



TRACING THE UNEVEN DIFFUSION OF MISSIONARY EDUCATION IN
COLONIAL UGANDA:
EUROPEAN INFLUENCES, AFRICAN REALITIES AND THE PITFALLS
OF CHURCH RECORD DATA

African economic history working paper series

No. 25/2016

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ISBN 978-91-981477-9-7

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The African Economic History Network is funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Sweden

Tracing the uneven diffusion of missionary education in colonial Uganda: European influences, African realities, and the pitfalls of church record data¹

Abstract

The increasing use of missionary church records in studies of African human capital formation appears both promising and problematic. We engage with a recent article by Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf (2016) to show how selection biases in church record data may provoke overly optimistic accounts of European influences on Africa's schooling revolution. Confronting their dataset – drawn from the marriage registers of the Anglican 'Namirembe Cathedral' in Kampala – with Uganda's 1991 census, we show that trends in literacy and numeracy of people born in Kampala lagged half a century behind those who wedded in Namirembe Cathedral. We run a regression analysis on decadal birth cohorts (1910s-1960s) showing that ethnic, gender and locational educational inequalities persisted throughout the colonial era. We argue that European influences on access to schooling, new labour market opportunities and women's emancipation in colonial Uganda were uneven and exclusionary, while being mediated and sustained through a political coalition of the British colonial administration with the Buganda Kingdom. We call for a more sensitive treatment of African realities in the evaluation of European colonial legacies.

¹ We thank Jutta Bolt, Selin Dilli, Dácil Juif, Leigh Gardner, Doreen Kembabazi, Elise van Nederveen and Pieter Woltjer for valuable input. We acknowledge financial support from the European Research Council under the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme (ERC Grant Agreement no. 313114) as part of the project 'Is Poverty Destiny? A New Empirical Foundation for Long-Term African Welfare Analysis'.

1. Introduction

In the on-going academic debate on the legacies of European colonial rule in Africa, the spread of mass education has long taken a prominent place.² It is widely acknowledged that the imposition of colonial rule in the late 19th and early 20th centuries gave impetus to a genuine schooling revolution in Africa south of the Sahara. The lion's share of (formal) schooling up to the Second War was provided by private missionary societies, partly supported by state subsidies derived from locally forged tax revenues. The diffusion of mission schools and related human capital accumulation was also an uneven process. In some colonies – and among specific groups within those colonies – the 'elevation' of indigenous peoples into the realms of literacy, numeracy and other 'merits' of Christian civilization proceeded much faster than in others.

Recent scholarship has done much to uncover new historical data, to broaden and deepen comparative perspectives and to apply new quantitative techniques to study the impact of missionary activities on long-term African development. This literature has documented the effects of variegated colonial policies on the establishment of mission schools in French, British and Belgian Africa.³ It has revealed significant differences between Protestant and Catholic missions in terms of literacy development and gender inequality in access to schooling.⁴ It has tested the long-term implications of missionary and public schooling for economic growth, political governance, and fertility transitions in Africa.⁵ And it has shown how geographically and temporally uneven investments in mission schools have had persistent development effects.⁶

Recently, Felix Meier zu Selhausen and collaborators have pioneered the use of micro-data retrieved from the archives of African missionary churches to explore human capital formation and occupational mobility among African men and women.⁷ Collecting data from Africa's scattered church missionary archival records is a painstaking job, but the potential gains are high. Missionaries began to record information about their converts as soon as they were established, casting light on human development back into the earliest days of colonial rule, at times when colonial bureaucracies were still insufficiently equipped to collect fine-grained data on indigenous African affairs. The prime treasure in the African church archives are the marriage records, usually preserved in situ. Provided that they have stood the test of time and tropical climate, these registers offer a century-spanning survey of

² Moumouni, *l'éducation en Afrique*; Sutton, 'Education and the Making'; Warren, *Imperialism*; Sender and Smith, *Capitalism*.

³ Benavot and Riddle, 'The expansion'; Dupraz, 'British and French Colonial Education'; Frankema, 'Colonial education and post-colonial governance'; Cogneau and Moradi, 'Borders that divide'.

⁴ Woodberry and Shah, 'The pioneering protestants'; Gallego and Woodberry, 'Christian Missionaries', Nunn, 'Religious conversion'.

⁵ Bertochi and Canova, 'Did Colonization Matter'; Bolt and Bezemer, 'Understanding Long-Run African Growth'; Brown, 'Democracy, colonization'; Lloyd et al. 'The spread of primary schooling'.

⁶ Huillery, 'History matters'; Grier, 'Colonial legacies'; Feldmann, 'The long shadows'.

⁷ Meier zu Selhausen, 'Missionaries and female empowerment'; Meier zu Selhausen, *Women's empowerment in Uganda*; Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf, 'Colonial legacy'; Meier zu Selhausen, Van Leeuwen and Weisdorf 'Social mobility'. See for more information on efforts to collect missionary data across sub-Saharan Africa the project website "The Economic History of Christian Africa" at <http://ehca.info/>.

personal characteristics of spouses who sealed their bond in the church. The brides' and grooms' capacity to sign the record with their names provides an indicator of literacy development; their capacity to report their exact age at marriage sheds light on the development of numeracy; and recorded occupations of spouses and their fathers contain valuable information on skill development, labour market participation and intergenerational social mobility. Moreover, while most other colonial sources tend to be heavily male biased, these marriage registers include information on both African men *and* women, creating new scope for the study of gender inequality in an African colonial context.

In a recent article published in the *Economic History Review*, Felix Meier zu Selhausen and Jacob Weisdorf (henceforth MzSW) explore the marriage registers of the Anglican 'St Paul's Cathedral' on Namirembe Hill in Kampala (henceforth Namirembe Dataset) to investigate the development of literacy, numeracy and occupational status among Kampala men and women. They claim that their data reveals a 'gender Kuznets curve' during the colonial era and make the case that agents of European colonialism contributed to a gender-balanced accumulation of human capital by breaking with 'traditional' indigenous norms of female disempowerment.

In this paper we scrutinize the use of church record data for making such far-reaching claims and address the related, but broader, issue of how to disentangle European influences from their interaction with African social, political and economic realities, in evaluating the legacies of European colonialism. Although we support the use of locally-sourced micro data and appreciate innovative empirical approaches, we are concerned that the use of biased data in combination with an insufficiently contextualized application of Eurocentric analytical concepts, produces questionable narratives of long-term African development. We feel that for a field which is just experiencing a major revival of academic interest, the historiographic revisionism stemming from the application of new research approaches is too important to be left undebated.⁸ Building on new empirical evidence and an in-depth discussion of secondary literature, we offer an *alternative account* of the diffusion of missionary education in colonial Uganda, one which emphasizes the role of political coalitions and African agency in the development of exclusionary systems of opportunity.

In section 2 we introduce the main claims of MzSW's paper and elaborate how selection biases may arise from a) the uneven patterns of diffusion of Christianity in colonial Uganda; b) the fact that Christian marriages were mostly practiced among wealthier and well-connected converts, and c) the fact that Namirembe Cathedral was the most prominent Anglican house of worship in colonial and post-colonial Uganda, attracting a disproportional number of marriages among the *upper social strata*. We compare literacy and numeracy among individuals in the Namirembe Dataset with Uganda's 1991

⁸ See Austin, 'Reciprocal comparison'; Hopkins, 'A New Economic History'; and Austin and Broadberry, 'the renaissance of African economic history'.

population census that has been made publicly available through IPUMS.⁹ We group census observations in decadal birth cohorts to track developments of literacy and numeracy from the 1890s onwards. We find that persons who married in the Namirembe Cathedral performed much better than a representative selection of persons from comparable Kampala birth cohorts in the census data.

In section 3 we use the rich historiography on the political alliance between the British and the Baganda to explain the uneven diffusion of missionary education during the early colonial era, and to address the role of European influences in that process. We proceed in section 4 with a regression analysis to further explore the drivers of schooling attainment among six consecutive birth cohorts across Uganda (1910-1969). We find that gender, place of birth and ethnicity explain a substantial part of the selection into mission schools. The persistent lead of the Baganda over other ethnic groups indicates that the former disproportionately participated in, and benefited from, missionary education during the colonial era, with long-lasting effects.

In section 5 we argue that newly arising occupational opportunities in Kampala were conditional upon the exclusion of Uganda's large number of productive smallholders residing in the countryside and discuss how access to new jobs was limited by the presence of South Asians who dominated the (semi-) skilled labour market. Instead of the *diffusive* nature of European influences, our account emphasises its *divisive* nature: access to new labour market opportunities was embedded in an institutionalized system of inclusion and exclusion.

In section 6, we discuss MzSW's proposition that gender inequality stemmed from 'African social norms' and processes of gender emancipation can be attributed to the influences of 'European modernity'. Our account stresses how the *interaction* of patriarchal values of Baganda society with the late-Victorian ideologies of the Anglican church produced a new system of institutionalized gender inequality, which cannot be understood from a static and rigid conceptual dichotomy between 'African traditionalism' and 'European modernity'.

2. A gender Kuznets' curve in colonial Uganda?

In *A colonial legacy of African gender inequality? Evidence from Christian Kampala, 1895-2011*, MzSW "investigate the hypothesis that African gender inequality and female disempowerment are rooted in colonial times."¹⁰ Analysing various indicators of human capital and occupational mobility, their main conclusion is that "the arrival of Europeans in Uganda ignited a century-long transformation of Kampala involving a gender Kuznets curve"¹¹, with most of the gender gap closed before

⁹ Minnesota Population Center *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series*. Original data from Uganda Bureau of Statistics *1991 Population and Housing Census*. We thank Rebecca Simson for bringing this source to our attention. See for her use of the IPUMS data Simson, 'Patronage or meritocracy?'

¹⁰ Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf, 'Colonial legacy', p. 229.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 229.

independence. They suggest that Kampala men acquired almost full literacy in the early 20th century and quickly found their way into the formal wage economy forged by Europeans, while women took a bit longer, but followed suit. A composite indicator of marital gender inequality reveals a widening gap during the early decades of colonial rule peaking among newlyweds in the 1910s, turning into a narrowing gap which wasn't much larger in 1962 than it had been at the onset of colonial rule. Upon independence virtually all of the observed brides and grooms were literate and numerate, while the gap in terms of employment (working skills, white-collar work, waged work) was still substantial, but closed rapidly in the early post-colonial era.

The authors invoke Ester Boserup's *Woman's role in economic development* (1970) to argue that European colonial rule contributed to a gender-balanced pattern of human capital development in Kampala by instilling 'modern' norms of gender equality in a society that was inherently prone to discriminate women. They observe that daughters of African men working in the "traditional, informal economy [such as peasants] were more often subjected to marital gender inequality than daughters of men employed in the modernized, formal economy created by the Europeans."¹² According to MzSW this suggests that their findings for "urban Africa" are likely to be different for "rural Africa" and that,

"African discrimination against a modernized (European-style) economy could be key for understanding contemporary women's lack of access to education and formal employment, and hence one reason for the persistence of poverty in Africa." [italics added].¹³

A recent working paper, joint with Marco van Leeuwen, also contains strong conclusions. Using a somewhat broader set of marriage registers from Kampala and a few rural parishes to investigate long-term trends in social mobility in Uganda, the authors find "*a stark contrast to the pessimistic view that colonialism retarded Africa. Colonial influences in Uganda brought much greater and more equal opportunities for social advancement than in pre-colonial times*" [italics added].¹⁴ Setting aside the question whether a general invocation of 'pre-colonial times' serves as a proper counterfactual for the evaluation of colonial influences, our principle concern here is whether a study of selective church marriage registers justify such far-reaching claims. Close reading reveals that MzSW themselves also struggle with the issue of data representativeness. On the one hand, they consider the Namirembe Dataset is "a fairly good representation of Kampala individuals (regardless of religious affiliation)"¹⁵. On the other hand, they admit in attenuated terms that,

¹² Ibid, p. 229.

