

## Abstracts:

### 1. Joel Mokyr (Northwestern): “Knowledge, Institutions and the Origins of the Great Enrichment”

Modern scholars such as North and Acemoglu-Robinson have stressed the critical role of institutions on modern economic growth. They have focused on inclusiveness and property rights enforcement, the rule of law, and non-predatory government. While these elements are important, they fail to deal adequately with the true engine of economic growth: the growth of *useful knowledge*, that is, the tsunami of science and technology that created the Great Enrichment after 1750. In this presentation, I will stress two sets of institutions that together account for much of the economic progress. One of them is the *Republic of Letters*, which governed the rules of scientific research and intellectual innovation. The other is the set of institutions that governed and regulated apprenticeship, which helped create a class of relatively progressive and well-trained artisans. Between them, those two institutions created both the learning and the workmanship necessary to launch the Industrial Revolution.

### 2. Jose-Antonio Espin-Sanchez (Yale): “The Rain in Spain Stays mainly when you pray” (with Salvador Gil Guirado, Universidad de Murcia)

We analyze the case of *pro-pluvia* rogations in the Catholic Church in Murcia (Spain) over the last 400 years. *Pro-pluvia* rogations were ceremonies performed to ask God for rain. Non-parametric tests show that the series are very homogeneous until 1833, the end of the old regime in Spain. During the last two centuries the series lack homogeneity due to political and social turmoil in Spain. We show how the rogations that were asked (and paid) by the City Council (CC) differ from the ones paid by the Ecclesiastical Council (EC). The rogation cycles were usually initiated by the CC and then mechanically repeated until it rained. EC rarely initiated the rogation cycle and they waited a few months to begin initiating their prayers, but then they prayed more and more often. This behavior is consistent with the CC minimizing unrest and the EC maximizing correlation between praying and rain.

### 3. Ian Morris (Stanford): “The end of democracy”

Scholars of institutions normally look at past forms of government (oligarchy, authoritarianism, absolutism, etc.) as attempts to solve historically specific problems of governance. However, students of democracy often seem to see it teleologically, as the ideal form of government and end of history, and to treat the rollback of democracy in some 21st-century countries as merely the tactical triumph of self-interested elites over the common good. However, history suggests that this might be a mistake, because the only time before the 19th and 20th centuries when an extensive system of democracies emerged, in Greece in the 5th and 4th centuries BC, the entire premise of democracy was ultimately rejected. In this paper I argue that just as the rise of male democracy in Greece around 500 BC was an attempt to

solve a particular set of problems in governance, democracy's defeat after 350 BC was a response to the disappearance of those problems and the emergence of new ones; and although conditions in the modern world are very different from those in ancient Greece, I suggest that the problems in the West to which democracy was a successful solution in the 19th and 20th centuries might now be disappearing. If this analogy is valid, we should expect democracy too to be replaced by new political systems in the 21st-22nd centuries.

4. Naomi Lamoreaux (Yale): "States, Not Nation: The Sources of Political and Economic Development in the Early United States" (with John Wallis, U of Maryland)

General histories of the United States focus almost exclusively on developments at the national level. Yet it is well known that most of the important changes that propelled political democratization and economic modernization in the nineteenth century occurred at the state level. This paper shifts the focus back the states by reexamining aspects of economic development that the states are conventionally acknowledged to have led—the creation of a banking system, the construction of transportation infrastructure, the promotion of corporations—and showing that they were part and parcel of a more fundamental institutional shift that gradually reshaped the way democracy worked. To borrow the terminology that Douglass North, John Wallis, and Barry Weingast developed for their book *Violence and Social Orders* (2009), this shift transformed the United States from a "limited access" to an "open access" social order. The United States was not born modern at the time of the American Revolution or even the Constitution. Rather, we contend, the institutional prerequisites for political and economic modernization took shape over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century through a series of mutually reinforcing political and economic changes that occurred at the state level. These prerequisites emerged first in a small handful of states where, for highly contingent reasons, seemingly intractable problems of implementing democracy were solved by changing the institutions governing the interaction of politics and economics. As subsequent events highlighted the benefits of the new institutional configuration, it not only persisted but began to spread rapidly, though never completely, across the various United States. The federal government played essentially no role in this process until the Civil War, and for a long time after that it played only a bit part.

5. James Fenske (Warwick): "Linguistic Distance and Market Integration in India" (with Namrata Kala)

We collect data on grain and salt prices, as well as language, for more than 200 South Asian markets in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Conditional on a rich set of controls and fixed effects, we find that linguistically distant markets are less integrated as measured by the degree of price correlation. While linguistically distant markets exhibit greater genetic distance, greater differences in literacy, and fewer railway connections, these factors are not sufficient statistics for the negative correlation between linguistic distance and market integration. Our results indicate that a one standard deviation increase in linguistic distance predicts a reduction in the price correlation between two markets of 0.121 standard deviations for wheat,

0.167 standard deviations for salt, and 0.088 standard deviations for rice. These differences are substantial relative to other factors such as physical distance that hinder market integration.

6. Nicholas Crawford (IAST): “Slave Provisioning Laws and the Politics of Abolition in the British Empire”

Scholarship on the politics of slavery in the British Empire from the American Revolution to Emancipation has been dominated by studies of the emergence of the antislavery movement in Great Britain alongside competing interpretations of the factors that led Parliament to abolish the slave trade in 1807 and slavery itself in 1833. This scholarly focus on the motivations and outcomes of the abolition movement has neglected how contemporary debates about slavery shaped social and political reforms on both sides of the Atlantic concerning the health and physical condition of the enslaved. My research focuses on how abolitionist politicians in the British Government increasingly sought to regulate the provision of food, clothing, shelter, and medical care for slaves in this period. This paper in particular examines Colonial Office efforts to establish a universal scale of food allowances and weekly hours of plantation labor throughout the slave colonies in the years immediately preceding the Abolition Act of 1833. What can an examination of the intellectual origins, (largely) failed policy implementation, and political legacy of this overlooked attempt at regulating the material conditions of slavery reveal about the longer process of dismantling the institution and establishing systems of free labor throughout the Empire?

7. Thomas Currie (Exeter): “How Evolutionary Theory can inform the Study of Institutions”

Institutions have long been an important topic of study for social scientists and historians. However, there is a need to better understand how and why institutions emerge and change. Here I outline a conceptual framework, informed by evolutionary theory, which follows models of cultural evolution in viewing institutions as part of a non-genetic system of inheritance. We use this framework to examine the ways in which broader historical factors and non-institutional aspects of culture (e.g., values, beliefs) may have shaped institutions in the past and influence present-day institutional arrangements and economic outcomes. I illustrate this approach with examples of how evolution theories and methods can be used to study institutional emergence and change. I emphasize the need to develop explicit models of the processes of institutional evolution, and stress the importance of testing and assessing these models with data, which entails paying attention to the particular features of the data being used and the peculiarities of historical data in general. I argue that there does not need to be a tension between researchers who focus on the specific circumstances of particular historical times and places and researchers investigating the possibility of general principles in human history, and propose that the kind of framework outlined here holds the

promise of bringing together and synthesizing the findings and insights from a range of different disciplines.

8. Peter K. Bol (Harvard): “China in 750 and 1100 Compared”

The differences between the China in 750, when the Tang dynasty was at the height of its power, and 1100, under the Song dynasty, were great and consequential. This talk reviews changes in population and population distribution, foreign relations, land ownership and taxation, national elite status, bureaucratic recruitment, urban systems, religious practices, technologies, literature and Confucian philosophy. After outlining the evidence for these changes and their magnitude we will ask how these developments were related to each other and how we should account for them. Some have argued that unexpected events led to a redirection of China’s historical course in the 12<sup>th</sup> century; if so, were the developments that culminated in the 11<sup>th</sup> of enduring historical significance?

9. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller (Austrian Academy of Sciences): “Toward that Great Byzantium ... Where Nothing Changes. Institutional Dynamics in the Medieval Roman Empire and Beyond”

The millennium of history of the medieval Roman Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean, commonly called the “Byzantine” one, allows for the long-term analysis of transformations from a complex institutional framework enfolding the entire Mediterranean towards a territorially more confined, but remarkably resilient socio-political system within the medieval world. Periods of dramatic change in the geopolitical and natural environment, leading to near-collapse in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, provide especially interesting episodes of challenge, failure or adaption of institutions of state, church and society. This also refutes still existing stereotypes of Byzantium as a “static” civilisation, fallen out of time and living only on a glorious past.

Besides a qualitative and quantitative survey of written and archaeological evidence, I apply the analytical framework of “systems theory” developed by the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998) in order to capture the interdependencies between politics, economy and religion within a polity and with the political, economic and ecological environment (Luhmann, 1997; Becker & Reinhardt-Becker, 2001; Becker, 2004). Luhmann’s theory, which also integrates aspects of complexity theory and social evolution, is valuable for our analysis in various aspects; it makes us aware of the reduction of environmental and social complexity which is reflected in our historical sources, and it provides a framework to approach complex mechanisms within and the dependencies between various social spheres and their environment.

In addition, I employ methods and tools of network analysis, which allow us to capture, analyse and model linkages and cause-effect correlations in society, economy, politics and religion on the macro- and micro-level down to groups and individuals (Gould, 2003; Lemercier, 2005). Furthermore, a comparison of institutional trajectories in the medieval Roman Empire with those of neighbouring

societies, both causers of challenge and sources of inspiration, allows us to capture the “diversité véritable” without losing track of essential commonalities (the “strange parallels”, as Victor Liebermann has called them, 2009) with regard to the transformation of politics and societies.

10. Mohamed Saleh (TSE and IAST): “Taxing Unwanted Populations: Fiscal Policy and Conversions in Early Islam” (with Jean Tirole, TSE and IAST)

Hostility towards a population, whether on religious, ethnic, cultural or socioeconomic grounds, confronts rulers with a trade-off between taking advantage of population members' eagerness to keep their status and inducing them to “comply” (conversion, quit, exodus or any other way of pleasing the hostile rulers). This paper first analyzes the rulers' optimal mix of discriminatory and non-discriminatory taxation, both in a static and an evolving environment. It thereby derives a set of unconventional predictions. The paper then tests the theory in the context of Egypt's conversion to Islam after 641 using novel data sources. The evidence is broadly consistent with the theoretical predictions.

11. Peter Turchin (U of Connecticut): “The Zigs and Zags of Inequality in Human Evolutionary History”

Most historians have abandoned the search for general principles governing the evolution of human societies. A typical approach to studying why institutions (laws, rules, sanctions, customs, and norms) emerge, change, and disappear is to focus on explanations that are contingent on the specific historical circumstances in which such institutions evolve. However, although every society is unique in its own ways, this doesn't preclude the possibility that common features are independently shared by multiple societies. In my presentation I will argue that it is possible to study both the diversity and commonalities in social arrangements found in the human past. To advance beyond purely theoretical debates and comparisons based on limited samples, my colleagues and I are building a massive repository of systematically collected, structured historical and archaeological data, *Seshat: Global History Databank*. Specifically, I will focus on the evolution of institutions that promote equality (or vice versa, inequality). Levels of inequality have changed dramatically during the past 10,000 years of human evolution: from egalitarian small-scale societies of hunter-gatherers to first hierarchical societies with great inequities in the distribution of power, status, and wealth. The Axial Age (c.800–200 BCE) introduced another notable transformation, starting a move towards greater egalitarianism that has been continuing to the present. I will describe how the Seshat project codes data on religion, norms and institutions, and other cultural characteristics of historical societies in a form that make them suitable for statistical analyses, and present preliminary results of testing different theories explaining the evolution of equity institutions with these data.