Introduction**

A little over a hundred years ago, prior to European colonial rule, an outsider traveling to these four Akan villages in the forest zone of West Africa would have found very similar communities. Well before the establishment of British and French colonial rule in the late 1800s and early 1900s, these villages had all been settled by Akan peoples who had resisted incorporation into an expanding Asante empire. The villages in these two neighboring regions in what is today southwestern Ghana and southeastern Cote d'Ivoire thus shared similar precolonial histories, politics and cultures.

By the late 1990s, I anticipated that these villages were still alike in many important ways. Since the Akan have continued to be the dominant ethnic group in each of the villages, they still shared similar indigenous institutions of chieftancy, matrilineal family systems, and customary systems of land tenure, inheritance and justice. Furthermore, the Akan farmers in these villages had adopted cocoa as the main cash crop in the early 1900s so they were integrated comparably into national and international markets. These national markets were also being similarly liberalized by the 1980s with the adoption of parallel structural adjustment reforms. Villagers were approximately the same distance from a paved road and major urban centers, and they had each benefited from the same moderate amount of economic and social service infrastructure. Even the national political scene seemed to be converging in the two cases. After decades of instability in Ghana and single-party dominance in Cote d'Ivoire, both countries had adopted multi-party democratic political systems in the early 1990s and both were pursuing major decentralization initiatives to devolve greater authority to the local level.

Despite all of the above similarities, I found striking differences in the local conceptualizations of citizenship and everyday practice of politics. In the Ghanaian villages, village residents articulated a more restricted, community-oriented notion of citizenship rights and duties whereas in the Ivoirian villages, villagers described a more expansive, individualized, sense of entitlements. Ghanaian villagers viewed village-level authorities as the key decision-

makers resolving conflict and promoting development while Ivoirian villagers rarely cited the most local political figures and usually mentioned individual “big men” by name based in the urban capitals of Abengourou and Abidjan. In the Ghanaian region, village residents were much more openly and actively developing village-level party organization for the ruling as well as opposition parties. In contrast, in the Ivoirian region, with an election also on the horizon, political parties were not institutionalized at the village level but were represented opaquely by individuals known locally to favor a political group. When conflicts arose in the Ghanaian villages, the village residents quickly came together to resolve the problems at the community level. Meanwhile, in the Ivoirian villages, conflicts threatened to simmer and boil over in the village as any decision on how to proceed was delayed interminably by transferring the issue upward to the central state authority in the regional capital.

So what explained these remarkable differences in the nature of citizenship in an area where village residents on either side of the Ghana-Cote d’Ivoire border still considered themselves part of “one family”? In this paper, I explore the contrasts in the indigenous meanings of citizenship and everyday political practices at the village level in these two similar regions. I argue that changes in the informal institutions of reciprocity have shaped the varied patterns of citizenship and local politics. The informal institutions of reciprocity were the rules that village residents followed to exchange help and social support with the nuclear and extended family, clan, friends, neighbors, ethnic group or others. These informal social institutions, in turn, have been transformed in different ways by the divergent local experience of state formation over time in the two regions.

This paper highlights the important and understudied role of informal institutions in the study of democracy.<sup>1</sup> It also emphasizes the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to studying political change. This historical and ethnographic approach to analyzing politics at the grassroots can help us understand recent political events at the national level in Cote d’Ivoire and

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Bratton (2008), Hyden (2006), Helmke and Levitsky (2006) and Galvan (2004).

Ghana. Where the national unity of Cote d'Ivoire has been threatened by ethno-regional civil war, Ghana has managed to consolidate its democracy with a second peaceful transfer of power after a razor-thin victory by the opposition in December 2008.

### **Theories of Citizenship**

There is very little work that empirically investigates indigenous concepts of citizenship in Africa.<sup>2</sup> Much of the existing literature theorizing citizenship or highlighting the connection between social and political exclusion emerges from the study of advanced industrialized countries, particularly Western Europe.<sup>3</sup> As a result, citizenship is framed almost exclusively as legally-recognized membership in the political community of a nation-state. In contrast, I seek to investigate the very boundaries of the political community or communities (plural). I want to know not simply *how* the nation is imagined, but what is imagined by whom.<sup>4</sup> By expanding the focus beyond the parameters of the nation-state, we can consider the construction of sub-national and/or trans-national communities as well as the possibility of simultaneous identification in more than one community.<sup>5</sup>

My hypothesis linking the history of formal state institutions and changing patterns of informal reciprocity to differences in indigenous conceptions of citizenship is unconventional. Most of the existing literature focuses on the independent effects of more traditional political science variables such as the role of the state in guaranteeing rights (T.H. Marshall); the development of capitalism (Marx); the rise of transnationalism or multiculturalism (Held and Archibugi; Kymlicka, et.al.); and, the character of local government and voluntary associations (Toqueville). These four alternative theoretical explanations are considered briefly below.

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<sup>2</sup> A notable exception is Mamdani's (1996) exploration of the effects of the bifurcated state on citizenship in Uganda and South Africa using largely archival resources. See also Frederic Schaeffer's book (1999) exploring indigenous concepts of democracy in Senegal and a recent book emerging from the Afrobarometer public opinion surveys in Africa (Bratton et.al. 2005).

<sup>3</sup> The classic work on citizenship is T.H. Marshall (1992).

<sup>4</sup> See Anderson (1983).

<sup>5</sup> On subnational identities, Posner (2005) examines how institutions, in particular, party system rules, shape which type of ethnic cleavage is mobilized, i.e., language, tribal, religious, racial, etc. On transnational political networks and identities, see Archibugi and Held (1995). On the existence of 'two publics', see Ekeh (1975).

One must begin first with T.H. Marshall. In his definition of citizenship, Marshall's language clearly emphasizes the state as the active participant that "bestowed" and "endowed" citizenship status on "those who are full members of a community."<sup>6</sup> According to Marshall, the state played a critical role in the expansion of citizenship by guaranteeing first civil, then political, and then social rights. While Marshall was keenly interested in the relationship between citizenship and social class, he underemphasizes the social and political conflict involved in progressing from one stage to the next. The African experience highlights the political conflict and contingency involved in obtaining and then maintaining different bundles of rights at various points in time. Furthermore, in Africa, social rights appear to have preceded civil and political rights, and then each set of rights has been, at various points, fully revoked or partially compromised. In the current neoliberal era, many African countries have reinstated multi-party democratic systems where civil and political rights are officially guaranteed but the retrenchment of public social service provision undermines the fiscal basis for social rights as they have been conceived in the past. Again, citizenship rights do not simply progress in one universal direction but, rather, there are multiple, contingent patterns.