¹³ Ibid, p. 257.

¹⁴ Meier zu Selhausen, Van Leeuwen and Weisdorf, 'Social mobility', p. 1

¹⁵ Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf, 'Colonial legacy', p. 238.

“Our conclusion regarding the trends in gender inequality faces the problem that the process of conversion to Christianity may have been uneven. Although Christian missionaries were undoubtedly dedicated to involving all sections of society in their religion, a likely scenario is that the first Africans to convert to Christianity were those that stood to gain from a close connection with the new colonial rulers, notably the local elites.”¹⁶

To accommodate this particular concern MzSW turn to their own dataset, and run two additional regressions on sub-samples excluding people with presumed elitist background, only to conclude that “the patterns of gender inequality among the sub-sample populations are identical to that of the full sample” and that “this builds confidence that our conclusion regarding the evolution of gender inequality is robust to a possible sample selection bias driven by an uneven process of conversion to Christianity”.¹⁷

MzSW deserve much credit for uncovering and elaborating novel primary sources that can shed new light on human capital development among specific groups of Africans during the colonial and post-colonial era. However, an analysis of the more encompassing census data demonstrates that the problem of sample selection bias is far more serious than they are willing to admit. In our view, this selection bias operates on three levels. First, the process of conversion to Christianity was indeed uneven. Second, as will be elaborated in section 3, only a small share of *Christian* Ugandans – mostly the wealthy and well-connected – opted for a ‘ring marriage’ rather than customary or more informal unions. And third, the Namirembe Cathedral itself emerged as *the* elite-church of early colonial Uganda.

Several colonial era studies show that Christian marriages made up only about 15 per cent of all reported unions.¹⁸ The 1931 census reports that 72 per cent of the population of ‘Greater Kampala’ identified as Christian, but only 28 per cent of all married individuals had sealed their bond in a Christian church, and just a fraction of these were selected into the Namirembe Cathedral.¹⁹ A study of Kampala in the 1950s indicates that this bias still existed, and explains that Christian church marriages were “rare” because of:

“(a) the considerable cost of such marriages, although they confer social status, and (b) the potential complications which arise when such marriages are broken. [...] A Christian

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 251.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 251.

¹⁸ Perlman ‘Law and the status of women’

¹⁹ Uganda 1931 census

marriage is recognized by [both native and Protectorate court], but can, in the case of breakdown, only be dissolved in a Protectorate court.”²⁰

Similarly, a study of the position of women in 1960s Uganda observed that “those who contract ring marriages tend to be members of the wealthy or upper class.”²¹

The selection effect for Namirembe Cathedral was probably even stronger, as the church was erected in the vicinity of the Buganda royal court, and attracted relatively well-off people from and its surroundings to marry in the most prestigious Anglican Cathedral of the country, a status it by and large retained up until today, even though its membership has probably become more diverse over time.²²

The overrepresentation of elite persons among Christian *brides* was further compounded by the widespread practice of polygamy among the Baganda, especially among wealthy and powerful men. Although the church expected Christian men to dissolve their customary marriages with ‘surplus wives’, non-officially sanctified polygamy continued to be widely practiced. Even though MzSW argue that polygamy does not bias their sample, the women that appear in the Namirembe Dataset were selected to be their husband’s only official Christian wife. Their non-elected counterparts married in traditional ceremonies, or did not wed at all.²³

In an earlier article on missionaries and female empowerment in colonial Uganda, Meier zu Selhausen provides a more balanced discussion of the selective nature of church marriage in colonial Uganda, and elaborates on how selection may have given rise to biases in the marriage registers.²⁴ Unfortunately, these considerations and their implications are not reflected in the study we discuss here. The inconsistent treatment of bias in the church record, and the absence of a systematic investigation, leaves much uncertainty about the validity of conclusions about human capital and occupational mobility among Christian Africans, an issue that we now set out to address.

We compare the historical development of literacy and numeracy observed in the Namirembe Dataset with a sample of 1.5 million individuals (10 per cent of the population), drawn from the 1991 Uganda Population Census and made available through IPUMS, as well as supplementary evidence on numeracy from the 1959 Census. We take year of birth in the census to extrapolate trends backwards in time, using a 9-year weighted moving average to smoothen the effect of age heaping. We report

²⁰ Gutkind, ‘Town life’, p. 43.

²¹ Perlman, ‘Law and the status of women’.

²² On Namirembe Cathedral and social status in early colonial period see Kodesh ‘Renovating tradition’

²³ Robertson and Hughes, ‘Family farm’; Musisi, ‘Elite Polygyny’; Kyomuhendo and McIntosh, *Women, work*, p. 69. Polygamy is still widely practiced in Uganda, even though the far majority of Ugandans identifies as Christian.

²⁴ Meier zu Selhausen, ‘Missionaries and female empowerment’, pp. 84-87. See also Meier zu Selhausen *Women's empowerment in Uganda*, 46-48 and 53-54

results for individuals born in Kampala separately from the Ugandan population as a whole. We discuss a number of data limitations upfront.

First, our sample for the earliest birth cohorts in Kampala is small (see table 1), as was the ‘city’ itself, which basically consisted of the extended royal court of Buganda (see section 3). Although we need to treat the early period with care, the size of our sample improves over time, so that by the mid-colonial period we have a sufficiently large sample to trace the temporal development of literacy rates for Kampala with considerable confidence.

Table 1: Sample size of the 1991 Population Census, per birth cohort

Year of birth	Men			Women		
	Uganda	Kampala	Kampala Share	Uganda	Kampala	Kampala Share
1895-99	733	5	0.7%	626	11	1.8%
1900-09	2936	26	0.9%	2500	31	1.2%
1910-19	9256	86	0.9%	8776	95	1.1%
1920-29	17728	139	0.8%	17779	157	0.9%
1930-39	28441	193	0.7%	29296	236	0.8%
1940-49	42711	327	0.8%	44830	382	0.9%
1950-59	65463	808	1.2%	68389	852	1.2%
1960-69	116973	2300	2.0%	129168	2511	1.9%
1970-79	110927	3538	3.2%	123450	3748	3.0%

Source: Uganda 1991 Census

Second, backward extrapolation of census data by birth cohorts may *overstate* literacy rates due to a ‘survival bias’ towards literate individuals, who may have had a larger chance to make it into the high age groups than illiterates. On the other hand, Idi Amin’s regime in the 1970s was notorious for targeting highly educated persons, such as doctors. This may have caused a survival bias skewed towards uneducated persons, but we do not expect the loss of educated Ugandans was sufficiently large to affect the representativeness of the literacy or numeracy shares among the pre-Amin cohorts.²⁵

Third, because our data for Kampala pertains to individuals who were born in the area which is currently the administrative district of Kampala, we exclude immigrants who arrived in Kampala later

²⁵ Idi Amin’s measures to expel South Asians in 1972 did cause a severe brain drain among non-African Ugandan residents.

in life. It is not clear how this affects our sample. Cities tend to attract both higher educated and lower educated people and there is no way of knowing whether their literacy rates were comparable to those who were born, raised and educated in Kampala. What we do know and demonstrate in section 4, however, is that people born in greater Kampala had a consistent advantage in attainment levels over people who were born elsewhere in Uganda.

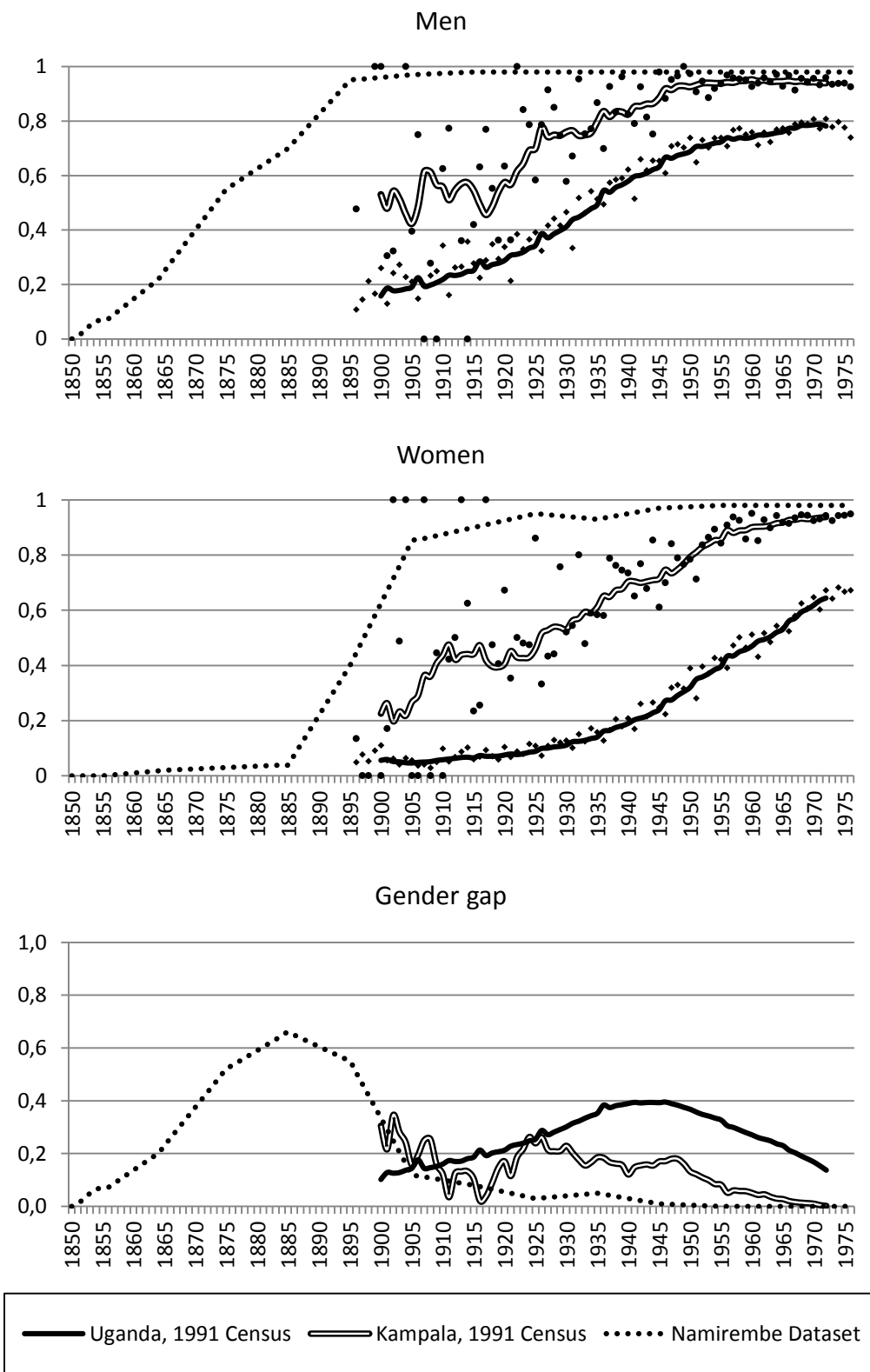
Fourth, using backward extrapolation by year of birth, we assume that the observed individuals obtained literacy and numeracy early in life. While it is undoubtedly true that the far majority of people obtained such basic skills during their childhood, some individuals may have obtained education later in life, which again implies that our figures are on the conservative side of our argument. In Appendix A we report a comparison of schooling attainment in the 1959 population census and the 1991 census for Uganda's four provinces. This robustness tests suggests that our method of backward extrapolation indeed has a tendency to *overstate* human capital for the early period. Correcting for this bias would only further widen the gap between the census data and the Namirembe Dataset and thus strengthen the point we aim to make in this section.

