

OSTROM WORKSHOP COLLOQUIUM SERIES

James Robinson

Harris School of Public Policy
University of Chicago

“The Evolution of Culture and Institutions: Evidence from the Kuba Kingdom”

Monday, March 7, 2016 *

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park



We use variation in historical state centralization to examine the impact of institutions on cultural norms. The Kuba Kingdom, established in Central Africa in the early 17th century by King Shyaam, had more developed state institutions than the other independent villages and chieftaincies in the region. It had an unwritten constitution, separation of political powers, a judicial system with courts and juries, a police force and military, taxation, and significant public goods provision. Comparing individuals from the Kuba Kingdom to those from just outside the Kingdom, we find that centralized formal institutions are associated with weaker norms of rule-following and a greater propensity to cheat for material gain.



James Robinson is a University Professor at the Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago. He was formerly the Wilbur A. Cowett Professor of Government at Harvard University. He studied economics at the London School of Economics, the University of Warwick, and Yale University. His main research interests are in comparative economic and political development with a particular interest in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. He is coauthor with Daron Acemoglu of the books *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* and *Why Nations Fail*. He is currently conducting research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Haiti, and in Colombia where he has taught for many years during the summer at the University of the Andes in Bogotá ([website](#)).

**Also on March 7, James Robinson will give a presentation on “Committing Not to Build a State: Colombia in Comparative Context” in the IU Maurer School of Law, Room 120, at 4:00 p.m.*

Presentations are open to the public and are live streamed (see our website for URL and papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch, and refreshments will be available. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon (sturgeon@iu.edu; 812/855-3151).