



Political Science
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Department Seminar Series

James Robinson

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The Interaction of Culture and Institutions: Evidence from the Kuba Kingdom

Friday, November 7, 2014
12:00 – 2:00 p.m. in 3130 SSH



Abstract: We examine the impact that state development has on internalized social norms. Our analysis studies variation caused by the creation of the Kuba Kingdom in the Congo basin in the early 17th century by King Shyaam. The Kingdom was much more developed than the independent villages and chieftaincies that surrounded it. It featured a judicial system with courts and juries, a police force, a military, separation of political powers, taxation, and public goods provision. We compare descendants of the Kuba Kingdom with descendants of groups living outside of the Kuba Kingdom, most notably the Lele. We find evidence of formal institutions crowding out internal norms. Using a variety of behavioral experiments, we show that Kuba descendants are less likely to follow rules and more likely to cheat. We show that this difference is not due to differences in income, altruism, risk aversion, time preference, religiosity or differential treatment during of after the colonial period.

James Robinson is a Professor of Government, Harvard University. His research interests lie in political economy and economic and political development. He received his BS from the London School of Economics and Political Science, his MA from University of Warwick, and his PhD from Yale University in 1993. Some of his publications include: Why did the West Extend the Franchise? Quarterly Journal of Economics, August 2000, A Theory of Political Transitions American Economic Review, September 2001, Colonial Origins of Comparative Development, American Economic Review, December 2001, Inefficient Redistribution American Political Science Review, September 2001, Reversal of Fortune Quarterly Journal of Economics, November 2002 and States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control by Jeffrey I. Herbst: A Review Essay, Journal of Economic Literature, June 2002; . He has just published a book jointly with Daron Acemoglu titled The Economic Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship which was published by Cambridge University Press. Follow this link to Robinson's newest book

<http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/economics/economic-development-and-growth/africas-development-historical-perspective>