Figure 1 compares the development of literacy in the census with signature literacy in the Namirembe Dataset. The differences are striking. Namirembe Cathedral grooms who were born after 1890 acquired almost full literacy (>80%), while brides lagged by just one decade. The census data for Kampala shows that similar literacy rates were only first reached among men born in the 1930s and women born in the 1950s; a difference of more than half a century! For Uganda as a whole, the development of literacy progressed at an even much more modest pace. Only by the end of the colonial period did the majority of young men attain literacy, while female literacy just began to rise from a very modest level.

The 1991 census also sheds light on the development of numeracy in Kampala and can be complemented by data from the 1959 Population Census Report, which gives the age distribution of the Baganda population of 'Greater Kampala' (n=118,965).²⁶ The data allows us to construct an ABCC index to estimate the incidence of age-heaping (an oft-used proxy for numeracy) going back to the birth cohort 1870-79 and compare it with the ABCC index derived from the Namirembe Dataset. The church record data suggest that women were very well capable, even more so than men, of reporting their correct age from the 1880s onwards, reaching an ABCC index remarkably close to 100. The census data, on the other hand, show a gradual increase in correct age reporting, with men performing better than women across all birth cohorts.

²⁶ We use the term 'Greater Kampala' to refer to Kyad(d)ondo County which basically consisted of Kampala, its peri-urban areas and some adjacent countryside. The great majority of permanent inhabitants of in this county identified ethnically as Baganda.

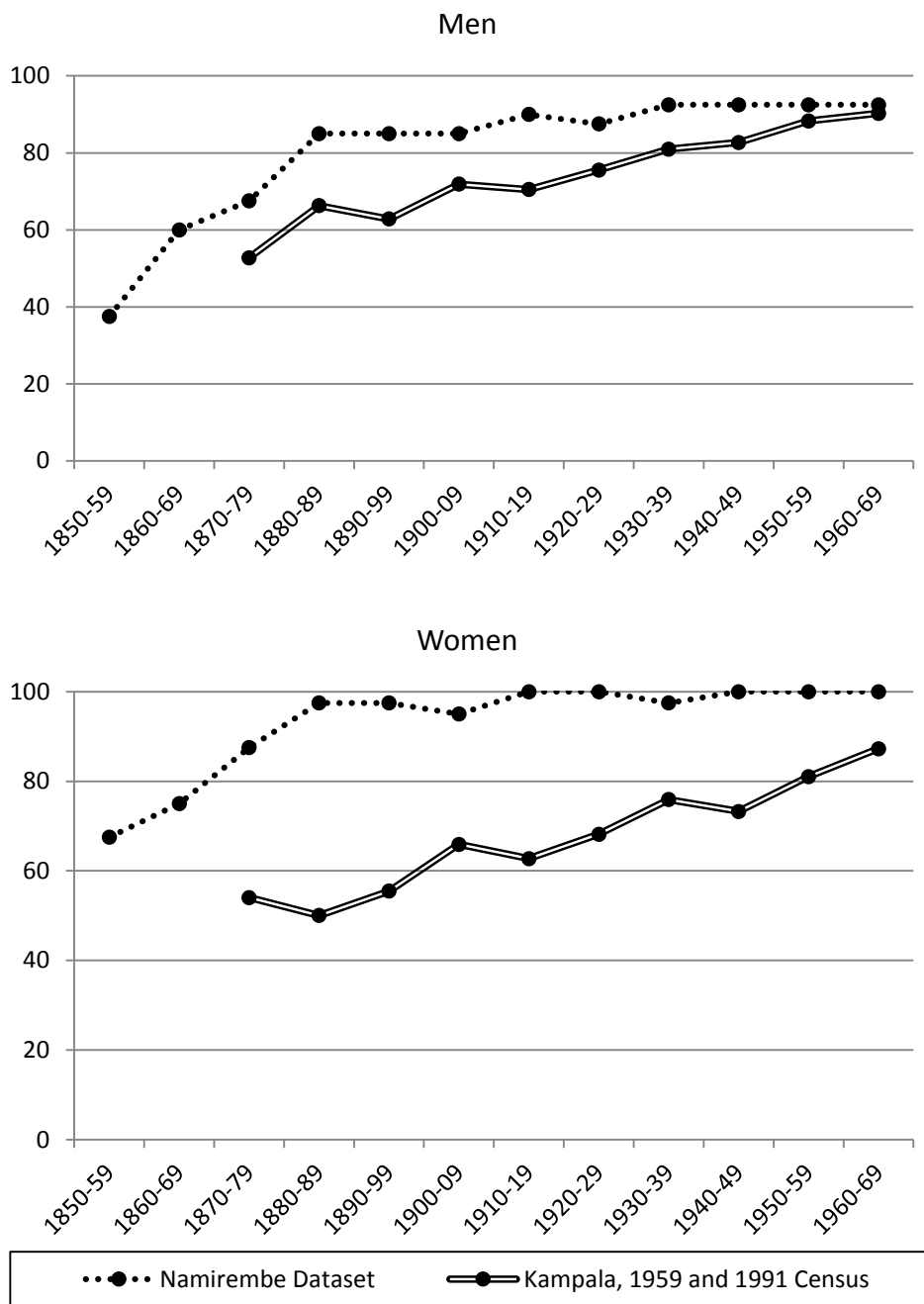
Figure 1: Literacy rates and literacy gaps, per year of birth



Note: Since not all birth years are equally represented, we use weighted nine year moving averages.

Source: Uganda 1991 Census.

Figure 2: ABCC Indices for Kampala, per decade of birth



Notes: An ABCC index of 100 means that all ages are equally represented in the birth cohort. In the case that everyone reports rounded ages (ending on 5 or 10), the ABCC will be 0. The higher the ABCC index, the higher we may expect the numeracy of the population to be. See A’Hearn, Baten & Crayen for more information.

Sources: Uganda, *Census 1959: African population*; Uganda, *Census 1959: non-African Population*; Uganda, *Census 1991*

MzSW acknowledge that “the fast improvement in literacy admittedly raises suspicion that the marriage registers are not an entirely representative sub-set of the population living in (and around) Kampala in this period,” but are quick to add that “[t]his does not detract from the fact that the sampled men and women performed very differently in terms of educational progress,” reiterating their conclusion that “*gender inequality in literacy had practically disappeared by the mid-twentieth century*” (italics added).²⁷

The census data present us with a different picture. Although our sample is small for the early period, the data suggests that the peak in the male-female literacy gap was less dramatic, and only occurred among those born in the 1920s – forty years later than among the brides and grooms in the Namirembe Dataset. For Uganda as a whole the literacy gap peaks for those born in the 1940s and educated around the time of independence. Hence, the census data does not support the claim that “marital gender inequality was not significantly different from its pre-colonial level at any point in time following Uganda’s independence in 1962”.²⁸

We conclude that the large discrepancies between the church record data and the census data – even for very basic indicators of human capital – are caused by the fact that these sources capture different layers of Ugandan society. The church records reveal a remarkably rapid diffusion of literacy and numeracy among a selective group of privileged Christian individuals in and around Kampala, while the census data reveal a much slower diffusion of literacy and numeracy among a random sample of people born in Kampala. This comparison opens up a range of important questions about elite formation and transformation, as well as about processes of human capital diffusion and changing occupational opportunities in a colonial context. The church record data provide a fascinating new angle to study those questions in more detail. However, as we set out to highlight in the following sections, this research agenda can only live up to its promise if African realities are properly factored into the historical narrative.

3. The uneven diffusion of missionary education: European influences or African agency?

Why did a certain class of Christian individuals in and around Kampala obtain literacy and numeracy skills so rapidly? And what was the role of ‘European agents’ and ‘colonialism’ in this process? To tackle these questions we have to begin by zooming in on the emergence of a political alliance between British missionary and colonial interests and indigenous elite factions of the Kingdoms in the Great Lakes Region during the late 19th century. The Buganda Kingdom was the most powerful of these pre-colonial kingdoms, drawing admiration from early explorers because of its sophisticated bureaucratic structures. In the words of one historian,

²⁷ Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf, ‘Colonial legacy’, p. 239

²⁸ Ibid, p. 231

“[The Kingdom] was equipped with an administrative apparatus as centralized and efficient as could conceivably have been erected without either writing or any means of transport other than the human head”.²⁹

Buganda’s *Kabaka* (king) ruled from the *Kibuga* (royal capital) located on Mengo Hill, one of the seven foundational hills of Kampala, on the shores of Lake Victoria.³⁰ Islamic influences had already penetrated the area when British Anglicans first set foot in 1877, quickly followed by French Catholics in 1879. Rival Baganda factions sought out pragmatic strategic alliances with Christian and Muslim explorer-missionaries.³¹ In a cutthroat scramble for political power, several coalitions emerged and dissolved, often violently. Eventually – after the intervention of the maxim guns of Captain Lugard and his British East African Company – a powerful faction of Anglican chiefs gained the upper hand, and Anglicanism became the *de facto* state religion of Uganda. Catholics were pacified and given some political power, while Muslims were tolerated but politically marginalized. In 1890, the Anglicans built their first house of worship and centre of evangelization – St Paul’s Cathedral – on Namirembe Hill, close to the royal court. The Catholics set up camp on the adjacent Lubaga Hill.

These events had a large and long-lasting impact on the course of Uganda’s colonial history. When the British Protectorate was established in 1894, it was named after the Buganda Kingdom, even though the territory included a great diversity of, sometimes antagonistic, ethnic groups and kingdoms. Baganda elites codified their privileges within their own Kingdom and exploited access to European military technology to extend their influence in the region. The Buganda Agreement of 1900 allocated property rights of a large share of the Kingdom’s most fertile soils to approximately 3,700 Baganda chiefs.³² The British relied heavily on Baganda “sub-imperialism” to establish hegemony over its new acquired colonial territory.³³ A Baganda military expedition subjugated the defiant Bunyoro Kingdom, and Semei Kakangulu, a powerful chief and Anglican convert, conquered Bukedi - ‘the land of the naked peoples’ – north and east of Buganda, spreading the Christian gospel, imposing Luganda as the language of instruction at schools and churches, introducing cash crops and a poll tax and founding new cities that exist up to today. He became the *de facto* ruler of Eastern Uganda, until the British made concerted efforts to reign him in.³⁴

