



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Comparative Economics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jce

Reading, writing, and religion: Institutions and human capital formation

Latika Chaudhary*, Jared Rubin

Scripps College, 1030 Columbia Ave., #4072, Claremont, CA 91711-3905, United States
 California State University, 800 N. State College Blvd., Fullerton, CA 92834, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 4 February 2010

Revised 1 June 2010

Available online 11 June 2010

JEL classification:

H52

I22

I28

J24

N35

Z10

Keywords:

Religion

Education

Institutions

India

ABSTRACT

Chaudhary, Latika, and Rubin, Jared—Reading, writing, and religion: Institutions and human capital formation

In this paper, we empirically test the role that religious and political institutions play in the accumulation of human capital. Using a new data set on literacy in colonial India, we find that Muslim literacy is negatively correlated with the proportion of Muslims in the district, although we find no similar result for Hindu literacy. We employ a theoretical model which suggests that districts which experienced a more recent collapse of Muslim political authority had more powerful and better funded religious authorities, who established religious schools which were less effective at promoting literacy on the margin than state schools. We test this hypothesis econometrically, finding that the period of Muslim political collapse has a statistically significant effect on Muslim literacy while controlling for it eliminates the significance of the proportion of Muslims on Muslim literacy. This suggests that the “long hand of history” has played some role in subsequent differences in human capital formation through the persistence of institutions discouraging literacy. *Journal of Comparative Economics* 39 (1) (2011) 17–33. Scripps College, 1030 Columbia Ave., #4072, Claremont, CA 91711-3905, United States; California State University, 800 N. State College Blvd., Fullerton, CA 92834, United States.

© 2010 Association for Comparative Economic Studies. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Social scientists have long recognized the important relationship between education and economic growth. More educated societies often have higher worker productivity, greater life expectancy and are also quicker to adopt new technologies (Schultz, 1983; Becker, 1964; Drèze and Sen, 1998).¹ Despite the numerous social and private benefits of education, enrollment and literacy, however, vary dramatically across countries, religions and social groups. A large majority of the citizens of developed countries acquired functional literacy by the early 20th century, while citizens of developing countries such as Chad and India are still struggling with literacy rates of 48% and 52% respectively. Even within countries, there are significant differences in human capital accumulation between groups such as blacks and whites in the United States (Margo, 1990; Hanuskeh et al., 2009; Fryer and Austen-Smith, 2005), and Hindus and Muslims in contemporary India (Government of India, 2006).

To account for differences in educational development, some scholars note the role of government policies (Fernandez and Rodrik, 1991; Lindert, 2004; Galor and Moav, 2006; Rajan, 2009), while a more recent literature emphasizes the historical importance of religion and religious norms that either constrain or encourage religious groups to acquire human capital at a higher rate relative to other religious groups living in the same region (Berman, 2000; Becker and Woessmann, 2008,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: latika.chaudhary@scrippscollege.edu (L. Chaudhary), jrubin@fullerton.edu (J. Rubin).

¹ There is vast literature on human capital, growth and development such as Lucas (1988), Barro (1991), Gregory Mankiw et al. (1992) among many others.

2009; Botticini and Eckstein, 2005, 2007). Our paper relates to this broader literature by studying historical differences in educational attainment between the two main religious groups of India—Hindus and Muslims.²

Average Muslim literacy was slightly below average Hindu literacy in the colonial period and the variance in Muslim literacy was also lower than Hindu literacy (in 1911, Hindu literacy was 7.1% (variance 6.2%) and Muslim literacy was 6.2% (variance 4.8%); see Table 1 for details). However, there was tremendous heterogeneity between provinces. For example, in Bengal 21.1% of Hindu males were able to read and write in any language as compared to only 10.9% of Muslim males. But, in provinces such as Madras and the United Provinces, Muslims enjoyed comparable or even higher literacy than Hindus. Female literacy was very low for both religious groups, but the provincial patterns are similar to those for male literacy.

This paper uses the earliest reliable data on literacy and a theoretical model to explore why Hindus and Muslims had different literacy rates under the British. The difference in literacy is a puzzle, because it appears to be a function not only of demographics and economic conditions, but also of the share of Muslims in a district.³ Using data from the 1911 and 1921 census, we find that Muslims who lived in districts with more Muslims had lower literacy rates. The British were keenly aware of the differences and actually devoted more resources to education in Muslim districts, yet seemingly to no avail.

Our model explains this pattern by examining the incentives of Muslim religious authorities, political authorities and the citizens. Specifically, we argue that where Muslim rule in India collapsed more recently, Muslim religious authorities were stronger vis-à-vis the British. This is due to the legitimizing role that religious authorities have historically played for Muslim political authorities, a relationship that is an exogenous remnant of the birth of Islam and the type of institutions that it encouraged (for more, see Rubin (2009)). The model suggests that areas where Muslim political authorities collapsed more recently had stronger religious authorities that were better able to compete for Muslim students with the British. These authorities attracted more Muslims to schools with religious curricula that, on the margin, were less effective at promoting literacy.

Our model thus implies that the share of Muslims in a district may merely proxy for the historical situation in which certain Muslim-dominant regions established institutions that discouraged literacy amongst Muslims. If this is true, then areas where Muslim rule collapsed a longer time ago should have more Muslim students attending secular (public) schools and thus the fraction of Muslims should contribute less (if at all) to lower literacy in these districts. We test this hypothesis by controlling for the period of Muslim collapse using three dummy variables: districts where Muslim rule collapsed prior to 1765, when Muslim rule fell in parts of the northern and eastern areas of India; 1765–1805, when Muslim rule collapsed in some of the southern and northern regions; and post-1805, when Muslim rule collapsed in the northern and western areas (Robinson, 1982).

Though this is admittedly a noisy proxy, we find that a more recent collapse has a negative and statistically significant effect on Muslim literacy. Moreover, once we control for the period of Muslim collapse, the presence of other Muslims has no statistically significant effect on Muslim literacy. This more nuanced approach which incorporates the effects of institutions on actions and outcomes thus provides a more complete picture of both the relationship between Hindu and Muslim literacy in this period and, more generally, the relationship between institutions and differences in human capital formation between groups.

2. Historical background: education, colonization, and literacy

Beginning in the mid-19th century, the former indigenous system of Indian schooling was largely replaced by a new state system of schooling introduced by the East India Company and developed further by the colonial government after the East India Company's rule came to an end in 1857. Schools were of two types under the former indigenous system: elite religious schools for students interested in a lifetime of higher education and local elementary schools where village boys were taught the three R's in the vernacular medium. The religious schools were differentiated by religion (Hindu or Muslim) with upper caste Brahman teachers and pupils dominating the Hindu (i.e. Sanskrit) religious schools, although Hindus did occasionally teach at some of the Muslim schools (madrasahs). The local schools also encompassed Qur'an schools (i.e. makhtabs) where Muslim boys learned to read the Qur'an. Some historians suggest that 8–12% of the male population was literate, but we interpret the estimates with caution, as a systematic enumeration of literacy did not begin until the early 20th century.⁴

Under the British system, publicly financed and managed schools (government and local board schools) functioned alongside privately managed aided and unaided schools. Private aided schools received public subsidies despite being privately managed, while private unaided schools did not receive any public money.⁵ Privately managed schools came under the authority of the state school system because they conformed to official education standards and their students were allowed to take public examinations.

² Ghurye (1961), Srinivas (1998) and Borooh and Iyer (2005) have also commented on literacy differences in India.

³ Our results bear a striking resemblance to other studies that have found similar negative effects on the educational attainment of minority groups living in areas heavily populated by their own group such as blacks in the United States (Margo, 1990; Hanuskeh et al., 2009). While the explanations for some of these findings in US studies are related to differences in the supply of schooling, it could also be related to differential preferences within minority groups living in non-minority versus minority areas (Fryer and Austen-Smith, 2005). We concentrate primarily on the former type of explanation in this paper.

⁴ See Nurullah and Naik (1951) and Basu (1982) for details. Basu (1982) suggests that literacy was more commonplace among Brahmans and other upper caste males. Unfortunately, there is no systematic data available to gauge the spread of schooling or estimate the degree of literacy in the population.

⁵ See Progress of Education, Quinquennial Reviews (volumes 1897–1927). See Nurullah and Naik (1951), Basu (1974), and Ghosh (2000) for a historical examination of colonial Indian education.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات