African History through the lens of Economics

Questions and Answers - Week 4

Main Lecture 4, Tuesday, February 22: The Slave Trades with *Nathan Nunn*

Special Lecture 4, Wednesday, February 23: The Slave Trades' Impact on Population and Africans *with Patrick Manning, and Ugo Nwokeji*

Please visit our course website to access the recorded lectures and slides of each session. Due to the high volume of questions received during the live Q&A, we have prepared this document, which addresses a selection of questions that were not possible to answer during the lecture.

1. What impact do the slave trades have on contemporary development in Africa? Could underdevelopment be attributed to the trade in slaves?

Nathan's presentation illustrated the link between enslavement during Africa's four main slave trades and contemporary economic development, as reflected by real GDP per capita. The estimated correlation gives the average effect of the slave trades. The slave trades do not explain all the (sizable) variation in economic performance across African countries, but they explain an important part of it.

The estimated relationship retains significance once one accounts for geography, the disease environment, pre-colonial political centralisation and other features. The research shows that the quasi-exogenous component of the slave trades, driven by proximity to the markets for enslaved people in the Americas and Asia, is also a strong correlate of economic development. This variation is used in an instrumental-variables analysis to obtain causal estimates of the effects of the slave trades.

A voluminous body of research in the past decade has provided further "reduced-form" evidence of a relationship between enslavement during the slave trades and other factors relating to economic and social development. We refer you to Nathan's presentation slides, already uploaded on the course website.

Core readings and reviews

- Nunn, Nathan, (2008), "The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *123*(1): 139—176.
- Nunn, Nathan. 2010. "Shackled to the Past: The Causes and Consequences of Africa's Slave Trades," in Jared Diamond and James A. Robinson (eds.), *Natural Experiments of History*, pp. 142-184. Harvard University Press.
- Nunn Nathan (2017). "Understanding the Long-Run Effects of Africa's Slave Trades". eBook: *The Long Economic and Political Shadow of History*, Volume 2, S. Michalopoulos and E. Papaioannou (Editors).
- Whatley, Warren. (2015). "The Economic Legacies of the African Slave Trades," in *The Oxford Handbook of Africa and Economics*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

2. What is the relationship between the slave trades and health, fertility and HIV?

Please see the easy-to-follow VOEU review by Nathan Nunn on the slave trades and contemporary development.

Another useful review paper on the slave trades and population dynamics, an issue we delved into during the Wednesday lecture by Patrick Manning, is the following:

- Manning, Patrick. (2014). "African Population, 1650-2000: Comparisons and Implications of New Estimates." In Emmanuel Akyeampong, Robert Bates, Nathan Nunn, and James Robinson, eds., *Africa's Development in Historical Perspective*, 131–152. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The following papers document the effect of the slave trades on fertility, family structure, health behaviour and HIV:

- Bertocchi, Graziella and Arcangelo Dimico. (2020). "The Long-Term Determinants of Female HIV Infection in Africa: The Slave Trade, Polygyny, and Sexual Behavior" IZA DP No. 9102.
- Dalton, John T. and Tin Cheuk Leung (2014), "Why is Polygyny More Prevalent in Western Africa? An African Slave Trade Perspective", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 63 599-632.
- Teso, Edoardo. (2019). "The Long-Term Effect of Demographic Shocks on the Evolution of Gender Roles: Evidence from the Transatlantic Slave Trade" *Journal of the European Economic Association,* 2019, 17(2), 497-534.

3. How did the slave trades affect culture and can we see this impact even today?

Please refer to the presentation slides of G. Ugo Nwokeji on this issue.

Exciting research by Nathan Nunn and Leonard Wantchekon demonstrates a strong within-country association between enslavement during Africa's slave trades and contemporary trust.

- Nunn, Nathan, and Leonard Wantchekon, (2011) "The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa," *American Economic Review*, *101*(6): 3221–3252.

We also refer you to another interesting paper by Warren Whatley, our guest in week 2, on the slave trades and political authority:

- Whatley, Warren (2012): "*The transatlantic slave trade and the evolution of political authority in West Africa*".

We further recommend the following case study by G. Ugo Nwokeji on West Africa, Nigeria and Biafra:

- Nwokeji Ugo G. (2010), *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge University Press.

4. What other channels link the slave trades to contemporary African development?

Economics research has identified various mechanisms linking enslavement during Africa's slave trades (and the associated violence) with contemporary development. Nathan Nunn's VOEU review summarises the key takeaways. Here are some relevant readings:

- Distrust. Nunn and Wantchekon (AER 2011).
- Conflict. Besley and Reynal-Querol (APSR 2014); Fenske and Kala (JDE 2017)
- Population dynamics, gender and family structure. Teso (JEEA 2018)
- Health and HIV. Bertocchi and Dimico (2020).
- Ethnic stratification – authoritarianism. Whatley (AER P&P 2012)
- Education. Okoye and Pongou (2019)
- Finance and entrepreneurship. Pierce and Snyder (RFS 2018)
- Household finance. Levine, Lin, and Xie (EJ 2020)
- Female genital cutting. Corno, La Ferrara, and Voena (2020)

5. How reliable are the data on the number of individuals trafficked during the slave trades? What are the sources? Do they reflect the number of enslaved Africans who reached the Americas and other regions or those enslaved before departing the continent? Do we have estimates of the number of deaths of Africans who resisted enslavement and those dying en route to the slave countries and colonies?

The Atlantic slave trade is well-documented but still in debate; the Indian Ocean slave trade is now under study by three groups; while the trans-Saharan slave trade has been estimated, notably by Ralph Austen. Many volumes were published from 1969 to 2000; the Atlantic slave trade study results have been incorporated into the *Slave Voyages* dataset. See Nathan Nunn's 2008 publication "The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades" and its data appendix for sources and details.

Mortality during the transatlantic voyage is known with some precision from the *Slave Voyages* dataset. Manning's simulations assumed captive mortality in Africa to have equalled transatlantic mortality. On shipboard rebellions, see David Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 2001.

Bibliography:

- Joseph C. Miller published summaries of worldwide bibliography on slavery from 1990 to 2009. See "Slavery and Abolition" for annual summaries and a guide to the earlier bibliographies.
- The Bayesian simulation by Manning and Liu shows deaths at sea averaging about 12% of the total number embarked, with totals of 100,000 deaths per year from the 1760s to the 1820s.

6. Why was Africa the main source of slaves? Why were Africans "preferred" to native Americans or Asians?

Nathan mentioned the high productivity of African labour in the Americas, amplifying a discussion in Manning, "Slavery and African Life", 32–37.

Dr Nwokeji noted that a prohibition against enslaving Europeans had arisen in Europe.

On indigenous enslavement in Brazil, see "Blacks of the Land: Indian Slavery, Settler Society, and the Portuguese Colonial Enterprise in South America" by John M. Monteiro. 2018.

7. Was there collaboration with local rulers that made it possible for many slaves to come from Africa? Who in Africa benefited mostly from the slave trades?

Almost every society in Africa appears to have lost out on the whole because of the slave trades, but some individuals did benefit. Anyone who was able to enslave rather than be enslaved benefitted from their actions. Those who benefitted the most during the slave trades were slave raiders, "merchants" and some political leaders.

For an important study of resistance to slavery in Africa, see Rashid Ismail, '"A Devotion to the Idea of Liberty at Any Price": Rebellion and Antislavery in the Upper Guinea Coast in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,' in Sylviane Diouf, ed., *Fighting the Slave Trade*.

This article by German news outlet DW offers insight into the initial role played by a ruler of the Kongo Kingdom in supporting the slave trade: www.dw.com/en/afonso-i-of-kongo-the-ruler-caught-up-in-the-slave-trade/a-56974888.

8. How did southern Africa manage to avoid the slave trade?

The southern part of Africa was a net importer of slaves, according to the Slave Voyages database. The region's need for domestic captive labour is likely an important factor in explaining why it did not engage in more "international" enslavement.

This reference may be useful: Ross, Robert, *Cape of Torments. Slavery and Resistance in South Africa*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1983.

9. What was the means of exchange in the slave trades?

On exchange of assemblies of goods, see P. D. Curtin, *Economic change in precolonial Africa: Senegambia* (1975). On cowrie currency, see J. Hogendorn and M. Johnson, *Shell Money of the Slave Trade* (1986).

10. What was the role of the Christian church and missions in enslavement? How has the slave trades affected religion?

Linda Heywood's article on Kongo shows how the Catholic Church came to support slavery in the 16th century. In the late 18th century Protestant churches began opposing enslavement, and in the 19th century the Catholic White Fathers opposed slavery in missions, especially in north and east Africa; see work by François Renault. We will return to the role of Christian missions in two weeks.

11. What are the sources of the population data and estimates that Professor Patrick Manning used?

The main data on the Atlantic slave trade captive-export estimates are summarised in the *Slave Voyages* dataset. For eastern and northern Africa, estimates for captives are assembled from historians' estimates. Parameters for birth, death and migration rates are drawn from standard demographic tables. See African Population and Migration Dataverse (online), especially https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/4WQ1IP . See also Patrick Manning's website, https://patrickmanningworldhistorian.com/

12. **Can you recommend additional readings on the slave trades and their legacy?**

Please see the readings at the end of Nathan Nunn's lecture slides, available on the course website (www.wheelerafricacourse.org/about-6). For convenience we reproduce them below.

- Hawthorne, Walter. 2003. *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations Along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400–1900*. New York: Heinemann.
- Heywood, Linda. 2009. "Slavery and its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491–1800," *Journal of African History*, 50: 1–22.
- Hilton, Anne. 1985. *The Kingdom of Kongo*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Inikori, Joseph. 1992. "Africa in World History: The Export Slave Trade from Africa and the Emergence of the Atlantic Economic Order," in B.A. Ogot, ed., *General History of Africa: Volume 5, Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. Berkelely: University of California Press.
- Inikori, Joseph. 2000. "Africa and the Trans-Atlantic Trade," In Toyin Falola (ed.) *Africa: Volume I, African History Before 1885*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.
- Inikori, Joseph. 2003. "The Struggle against the Transatlantic Slave Trade: The Role of the State," In Sylviane A. Diouf (ed.) *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, pp. 170–198.
- Koelle, Sigismund Wilhelm. 1854. *Polyglotta Africana; or A Comparative Vocabulary of Nearly Three Hundred Words and Phrases, in More than One Hundred Distinct African Languages*. London: Church Missionary House.
- Lovejoy, Paul E, 2012. *Transformations in Slavery*.
- Northrup, David. 1978 *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Nunn, Nathan. 2008. "The Long-Term Effects of Africa's Slave Trades," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 123 (1): 139–176.
- Nunn, Nathan. 2010. "Shackled to the Past: The Causes and Consequences of Africa's Slave Trades," in Jared Diamond and James A. Robinson (eds.), *Natural Experiments of History*, pp. 142–184. Harvard University Press.
- Nunn, Nathan and Leonard Wantchekon. 2011. "The Slave Trade and the Origins of Mistrust in Africa," *American Economic Review*, 101(7): 3221–3252.
- Nunn, Nathan and Diego Puga. 2012. "Ruggedness: The Blessing of Bad Geography in Africa," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 94 (1): 20–36.
- Vansina, Jan. 1989. "Deep-Down Time: Political Tradition in Central Africa," *History in Africa*, 16: 341–362.
- Whatley, Warren. 2014. "The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the Origins of Political Authority in West Africa," In Emmanuel Akyeampong, Rrobert H. Bates, Nathan Nunn, James A. Robinson (eds) *Africa's Development in Historical Perspective*, pp. 460–488. New York: Cambridge University Press. Nathan Nunn The Slave Trades

Please also see the following important works by Patrick Manning:

- *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture* (2009), ch. 3–4;
- *Slave Trades, 1500 – 1800: Globalization of Forced Labour* (1996) [with detailed introduction and 17 chapters];
- *Slavery and African Life* (1990);
- Manning and Liu, "Research Note on Captive Atlantic Flows," *Journal of World-Systems Research* 26: 103–125.

13. Please elaborate on the impact of enslavement on gender roles

Whereas the transatlantic slave trade mostly targeted men, the trans-Sahara slave trade (a much older trade) mostly targeted females; while the Indian Ocean slave trade impacted males and females roughly equally. The following articles are relevant:

- "Female Genital Cutting and the Slave Trade". (2020) Corno, La Ferrara and Voena.
- "Population Dynamics, Gender and Family Structure". Teso (JEEA 2018).

14. What is the impact of the slave trade on languages?

Nunn (2007) shows at the end of his paper a strong correlation between enslavement and number of languages (linguistic fractionalisation). The interpretation he offers is that ethnic groups did not form cooperative ties, thereby creating larger groups. This dynamic was disrupted by the slave trades; instead, the ethnic and language groups fought one another and remained smaller and more fragmented than they would have been otherwise.

As Ugo Nwokeji emphasised in his remarks, during the slave trades there was considerable movement of people; either captured and moved to the ports or who fled to avoid enslavement. Commerce also increased during these periods.

For additional insights into the impact of the slave trades on specific communities/groups in Africa, we recommend the following readings:

- Oriji, J.N. 1987. "The Slave Trade, Warfare and Aro Expansion in the Igbo Hinterland". *Transafrican Journal of History*. 16: 151-166.
- Klein, Martin A. 1990. "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on the Societies of the Western Sudan". *Social Science History* 14(2): 231-253.
- Heywood, Linda M. 2009. "Slavery and its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491-1800". *The Journal of African History* 50(1): 1-22.
- Uzoigwe, G.N. 1973. "The Slave Trade and African Societies". *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 14(2): 187-212.
- Van Dantzig, Albert. 1975. "Effects of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Some West African Societies" *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire*; 252-269.