A second theoretical explanation derives from Marx and his critiques of citizenship as a bourgeois by-product of capitalism. In contrast to Marshall, Marx disparaged the 18<sup>th</sup> century legal codification of civil rights as a means for the further economic oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie.<sup>7</sup> For example, Marx repeatedly rejected the individualism of the declaration of the citizen's right to property, arguing that this made men "egoistic" and overly independent from the larger society.<sup>8</sup> For Marx, true emancipation would be achieved when private property was abolished, not protected and made sacrosanct by the state. He viewed the state's role in upholding and guaranteeing these individual, rather than social or collective rights, as the means

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<sup>6</sup> Marshall.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Marx's early essay "On the Jewish Question" (1843) for a discussion of the distinction between the rights of man and the rights of citizen, in Tucker (1978: 40-46).

<sup>8</sup> Tucker: 43.

for the bourgeoisie to dominate the working class. Marx theorized that the development of capitalism would produce such brutal material inequality and exploitation of the working class that the “benefits” of 18<sup>th</sup> century citizenship would be revealed as illusory.<sup>9</sup> In these two cases, however, the development of class consciousness does not appear to be the primary, explanatory factor for differences in local citizenship identities and political practice. Furthermore, the two cases share the same level of capitalist development and degree of incorporation into the global capitalist economy, yet, we see striking differences in the ways that local people perceive their political community and relationship to the state.

Third, a more recent, theoretical explanation is that the growth of trans-national institutions and/or the rise of multiculturalism since the 1980s may be reorienting the locus of citizenship away from the nation-state. Held and Archibugi have argued for a model of “cosmopolitan democracy” where increased involvement with supra-national institutions spurs a transition to world citizenship.<sup>10</sup> Instead of *supranational* citizenship, scholars such as Iris Marion Young and Kymlicka have moved citizenship theory in the opposite direction, focusing on the rise of multiculturalism and the growth of *subnational* citizenship.<sup>11</sup> The above theories do not appear to explain the puzzling variations seen in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire. Divergence exists during similar time periods of transnationalism and multiculturalism. Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire participate in similar fashions in regional and international political institutions. Furthermore, the make-up and political mobilization of cultural groups within both nation-states are roughly similar. Finally, when ethnic groups have mobilized differently in Cote d’Ivoire, it is to demand political control of the nation, not special minority rights within the nation. These differences in ethnic politics are more tightly linked to the variation in the social patterns of reciprocity and exclusion than the politics of multiculturalism. This paper neither assumes a liberal notion of

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<sup>9</sup> See for example, Marx’s discussion in “Capital” (Tucker: 438).

<sup>10</sup> Archibugi and Held (1995).

<sup>11</sup> Young (1989). See Kymlicka (1995) and Kymlicka and Norman (2000).

individual citizenship in a nation-state, nor takes such a normative stance on a preferred type of non-national citizenship. Instead, the locus of citizenship(s) is investigated empirically.

Finally, a fourth theoretical explanation for these differences in local conceptions of citizenship derives from the theory of Alexis de Tocqueville. In contrast to Marshall and Marx's preoccupation with the macro-context of the state or capitalist market economy, Tocqueville was more concerned with how people were organized and participating at the micro-level. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville argued that the high degree of participation in local government and local voluntary associations shaped Americans' sense of citizenship and strengthened democracy.<sup>12</sup> He highlighted how a citizen's active participation in the township's everyday governance provided "practical notions on the nature of his duties and the extent of his rights."<sup>13</sup> Like local government, the process of participating in associations also provided a certain civic education for ordinary citizens. In fact, as I have argued elsewhere, the nature of associational life does differ in important ways in these regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>14</sup> But, my argument here is not that differences in the informal institutions of reciprocity are the only determinant of citizenship. Rather, the variation in the patterns of reciprocity is a key factor that combines with the experience gained in local political associations and in local political institutions over time to shape indigenous concepts of citizenship.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

In order to refine our theories of citizenship, this paper draws on over 18 months of intensive field research in two carefully matched regions of neighboring Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>15</sup> Like a "natural experiment", this comparative case design controls many potential

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<sup>12</sup> See Tocqueville (1835; 1840: 115).

<sup>13</sup> Tocqueville (vol. 1: 71).

<sup>14</sup> Morris MacLean 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Fieldwork was conducted from April-August 1997 and from October 1998-October 1999 in two similar villages in Tano District in Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana, and in two similar villages in the ABengourou

explanatory variables such as precolonial ethnic culture, levels of wealth, economic development, public infrastructure, etc.<sup>16</sup> These two cases are particularly useful as they represent African states and societies which have been (until very recently in Cote d'Ivoire) relatively more stable politically and economically – both deemed African “success stories” at different points in recent history.

The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods including original survey research (n=400), focus groups, in-depth interviews, and oral histories in each of the four fieldsite villages. In addition to local fieldwork, extensive interviews and archival research were conducted in Accra, Abidjan, Dakar, Paris and London.

### **Differences in the Indigenous Conceptualization of Citizenship in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire**

Ghanaians and Ivoirians in these two regions have developed varying notions of citizenship. My goal was to explore these indigenous understandings of citizenship in the most unrestricted manner possible. Here, I not only investigate the indigenous meaning or content of citizenship, but also the nature of the political community (or communities) from which citizenship emerges, or the location of citizenship. To do this, I asked two open-ended questions at the very end of the survey about the rights and obligations that are owed between an individual and the state.<sup>17</sup> The interviewers used the local language translation for “the state.” They were careful not to use “Ghana” or “Côte d'Ivoire” as a short-hand because of the way it might frame

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region of Cote d'Ivoire. Fictional names are used for these villages in the endnotes to protect the anonymity of the sources. The author gratefully acknowledges the support of a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad fellowship and grants from the Social Science Research Council, Institute for the Study of World Politics, and the UC-Berkeley African Studies Center. The author also wishes to express thanks for the tireless efforts of the research assistants in each country, Celestin Mian and Fulgence Kanga in Cote d'Ivoire and Faustina Sottie and Kweku Dickson in Ghana, as well as the institutional support of the University of Ghana at Legon's Department of Political Science and the Centre de Petit-Bassam (IRD/ORSTOM) in Abidjan.

<sup>16</sup> On the use of natural experiments, see Dunning (2008).

<sup>17</sup> The two questions were: “When people talk about citizenship, they often talk about rights and obligations. What do you expect the state to do for its citizens?”; and, “We have spoken just now about the rights of citizens. In your opinion, what do you owe to the state?”

citizenship at the nation-state level and bias the respondents' answers. I also placed these two questions about rights and duties immediately after one that probed the respondents' primary political identity. The prior question thus reminded respondents how they belong simultaneously to multiple different types of categories, i.e., age, ethnicity, gender, occupational, regional and national. Since much of the theoretical and public discourse about citizenship focuses on rights, and respondents might be expected to be more familiar with or primed about rights, the survey questionnaire asked about rights first. In fact, the survey question about duties was the very last one posed to respondents during the interview.

### *Comparison of the Local Notions of the Rights of Citizenship*

To start, the perceptions of the rights of citizenship differ in two important ways in these regions of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. (See Table 1.) First, Ghanaians responded with a relatively restricted list of rights that were frequently linked in the same sentence to corresponding duties. For example, one survey respondent replied, "I would do anything I am asked to do, be it payment of money (taxes), etc., if only that will help to improve education."<sup>18</sup> This finding strengthens the earlier evidence of a more explicit view of reciprocity between the state and citizens in Ghana than in Côte d'Ivoire.

In contrast, Ivoirians had a much more expansive view of the state's role in their lives, often presenting a long list of entitlements owed to them from an omniscient and omnipotent state. For example, one 40 year-old Akan man ticked off several things that the state should give him and then summarized by saying that the state should provide "everything I need."<sup>19</sup>

Second, the nature of the rights owed to citizens differed in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Ghanaians conceptualized their rights as citizens in terms of public goods that the state provides to communities, for example, social services or the construction of roads. In Ghana, one third of the survey respondents (33%) said that citizens had a right to the state provision of social

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<sup>18</sup> Survey interview (anonymous) by author. Barima, Ghana.

<sup>19</sup> Survey interview (anonymous) by author. Kyere, Côte d'Ivoire.

services, often free or low-cost education or health care. For example, many mentioned that the state “should give good health” or “reduce fees at the hospital”.<sup>20</sup> Only 10% replied similarly in Côte d’Ivoire.

In contrast to the largely community orientation of the rights described by Ghanaians, every one of the most frequently mentioned rights by Ivoirians was individually oriented. For example, the most frequently cited right in Côte d’Ivoire was that the state should provide loans to individuals (28%) for individual farm expansion or enterprises. One typical Ivoirian response was, “The state should give a loan for my trading.”<sup>21</sup> Several Ivoirians even mentioned credit as a way the state should help individual families school their children, a one-time consumption by an individual as opposed to the long-term income generating objectives of most farm loans. Consistent with the earlier point about more expansive entitlements, almost as many Ivoirians (20%) asserted that the state should “give me some money” as outright cash grants instead of credit. In addition to housing (16%) and employment (16%), Ivoirians frequently included food and even various individual consumer goods as something the state should give to citizens for free. For example, one Ivoirian declared in all seriousness, “The state should buy me a car, purchase me a refrigerator, and, build a house for me.”<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, after nearly two decades of efforts to liberalize the economy, a significant percentage of respondents in both Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire mentioned that the state should re-regulate the prices of goods (11% in Ghana; 13% in Côte d’Ivoire). Ghanaians and Ivoirians both mentioned a wide range of goods, including crops produced in the field site regions for the international and national markets, other foodstuffs, consumer goods, transportation, etc. One Ghanaian typified many responses in both countries suggesting that the government should return to pre-liberalization policies where the government purchased goods and stabilized prices.

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<sup>20</sup> Survey interviews (anonymous) by author. Barima, Ghana.

<sup>21</sup> Women’s focus group (anonymous). Tape recording. Kyere, Côte d’Ivoire, August 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Survey interview (anonymous) by author. Kyere, Côte d’Ivoire.

“The government should buy our farm produce as it used to be in the past, to ensure ready market and fix prices for our farm produce.”<sup>23</sup>

Finally, the rights “classically” associated with citizenship in advanced industrialized democracies in the U.S. and Western Europe were almost never mentioned by either Ghanaian or Ivoirian respondents. Thus, 2% or fewer of respondents in both countries mentioned the right to freedom, equality, political participation, or the protection of private property. According to Marshall, the above civil and then political rights should have evolved first but in these post-colonial contexts, social rights were more frequently cited in both Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. What differed between the cases was the way Ghanaians conceptualized these social rights as delivered primarily to reciprocating community groups, whereas Ivoirians conceived them as rights provided to entitled individuals.

The above points demonstrate how the conceptualization of rights is powerfully shaped by the political context as well as the particular moment in world historical time. Rights do not develop everywhere at every moment in history in the same linear progression of stages from civil to political to social rights as Marshall theorized. These post-colonial cases highlight how rights may be obtained in a different order, and, furthermore, they can be won and later lost. Different political histories, including different everyday experiences of the state, shape how people develop their own concepts of the rights of citizenship. Ironically, the legacy of British laissez-faire liberalism in Ghana stimulated a more community-oriented notion of citizenship on the ground. The history of more decentralized state institutions in Ghana allowed space for local-level community institutions to thrive. Thus, the liberal emphasis on self-help was accomplished in the context of the community, not as separate individuals. In contrast, the French legacy of centralized étatism squashed community-based initiative and encouraged individual dependence on state largesse. Paradoxically, the highly centralized state in Côte d’Ivoire fostered a stronger liberal individualism at the local level.

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<sup>23</sup> Men’s focus group (anonymous). Tape recording. Barima, Ghana, March 1999.

### *Comparison of the Local Notions of the Duties of Citizenship*

Paralleling the patterns found above, Ghanaians and Ivoirians also thought about the duties of citizenship in distinct ways. (See Table 2.) First, while Ghanaians linked rights and obligations explicitly in descriptions of reciprocity with the state, Ivoirians dwelled on entitlements and then struggled longer even imagining the concept of duties. For example, after a lengthy pause, one Ivoirian respondent finally responded, “I greet them,” referring to state officials who come visiting the village on rare occasion. As another Ivoirian exclaimed, “It’s us that don’t have anything. Who should help the state, and why?!”<sup>24</sup>

Second, the nature of the duties owed to the state continued to be more community-oriented in Ghana and individually-oriented in Côte d’Ivoire. The most frequently cited response in Ghana was “to work to develop the community or country as a whole” (52%) whereas the most frequently cited reply in Côte d’Ivoire was “to work on the respondent’s individual farm” (58%). As one Ivoirian explained, “Every morning, I go to the farm. This is all that I can do for the state.”<sup>25</sup> Almost all of the Ivoirian respondents spoke in terms of how the state benefited from their individual cash crop production, but almost never in terms of how their individual food crop production increased the food security of the nation as a whole, as so many Ghanaians did. As one 27 year-old female tomato farmer in Ghana said: “I should work harder at my farming to produce more food to help feed Ghana.”<sup>26</sup>

Another indicator of the more community-oriented conceptualization of duties is that over three times as many Ghanaian respondents (22%) mentioned the obligation to pay taxes as Ivoirians (7%). Ghanaians not only mentioned taxation more frequently, but almost always put it in the context of reciprocity for state-provided services. For example, several Ghanaians asserted that citizens should pay taxes in return for the state’s efforts to create jobs, provide free medical care and free education. This is not to argue that all Ghanaians were eager to pay taxes; they

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<sup>24</sup> Survey interview (anonymous) by author. Opanin, Côte d’Ivoire.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Survey interview (anonymous) by author. Barima, Ghana.

were not.<sup>27</sup> But, in general, many more Ghanaians viewed the payment of taxes as an obligation they had to fulfill.

In contrast, while several Ivoirians from this region indirectly referred to state taxation of their cash crop production, very few directly discussed paying taxes to the state as an obligation. They only spoke of payment to the state in highly personalized and ceremonial terms to acknowledge state representatives visiting the village. For example, several Ivoirians mentioned giving gifts to the state in the “traditional” idiom of honoring visitors with a sheep. These comments by Ivoirian respondents illuminated a popular sense of submission vis-à-vis a dominant state and lacked any notion of representation or reciprocity.

Lastly, the contrasting perceptions of communal labor in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire revealed dramatically the nature of citizenship in the two cases. In Ghana, communal labor was mentioned explicitly by almost 21% of all respondents, whereas less than 1% of respondents in Côte d’Ivoire noted it. One long-time resident of Makwan, Ghana, emphasized the need for self-reliance explaining, “The citizens are too many for the state to be able to help, so the citizen should rather do something to improve their lot instead of relying on the state.”<sup>28</sup> During the time of fieldwork in both Ghanaian villages, the chief or local unit committee frequently organized work groups to facilitate a government-sponsored rural electrification project, provide labor for the construction of a public school building, or prepare for a funeral. Opinion in both Ghanaian villages was that participation in communal labor was high, enforceable and evenly distributed among residents.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> In fact, one elderly non-Akan woman argued that taxation by the state was unfair and went counter to the state’s obligations toward the citizenry: “It is not for the government to collect money but to help so people could survive and have a little money for themselves.” Survey interview (anonymous) by author. Barima, Ghana.

<sup>28</sup> Survey interview (anonymous) by author. Makwan, Ghana.

<sup>29</sup> One Ghanaian man explained the enforcement mechanism for communal labor: “Whoever refuses to take part is sent to where the law is.” Men’s focus group (anonymous). Tape recording. Makwan, Ghana, April 1999.

In comparison, communal labor in Côte d'Ivoire was viewed negatively, as an indicator of state failure. When one Ivoirian respondent mentioned how the “cadres” had organized the village to construct several school classrooms, he was openly resentful. The message was that this communal labor was something that should not have occurred if the state had been functioning properly.<sup>30</sup> In Côte d'Ivoire, there were clearly community projects that needed to be accomplished (i.e., preparation for road resurfacing, clearing of brush for the youth hostel, etc.) but Ivoirians failed to organize any communal labor to facilitate them, as was so often done in Ghana.

Again, as earlier, very few respondents in either Ghana or Côte d'Ivoire mentioned the “classic” obligations of citizenship historically associated with Western democracies. Very few respondents mentioned obeying the laws of the state, and not one person described military service as an obligation.<sup>31</sup> The only exception was taxation, which was prominent only in Ghana. The duty to participate in the political process was also mentioned by a fair number of respondents in both countries (10% in Côte d'Ivoire and 7% in Ghana), but this was well behind the most significant responses.

***Conceptualization of the State and their Relationship with the State in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire***

Ghanaians and Ivoirians conceptualized the state and their relationship with the state in very different terms. (See Table 3.) First, in Ghana, most respondents spoke about “the government,” whereas in Côte d'Ivoire, the overwhelming majority talked about “the state.” This variation in word choice was not simply a linguistic accident but reflected underlying conceptual differences in how Ghanaians and Ivoirians thought about the state. The Ghanaians’ use of the word government emphasized a civil organization that provided services whereas the Ivoirians’ use of “the state” highlighted a political organization.

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<sup>30</sup> Men’s focus group (anonymous). Tape recording. Opanin, Côte d'Ivoire, September 1999.

<sup>31</sup> The history of the military is much different in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire than in the U.S. or other Western democracies. The army is entirely professional. There is no requirement to register for military service at a particular age, and there has never been a need for a draft.

Second, when describing the state, Ghanaians and Ivoirians mentioned different levels of administration with contrasting degrees of personalism. Ghanaians usually referred in general terms to the civil administration or bureaucracy as a whole. Very few people talked about the ruling party or then-President Rawlings by name or called the government “he” as they did so frequently in Côte d’Ivoire. In contrast, Ivoirians specified “state” almost immediately in terms of individual political authorities, not the civil administration. Only one person mentioned civil servants as the state; everyone else interviewed mentioned politically elected or appointed officials such as the mayor, préfet, ministers, President, etc. Frequently, Ivoirians simply referred to individual politicians by name, rather than by their offices. For example, one Ivoirian villagers attested, “Mayor Akon Yao comes to our aid.” Not the mayor’s office, but the individual himself. The state was also more frequently conflated with the ruling party in Côte d’Ivoire, at the time, the PDCI.

Finally, Ghanaians and Ivoirians in these regions differed in their descriptions of the relationship between the state and local people. While both Ghanaian and Ivoirian respondents described a paternalistic state, in Côte d’Ivoire, a more straightforward, top-down paternalism reinforced the perception of unequal levels of power between the state and local people. “When one speaks of the state, it’s all of us. But, the sous-prefet, the prefet, the gendarmes and police are our guardians. They watch over us.”<sup>32</sup> One Ivoirian highlighted the tension between a commonly espoused ideal of “the state as all of us” and the reality of an abysmal lack of connection between the state and the villagers.

The state is all of us. But, our elected officials do not come to the source for their information, let’s say, regarding our key problems...M. Brou Emile, President of the National Assembly, doesn’t even know here in Opanin. He takes decisions all by himself, and we don’t like that. Otherwise the state is all of us.<sup>33</sup>

In comparison, Ghanaians, frequently articulated their notion of paternalism within a familial idiom of reciprocal duties between the “father” and his children. For instance, one

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<sup>32</sup> Men’s focus group (anonymous). Tape recording. Kyere, Côte d’Ivoire, August 1999.

<sup>33</sup> Men’s focus group (anonymous). Tape recording. Opanin, Côte d’Ivoire, September, 1999.

Ghanaian woman described the state as a father helping his “child”, which represented the local people in the village. “Before anything is done, it is important the big people provide assistance so if the big people don’t offer help, or push you -- you as a child, what can you do?”<sup>34</sup> No such reciprocity was described in Côte d’Ivoire.

### **Differences in the Exercise of Citizenship in Everyday Local Politics**

Now, I move beyond an analysis of the mindset of individuals in these regions of Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire to examine how these individuals actually exercised citizenship in everyday local politics. Here again, we see surprising variations in the practice of politics given the tremendous similarities shared by these neighboring regions.

#### ***Comparison of Village-Level Authority and Decision-Making***

In general, village-level state and chieftancy institutions had greater authority and were more active in development initiatives and decision-making in Ghana than in Côte d’Ivoire. When asked who were the most important individuals or groups in making decisions or developing policies for the village, Ghanaians most frequently cited village-level political institutions whereas Ivoirians noted, often by name, individuals who were based outside of the village. (*See Table 4.*) In Ghana, an overwhelming number of respondents (82%) cited the village-level unit committee as among the three most important leaders of village development. In comparison, Ivoirians rarely mentioned the most local political authority, the sous-préfet (4%) or mayor’s (6%) office.

Ghanaians also evaluated the village chieftancy as playing a more pivotal role than did Ivoirians. Over twice as many Ghanaians (55%) cited the chief as one of the three most important leaders for development in Ghana as Ivoirians (25%).<sup>35</sup> The chief’s elders were also

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<sup>34</sup> Women’s focus group (anonymous). Tape recording. Barima, Ghana, March 1999.

<sup>35</sup> Other survey and interview data suggests that the institution of the chieftancy was held in higher esteem than most individual chiefs. Furthermore, many respondents distinguished between the chief’s important role in community development as opposed to assistance to individuals. In Ghana, 16% of respondents reported that the chief does nothing to help individual villagers in need. Many Ghanaian respondents

rather frequently mentioned in Ghana (13%) and only rarely noted in Côte d'Ivoire (5%). Indeed, in Côte d'Ivoire, respondents were almost never able to name the elders of the village. One non-Akan cocoa farmer who had been an officer in the village cocoa producer cooperative admitted, "Me for example, I have been here since 1984 (fifteen years), but I don't know who is an elder."<sup>36</sup> Others would tentatively put forward the names of one or two people, but their uncertainty was magnified by the lack of agreement among the other discussion participants. In comparison, in Ghana, almost everyone interviewed was able to name the elders in their village quickly, usually identifying them by their ceremonial sub-chief names as opposed to their common family name. Although the traditional queenmothers were more powerful and active in both Ghanaian villages than in either Ivoirian one, they, along with the rest of the royal family, were rarely cited in Ghana (3%) and never mentioned in Côte d'Ivoire (0%).<sup>37</sup>

A significant number of Ghanaian respondents (24%) mentioned the District Assembly, the representative body based in the district capital, as being important. The fact that nearly four times as many respondents mentioned the unit committee, the *most* local state institution based in the village, as mentioned the district assembly demonstrates the impact of the extension of local government to the villages in Ghana. Even though problems remain with Ghana's decentralization initiative, local people did view the most local level of government, which was based on members elected from their village, as the most significant and influential in the

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commented, "The chief himself is finding life difficult as such he is unable to help anyone..." While there are a fair number of negative comments such as this one above, a much greater number of Ivoirians (37%) responded that the chief does nothing, a difference that is statistically significant (significance=.000). Ivoirian comments also tended to be more immediate and forthrightly negative. "If you have a problem, he does not resolve it. He does nothing... The situation is getting worse and worse too because often, one resolves problems elsewhere." Survey interviews (anonymous) by author. Barima, Ghana and Kyere, Côte d'Ivoire.

<sup>36</sup> An argument could be made that since this man did not belong to the indigenous Akan ethnic group, that he would not have the same reasons to know the elders. Still, his highly public activity with the cocoa producer cooperative and his own role as an elder of his ethnic group in the village would have provided ample opportunity to come into contact with the Akan elders. Men's focus group (anonymous). Tape recording. Kyere, Côte d'Ivoire, August 1999.

<sup>37</sup> The more active role of queenmothers in Ghana still gave a more highly visible political place to women than in Côte d'Ivoire, a trend reinforced by the significant participation of women in the village unit committees.

decisions that affected their lives. This was obviously not the case in Côte d'Ivoire as no such elected village institution existed.

In contrast, demonstrating a lack of confidence in local-level political institutions, most Ivoirians (51%) cited, often by name, wealthy civil servants (“cadres”) as being the most influential person or group for the development of their community. These individuals may have been born in the village and have family members living there whom they visit occasionally, but they are generally based in the regional or national capital. As one Ivoirian explained, “These are the ‘cadres’ who can develop the village, for example, Bonzou.”<sup>38</sup> In Kyere, even the younger brother of the chief who seemed to serve as a village elder mentioned only Bonzou as the single most important leader for village development, not the chief. In Opanin, the Minister of Economy and Finance was considered a “son of the village” and was mentioned frequently by name as being pivotal in various village development projects. In comparison, in Ghana, respondents never cited high-level civil servants or particular “sons of the village” by name.

The second most frequently identified leaders of village development and decision-making in Côte d'Ivoire were simply “the rich” (16%). Similarly, several big cocoa farmers were frequently mentioned (11%) by name as being important leaders for village development. Interestingly, in Opanin, these planters were not official elders of the chief, but served as *de facto* elders and interim leaders after the village chief’s grave illness and subsequent death. In contrast, Ghanaians never cited the rich or big farmers. The comparison of the frequency of these two responses demonstrates dramatically the confluence of economic and political power that was rooted in personal wealth and achievement in Côte d'Ivoire, rather than any elected or appointed office, as was the case in Ghana.

An ethnographic comparison of the initial process of obtaining approval for the field research provides further evidence that the local state and chieftancy institutions had more authority and decision-making power in Ghana than in Côte d'Ivoire, where individuals with

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<sup>38</sup> Survey interview (anonymous) by author. Kyere, Côte d'Ivoire.

personal political and economic power seemed the most influential. (*See Table 4.*) To preview, in general, village-level state and/or chieftancy institutions made the decision to approve my research stay in Ghana whereas urban-based “cadres” and/or local economic elites did so in Côte d’Ivoire.

In the first village in Ghana, the chief, in consultation with his elders, played a major role in personally encouraging the field research. The chief later consulted several members of the unit committee as well as the district assembly representative for the village, but the decision was practically taken. The research team was housed in the chief’s palace, and the chief ordered the “gong-gong” beater to announce our arrival to the village residents early the next morning. In the second Ghanaian village, the unit committee facilitated the official approval from the chief. The decision was formally announced at a meeting presided over by the chief but attended by all of the unit committee members (as quasi-elders). The chief arranged accommodation in the compound of a village elder (where one of the chief’s wives lived and cooked). In this village, the unit committee initiated the “gong-gong” announcement of our arrival to the village. In both cases, the village-level state and chieftancy institutions played an active and often concerted role in approving of and accommodating the research team.

In contrast, in the first village in Côte d’Ivoire, the start of the study was delayed as a village resident had to travel to Abidjan to seek the approval of an urban-based cadre. The cadre gave the keys for one of his village homes, then vacant and somewhat distant from the chief’s residence, and instructed the villager to accommodate the team there. The chief did hold a somewhat impromptu meeting in his courtyard to welcome the team officially one Sunday afternoon, but few village residents were aware or even around, and, despite repeated requests, it was never clear whether the “gong-gong” was beaten to announce the project. In the second village, one of the wealthiest farmers in the village played the primary role in approving the project, in consultation with several other local economic elites. The meeting to officially welcome the project was held indoors in the wealthy farmer’s living room, and the team was

accommodated in his large compound. In both Ivoirian villages, the chieftancy was included in more ceremonial and symbolic terms than as an actual decision-maker in the process.<sup>39</sup>

***Comparison of Village-Level Party Organization:  
Building Village Cells in Ghana versus Receiving Party Bosses in Côte d'Ivoire***

The next sub-section shows how local people were also more active and continuously involved in political party organization at the village level in this region of Ghana than in Côte d'Ivoire. In each of the Ghanaian villages, several people were well known as the village representatives for the major national political parties. At the time of the field research in 1998-99, the opposition party representatives (in particular, the New Patriotic Party or NPP) was the most energetic, organizing informal weekly meetings over a year and a half in advance of the 2000 elections (where the NPP won). These meetings included some limited discussion of programmatic issues but focused largely on local party strategy to win voters, increase voter participation, and eliminate electoral manipulations and fraud. Local party leaders were also trying to institutionalize party organization at the village level by opening up party offices in the village. The NPP district office actively supported these developments by organizing events to inaugurate the new headquarters of the party's village cell. Ironically, the ruling party (the National Democratic Congress or NDC) was less lively at the village-level. Party representatives in the village described extensive factionalization within the district branch of the NDC, paralleling the divisions at the national level and hindering their local organization.

In contrast, in Côte d'Ivoire, political party meetings and organizational activity were much less frequent and institutionalized. Representatives of the ruling party acknowledged that they would only begin to meet more regularly immediately prior to elections. Even then, the party focused on organizing small festivals and rallies to receive visiting party bosses from Abidjan. These visits also appeared to be largely initiated by the regional and national party

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<sup>39</sup> It is true that the chief was gravely ill at the time of the official start of the project in the second village, however, even earlier that year and two years previous during a pre-dissertation trip, I was introduced to the chief more as a courtesy or even an afterthought, instead of an essential first step in the usual protocol as was done in Ghana.

officials, not the village representatives. The opposition parties were beginning to get organized for the 2000 elections, but much less energetically than in Ghana. The Rally for a Democratic Republic (RDR) was quietly establishing initial village cells, but there was no official representative (as for the ruling PDCI), and there were no regular meetings.<sup>40</sup> Opposition activity was also conducted in a tenuous atmosphere of greater secrecy in Côte d'Ivoire than in Ghana. Opposition party followers claimed that there were actually more party members in the village, but that local people were fearful of openly declaring their opposition to the long-dominant PDCI. In the past, sous-préfet officials had difficulty in finding even one official representative of each political party to monitor the elections at each polling station.

To summarize, village residents in these regions of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire had very different ways of conceptualizing the state role as well as the specific rights and obligations they associated with citizenship. They also differed remarkably in the ways they exercised their citizenship in the everyday practice of politics at the local level. The next section of the paper presents my argument for these striking differences.

### **Explanation: Informal Institutions of Reciprocity Mediate Different Histories of State Formation**

Ghanaians and Ivoirians had distinct ways of conceptualizing and practicing citizenship at the village level. I argue that these differences in political culture and practice are explained by the ways that contrasting informal institutions of reciprocity mediate different histories of state formation in each of the regions.<sup>41</sup> Thus, in Ghana, the more diversified and horizontally-oriented informal institutions of reciprocity reinforced a legacy of decentralized state policies to strengthen the community orientation of citizenship. In contrast, in Côte d'Ivoire, the more concentrated and

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<sup>40</sup> Instead of being named an "official" representative, certain village residents were simply known to be active followers of a certain opposition party.

<sup>41</sup> On subnational variation in the history of state formation, see Boone (2003).

vertically-oriented informal institutions of reciprocity amplified the effects of more centralized policies to build up the individual orientation of citizenship.

Before proceeding, it is important to qualify my claims. My claim is not that informal institutions were the only factor influencing indigenous citizenship. In fact, in a related article, I show how variation in the organization of local associations also had an important role to play in strengthening these differences with implications for the mediation of ethnic conflict at the grassroots.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the different histories of the formation of political administrative institutions also have had an independent effect on notions of citizenship that is not mediated by informal reciprocity. Instead, I seek to draw attention to an understudied indirect pathway of influence between formal state institutions and citizenship through the mechanism of the informal institutions of reciprocity. Because the study's research design allows us to control for so many other potential rival explanations, the importance of *this interaction between the local experience of the state and the informal institutions of reciprocity* is revealed.

The informal institutions of reciprocity are the shared rules of social exchange between individuals and groups over a long period of time.<sup>43</sup> The reciprocal exchange of social support may involve gifts of money, labor, goods, or even emotional support and include nuclear and extended family, friends, neighbors, other villagers, members of the same or different ethnic groups, etc. The exchanges may take place within the village or involve people in cities or even overseas. These exchanges are simple, dyadic relationships between two people in one time period but may involve generalized reciprocity that spans across generations. If these informal rules are violated, inappropriate behavior is sanctioned through gossip, social stigmatization, or even violence. For example, in these regions, many village residents explained the increase in the use of witchcraft to punish those who had not shared their success with needy extended family members according to the understood informal rules of reciprocity.

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<sup>42</sup> Morris MacLean (2004).

<sup>43</sup> To conceptualize reciprocity, I build on an enormous literature in anthropology and history as well as works by Scott (1976), Popkin (1979), Hyden (1980) and Bates (1989) in political science.

Despite sharing many similarities (i.e., a shared precolonial political history, dominant Akan culture, similar levels of wealth, etc.), the informal institutions of reciprocity also differed dramatically in these regions of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Overall, I found that a lower percentage of the population gave a much lower quantity of help but to a more diversified group of social categories and on less stringent terms in Ghana than in Cote d'Ivoire.

Thus, first, a surprisingly high number of village residents in the Ghanaian region were not investing in any type of social exchange, neither as a donor, nor as a recipient. Over 39% of respondents from the Ghanaian region reported that they did not give any type of help to anyone whereas only 6% of Ivoirians did not invest in any reciprocity.

Second, the median amount of help given was significantly smaller in the Ghanaian region than in the Ivoirian one. Ghanaians gave on average under \$29 per year for hospitals, medicine, school fees, school supplies and clothing, while Ivoirians gave \$117 per year, over four times as much.

Third, while the largest share is allocated to the nuclear family in both regions, this is particularly concentrated in Cote d'Ivoire, where over 69% of help is given to the nuclear family (which is conceptualized very minimally as the respondents' children only). When Ivoirians did give to the extended family, it was more likely transferred to parents or other elders than to siblings or peers. In comparison, village residents from the Ghanaian region gave help to a more diversified set of social categories overall, and, in particular, noted the importance of friends and siblings. Another more open-ended survey question that recorded the first-cited source of assistance if the respondent was ill confirmed the patterns emerging from the documentation of actual behavior highlighted above. (*See Table 5.*) Ghanaians received help from a greater number of social categories than did Ivoirians who relied almost exclusively on their immediate nuclear family.

Finally, the terms of reciprocity were becoming less generalized and less long-term in both regions, but particularly so in Cote d'Ivoire. For example, Ivoirians reported in greater

numbers that they were no longer able to reimburse loans in kind and that it was no longer “obnoxious” but rather “expected” to charge interest on a loan today. In contrast, Ghanaian village residents were noticeably more uncomfortable discussing the topic of interest on loans.

So, how are these divergent informal institutions of reciprocity linked to the differences in citizenship? I argue that an individual’s experience of the informal institutions of reciprocity shapes their reading of the boundaries of the political community, reinforcing certain types of identities over others and changing the contours of cleavage and coalition in a particular place and time. This is important for how individuals define themselves as citizens in a particular community and/or vis-à-vis the state. Thus, these informal institutions are not simply social, in providing valued group support, or economic, in pooling risk where insurance markets have failed, they are fundamentally political.

Hence, because individual Ghanaians and Ivoirians were connected in different types of relations of reciprocity, they conceptualized their political community and practiced citizenship differently. They organized along different political lines of coalition and cleavage. As a result, the Ghanaian and Ivoirian approaches to conflict resolution and decision-making varied at the local level. In general, as a result of different informal social connections and disconnections, Ghanaians and Ivoirians in these regions engaged with the local institutions of chieftancy, the central state, and political parties in quite different ways.

Thus, in Ghana, since reciprocity was more horizontally oriented and widely diversified across a range of social categories, social ties frequently cut across ethnicity, gender and class. These social linkages provided opportunities to gain knowledge of and develop confidence in individuals who belonged to other groups. Thus, the horizontal networks increased the likelihood of developing coalitions (social, economic, political or otherwise) across these various categories at the community level. This more heterogeneous local social experience also encouraged a greater willingness to come together to resolve community problems at the local level rather than trying to skip to higher levels in the political system. This inclination to resolve conflict and

make decisions at the village level were strengthened because in Ghana, the village-level chieftancy and unit committee were both available and actively pursuing opportunities to expand their local authority. In Ghana, the more diversified and horizontally-oriented relations of reciprocity encouraged a more localized and openly heterogeneous political party organization there. Lastly, over two decades of authoritarian rule in Ghana reinforced the appeal of working with local government. The years under Rawlings' PNDC regime (1981-1992) were described by village residents as particularly frightening, which had a localizing effect on political participation. In Ghana, then, authority and decision-making started and stayed in the village.

In contrast, in Cote d'Ivoire, the informal institutions of reciprocity were more vertically oriented and concentrated on the nuclear family, so social ties rarely cut across ethnicity or class. The social exclusion of poor families versus rich ones was reinforced, and there were fewer opportunities for contact between individuals of different groups. The vertical networks increased a narrower type of social trust that was less likely to lead to coalition building across groups within the community. Since the village chieftancy was relatively weak, and no equivalent to the Ghanaian unit committee existed in the Ivoirian villages, individuals had little incentive, or opportunity, to solve problems at the community level. Frequently, individuals and groups proceeded directly to personal contacts positioned in the higher echelons of the political system. The more concentrated and vertically-oriented networks also stimulated a more top-down, urban-activated party organization. Even though Ivoirians also lived under several decades of authoritarian rule since independence, the character of authoritarianism was quite different and fostered national linkages rather than local ones. While the single-party state of Houphouët-Boigny did not allow for competition, in general, there was less violent instability and fear of the ruling regime than in Ghana during the same period. In Côte d'Ivoire then, more homogeneous and extra-local social and political experience combined with the absence of effective local political institutions to undermine authority and decision-making in the village and shift it upward to the regional and national capital.

Even the brief comparative analysis above highlights how these informal social institutions of reciprocity were not “independent” of state institutions but actually transformed by the local experience of the state over time. In other work, I investigate in detail how the varied historical construction of the state role’s in mediating risk via political administration, social service provision and agricultural policy has altered the informal institutions of reciprocity in very different ways in the two regions.<sup>44</sup> This challenges conventional theoretical approaches portraying “Africa” as homogeneous, African colonial and post-colonial states as endemically weak, and local societies and cultures as insulated, unchanging and vibrant.

### **Conclusion**

The perceptions and everyday practice of citizenship differed in dramatic ways in these villages in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. The variation in the informal institutions of reciprocity were a key, and heretofore understudied, causal factor in the creation of these important differences. Reciprocity that was more narrowly concentrated on the nuclear family meant that Ivoirians were less connected to their larger community through social interaction and resulted in a more individually-oriented notion of entitlements from the state in Côte d’Ivoire. In contrast, more diversified relations of reciprocity in Ghana fostered a wider basis of social interaction across the community, resulting in a more community-oriented notion of reciprocity with the state. These different patterns of informal reciprocity in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire meant that authority and conflict resolution were more localized in Ghana than in Côte d’Ivoire.

Lastly, the ways that the above components combined – the indigenous concepts of citizenship and the everyday practice of local politics – in each of the country cases was perhaps counter-intuitive. One might imagine that the strength of community-based citizenship and local organization in Ghana might threaten national unity and stability, but this does not appear to be

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<sup>44</sup> Morris MacLean (n.d.), *Transformations: State Legacies, Informal Institutions of Reciprocity and Citizenship in Rural Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire* (under review).

the case. If anything, the national political outcomes are quite the reverse. Overall, the prospects for democratic consolidation continue to be more promising in Ghana than in Côte d'Ivoire.

In Ghana, a more restricted and community-oriented notion of citizenship has combined with the availability of multiple, overlapping village-level institutions to facilitate a more optimistic participation and compromise in politics. These more locally-rooted institutions probably helped stabilize the Ghanaian political system during the elections in 2000, which gave power to the NPP opposition for the first time in twenty years, as well as in 2008, which returned power to the NDC after a razor-thin run-off victory. Nevertheless, the lack of linkage upward from the village to the national political system continues to be a problem that must be resolved for genuine long-term political stability in Ghana.

