

INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS AND CITIZENSHIP IN RURAL AFRICA

*Risk and Reciprocity in
Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire*



Lauren M. MacLean

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521192965

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First published 2010

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

MacLean, Lauren M.

Informal institutions and citizenship in rural Africa : risk and reciprocity in Ghana and
Cote d'Ivoire / Lauren M. MacLean.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in comparative politics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Ghana – Rural conditions. 2. Villages – Ghana. 3. Borderlands – Ghana.
4. Cote d'Ivoire – Rural conditions. 5. Villages – Cote d'Ivoire. 6. Borderlands – Cote
d'Ivoire. I. Title. II. Series

HN832.A8M33 2010

307.76'209667-dc22

2009047385

ISBN 978-0-521-19296-5 Hardback

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this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is,
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List of Abbreviations

CAISSTAB	Caisse de Stabilisation et de Soutien des Prix des Productions Agricoles
CPP	Congress People's Party
GOCI	Government of Côte d'Ivoire
GOG	Government of Ghana
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
FPI	Front Populaire Ivoirien
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NPP	New Patriotic Party
PAMSCAD	Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment
PDCI	Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council
RDR	Rassemblement pour la Démocratie Républicaine
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the intellectual and moral support of many different people in many different parts of the world. Tom Callaghy inspired a passion for both teaching and research as a professor and senior thesis advisor during my undergrad days at Penn and has continued to guide and mentor me at each stage of my career. In my first job after college at World Resources Institute in Washington, DC, Tom Fox, Kirk Talbott, and Peter Viet encouraged me to do and learn as much as I could, including facilitating my first trip to West Africa. Another WRI colleague, Dorm Adzobu, his wife, Annie, and their children welcomed me so warmly and generously to Ghana that it has been difficult to travel anywhere else.

During graduate school and beyond, my doctoral committee advisors at Berkeley, David Leonard, Michael Watts, Robert Price, and Kiren Chaudhry, have provided invaluable intellectual support and advice. I also benefited from critical feedback from many others at various stages of the project, including Christopher Ansell, Ruth Collier, Akhil Gupta, Frank Hirtz, Jonah Levy, the late Donald Rothchild, and Richard Roberts. The “Berkeley mafia” of graduate student colleagues continues to thrive through virtual communication, so countless thanks go to Regina Abrami, Dennis Galvan, Markus Goldstein, Ken Greene, Evan Lieberman, Khalid Medani, Aaron Schneider, and Rob Weiner. In particular, I owe thanks to Melani Cammett and Julie Lynch, who provided incisive readings of the manuscript at critical points. A special thank you to Teri Caraway, who provided extensive comments and was my link to an academic community at Northwestern University in Chicago. I also am grateful to Bruce Clayton (Northwestern University) and Antje Schwennicke (Indiana University) for their statistical expertise and support.

This project would not have been possible without the support and efforts of many friends and colleagues in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. I am grateful for the support of Joseph Ayee and everyone in the Department of Political Science at the University of Ghana at Legon. I wish to thank E. Gyimah-Boadi and the Centre for Democracy and Development for their support during my research stay and afterward. In Côte d'Ivoire, I would like to thank Laurent Vidal, Pierre Janin, Virginie Briand, and other colleagues then at IRD's (formerly ORSTOM) Centre de Petit Bassam for the research affiliation, intellectual guidance, and logistical support. Needless to say, I could not have conducted this research without the invaluable contributions of my research assistants: Kweku Dickson and Faustina Sottie in Ghana, and Fulgence Kanga and Célestin Mian in Côte d'Ivoire. Not only was the quality of the data they collected outstanding, but they also taught me volumes about the local culture and politics during the many meals and late night discussions we shared. Mr. Ernest Appiah deserves special thanks for providing his expertise and managerial support in all aspects of the project in Ghana.

The most tremendous debt I owe is to the four village communities who welcomed a total stranger into their midst. Thank you to Nana Amaankwaah and Nana Fosu Ababio II in Ghana as well as Nana Bouadou Dogi in Côte d'Ivoire for approving and making arrangements for our research team. Thank you to our "tuteurs" M. Affouafou N'Doli, M. Bonzou, and M. Assande Kablan as well for all they did to facilitate a welcoming home. I feel so honored to have been included in the lives of so many families during my stay; in particular, I wish to acknowledge the friendship of Augustine Addai-Appiah, Janet Antiwiwaa, Ibrahim Amadu Sissao, Noel Koffi Kouassi Assande, Jacques Ehui Assa, and Thomas Tanoh Kablan. Thank you also to Mr. Joseph Fosu-Oppong; Georgina Darko; the late Agbatou Adiko; the then-deputy mayor of Abengourou, Kouame Amoakon; and the then-sous-préfet, Victor Gnanngbi for their genuine concern for my safety and happiness in finding the right villages for the study and for their extensive efforts to make the appropriate introductions. I also want to thank my American families in Africa: the Schefflers in Ghana; and the Belle Isles, Bissets, Rayners, and Sikes in Côte d'Ivoire.

Next, I would like to acknowledge the financial support I have received for this project: the National Science Foundation, the Social Science Research Council International Pre-Dissertation Fellowship Program, the Fulbright Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program, the Institute for the Study of World Politics, the University of California at Berkeley African Studies Center, the University of California at Berkeley's

Department of Political Science, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Indiana University's Department of Political Science, Indiana University's Workshop on Political Theory and Policy Analysis, as well as Indiana University's Center on Philanthropy.

Many colleagues have provided support as I worked to revise the dissertation and turn it into a book. At the University of Michigan, Ann Lin, my mentor while doing the RWJ post-doctoral fellowship, helped me think through the book's arguments. At Indiana University, Jeff Isaac read and gave valuable comments on several drafts. Lin Ostrom and Mike McGinnis supported a workshop "book party," at which I received constructive criticism from colleagues across disciplines including Beth Buggenhagen, Mike Ensley, Sheldon Gellar, John Hanson, Jeff Hart, Les Lenkowsky, Bill Schuerman, Regina Smyth, Bev Stoeltje, Armando Razo, David Reingold, Jean Robinson, Beate Sissenich, and Ann Marie Thomson. Thank you also for the comments and cheerleading from Eileen Braman, Gardner Bovingdon, Kon Dierks, Ilana Gershon, Gina Lambright, Marissa Moorman, and Hillel Soiffer. I am also grateful for the diligent research assistance of Megan Hershey, Mike Radcliffe, Katie Scofield, and Martha Wilfahrt.

At Cambridge University Press, I am so thankful for the support of my editors, Lew Bateman and Margaret Levi, throughout this process. In particular, I owe a tremendous debt to associate editor Bob Bates, who provided insight and encouragement at every stage. I learned so much from the review process as an author, scholar, and teacher. I valued all the constructive criticisms and suggestions offered by the external reviewers. I also would like to thank Emily Spangler and the production staff at Cambridge.

I would also like to thank several journals for permission to reprint material that has already been published. Some material from Chapters 4 and 5 are published with kind permission from Springer Science+Business Media, from the article, "Constructing a Social Safety Net in Africa: An Institutionalist Analysis of Colonial Rule and State Social Policies in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 37, Issue 3 (2002), pp. 64–90. Several chapters in the book draw from material originally published in "State Social Policies and Social Support Networks: The Unintended Consequences of State Policymaking on Informal Networks in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire," *International Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 26, Issue 6, pp. 665–691, which is reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd. (<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>). Some material from Chapter 6 has already appeared in "Empire of the Young: The Legacies of State Agricultural Policy on Local Capitalism and

Social Support Networks in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, 3 (July 2004), pp. 469–496. And parts of Chapter 7 draw on material previously published in my article, "Mediating Ethnic Conflict at the Grassroots: The Role of Local Associational Life in Shaping Political Values in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2004), pp. 589–617.

Finally, I would never have finished this book without the endless support and grounding perspective of my husband, Jason MacLean, and our children, Jasper, Skylar, and Benjamin. They always cheered me on, even when the project involved difficult separations for overseas fieldwork, or time tied to my computer chair finishing another draft. The support and interest of my parents, in-laws, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins proved to me that the extended family is not necessarily a vestige of the past here in the United States. I also owe a huge debt to my "village community" of friends and dream teams of caregivers for our children. This book is dedicated to them all.

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PART I

THE TRANSFORMATION OF INFORMAL
INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIAL RECIPROCITY IN
GHANA AND CÔTE D'IVOIRE

CHAPTER I

Introduction

African political economies are not always and everywhere in crisis. Indeed, over the past 100 years, the countries of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa have been considered successful models of democratic and economic development at different points. We cannot understand the varied paths of the Ghanaian and Ivoirian political economies by solely focusing at the macro level on state weakness, or by exclusively concentrating at the micro-level on the deficits of social capital or missing institutions. In this book, we travel to similar villages in the countryside on either side of the Ghana–Côte d'Ivoire border to see how the history of people's experience of state-building has fundamentally transformed economics and politics from the ground up.

A little more than 100 years ago, prior to European colonial rule, an outsider traveling to the four Akan villages selected for this study in the forest zone of West Africa would have found communities with very similar political histories, economies, social organization, and cultures. As the Asante Empire began to centralize and expand in the mid-seventeenth century in what is now Ghana, these Akan groups resisted incorporation.¹ Instead, they chose to migrate farther westward of the Asante capital of Kumasi to what is now the southwestern part of Ghana and the southeastern part of Côte d'Ivoire. (See Figures 1.1 and 1.2.) The Akan peoples in these

¹ A variety of Akan peoples had migrated to what is now Ghana around the thirteenth century AD. The Akan linguistic group includes the Akuapem, the Akyem, the Asante, the Baoule, the Brong, the Fante, and the Nzema peoples of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. They were organized as small states until a few groups began to centralize and expand their kingdoms, most notably, the Asante Empire. By 1874, the Asante Empire included over 100,000 km² and approximately three million subjects. See, for example, Wilks (1993, 1975); McCaskie (2001, 1995b); Arhin (1976); and Fortes (1969).

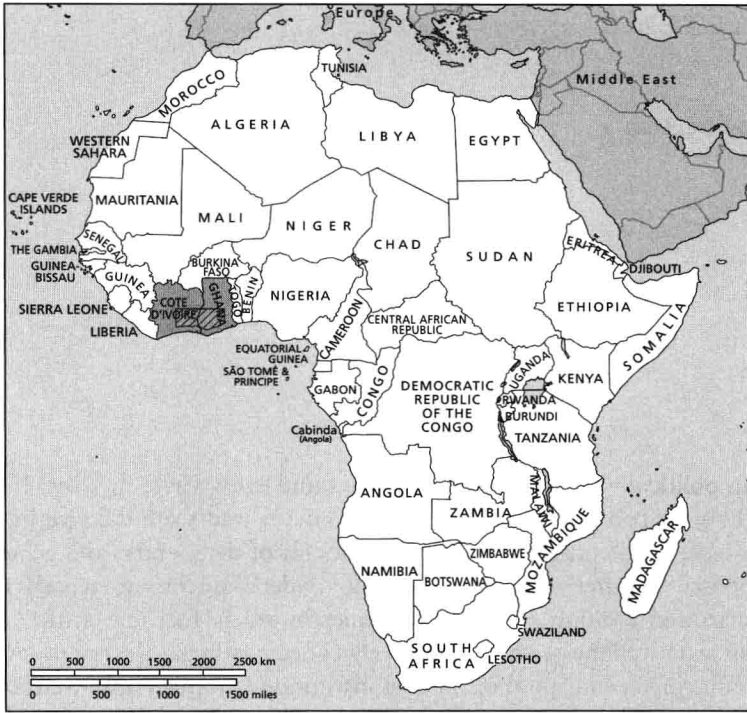


FIGURE 1.1. Map of Study Region in Africa

fieldsite villages thus shared similar village chieftancies, matrilineal family systems, and customary systems of land tenure, inheritance, and justice.² Even today, village residents of these Akan regions continue to identify as “one family,” avowing that they fundamentally have *shared* the same pre-colonial history, politics, and culture.

Yet, when I arrived in these villages in 1998–1999, I found striking differences in the local politics and cultures. In particular, I was surprised by the extent and types of variation in the informal institutions of social reciprocity and indigenous notions of citizenship. First, informal reciprocity – the ways that village residents exchanged help and social support with their nuclear and extended family, clan, friends, neighbors, ethnic group, or others – was quite different in the Akan areas now on either side of the Ghana–Côte d’Ivoire national border. In the Ghanaian region, fewer people were

² For example, see Firmin-Sellers’ (1996) comparative analysis of the development of land tenure systems in the same two regions as this book.

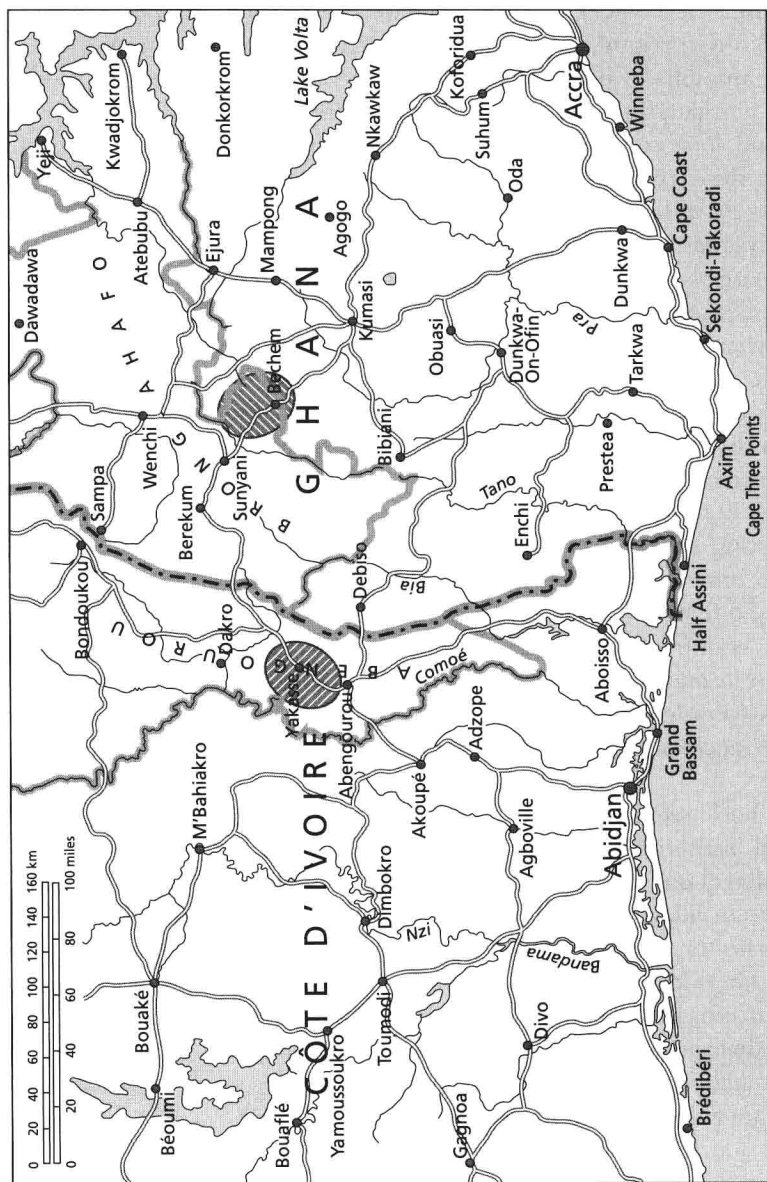


FIGURE 1.2. Map of Fieldsites in Similar Regions of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana