African Traditional Authorities and Religious Institutions as Intermediary Institutions to Contact Members of Parliaments

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ABSTRACT

The recent resurgence of traditional authorities and religious institutions in Africa has stirred a heated scholarly debate about the positive or negative roles these institutions might play in the African democratic process. Approaching this debate from the constituent-representative perspective in Africa, this article examines the extent to which the sometimes controversial traditional authorities and religious leaders impact the constituent-representative relationship in 20 African countries. Quantitatively analyzing cross-national Afrobarometer survey data with probit regression models, I find that African citizens use more informal linking mechanisms such as traditional authorities and religious leaders than formal channels like the party to contact their representatives. These so-called traditional channels that fulfill a social utility role toward ordinary citizens facilitate the connection between voters and their elected officials. More importantly, the article fills a gap in the literature by probing and substantiating the role of informal intermediary institutions as they strengthen ordinary citizens' weak political attachment to their political systems in Africa.

Introduction

The recent resurgence of traditional authorities and religious institutions in Africa has stirred a heated scholarly debate about the positive or negative roles these institutions might play in the African democratic process (Ayittey 1995; Mamdani 1996; Keulder 1998; Lawson 2002; Mattes 2007). In addition to their resurfacing, these institutions have become a safe place for citizens to confide in and communicate their political preferences to these institutions. More relevantly, citizens reach out more to their traditional or religious authorities than their elected officials when faced with political or social issues. From its first round of surveys in 1999 to the 9th in 2022, the Afrobarometer's successive survey rounds have shown this phenomenon. For instance, on average, whereas 37% of Africans reach out to their religious leaders and 29% of citizens contact their traditional rulers, only 12% contact their national representatives. Furthermore, there is wide variation among countries; while 35 % of Liberians contact their Members of Parliament (MPs), only 3% in Madagascar bother to do so. As for contact with informal leaders, 58% of Sierra Leoneans contact religious and 65% contact traditional rulers; in contrast, less than 5% contact traditional authorities in Cape Verde. For political scientists who know the centrality of a healthy constituent-representative relationship in a representative democracy, the absence of such a relationship, coupled with the omnipresence of these informal institutions in the African democratic process, should raise some critical questions about democratic accountability. Scholars are not alone in worrying; democratic practicians often wonder how African citizens could hold accountable an elected official who did not hear his constituents' preferences directly from them (Peter Veit et al. 2008, 10). However, while citizens' evaluation of their elected officials is crucial for democratic accountability, it is a secondary step in constituent-representative interactions. The first step of such a relationship is to investigate whether and how constituents relate to their elected officials across the countries examined.

The Research Question

Since empirical observations and survey data simultaneously report the lack of constituent-representative contacts and the quasi-omnipresence of traditional and religious authorities in the political sphere (Ribot 2002; Englebert 2002; Ubink 2008; Kyed 2007; and Bratton and Logan 2011, 2008), then the most pressing question becomes to wonder the extent to which are religious and traditional authorities useful to the constituent-representative relationship in the African democratic process? Answering this question requires a closer look at the debate in the literature about whether traditional institutions are necessary for the consolidation of African democracy. This debate pits two camps against each other: "Modernists" versus "Traditionalists." Traditionalists posit that African traditional authorities, organic emanations of the ordinary citizens, are the true representatives of the people, and as such, these informal institutions constitute the steppingstone of any successful democratic transition in Africa (Ayittey 1995; Keulder 1998; Lawson 2002). In stark opposition, modernists, led by Mamdani (1996), one of their most vocal proponents, counter that these traditional authorities are nothing but vestiges of colonial despotism and are antithetical to

any democratic development in Africa (Mamdani 1996, 18). As a result, traditional authorities and democratic institutions cannot coexist. A successful democratic reform in Africa ought to get rid of these institutions.

The Argument

I argue that traditional institutions are useful for democracy because they serve as a communication channel between citizens and their representatives. The existence of traditional authorities facilitates the two-track political participation of citizens in Africa. This side-by-side use of the two modes of political participation is using informal channels to reach out to formal institutions to increase citizens' input in their political communities. Specifically, compared to other factors purported to facilitate contact between citizens and their representatives, the combined effect of these two institutions stands out as the most powerful predictor of contacting Members of the Parliament. The idea of side-by-side or low and high road of participation is akin to that of the two-track political process in Africa. Amply explained by Manning (2002) in her analysis of the Mozambican peace process, the concept of two-track practice is a realistic description of political practices in Africa where informal institutions (often ignored or dismissed) complement formal ones. Similar to Manning's (2002) argument of the two-track implementation of the peace agreement in Mozambique, the two-track participation argument sheds light on a common practice yet benighted by the lack of academic interest (63-84).

To demonstrate this argument, I devise the following design. My primary dependent variable is citizens' contact with their members of parliament in Africa. My two primary independent variables are contacts of religious institutions and contacts of traditional authorities. I contrast the effects of these two primary independent variables (informal institutions) against the effects of the alternative hypothesis variables: contacts of party officials, voting, and citizens' partisanship, controlling for individual-level variables (demographic and socioeconomic) and country-level variables (electoral systems and country gross domestic product per capita). I also control for a potential selection bias caused by highly opinioned individuals who might contact traditional authorities and MPs. This makes the causal connection between traditional authorities and MPs spurious. Following the examples of public opinion studies in American politics, I control citizens with strong opinions by including the variable *closeness to a party* that captures individuals' ideological strength. The approach is strictly quantitative, and the data comes from the Afrobarometer Round 4. Post estimations of the logistic regression results support the hypothesized relationships that citizens who contact these institutions have a marginal effect of 4.3% more likely to contact their MP than citizens who do not contact their religious or traditional authorities. Even taken individually, contacts of religious institutions and traditional authorities remain remarkable indicators (albeit reduced) of contact of MPs (contacting religious institutions, 2.3% and contacting traditional authorities, 2%). In contrast, those who contact party officials are only 0.5% more likely to contact their MP. Unsurprisingly, weak party attachment is reflected by a negative coefficient of the variable party closeness on contact with MP (-2.4%). The finding on party closeness also resolves the potential threat of a selection bias and confirms the causal effects of these institutions. Another all-too-common finding in African behavioral politics is the quasi-exclusion of women; the coefficient of gender is predictably negative and highly significant (-2%). These findings are echoed in Afrobarometer surveys. On average, forty percent of ordinary citizens directly contact their religious leaders and twenty-nine percent their traditional authorities daily. In contrast, very few ordinary citizens directly contact their elected legislative officials from their districts. Practically, less than two out of ten ordinary citizens ever initiate such contact with their representatives. An overwhelming eighty-seven percent of the population lives in total isolation from their representatives. A quick computation shows that the rates of contact between citizens and their informal institutions are twelve-fold higher than that of the citizens-MP contacts. These rates of contacts vary across countries, with some countries displaying a higher rate of contacts, such as Botswana (20%), Kenya (19%), and Liberia (18%), and others showing abysmal rates of contact between citizens and their MPs including Madagascar (1%), Namibia (2%) Nigeria (4%). These figures indicate that informal institutions are more connected to ordinary citizens than formal ones.

Scope, Contirbutions, and Limitations

The article covers only the twenty countries from the Afrobarometer Round 4, including Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The rationale behind the choice of Afrobarometer round four stems from the richness of this round in representative-constituent-related topics in Africa. In addition to the common questions about types of contacts, this round allows the researcher to delve into the role expectations of citizens and parliament members across the continent. More importantly, the timing of the survey (2009) gives the investigator the unique opportunity to assess the extent to which the dyadic electoral connection between citizens and their elected officials has taken root two decades after the beginning of Peter Schraeder's (1995) calls "The Third Wave of democratization in Africa" (1161).

Although the subject deals with religious institutions and their relationships to political participation, it does not attempt to differentiate the distinct effects of each religious denomination on participatory activities. I focus strictly on the combined effects of the two informal institutions, African traditional authorities and religious actors, as they facilitate contact between citizens and their MPs. In other words, I skirt the debate about the comparative effects of mainline religious denominations'

"old missions" versus that of new Pentecostal or new charismatic churches or the debate about contrasting Christians versus Muslims regarding their respective effects on political participation. The article treats these informal institutions as non-state actors that are "linkage institutions" between the state and the society.

This article contributes to the legislative-constituent relationship in Africa by showing that formal channels of articulation of citizens' preferences do not render obsolete the channels of informal institutions. Despite the relatively small marginal effects of the principal independent variables (i.e., 4.31% of the combined effects of traditional authorities and religious institutions), the substantive meaning of these findings is twofold. First, the numerical substantiation of the linking mechanism between representatives and their constituents gives hope to democratic promotors and scholars. For democratic donors and democratic activists who endeavor on the field, these results suggest integrating African Traditional Authorities (ATA) in their democratic building efforts instead of antagonizing them. By integrating these structures, democratic promotors will help citizens convey their preferences to their Members of Parliament (MPs), albeit through informal authorities. The second importance pertains more to academia. The findings validate an existing phenomenon extensively investigated in other fields from qualitative approaches. Understandably, the reaction to these structures has been multiple. This article takes on the debate that opposes the two camps on the role of African Traditional Authorities (ATA) in the African democratic process. Acknowledging each side's point, I argue that this issue should not be an either-or matter. I contend that framing the debate that way amounts to a false dichotomy because traditional authorities are part and parcel of the African social fabric and its political DNA. Even though these institutions in many places on the continent have had a tarnished legacy and continue to be weaponized against their own very people, they cannot simply be ignored. My middle-of-the-road argument is to acknowledge them, train them, and use their popular legitimacy to disseminate democratic values. Mozambique has successfully attempted such an integration of traditional authorities. My argument is substantiated by empirical evidence from the Afrobarometer data. It shows that compared to formal institutions such as contacting party officials or education, the variables contacting African traditional authorities and religious leaders are the most powerful predictors of contact with MPs. Moreover, because these institutions are integral to the African social-political landscape, shedding light on this path increases the possibility of deepening the root of democracy by strengthening upward democratic accountability. Finally, the article contributes to the participation theory by identifying these institutions as modes of political participation. Consequently, their fate must not be confined to a false and rigid dichotomist relationship with democratic consolidation in Africa.

I divide the article into three parts. The introductory section frames the article. The second section elaborates on the theoretical framework of this chapter and comprises two subsections. The first subsection evaluates the existing literature on the political relevance of these institutions. Specifically, it critically examines supporting and opposing arguments in the academic debate about traditional authorities and religious institutions relating to the building of democracy in Africa. The second subsection presents my argument as a middle course between traditional and modernists. The third section consists of the empirical evidence that substantiates my argument.

Literature Review

The present literature review has three subsections. The first subsection sheds light on historical backgrounds and the debate about the resurgence of traditional authorities. The second subsection examines the different scholarly approaches used to analyze the political relevance of religious institutions. The third subsection is more pertinent to the research question. It reviews the state of the scholarly debate about whether traditional institutions fit in the picture of Africa's democratic development. I close these critical evaluations by pointing to gaps in the literature and the way to

Extant theories about the resurgence of Religious and Traditional Institutions

In this subsection, I report an empirical observation about the recent revival of religious and traditional institutions and the existing speculations about the causes of this resurgence. Although the issues of resurgence of these institutions deal only tangentially with the research question of this article, extant theories about resurgence provide a historical background that helps better contextualize the debate between *"Modernists*" and *"Traditionalists."* If anything, this resurgence speaks to the resilience of these institutions and their omnipresence in ordinary people' (Logan 2008, 2011). Reports from various surveys lend credence to this widespread phenomenon of the resurgence of religious and traditional institutions in Africa. According to the World Value Survey (WVS), Africa is the most religious continent in the world. Patterson (2015) reports that religious organizations take up the lion's share of non-state actors in every single country on the continent (43). Membership in religious groups has consistently soared, giving religious actors and institutions vast networks, resources, and time to increase their relevance politically, economically, and socially (2015, 40). The importance of religiosity is shown through the ever-swelling rate of memberships and the importance given to religious practices by members. According to the Afrobarometer, on average, 73.2% claim to be members of a religious group, and 80% claim that religion is very important. Of these members, nearly 75% are either active members or occupy a leadership position. Only one out of four surveyed declare not to be affiliated with any religious group (Afrobarometer Round 4, online analysis). The two monotheistic religions (Christians and Muslims)

dominate the religious landscape. These two major religious groups themselves comprise several subdivisions. For instance, among Christian religions, the Afrobarometer lists 23 subgroups including Apostolic Faith, Baptist, Calvinist, Church of Christ, Christian Church, Coptic, Dutch reform, Dutch Reformed, Evangelical, Independent, Jehovah Witness, Last Church, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Moravian, Mormon, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Quaker, Seventh Day Adventist, Zionist, and Zionist. The other mainline religious group, the Muslim, is divided into two major subgroups: Sunni and Shia. Each of these subgroups includes multiple brotherhoods, including Hamadiya, Ismaeli, Izala, Layenes, Mouridiya, Qadiriya, Sidiya, Tijania, Trabiya, Wahhabiya (Afrobarometer round 4). Like religious organizations, though less in magnitude, African traditional authorities have known a resurgence across the continent. Altogether, scholars and democratic activists have enumerated five potential causal factors undergirding these institutions' upsurge: state-centric theories, pre-colonial social organization, colonial legacy, the extent of countries' democratic consolidation, and the influence of international actors.

The nature of a pre-existing social structure before colonial penetration is presumed to be a source of the resurgence of parallel institutions, such as traditional and religious institutions in Africa. A group of African scholars categorized African precolonial political structures into two main types based on the extent of power concentration: centralized and decentralized governance (Onyejekwe et al. 2004). In the centralized type, the power structure is hierarchical, whereby an absolute power in the decision-making process dominates the monarch or chief at the top. The centralized system displayed a sense of collective resistance in Uganda (the Buganda empire), Lesotho, Botswana, and Ghana (the Ashanti). In contrast, in the decentralized type, the power structure was collegial, and all decisions were consensual. The decentralized systems consisted of groups of age sets, a conglomerate of small villages loosely tight together (Onyejekwe et al. 2004, 12). To illustrate, the decentralized types are roughly like the Delian League of the Greek city-state association in 478 BC with a weak enforcement power. Following the power structure, this argument infers that in places where power was highly centralized, traditional authorities resisted more colonial powers and new African states than in places where they were decentralized. With their hierarchical structure, these social organizations resisted total annulment often by going underground. These concealed organizations gained strength whenever the formal structure failed to exert its functions. Similarly, Englebert (2002) sees colonial legacy as a source of resurgence of traditional authorities (120). Unsurprisingly, the resurgence has happened more in Anglophone Africa than in Francophone or Lusophone parts. This institutionalist argument suggests that the British colonial model of indirect rule nurtured local powers. Consequently, in ex-British colonies, existing local and traditional institutions grew and were strengthened by the post-1990s winds of Africa's liberalization. Empirical observations show that despite caustic criticisms leveled at the British style of indirect ruling, traditional rulers have remained more politically relevant in ancient British colonies than elsewhere in Africa. Still, it is fair to point out that the difference in colonial legacy mattered more at the early ages of the independence of these countries (Lee and Paine 2016). After the 1990s' decade, virtually all African countries have witnessed a surge in the activities of these institutions, irrespective of the formal colonial power's style of administration (direct or indirect rule). The Afrobarometer's surveys show no difference in rates of ordinary citizens' contact with religious and traditional leaders among African ex-colonies. For instance, from Afrobarometer Round 4, contacts of traditional and religious leaders average 27.6% in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda (all ex-British colonies). The contact rate with traditional authorities averages 30% in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal (all former French colonies). This could mean that these institutions did not cease to exist even in the direct form of colonial rule, where the French brutally erased precolonial power structures; they merely went underground and resurfaced under democratic transition. Below, table 1 briefly summarizes the style of pre-colonial political organization, colonial rule, and the status of recognition of these institutions post-1990. By recognition, scholars mean the official acknowledgment of traditional authorities' existence and their jurisdictions' purview. These recognitions are usually couched in legal terms in countries' founding documents (constitutions or decrees). For instance, in Mozambique, the 2002 constitution acknowledges the existence of traditional authorities and defines their jurisdiction. In contrast, the latest Nigerian constitution of 1999 openly chooses to ignore traditional institutions (Iyeh Peter 2014, 136). Furthermore, authors have gone beyond the precolonial and colonial political structure to focus on the adaptability of these social structures to the newly independent African states' organization. The most known proponent of this contention is David Apter (1960), who divides traditional authorities into two categories: *"instrumental"* traditional authorities and *"consummatory"* ones (50). He defines instrumental traditional authorities as those who adapted swiftly to the new state's organizations, remained alert to signals of state failure, and seized upon those failures to reassert their existence. He cites the Buganda Empire as an illustration of instrumental traditional authorities. According to Apter (1960), despite adhering to Idi Amin's administration and living in a low profile, the Bugadan traditional authorities took advantage of the collapse of this regime to reassert itself. In contrast, "*consummatory*" traditional authorities easily gave in to the attractions of the new state's perks of power. They let themselves be captured by the states with the consequence of dismantling their core structure (Apter 1960, 61).

The fourth school of thought attributes causes of the resurgence of traditional authorities and religious institutions to failed African states (Ekeh 1975; Migdal 1998; Sklar 1999; Baker 2000; Herbst 2000; Ubink 2008). The underlying assumption is that a badly dysfunctional state leaves a void of services these institutions fill immediately. According to Bruce Baker (2000), state failure exhorts rival social organizations like tribal authorities to seize the opportunity and exert their "social control"

(26). This assumption would make us believe that war-torn countries are fertile grounds for traditional authorities to thrive. A variant of the state weakness premise is put forward by Herbst (2000). He contends that the failure of the state to project its power (due to countries' geography and weak demographic density) opens up opportunities for remote local and regional power centers to rally around one or several unifying dimensions of their identity, be it ethnicity, language, or history (124). Ubink (2008) adds that states have allowed traditional authorities to expand for state-centric interests (23). State motivations are self-serving when they attempt to associate with traditional authorities; they aim at gaining electoral legitimacy at a local level. States are also pragmatic actors in letting these institutions flourish. Ribot (2002) writes that states have learned that sidelining traditional authorities often antagonizes them and may amount to the failure of state-sponsored projects at a local level (16). More importantly, the state associates traditional authorities with undertakings to use them as linkage institutions to reach individual citizens. Taken to its logical conclusion, this state-centric argument suggests that traditional authorities would be silenced in strong states. Once again, the reality on the ground shows that most countries that have formally acknowledged these institutions are all relatively strong states. Examples include South Africa, Ghana, Botswana, Burkina Faso, and two previous countries torn by civil wars, Mozambique and Uganda. Furthermore, on the face of it, the state-centric logic comes intuitively. However, realities on the ground leave this assumption unsubstantiated. For instance, this assumption would make war-torn countries fertile ground for traditional authorities to thrive. Yet, as Englebert (2002) stresses, civil wars did not make traditional authorities emerge in Liberia, Zaire, Angola, or Cote D'Ivoire (The exception being in Sierra Leone, where the elders controlled the local civil defense units, the *Kamajors* during the Sierra Leonean civil war.

Scholars have attributed resurgence to international actors (USAID and international financial institutions (Ribot 2002; Englebert 2002; Ubink 2008; Kyed 2007; and Bratton and Logan 2011, 2008). The idea is that resurgence is an outcome of the applications of conditions attached to the aid package from external actors (usually the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). Conditions for getting these development packages include stripping African states' budgets and encouraging decentralization and local governance. These Bretton Woods institutions have expanded their partnership beyond state actors to include traditional and local authorities. For instance, Ubink (2008) reports a partnership between the Asanteeman, the Abuakwa, and the World Bank in funding 5 million dollars for local projects in Ghana (11).

Resurgence as a signal of a failed national identity-building

Rejecting all the above speculations, scholars see the resurgence from a different vantage point: national unity (Bustin 1999, 2000; Chabal 1994). For these scholars, rather than indicating a thriving civil society, the resurgence of traditional authorities expresses a failure in making a unifying national identity. Bustin (1999) first pointed this out by comparing the Republic Democratic of Congo to Uganda, regarding how citizens in the two countries showed their attachment to their national identity. In Uganda, Bustin (1999) noticed that despite boasting a dynamic civil society and an uptick in the activities of traditional and religious institutions, the country remains bitterly polarized between major traditional authorities. In addition to these divisions along tribal or ethnic lines in Uganda, ordinary citizens display stronger allegiance to their tribal groups than to their national identity. Citizens primarily identify themselves as Buganda, Banyankole, Basoga, Langi, or as part of one of the 37 other ethnic groups. Bustin opposes Uganda in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He observes that citizens in the DRC, a virtually collapsing state that has gone through cyclical civil wars since its independence, show more national pride than tribal loyalty (83). Bustin (1999) hypothesizes that when the nation-building project is on the right track, all communities inclusively feel less threatened and express less the need to be acknowledged (86). Corroborating this stance, Chabal (1994) adds that national identity building has succeeded in countries where the ethnic makeup is less lopsided (64). In other words, wherever one or two ethnic groups claim the status of ethnic majority, the ethnic dimension of citizens' identity becomes more salient, such as in Kenya, Rwanda, or Ethiopia. In contrast, when a country's ethnic makeup is fairly evenly distributed, constructing national identity is more successful because the emphasis is less on ethnic dimension than on national identity; examples include Cameroon, Tanzania, and Guinea (68).

At this juncture, one can retain that the resurgence of these institutions is a multi-causal, context-dependent, and undeniable phenomenon. Each of the listed causes above is a contributing factor. What is constant is the causal connection between the advent of democratic change and the resurgence of the continent. Although no statistical inference can be drawn from such a small sample of 20 countries, the temporal precedence of the advent of democracy and the subsequent formal recognition of these institutions is irrefutable. Many countries have formally mentioned and acknowledged the rights of traditional and religious institutions in countries' funding documents. For instance, Botswana formally acknowledged traditional and religious institutions in the 1960s, Senegal in 1978, Liberia in 1986, Burkina in 1987; Ghana in 1992; Lesotho (revamped constitution 1993); South Africa in 1994; Namibia (Act of 2000); Zambia, Zimbabwe in 2013. Since resurgence seems to have gained strength in the wake of the democratic transition in Africa, one is poised to ask these two questions: how have scholars approached the political relevance of these institutions, and to what extent do traditional and religious institutions contribute positively or negatively to the consolidation of democracy in Africa?

Overwhelmingly in the existing literature, the political relevance of religious and traditional authority has been approached

from a macro-level perspective. Scholars have focused on leaders' behavior and interactions with the state at national and local levels. An illustration is religious leaders' roles in the 1990s during National Conferences in Africa. Haynes (1995) cites the role of many bishops (for Christians) and *Ulemas* and Sheikdom (for Muslims) as presiding officers of national conferences (102). Because of these roles, many observant perceive these leaders as democracy advocates. However, Haynes (1995) levels a vitriolic criticism at religious leaders, accusing them of being part of the hyperclass that exploits the uneducated, gullible poor in Africa (90). His analysis, rooted in the Marxist theory of class struggle, ascribes leaders' involvement in national conferences to subterfuge to maintain the status quo. He denounces the unholy connection between the political and religious elites to create a hegemonic coalition that "milks" the proletariat (95). In short, according to Haynes (1995), religious leaders cannot be actors of democratic change in Africa.

A second theoretical criticism of the elite-focused approach targets its main underlying assumptions, which implies that differences in religious denominations lead to differences in political behavior. This approach traces its roots back to Max Weber's [1930] 1992's Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, in which he hypothesized a strong relationship between democracy, capitalism, and protestant ethics. Likewise, Paul Gifford (1998) sees "older missions" to be highly supportive of democracy (31). However, the relationship between democracy and religious denominations remains an unsettled debate. Cooper (1976) attributes pervasive anti-democratic sentiments among Catholics to the strong hierarchical structure of their denomination that mirrors authoritarian regimes (75). Similarly, Reid and McClendon (2016) write about some religious leaders who have used their sermons to preach political apathy or political indifference (1045). Examples include Sufism (an extreme branch of Sunni Islam) and Black Protestants in the United States (Frazier and Lincoln 1974).

Do these institutions play a role in political participation in Africa?

Several classical studies have investigated the role religious and traditional institutions play in political participation in and outside Africa (Verba, Schlozman, Brady 1995; McCauley and Boadi 2009; Manglos and Weinreb 2012; Cooke et al. 2015; Patterson 2015; Reid and McClendon 2015). Approaching this question from a micro-level perspective, Manglos and Weinreb (2012) find no difference among religious traditions regarding their effects on political interest (216). Manglos and Weinreb's (2012) findings contradict the prevailing conventional wisdom that makes some religious traditions superior to others in fostering democratic attitudes. They argue that when education is accounted for and coupled with religious memberships, this interaction variable significantly increases citizens' political interest in every religious tradition (214). McClendon and Reid (2015) tackle the impact of religion on political participation in Africa from a psychological vantage point. They conducted an experiment in Nairobi that exposed churchgoers to religious messages. They find that Pentecostal self-affirming religious messages act like a stimulant that motivates religious people to get involved in some otherwise intimidating political activities. Ellis and Haar's (1998) article relates to the psychological perspective. They seek the reasons behind the pervasiveness of religious discourses and their ability to speak to power in Africa. For them, religious discourse in Africa can be seen as a countervailing power that attempts to remedy social injustices in the community (185). By claiming access to the invisible world, religious experts serve as intermediaries at several levels in Africa. They convey people's preoccupations to the invisible spirits and political leaders. Since ordinary Africans believe in the interconnection between the visible and invisible worlds, citizens understand why every leader (and family) has his or her spiritual expert (marabout or medicine men). Anecdotic examples expound the disproportionate power these private marabouts have weighing in African presidents' national or personal decisions (189).

In addition to classical studies, participatory outputs of traditional and religious authorities are said to result from their interactions with the state. Scholars agree that these interactions are strategic in that each entity seeks to assert itself while trying to influence the other. Furthermore, the state-society relationship involving these intermediary institutions and the state is dynamic (Lawson 2002; Cooke et al. 2015; Patterson 2015). Overall, the general pattern of these interactions results in one or the combination of these four outcomes: cooperation, cooptation-capture, confrontation, and fragmentation of these institutions. When interactions result in cooperation, both the state and traditional or religious institutions seek to accommodate each other, and the level of political participation is said to be high (Cooke et al. 2015, 8). The state and the non-state actors respect the limits of their respective spheres of influence and accept compromise for stability (Cooke et al. 2015, 1-126). The telltale example is the cohabitation of the Sunni Brotherhood and the state of Senegal (Cooke 2015,10).

In contrast, when interactions between the state and these intermediary institutions result in a capture and (or) a co-optation of the intermediary institutions, the state displays an unmitigated objective to incorporate them into its structure. Various methods are employed to achieve the capture goal, including bureaucratization and appointment to a national office to control these alternative loci of power (Downie in Cooke et al. 2015, 18). Empirical observations show that co-optation is the most common outcome of interactions between the state and the traditional and religious actors and institutions in Africa. Usually, traditional authorities that have allied themselves with the reining power have fallen in disgrace in the eyes of their fellow citizens. Capture cases are more pronounced in South Africa, where public distaste for chiefs who collaborated with the Apartheid remains strong (Mamdani 1996; Ntsebeza 2002). The participatory output in the case of co-opted intermediary institutions is reduced. Like co-optation, disintegration dampens the participatory dividend of religious institutions as a block.

A case in point is the implosion of church groups that cohered to spearhead democratization movements in Kenya (Downie in Cooke et al. 2015, 18). Initially, religious institutions faced the state as a unified block that pushed for a democratic change (Throup in Cooke et al. 2015, 20). As the state embarked on the track of democratic transition, this shift unleashed individual ambitions, and differences in political interest appeared—competing ambitions from distinct ethnic or regional backgrounds opened divisions within and among religious institutions. Political competitions with a strong ethnic undertone have led religious groups to disintegrate along ethnic lines. This has diluted religious groups' influence on political participation (Throup in Cooke et al. 2015,29).

Confrontation is the most extreme outcome of these interactions. Clashes between the state and traditional and religious institutions were common during the early stage of the democratic transition in Africa in the 1990s. When these institutions involved themselves in the struggle for democratic change, mostly through National Sovereign Conferences, they faced ruthless authoritarian rulers who dreaded the ballot poll and would do anything to protect their entrenched interests (Diamond, 1992). Head-butts over values and governance were frequent everywhere on the continent, most notably in Kenya, Zambia, and Guinea. In Kenya, leaders of all Christian denominations, churches, and their congregations were at the forefront to demand democratic change. In Zambia, the catholic Archbishop faced off with Hastings after issuing a scathing criticism against ongoing human rights abuses in Zambian. His criticism sparked widespread outcry and contributed to the collapse of the dictatorship in Zambia (Patterson, 2015). In Guinea, Mgr. Robert Sarah, the youngest bishop at his consecration (34 years), boldly and repeatedly confronted the Guinean dictator Sekou Toure for his Kangaroo courts and Gulag-type prisons in Guinea. For this, his name was on a blacklist of people to be executed, only to be spared by the death of Sekou Toure (Christophe Le Bec, *Jeune Afrique*, 2014). All in all, when the outcome of the interactions between the state and these intermediary institutions is confrontation, the participatory output is understandably cut short.

Traditionalists and modernists diverge on how traditional authorities foster universal participation. Because democracy implies universal participation, traditionalists such as Keulder (1998) posit that the African tradition of community- gatherings is the quintessential expression of a genuine democracy. He maintains that this type of gathering is simple, costless, direct, and accessible to everyone. Not only is everyone welcome to participate, but these community-wide gatherings offer safer arenas where ordinary people freely express their concerns. Communication is simple, direct, and mostly done face-to-face. In this sense, they are kin to both the original Athenian direct democracy and to the American time-honored tradition of Town Hall meetings. Regarding how the *demos* express their will, Ayittey (1995), a consummate traditionalist, claims that popular will can be expressed in two ways: majority will and unanimity. Whereas Westerners use majority rule to determine the popular will, Africans voice their popular will through unanimity reached in community gatherings (1184). One benefit of consensual decision-making is its permanent use of persuasion to assuage the dissenting party ultimately. In contrast, the majority rule often crushes the losing minority. More importantly, the unanimous decision-making process involves everyone because only consensual decisions carry the day. While traditionalists welcome modernity, they claim that "modernization does not mean westernization" (Ayittey 1995, 1204).

Modernists such as Molustse (2004) and Mattes (1997) reject the premise of community-wide-gatherings as an authentic and all-inclusive participatory mode. According to them, neither the participatory mode in these fora nor the decision-making process is democratic. Rather, these community-wide gatherings are restrictive and exclusive, and their decision-making process is far from consensual. Using the example of the Botswanan version of the community-wide gathering, the Kgotla, Molustse (2004) denounces these male-dominated gatherings of tribal leaders that discriminate against women and the youth (162). As for the decision-making process, Mattes (1997) counters that decisions that are taken in these gatherings are not made through the free contentment of attendees. On the contrary, these decisions are arbitrary and are reached by "coerced consensus, "whereby obsequious deference deters the slightest opposition. Substantively, these decisions yield individual preferences for the community interest (5). He concludes that traditional authorities stand for values that are at best antithetical to democracy and, at worst, they represent a non-democratic form of governmen" (6).

The second point of disagreement is on the extent to which African traditional authorities are accountable to their people. For the modernist Mamdani (1996), the most telling characteristic of traditional leaders is their despotism. He claims that the institution of traditional leaders reverses the direction of democratic accountability: accountability of these chiefs is upheld upwardly and inexistent downwardly, turning them into unfettered despotic leaders (18). However, traditionalists have vigorously disputed this claim, asserting that African political systems have built-in checks and balances mechanisms that even the mighty colonial power could not uproot (Ayittey 1995; Keulder 1998). Like unanimity, institutions of accountability, transparency, and checks and balances have long been practiced in Africa. Ayittey (1995) writes that in Africa's precolonial political systems, no power was unlimited:"Kings and chiefs' behavior were ritually controlled; their movements were hemmed in taboos to curtail discretionary use of power"(1210). Although Africans lacked written constitutions, they had multiple tools to curb despotic behavior. Max Gluckman (1965) gives the example of the *Barotse* in Central Africa, and Mike McGovern (2014) cites the case of *Kokologui* of Loma in Guinea and Liberia. These checks and balances allowed a mechanism to divest culprit monarchs or chiefs using a distinct channel of communication. For instance, the Serere in Senegal played a unique

drumbeat tune to signal their leaders' impeachment and revocation (Ayittey 1991).

The third area of dispute is the source of legitimacy of these institutions. Modernists contend that African traditional authorities lack popular legitimacy because they soiled their hands by allying themselves with the dominating power. Traditional authorities have always been tools of reinforcement in the hands of the oppressor, be it the colonial rulers or the newly independent state's representatives (Mamdani 1996; West and Klock 1999; Ntesebeza 2004). In his book *Subjects and Citizens*, Mamdani (1996) aims at these institutions and brilliantly analyzes the power dynamic between colonial rulers and their local representatives. Mamdani (1996) maintains that the alliance's ultimate goal between the colonial power and traditional leaders was to segregate and exploit rural dwellers. For instance, the author details how tribal leaders in South Africa sided with colonial powers and with the Apartheid regime against their people. These chiefs and tribal leaders were strawmen who reinforced arbitrary laws and received perks for their actions (28). In the same vein, West and Klock (1999) accuse these traditional leaders of being self-serving agents who shift allegiance depending on who is in power (460). Power-starved traditional leaders' duplicity is exposed in their dealings with their people and formal leaders. Lawson (2002) sees them as "vote brokers" in villages (quoted in Logan 2011). Ntesebeza (2004) views traditional leaders as more feared than respected, like the proverbial Machiavellian prince. Traditionalists reject the above description.

For traditionalists, along with providing stability in a rapidly changing world, African traditional authorities draw their legitimacy from the well of stewardship and adaptability. They deserve respect and trust because they provide a vast array of socio-economic and cultural services. In response to the accusation that traditional authorities are disloyal to their own, Williams (2010) responds that modernists mistake African traditional authorities' adaptability for duplicity. According to him, this adaptability serves both traditional leaders and their communities because it allows the latter to "straddle easily two worlds" as they become the face of the nation at the local level and the face of their locality on the national stage (121). This has led Owosu (1996) to argue that in Ghana, traditional authorities have had a constructive relationship with formal leaders and are credited for bringing development projects to their communities (312). Finally, traditionalists claim that African traditional authorities serve as a moral reference that anchors society into a solid moral ground and provides a sense of stability in a rapidly changing world.

Not all scholars see these two loci of power as competitors with a zero-sum outcome. Many scholars have taken a middle ground and claim these two entities are complementary (Anyanwu 2005; de Sousa Santos 2006; Kyed 2007; Ubink 2008; Logan 2008, 2011). While acknowledging that traditional authorities still bear some non-democratic features and flaws, they contend that framing this debate into two starkly opposing sides is misguiding. In a study conducted in Limpopo Province, Anyanwu (2005) explores the complementarity between formal and informal institutions. Using a qualitative strategy, he draws from a case study the evidence that rural folks do not necessarily oppose formal and informal institutions. The author concludes that ordinary people in rural areas desire to see the two forms of authority work hand in hand (97). This collaborative working relationship becomes fruitful when traditional authorities are recognized and associated with government-sponsored projects in villages. Failure to associate traditional authorities with government-led health antagonizes them and results in a debacle of these projects (Trinitapoli and Weinreb 2012). Although using a different methodology, Logan draws a similar conclusion. Her studies focus on the causes of the resilience of traditional authorities and their complementarity with formal institutions in Africa. Using a large dataset and a quantitative method, Logan (2008, 2011) finds that formal and informal authorities derive their legitimacy from the same fountain. Moreover, citizens concomitantly perceive these two entities as the two faces of the same currency. Citizens' attitudes toward chiefs are nurtured by their attitudes toward formal authorities and vice-versa (4). Logan concludes that the two provinces of authorities cohabitate harmoniously, and a symbiotic relationship exists between them. In her view, society effortlessly integrates the two (2). Integrating informal institutions into the state's structure is concrete in Mozambique. According to Kyed (2007), this integration has proven beneficial for the state, traditional leaders, and their customers. The December 15, 2000 decree acknowledged traditional authorities and integrated them by revamping their mission and christening them as "*community authority*" (8). The result has been a dynamic and continual reshaping of the state-traditional authorities whereby this productive tension increases their respective accessibility (Kyed 2007, 25). de Sousa Santos (2006) reports "the growing activism" of these informal institutions, likening them to the burgeoning interest groups phenomenon in Africa (64). Taking a more realist approach to the roles of traditional authorities, Ubink and Kyed (2008) warn that traditional authorities need not be compared to other linkage institutions (interest groups) or given lofty goals as in matured democracies. In the investigation of their desirability in African democracy, one must take contextual reality into account. They claim that the primary goal ought to be the improvement of local governance (14).

The proposed answers to the above questions have contributed considerably to our knowledge. Elite approach (i.e., the macro level) analysis has uncovered the intricacies of state-society interactions and different outcomes. For instance, it has helped put a finger on the roles played by religious leaders during the democratic change in the 1990s. However, the elite approach misses the other aspect of the story- arguably the most important- namely, ordinary citizens' daily actions and attitudes. In the heavily elite-driven approach, commoners are left out. While such academic negligence was understandable before the advent of the Afrobarometer, the availability of fresh, reliable, and individual-level data on public opinion and attitudes in

Africa allows researchers to analyze how and why ordinary citizens relate or not to their democratic institutions. After all, as Bratton says, ordinary people are those who breathe life into democratic institutions (Bratton 2010, 6). Another advantage of the individual-level analysis is to test how theories on the micro-foundation of political participation in mature democracies travel in an African setting. For instance, existing theories examined above on participation channels are limited to formal venues such as contacting your local party official or basing your action on your partisan identity. Finally, in the debate between modernists and traditionalists, although those who choose the middle ground adopt a pragmatic posture, their position begs questions about the democratic utility of the complementarity between formal and informal institutions. Pragmatists leave unanswered the following question: To what democratic end do informal and formal work together? The present article fills these gaps.

Table 1. Status of Recognition of Traditional Authorities in the 20 countries.

	Countries	Regions	Governing Style and Period		Status and Recognition	
			Pre-colonial	Colonial	Pre-1990	2018
1	Benin	Francophone	Centralized	Direct rule	Banned	Yes
2	Botswana	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Curbed	Yes
3	Burkina Faso	Francophone	Centralized	Direct rule	Banned	Yes
4	Cape Verde	Lusophone	Unknown	Direct rule	Unknown	Unknown
5	Ghana	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Curbed	Yes
6	Kenya	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Banned	No
7	Lesotho	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Authorized	Yes
8	Liberia	American	Decentralized	—-	Authorized	Yes
9	Madagascar	Francophone	Centralized	Direct rule	Banned	Yes
10	Malawi	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Authorized	Yes
11	Mali	Francophone	Centralized	Direct rule	Banned	Yes
12	Mozambique	Lusophone	Centralized	Direct rule	Banned	Yes
13	Namibia	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Authorized	Yes
14	Nigeria	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Banned	No
15	Senegal	Francophone	Decentralized	Direct rule	Authorized	Yes
16	South Africa	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Authorized	Yes
17	Tanzania	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Banned	Yes
18	Uganda	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Banned	Yes
19	Zambia	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Banned	Yes
20	Zimbabwe	Anglophone	Centralized	Indirect rule	Authorized	Yes

Theory

Why do intermediary institutions, traditional authorities, and religious institutions serve as conduits to connect citizens to their elected officials? I argue that these institutions link citizens and their MPs because of their indisputable social utility, allowing two-track political participation. Two-track participation in this article means the coexistence of formal (less used) and informal (more used) routes for citizens to convey their preferences. Informal channels of participation become the first conduits of citizens' concerns when other linkage institutions and the state suffer from pervasive weakness. Widespread institutional weakness of formal channels compounded by lack of genuine electoral connection between representatives and their constituencies gives no other choice to citizens to voice their concerns but to use what they are more familiar with, the closer traditional and religious institutions (Bratton et Al. 2005,134). In addition, traditional and religious institutions are proximate and highly visible in rural and urban areas. No matter how small or isolated communities are in Africa, edifices that house religious and traditional authorities are noticeable and present everywhere (Patterson 2015, 183). As actors with a perceived legitimacy in African society, religious and African traditional authorities provide an array of socioeconomic, political, and administrative services.

Traditional and religious institutions serve as intermediaries between citizens and their Members of Parliaments (MPs) because of their social stewardship in providing socioeconomic welfare (Anyanwu 2005, 97; Ubink 2008, 23; Patterson 2015, 175). Without a publicly funded welfare system, religious organizations are the primary caregivers in virtually all sub-Saharan

African countries. This basic healthcare provision covers benign illnesses and the deadliest pandemics, such as HIV and AIDS (Patterson 2015, 178). Trinitapoli and Weinreb (2012) report that the key to understanding the decrease in HIV prevalence lies in getting traditional and religious institutions on the board of public health campaigns (**??**). Patterson (2015) adds that faith-based organizations provide roughly forty percent (40%) of all healthcare services and help solve other societal problems for which the state has little or no response in Sub-Saharan Africa (**??**). Beyond tragic pandemic diseases, religious actors and traditional African authorities help coordinate and mobilize communities to implement routine health projects or immunization in rural and urban areas. These actors also motivate rural folks to participate in local development projects such as building roads and communal areas (McCauley and Boadi 2009, 8).

Religious and traditional institutions are conduits to reach out to MPs because they are instrumental in building and maintaining social peace in the community. The involvement of these institutions in peace-making activities is done at two levels in countries: First, in countries on the verge of social turmoil, traditional and religious institutions intervene to mend crumbling national unity by organizing National Days of Prayer. However, Cooke (2015) notices that some religious or traditional institutions can abuse their position to muffle a legitimate claim in the name of a purported national unity (Cooke et al. 2015, 5). Second, in post-civil war situations, traditional and religious institutions are frequently called upon at the negotiation table to serve in many capacities: as simple witnesses, active participants, or a neutral third party and moral guarantee of good faith in drafting peace settlements (Cooke et al. 2015; Patterson 2015). The roles traditional and religious institutions play in resolving conflicts are not limited to peacebuilding at a national level. At a community level, these local authorities are routinely more trusted and impactful. In the Afrobarometer rounds 1 and 2, nearly 28% of Africans rely on traditional and religious institutions to settle community disputes. This is three times higher than the 6.4% of those who choose the local courts to resolve conflicts. Perhaps the trustworthiness of these institutions also contributes to holding them in high esteem. In virtually all Afrobarometer opinions surveys, informal institutions (traditional authorities and religious leaders) are perceived to be more reliable and less corrupted than formal institutions.

The social utility of these institutions includes their administrative and political roles at a local level as well. Whether formal state institutions exist or not at the local level, it is here that traditional and religious institutions exert the most influence (Logan 2008, 2011; Ubink 2008). The involvement of traditional and religious institutions in local administration is more impactful in countries where this involvement is formally acknowledged, like South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, and Ghana. Although the extent of their power depends on contextual realities, there is a consensus that traditional authorities generally complete the following tasks: They control local resources, land allocation, and environmental protections (Ribot 2000; Ubink 2008; Williams 2010; Logan 2002, 2008, 2011). Scholars surmise that devoting these powers to local authorities is not benevolent. The state, or its representatives, purposefully leaves the micro-management of these complicated hot issues to traditional leaders at the local level. The reason behind this concession is to let traditional leaders inevitably tarnish their reputations (Williams 2010). Notwithstanding their involvement in local administration, these institutions play crucial political roles locally as a go-between and rallying force. As opinion leaders, traditional leaders are powerful tools of mobilization. For instance, religious actors led their flocks to be at the forefront of democratic struggles in the 1990s in Kenya. They achieved this role because they galvanized the masses and got their message recycled by their followers. In short, the mechanism can be summarized as the picture below shows. It is a three-step causal process that starts with citizens, then the intermediary institutions, and the MP at the end. I generated the following hypothesis from the above theory.
Hypothesis: Compared to citizens' contacts with formal institutions (party officials), citizens' contacts with informal institutions predict a greater likelihood of contacting members of the parliament.

Data and Methodology

The data used to probe the causal relationship is drawn from the Afrobarometer round 4. The Afrobarometer is a non-profit organization that researches public opinion and attitudes of ordinary citizens in Africa. It records how ordinary people relate to democratic institutions in different countries. Its main themes include democracy, governance, the rule of law, attitudes and behavior, and accountability.

Dependent Variable: Contact with Members of Parliament

The consistent question about contacts with one's MP in every round indicates the importance Afrobarometer surveyors attach to the constituent-representative relationship in Africa. In mature democracies like the United States, direct contact between citizens and their members of Congress is an enduring institution enshrined in the republic's founding documents. The sheer volume of these contacts bears witness to citizens' reliance on this venue to connect directly to their government despite the existence of alternative "linking institutions" (party, interest groups). According to Jacob R. Strauss and Matthew Glassman (2016) of the Congressional Research Services, since 2011, nearly four hundred million emails and twenty-two million postal mail are sent yearly to Congress (**??**). On the other hand, in every single country under investigation in this article, the rate of contact initiated by citizens to reach out to their legislative representatives is very low. Less than two out of ten ordinary

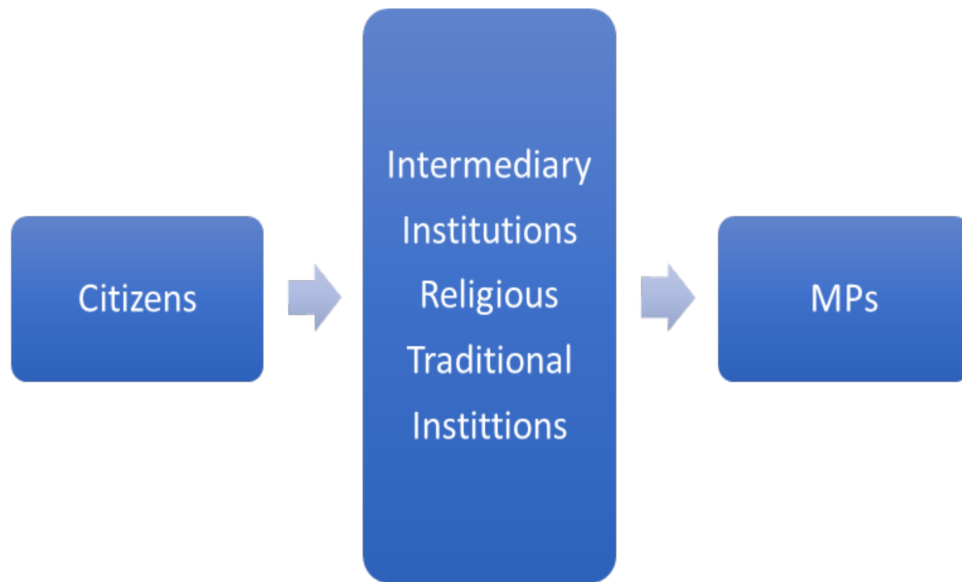

Figure 1. The Constituent-Representative Contacts with Intermediary Institutions

citizens ever initiate such a contact. Most of these contacts are done face-to-face. Although the question about writing to a representative is not asked in the Afrobarometer's surveys, one can surmise from the very small size (0.1%) of the surveyed that write to a newspaper that no one writes to her MP.

Table 2. Contact Members of Parliament

Category	BN	BTWNA	BFASO	CPV	GHANA	KENYA	LSTO	LIBE	MDGC	MLW
Never	89.60%	77.90%	88.50%	86.60%	84.60%	78.20%	87.00%	75.80%	97.70%	84.00%
Once only	4.60%	9.80%	3.60%	4.20%	4.20%	10.10%	6.10%	9.30%	0.80%	4.50%
Few times	4.10%	9.50%	4.80%	4.30%	6.10%	8.70%	4.60%	8.70%	0.80%	7.60%
Often	1.30%	2.60%	2.40%	2.10%	4.00%	2.80%	1.70%	5.60%	0.50%	3.40%

Category	MALI	MZBQ	NMBIA	NGRIA	SNGAL	S-AFR	TZNIA	UGD	ZMBIA	ZMBW
Never	87.40%	91.40%	96.20%	89.00%	91.00%	86.30%	83.90%	82.80%	84.40%	82.50%
Once only	4.60%	2.40%	2.40%	4.10%	1.60%	5.60%	6.50%	8.50%	6.80%	4.80%
Often	4.90%	3.20%	0.80%	4.50%	3.70%	5.10%	6.80%	5.90%	6.40%	8.30%
Few times	1.50%	1.50%	0.10%	1.30%	2.30%	1.10%	2.30%	2.50%	1.90%	4.10%

Independent Variables

Contacts of Religious and Traditional Institutions

Contacting religious leaders is probably the most widespread human interaction Africans get involved in outside the realm of the family. The pervasive religiosity could be assumed to cause a high contact rate with religious leaders. In the survey, the Afrobarometer enumerates nearly 23 religious denominations. Countries vary in types of religious denominational predominance. For instance, Christians form a large majority in Botswana, Benin, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The number of Christians and Muslims is roughly distributed evenly in Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria. Because the article's goal is not to gauge the individual effect of each religious denomination on political participation, no attempt will be made to engage in such an endeavor. The goal, instead, is to evaluate the impact of contacting any religious institution on the likelihood of contacting members of the parliament. In the Afrobarometer, contact with religious institutions takes on four ordinal values (Never = 0; only once=1; few times=2; often=3). For convenience, I recode this variable as a dichotomous variable by collapsing its values from 1 to 3 into 1. Another aspect related to religious affiliations is that 62% of those who claim membership are actively involved in religious organizations, either as leaders or active members. A cross-tabulation reveals that 39% of these active members in religious institutions declare having contacted their MPs.

Table 3. Contact Religious Leaders

Category	BN	BTWNA	BFASO	CAP V	GHAN	KEN	LESOT	LIB	MDGR	MLW
Never	62.20%	52.70%	62.90%	75.60%	54.10%	41.80%	62.60%	49.60%	84.40%	66.10%
Once only	7.40%	9.30%	7.70%	5.10%	10.60%	17.50%	10.30%	19.00%	4.00%	9.70%
Few times	19.40%	23.30%	16.20%	10.20%	19.70%	27.60%	15.60%	19.10%	7.60%	15.20%
Often	10.90%	14.70%	13.00%	6.80%	15.40%	13.00%	11.40%	12.20%	3.90%	8.90%

Category	MALI	MZBQ	NMBIA	NGRIA	SNGAL	S-AFR	TZNIA	UGD	ZMBIA	ZMB
Never	69.30%	59.30%	70.40%	52.80%	53.20%	74.70%	58.30%	42.20%	39.70%	49.50%
Once only	9.70%	7.50%	13.50%	13.00%	9.60%	8.60%	14.20%	18.00%	14.00%	6.90%
Few times	14.20%	14.50%	11.20%	22.90%	19.70%	11.90%	14.10%	25.90%	26.40%	23.20%
Often	6.50%	18.20%	5.00%	10.80%	17.20%	4.20%	13.30%	13.70%	19.80%	20.40%

Chikadibia Stanley Anyanwu (2005) defines traditional authorities as "individuals occupying communal and political leadership positions sanctified by cultural norms and values and enjoying the legitimacy of particular communities to direct their affairs" (2). They can be seen as the most important agents of socialization in rural and urban areas (Ubink 2008, 12). They occupy the space between families and the state and wield impressive social control by observing societal customs, norms, and rules. They wear two hats: civil and religious. Afrobarometer captures the importance of these institutions through the number of citizens who contact them daily. It is safe to assume that the presence of this question in every single one of Afrobarometer's surveys highlights the importance of this social relationship in African communities. Responses are captured as an ordinal level variable measured in five crescendo scales from (0) to (4). Varying from one country to another, response rates reach the highest level in Lesotho (58%) and the lowest in Cape Verde (0%). Over the years, the contact of traditional leaders across the twenty countries remains at 30%. I transform this ordinal variable into a dichotomous variable by collapsing the three values of any contact (only once, a few times, and often) into one value (1), and I keep the value of never as (0).

Table 4. Contact Traditional Rulers

Category	BN	BTWNA	BFASO	CAPV	GHAN	KEN	LESOT	LIB	MDGR	MLW
Never	72.70%	76.30%	71.00%	—	73.50%	57.00%	42.50%	72.00%	91.40%	63.30%
Once only	6.10%	7.40%	5.10%	—	6.40%	12.50%	10.20%	8.80%	1.60%	7.10%
Few times	13.40%	11.30%	11.10%	—	10.70%	18.70%	24.40%	11.50%	3.50%	17.40%
Often	7.50%	4.90%	12.10%	—	8.70%	9.60%	22.90%	7.70%	1.30%	11.60%
Category	**MALI**	**MZBQ**	**NMBIA**	**NGRIA**	**SNGAL**	**S.AFR**	**TZNIA**	**UGD**	**ZMBIA**	**ZMBW**
Never	60.30%	74.10%	77.30%	73.50%	72.80%	86.10%	84.00%	74.80%	70.10%	59.70%
Once only	9.20%	5.30%	9.70%	9.00%	3.90%	5.90%	3.20%	9.00%	7.60%	3.90%
Few times	19.40%	9.30%	9.70%	11.40%	10.80%	5.10%	3.60%	9.60%	14.10%	17.40%
Often	10.60%	10.60%	3.00%	5.20%	10.30%	1.90%	3.70%	4.70%	7.90%	16.30%

Voting

Voting is the most direct connection between citizens and their elected officials. It gives the constituent the inherent right to contact and hold the elected official accountable. In addition, voting for a candidate gives citizens an added reason to contact those who hold an office. Despite being a less information-rich act, voting for or against an elected official signals trust in the democratic process. In addition, voting for a candidate gives citizens an added reason to contact those who hold an office. In the Afrobarometer, the variable voted takes on seven nominal values. These values encapsulate a complex reality, including citizens' status regarding their voter registration, other structural barriers preventing them from voting, and their attitudes toward various voting acts. I transform the seven scale values into a dichotomous variable with 1=voted and 0= not voted for all other options.

Contact of Party Officials

As voting is the *par excellence,* the most direct individual dyadic connector between elected officials and citizens, the party is the collective channel through which citizens with similar policy goals and ideology achieve these goals. Schattschneider (1946) stated that modern democracy would not be conceivable without political parties. More than any other linkage institutions, formal and informal political parties theoretically are the best tools to aggregate and articulate citizens' preferences. Furthermore, structurally, the party should connect citizens directly to their members of parliament and the latter to their support base. As such, the party should be the greatest predictor of contact with MPs.

Table 5. Contact Influential Person (Party OR Government Agent)

Category	BN	BTWNA	BFASO	CAPV	GHAN	KEN	LESOT	LIB	MDGR	MLW
Never	94.60%	77.50%	93.10%	87.90%	86.00%	70.40%	89.90%	82.80%	99.10%	90.90%
Once only	2.10%	8.50%	1.90%	1.90%	4.50%	12.30%	4.10%	7.10%	0.30%	3.50%
Few times	1.60%	9.90%	3.30%	5.60%	5.90%	10.70%	3.00%	6.90%	0.30%	3.10%
Often	1.00%	3.80%	1.00%	2.70%	2.50%	5.50%	2.30%	2.80%	0.30%	1.60%

Category	MALI	MZBQ	NMBIA	NGRIA	SNGAL	S.AFR	TZNIA	UGD	ZMBIA	ZMBW
Never	85.80%	91.70%	79.40%	81.90%	92.20%	84.4.%	87.30%	79.30%	87.90%	88.90%
Once only	4.70%	2.60%	9.80%	6.90%	2.20%	5.30%	4.80%	8.40%	5.20%	2.80%
Few times	5.90%	1.80%	8.30%	7.90%	2.50%	6.00%	4.10%	8.20%	4.60%	4.90%
Often	2.30%	2.30%	2.20%	2.60%	1.70%	2.30%	2.70%	3.10%	1.80%	3.30%

Control Variables

To establish a clear causal linkage between intermediary institutions and contact with MPs, I control for two sets of variables. The first set of controlled variables consists of individual-level (demographic and socioeconomic) variables. The specified model includes education, age, residence, gender, and party identification.

The first control variable is age. Extant literature shows that age has a reverse-U-shape (hyperbolic) relationship with political participation (Verba, Scholzman, Brady 1995). This means that both younger and older citizens care less about getting involved in politics. The Afrobarometer records age as a continuous variable, from 18 to 90. For this study, I categorize age into four groups: young adults (18-39; adults (40-60); seniors (60-79); and older citizens 80.

The second control variable is Education. Education is widely seen as the most reliable indicator of political participation. The underlying assumption of this perception is that education allows citizens to climb the social and economic ladder; it is the quintessential tool for social mobility and the cognitive empowerment necessary for getting involved in public affairs. The modernization theorist Lipset (1960) and new behaviorists (Nie et al.1996; Norris1999) articulate the causal mechanism with the following three paths: the "*positional path*,"*the socialization path*," and "*the cognitive path*" (quoted from Mattes and Mughogho 2009, 2). "The positional path" links the educated persons with others through networks established during schooling. Through the "socialization path," educated people internalize societal values and codes of conduct to achieve their goals. Finally, the "cognitive path" endows educated people with a stockpile of skills, including practical abilities, understanding, and critical thinking, that boost their internal efficacy and allow them to navigate and participate in the political process (Mattes and Mughogho 2009, 2-23). In the Afrobarometer surveys, education is recorded as a continuous variable categorized into 12 groups. To better capture the distinct effect of different levels of education or lack thereof, I recode education as a trichotomous variable: Level one is coded 0 and captures all citizens with no formal education; level two is coded 1 for those having some secondary education, or graduated from high school; and level tree, coded as 2, regroups post-high school education attainment, including college and post graduate.

Another control variable is gender. Gender is traditionally coded as a dichotomous variable with female=0 and male =1. I follow the same convention. Compared to the established wisdom about gender and participation in mature democracies, the relationship between gender and political involvement in nascent democracies has also been counterintuitive. In mature democracies, political scientists revealed a *gender gap* before the feminist revolution of the 1970s and early 1980s. However, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) show in their voluminous survey that although men participate more than women, this difference is small and meaningless statistically (153). On the other hand, Norris (2003) found a difference in partisanship and ideological stances between men and women. Their study shows women leaning toward the democratic party with more liberal values than men. Yet Bratton andLogan (2006) find that these results do not hold in Africa. This inconsistency in findings warrants a new investigation specifically targeting women's contact with their MP in Africa.

The resource model pioneered by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) views income as a powerful predictor of political participation. Because of the pervasiveness of low-income levels, I capture individual economic situations with the variable *gone without food*. In the model, the variable gone without food is a proxy variable that captures the income levels of surveyed subjects. Furthermore, the extant literature attributes great political participation to *residence*. In Africa and elsewhere, urbanites are seen as more politically sophisticated citizens than their rural counterparts. In the Afrobarometer round 4 surveys, this variable is coded as a dichotomous variable with 1 for rural folks and 0 for urban dwellers. I complete individual-level variables with respondents' party identification. The Michigan School of Social Psychology of Political Participation dubbed the party ID as the "*unmoved mover*," it is the centripetal force that crystalizes all motivations to participate in politics (Campbell et al., 1960). The Afrobarometer seizes this variable by asking respondents to indicate their closeness to political parties. The answers are recorded as dichotomous variables with 0= = no closeness and 1= = close to party.

To complete the model, I control for two contextual variables: the electoral system and the economic level of each country (GDP per capita). Following Kuenzi and Lambright's (2005) footsteps, I code the electoral system as a dichotomous variable (Single-Member-District countries are coded as =1) and (Proportional Representation countries are coded as =0). As for the GDP per capita, I log the value taken from the World Bank database. I run a series of logit regressions followed by a post-estimation using the marginal effect of listed variables in individual countries' data. I complement these individual regressions by using merged data where I control for electoral systems and countries' economic levels (GDP per capita).

Discussion

The goal of this project has been to assess the extent to which intermediary institutions (traditional authorities and religious actors) conjointly and individually serve as linkage institutions that connect citizens to their members of parliament. The relationship to be measured is the simultaneous comparison of the strength of the linkages between formal institutions and MPs. On the other hand, the strength of connection between the two informal institutions and MPs. I perform a multiple logistic regression in which I contrast the effects of contacting the two intermediary institutions on contacting MPs against that of contacting party officials, partisanship, and voting. These results hold after controlling for individual-level variables

Table 6. Results of the Logisitic Regression

Independent Variables	Coefficients/ Marginal Effects	P-Value
Combined Effects ATA+ Religious Leaders	0.431***	0.000
Contact Religious Leaders	.0231***	0.000
Contact African Traditional Authorities (ATA)	.0201***	0.000
Contact Party Officials	.0057***	0.000
Electoral Systems	.0227**	0.000
Party ID (Closeness to party)	-0.246***	0.000
Education	.0018*	0.013
Gender	-.0208***	0.000
GDP	-.0139***	0.000
Gone Without Food	-.0032*	0.029

Note: ATA = African Traditional Authorities. RI Religious Institutions.
N= 21519. Log-likelihood = -5694.6521. LR chi2(13) = 3113.23
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000, Pseudo R2 = 0.2269 (***) = P-value = (000).

(socioeconomic and demographic) and country-level variables (electoral system and GDP per capita). In Table 5, the combined effect of the two primary independent variables, contact with religious institutions and contact with traditional authorities, display a greater coefficient (4.31%). Substantively, nearly 4% of ordinary people who contact either one of these institutions are more likely to contact their MPs.

At first glance, these findings seem admittedly small but put in a contextual perspective, these results harbor a great beacon of optimism for strengthening the constituent-representative relationship across the twenty countries under investigation. The Afrobarometer surveys show that the political elite is vastly insulated from citizens. Although the scarcity of contact between citizens and their MPs is generally widespread among the twenty countries analyzed, this linking mechanism is practically absent in some countries. Examples of countries with the lowest rates of contact include Madagascar (0.8%), Namibia (0.8%), Mozambique (3.2%), and Senegal (3.7%). One way to highlight the substantive effects of these findings is to plug the marginal effects of the combined effect of these institutions into the current population and contrast it with the above rates. Figure 2 displays differences in the population size that would contact MPs through the ATA and those who would contact without these intermediary institutions in Madagascar.

In this analysis, *contacting religious institutions* is a strong predictor of contacting MP (.0231) with a high statistical significance (P-value=000 at 95% confidence interval). This means that those who contact their religious institutions are nearly 2.3% more likely to reach their representatives than those who don't. This finding is important from the perspective of the high rate of contacts of religious institutions in Africa (on average 50%). While contacting religious institutions comes out as a consistent indicator of contact with MPs, religious affiliations do not. This is understandable. Religious affiliations that capture the diversity or number of religious denominations are highly context-dependent. Membership in religious groups is not significant. This result echoes the findings of Manglos and Weinreb (2013), who found no individual difference in participation among denominational groups (212). The present results also support Reid's (2017) idea that contextual factors, including local and national factors, help shape the political behavior of religious members. She points to the difference in residence (rural or urban) as the driver of the difference in members' political behavior. For instance, rural folks who are catholic behave differently from the urban Catholics in Kenya and Uganda (944). These heavily context-dependent factors explain why differences within and across denominations cancel out the impacts on participation, lending credence to the statistical result of no significance.

As theorized, *contact with traditional authorities* does serve as a mediating institution for citizens to contact their MPs. The results displayed in Table 5 show that this variable has a positive and statistically significant (0.201 with a P-value = 0.000 at a 95% confidence interval). Essentially, this means that citizens who frequently contact traditional authorities have a 2% more chance to reach out to their MPs than those who don't. The relatively smaller coefficient of traditional authorities than religious institutions reflects their checkered history across Africa. In a final analysis, it is perhaps important to point out that despite showing an attachment to these institutions, Africans do not request the clock of African political development to be turned back. Overwhelmingly, Africans reject a system of government conducted by traditional or religious rulers, one-party rule, or military rule. Afrobarometer rounds 2 and 3 report that 89% prefer the democratic form of governance and reject all alternative forms of government that would supplant the democratic ones. The inclusion of country-level variables yields two

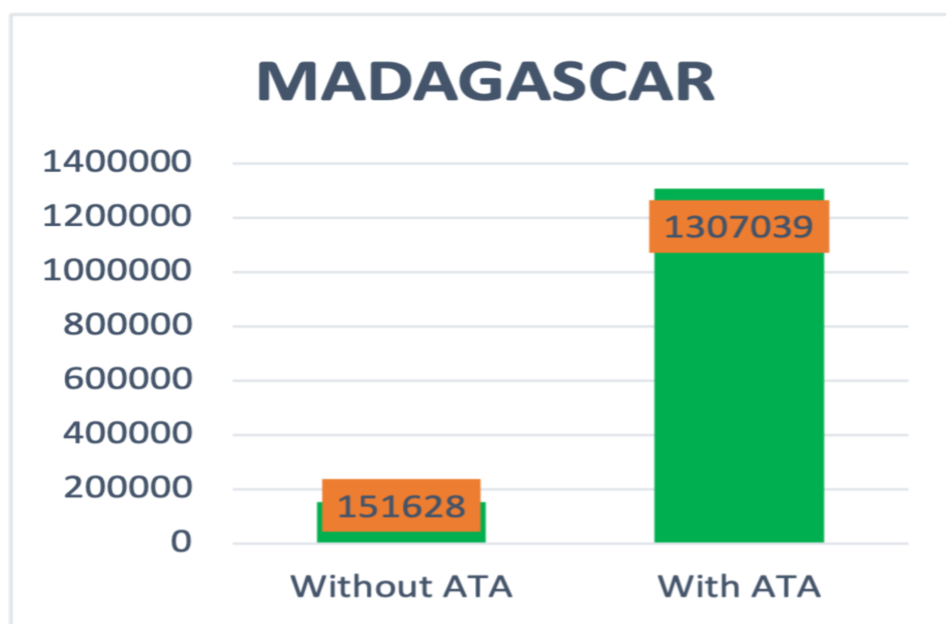

Figure 2. Contacting Officials in Madagascar

important findings. Firstly, as theorized by many scholars, electoral systems impact representative-constituents relationships. In Table 5, the variable electoral rule (a dichotomous variable) impacts positively the contact with MPs (.022). In a country with the electoral system of a single-member district, ordinary citizens have a 2.27% chance to contact their MP than in countries with any other electoral system. Secondly, unlike the electoral system, which has a positive coefficient, the country-level economic variable, the gross domestic product per capita, impacts contact with MPs (-013). This result also substantiates the conventional wisdom that a low level of economic development hampers political participation. Unlike informal institutions that positively impact bottom-up communication from citizens to their representatives, formal institutions display different pictures. Starting with contact with party officials, the coefficient is small but positive. This result is rather heartwarming for hopeful democrats in Africa (scholars, citizens, and activists). Conversely, party ID has a negative and statistically significant coefficient (-.024). Those claiming partisanship are 2.4% less likely to contact their MPs). This result is alarming because it signals a disconnect between ordinary citizens affiliated with political parties and their awareness that parties exist to facilitate bottom-up communication, among other functions. Unsurprisingly, neither voting nor residence affects whether citizens would contact their MPs.

Gone Without Food is a quantifiable yardstick of people's living standards regarding income in this article. It is what Amartya Sen (1999) called "the value of one's standard of living lies in living itself" (12). Because such a standard of living is low among those surveyed in Africa, the variable depresses the likelihood of contracting the MPs. In Table 5, the coefficient of the *Gone without Food* is negative and statistically significant(-.0032). Although specified as a single variable in the model, Afrobarometer uses this variable as an integrative part of an index variable called *Lived Poverty.* Lived Poverty is an experiential indicator measuring "how frequently people go without necessities during a year" (Mattes 2016,12). Finally, the variable *Education* positively impacts the dependent variable contact with MPs. With a positive and a statistically significant coefficient (.0018), the variable *Education,* albeit small, confirms the theory that citizens' socioeconomic status (SES) is a reliable indicator of their level of political engagement across the globe.

Conclusion

In conclusion, democratic waves in Africa have brought the rebirth of the most familiar and closest social organizations ordinary Africans know, religious institutions, and traditional authorities. Traditional authorities and religious institutions have known a revival across the continent for the last two decades. The Afrobarometer captures the importance of these institutions by measuring how many ordinary citizens contact them. Table 1, page 10 above, shows that resurgence has occurred in virtually every country irrespective of their colonial past. One can no longer dismiss these institutions as epiphenomena. If anything, their resurgence speaks volumes about their socioeconomic relevance in ordinary people's daily lives. Still, these institutions bear inherent non-democratic features such as the mode of selection, and sometimes, their ruling principles are shrouded in mysteries (Mattes 1997). Furthermore, in many places, these institutions have a tarnished reputation for collaborating with

successive extra-local powers (Mamdani 1996). Thus, the resurgence of these institutions raises a more pressing question about their fitness in the African democratic landscape. In response to this question, two camps have emerged. Recognizing the merits of each side, I have advocated a middle-ground position like other eminent scholars (Bratton and Logan 2008; Logan 2008, 2011). Yet, in this article, I go beyond mere speculation about traditional authorities' linkage role in connecting ordinary people to formal institutions to provide hard evidence about their role in constituent-representative relationships. Despite showing this tangible evidence, this investigation has some limitations. As mentioned previously, the scope is limited to the 20 countries in the Afrobarometer. Another limitation is that the lack of data (qualitative and quantitative) on both African traditional authorities and religious institutions cut short a more exhaustive comparison among countries under investigation. Specifically, except in a limited number of countries where the status of institutions is clearly defined and formally recognized (Botswana, Burkina, Ghana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe), in many of them, the status is unclear (Benin, Cape Verde, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia). Future research would make a great theoretical contribution by focusing solely on each of these institutions and comparing them across countries.

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