In Côte d'Ivoire, a more expansive notion of individual entitlements from the state combined with a total lack of legitimate, village-level institutions to produce a higher level of frustration and resentment than was found in Ghana. As one Ivoirian bitterly complained:

The elected officials consider us to be animals. They don't even respect us. All the time, they inform us that such and such country or NGO gave money to realize such and such thing, but we see nothing. They use it for their own needs. We are not happy.<sup>45</sup>

This high level of frustration with no viable outlet for political participation provides a context for understanding the December 1999 coup d'état and subsequent instability in Côte d'Ivoire.

Basically, there was no more reason to buy into local or national-level politics in Côte d'Ivoire.

The long-term resolution of the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire will require more than an elite-level political pact and cease-fire. Without workable local institutions that incorporate the heterogeneous populations that continue to reside throughout the country, no democratic peace will ever be sustained.

This analysis has important implications for our theories of citizenship and democracy. First, the paper confirms our earlier suppositions that we need to build new theories of citizenship to understand non-Western states. The conceptualization of citizenship in these non-Western

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<sup>45</sup> Men's focus group (anonymous). Tape recording. Opanin, Côte d'Ivoire.

cases is different than in the West because it is a completely different moment in world historical time. We cannot simply abstract the process of moving from a more localized to a national sense of citizenship from a particular political and historical context. Thus, beginning to imagine a national community during the “Benedictine” moment at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is not at all comparable with doing so in the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>46</sup> Most of the non-Western countries were formerly colonies that have only recently achieved independence. Many are weak states, in the Weberian sense of having a monopoly of the use of force within their territory, and even more fragile democracies, with quite recent memories of authoritarian rule during the colonial and post-independence eras. The digital and communication technology of today’s era of globalization also facilitates translocal linkages between individuals, organizations and social movements.

As a result of these contextual differences, civil and political rights have not been added sequentially in a teleological evolution but repeatedly been offered and then subsequently sacrificed. On the other hand, social rights have been emphasized as a cornerstone of national development and citizenship from the beginning, particularly since many of the colonies in Africa were obtaining independence during an era of great state reconstruction and welfare state expansion in Western Europe after WWII. Local identities are not being definitively crushed or progressively replaced with attachment to the nation-state but rather being reconstructed in complicated and particular ways. As a result, the evolution of citizenship today is not a simple, linear zero-sum competition between national and other competing identities.

Finally, this paper’s analysis suggests that we cannot understand democracies by focusing exclusively on cross-national differences in the formal institutions of the state. If the objective is to build sustainable democracies, then we need to examine the local experience of state institutions and how those interactions over time have reorganized informal institutions. The

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<sup>46</sup> Jean Comaroff used this turn of phrase, “the Benedictine moment”, to great effect in a lecture on globalization and the commodification of ethnicity at Indiana University, November 9, 2007. See Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff’s forthcoming book *Ethnicity, Inc.*

study of informal institutions is attracting renewed interest in the social sciences but this cannot be done in isolation from state power. More of our institutional analysis should be deeply historical and focused on the engagement and interactions between formal and informal institutions over the *longue durée*.

**Table 1. Comparison of Rights of Citizens in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire**

	<b>GHANA</b>	<b>CÔTE D'IVOIRE</b>
<b>Perception of Rights</b>	Restricted list of rights linked explicitly to duties	Expansive list of entitlements
<b>Nature of Goods Delivered by State</b>	Public goods consumed by communities	Private goods consumed by individuals
<b>Three most frequently mentioned rights</b>	Social services (33%) Employment (24%) Roads/markets/electricity (21%)	Individual loans (28%) Cash grants to needy (20%) Housing (16%) Employment (16%)
<b>Extremely Low Scores on "Classic" Citizenship Rights Associated with Western Democracies</b>	Provision of physical security (2%) Protection of private property (1.5%) Protection of equality (1%) Guarantee of freedom (0.6%) Freedom to participate in political processes 0%)	Provision of physical security (2%) Protection of private property (0%) Protection of equality (0.4%) Guarantee of freedom (2%) Freedom to participate in political processes (0.4%)

**Table 2. Comparison of Duties of Citizens in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire**

	<b>GHANA</b>	<b>CÔTE D'IVOIRE</b>
<b>Perception of Duties</b>	Explicit notion of reciprocity	Concept of obligations more difficult to grasp
<b>Nature of Duties Owed to the State</b>	Performed together as a community and/or to benefit the community	Performed as an individual
<b>Three most frequently mentioned duties</b>	Develop the community/ country (47%) Pay taxes (22%) Perform communal labor (21%)	Work on individual farm (58%) Participate in politics (10%) Develop community/ country (10%)
<b>Extremely Low Scores on "Classic" Citizenship Duties Associated with Western Democracies</b>	Participate in politics (7%) Obey laws (3%) Serve the military (0%)	Pay taxes (8%) Obey laws (7%) Serve the military (0%)

**Table 3. Comparison of Local Conceptualization of State**

	<b>GHANA</b>	<b>CÔTE D'IVOIRE</b>
<b>Word Choice</b>	"government"	"state"
<b>Level of state/government described</b>	administration as a whole	individual politicians
<b>Characterization of state</b>	generalized	personalized
<b>Nature of Relationship between State and Local People</b>	paternalism of state but with reciprocity of local people	more hierarchical paternalism without reciprocity of local people

**Table 4.**  
**Perceptions of Most Important Individual or Group Leader for Village Development and Policymaking in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire\***

<b>CATEGORY OF LEADER OR GROUP</b>	<b>DERIVATION OF AUTHORITY</b>	<b>GHANA</b>	<b>CÔTE D'IVOIRE</b>
<p>Most local state institutions</p> <p>Most local "traditional" institutions</p>	Based on elected or appointed political office	<p><b>HIGH</b></p> <p>Unit Committee 82.1% District Assembly 23.8%</p> <p>Village Chief 54.8%; chief's elders 12.9%</p>	<p><b>low</b></p> <p>Sous-Préfet 3.8% Mayoral 5.8%</p> <p>Village Chief 25% chief's elders 4.5%;</p>
Local and non-local individuals	Based on personal political and economic power	<p><b>Low</b></p> <p>bureaucrats 0% the rich 0% big farmers 0%</p>	<p><b>HIGH</b></p> <p>bureaucrats 51.4% the rich 16.4% big farmers 11.2%</p>

Note: All statistics shown are cumulative amounts that combine results for first, second and third mentioned responses.

**Table 5. First-Cited Source of Help If Respondent Were Sick**

	<b>GHANA</b>	<b>CÔTE D'IVOIRE</b>
<b>Nuclear family</b>	23%	59%
<b>Extended family</b>	20%	11%
<b>Friend</b>	28%	8%
<b>Church</b>	8%	0%
<b>Association</b>	0%	6%
<b>Rich Person or Moneylender</b>	16%	1%
<b>Government</b>	0%	0%
<b>Other</b>	4%	14%

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