To foster smooth and effective administration of the Protectorate, both Anglican and Catholic missionaries set up schools for the education of a new generation of, mostly Baganda, leaders. Mengo High School, the first Anglican school in Uganda was founded on Namirembe Hill in 1895 and had two British head teachers, before the first African headmaster took office in 1912. Boarding schools

²⁹ Wrigley, ‘Buganda: An outline history’

³⁰ Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen*, pp. 3-4

³¹ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*

³² Initially the number was estimated at 1.000. By 1909, 3.700 chiefs had claimed land titles. By the early 1950s, a vibrant land market had resulted in 50.000 and 60.000 individual landowners, corresponding to just over 10 per cent of the total adult male population of Buganda. See Mukwaya, *Land tenure*

³³ Roberts, ‘Sub-imperialism’

³⁴ See Twaddle, *Kakangulu*

were established to ‘build character’ among elites’ sons and daughters.³⁵ Alfred Tucker, the first Anglican Bishop of Uganda (1899-1908), made explicit that “if the ruling classes of the country were to [...] have a sense of responsibility [...], it was essential that something should be done for [the education of their children].”³⁶ Because of the early conversion of indigenous elites who soon became evangelists and teachers themselves, Christianity, and Anglicanism specifically, became regarded as the high-status religion.³⁷

MzSW interpret the diffusion of literacy among the sons and daughters of the first generation of elite Baganda converts in the vicinity of Buganda’s royal court as evidence for a benign European influence:

“most of the formation of human capital [...] took place during the early colonial period, emphasizing the role of Europeans for human capital accumulation among Christian Africans in and around Kampala.”³⁸

Yet, equating the diffusion of missionary education with the ‘role of Europeans’, overlooks the crucial role of “black evangelists” - i.e. African, and particularly Baganda, converts – in the process.³⁹ Frankema has argued that the remarkable schooling revolution in Uganda could never have occurred without the *Africanization of the mission*.⁴⁰ Due to the chronic lack of European missionaries and financial resources, the spread of mission schools beyond the confines of a handful of local centres – such as Mengo High School in its early years – depended crucially on the capacity of local African communities to mobilize resources for teaching materials, school buildings and recruitment of teachers. As the spread of the gospel was first and foremost carried by African converts-turned-missionaries, Oliver described the Kingdom’s late 19th century intellectual climate as “one of the most remarkable and *spontaneous movements* for literacy and new knowledge that the world has ever seen” [italics added].⁴¹ Of the reported 8,456 teachers in primary schools in Uganda in 1938, only c. 3 percent (285) were of European origin.⁴²

The results of the indigenous drive to conversion and education were impressive. By 1931, 32 per cent of the Baganda identified as Catholic and 30 per cent as Anglican. Interestingly, the swift diffusion of missionary education in Buganda undermined some of the initial power of the Baganda elites.⁴³ As

³⁵ See Ssekamwa, *History and Development*, pp. 59-70

³⁶ Tucker *Eighteen Years*. Interestingly, there was also a clear limit to how much education the colonial state deemed suitable for the indigenous elites: “when chiefs [...] petitioned the colonial state in the 1920s to allow their sons to attend university abroad, colonial officials discouraged such proposals and recalled some students who had already gone abroad, arguing that university-educated Africans could not accommodate themselves to colonial society upon their return.” Jorgensen *Uganda*, p. 80.

³⁷ Indigenous elites of Uganda’s other kingdoms were co-opted in a similar fashion. Kyomuhendo and McIntosh, *Women, work*, p. 52.

³⁸ Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf ‘Colonial legacy’, p. 254.

³⁹ The term is from Pirouet *Black evangelists*

⁴⁰ Frankema, ‘Origins of formal education’, p. 335, also see Meier zu Selhausen ‘Missionaries and female empowerment’, p. 78-79

⁴¹ Oliver, *Missionary Factor*, p. 184

⁴² Ibid, p. 340

⁴³ This fits a wider pattern. The circulation of money and opportunities for waged labour and cash crop cultivation was actively stimulated by the colonial administration who realized that a productive and profit-driven peasantry would raise

more people got educated, Baganda people from a wider range of backgrounds found their way into mission schools. It is plausible that more and more ‘self-made men’ were able to achieve social, economic and political success on the basis of meritocratic criteria such as school performance.⁴⁴

Outside Buganda, Christianity made much less headway during the colonial era, despite – or perhaps as a consequence of? – persistent “cultural imperialism of Baganda teachers and clergymen.”⁴⁵ By 1931, among non-Baganda Ugandans, only 5 percent identified as Catholic, 6 per cent as Anglican and 2 per cent as Muslim.⁴⁶ Even though conversion rates began to converge in the late colonial period, table 2 shows that Buganda continued to significantly outperform the rest of Uganda in terms of school attendance, even among Christian converts.⁴⁷

Table 2: Share of population aged 6-45 that has ever been to school by 1959, per province

	Buganda	Western	Eastern	Northern	TOTAL
Anglicans	67%	55%	36%	42%	46%
Catholics	51%	40%	34%	35%	39%
Muslims	41%	19%	10%	17%	23%
Others	7%	8%	8%	7%	7%
Male	55%	35%	30%	42%	42%
Female	40%	11%	8%	10%	18%
TOTAL	48%	29%	25%	26%	27%

Source: Uganda Census 1959 African Population

If the diffusion of education in Uganda should not be attributed to European agents, it should certainly not be attributed to British colonial policy. The successful *Africanization* of the mission - or should we say the *Bagandization* of the mission? – in fact delayed the British colonial government in taking

exports and custom duties. Moreover, the definitive establishment of British military and administrative hegemony, terminated the need for Baganda military assistance. Chiefs lost much of their political and military power and, in the 1920s, were reduced to salaried officials. The initial power of landlords over tenants was also scaled back significantly. In 1927, the British forced the *Busulu and Envujo Law* through the Buganda parliament, which fixed rent and tribute at a very low level. See Hanson *Landed Obligation*, Twaddle “Bakungu chiefs” and Jorgensen *Uganda* for detailed accounts.

⁴⁴ The possibility that access to educational and occupational opportunities was increasingly based on *meritocratic* rather than *ascriptive* criteria is interesting in its own right. Cf. Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf ‘Social mobility’

⁴⁵ Jørgensen *Uganda*, p. 177, Pirouet *Black evangelists*

⁴⁶ *Uganda Census 1931*. Conversion rates among the Batooro (26 per cent Christians) and Banyoro (25 per cent Christians) – both pre-colonial Kingdoms with Christianized elites – were also significantly higher than average, albeit much lower than the 70 per cent Christians among the Baganda.

⁴⁷ In the 1959 census, 76 per cent of the population in Buganda district identified as Christian, against 56 per cent in the rest of Uganda. *Uganda Census 1959*

responsibility for mass education in Uganda. Sir Henry Hesketh Bell, Uganda's governor (1905-1909), remarked that this success story, "relieved [the administration] of making the provision for education which in any other dependency would have been a serious call upon the government's finances."⁴⁸ This reality is borne out by some simple figures: in 1920 the colonial government spent a meagre 0.03£ (constant prices 1910) per person enrolled in primary missionary education, which set Uganda at the bottom of a larger British African sample. Just for the sake of comparison, in Sierra Leone the colonial government spent c. 0.98£ per student in 1920, about thirty times as much.⁴⁹

The arrival of a limited number of European missionaries set in motion, and this may indeed be called a legacy, the diffusion of literacy and numeracy among the previously illiterate population of Uganda. However, it is equally true that without deep involvement and commitment of Baganda converts and teachers, these European influences would have remained rather limited. This brings us to a wider point in evaluating colonial legacies: the near impossibility of disentangling the contributions of Europeans and Africans to a long-term development outcome, given that much of it results from a specific interplay among different actors, as the story of the Baganda-British coalition in Uganda exemplifies.

4. The diffusion of missionary education: the role of ethnicity, gender and location

How important and persistent was the role of (Baganda) ethnicity, gender and birthplace in the diffusion of education in colonial Uganda? The 1991 census data allows us to investigate the contribution of these factors to school attainment in a regression framework. We run two specifications. First, we regress a number of variables on years of schooling for the full sample and add variables one by one while controlling for birth cohorts. Second, we regress a similar set of variables on years of schooling for each decadal birth cohort separately, reporting standardized (beta) coefficients to explore the changing weights of variables over time. We deliberately confine our sample to the birth cohorts of the 1910s to 1960s, leaving out all people born before 1910 (avoiding survivor bias and tiny sample sizes) and after 1970 (i.e. the age group 0-21). We also exclude persons who were born outside Uganda. This leaves us with a sample of c. 585,000 men and women.

We estimate an OLS regression on years of schooling as dependent variable, with the following specification:

$$HC_{ij} = \alpha + \beta_1 x_1' + \beta_2 x_2' + \beta_3 x_3' + \varepsilon$$

where HC refers to years of schooling of individual i of birth cohort j , α is a constant, and ε is the error term. We also run a logit regression on literacy, the results of which are reported in the appendix (Table

⁴⁸ Ssekamwa, *History and Development*, p. 48

⁴⁹ Frankema, 'Origins of formal education', p. 342

B1), together with summary statistics (Table B2) and a correlation matrix (Table B3). Vector x_1 includes the variable FEMALE, which captures the effect of gender on school attainment (dummy). Based on the results presented in section 2, we expect a highly significant negative effect. Vector x_2 represents a set of variables related to place of birth, including KAMPALA, indicating whether a person is born in Kampala (dummy); and DISTANCE TO KAMPALA, which captures the distance of the centre of one's birth region to Kampala in kilometres. We hypothesize that people born in, or close to, Uganda's main administrative centre had better access to education and were more likely to acquire literacy.

Vector x_3 includes a set of variables related to ethnicity and indigenous power structures. 'Ethnicity' became a particularly important identity marker under the British colonial system of indirect rule.⁵⁰ As outlined in section 3, the British consciously sought alliances with some of the larger and more politically centralized and hierarchical ethnic groups and collaborated with these groups to pacify and govern the newly acquired territory. Considering the different levels of centralization as well as preferential treatment of some ethnic groups over others, we expect ethnicity have a strong effect on educational outcomes. The variable BAGANDA indicates whether an individual has the Baganda ethnicity (dummy), which we expect to have a positive effect. BAGANDA RULE indicates whether a person belongs to an ethnic group that was subjected to Baganda sub-imperialism in the early colonial period (dummy); Besides Buganda, Uganda encompassed three other pre-colonial kingdoms (Bunyoro, Tooro and Nkore). The variable PRE-COLONIAL KINGDOM indicates whether a person belongs to an ethnic group that identified with one of these kingdoms.

For the latter two ethnic variables there may be opposing effects. On the one hand, Baganda sub-imperialism may have brought other ethnicities into direct contact with missionary activities, while on the other hand the Baganda may have restricted opportunities for non-Baganda to access mission schools. For the pre-colonial kingdoms we hypothesize - while controlling for the most powerful kingdom of Buganda - that higher degrees of political centralization, social stratification and institutionalized flows of knowledge have stimulated a faster diffusion of mission schools than in acephalous areas, because the capacity to centralize resources made evangelization activities of both indigenous converts as well as European missionaries more effective and therefore more rewarding. The results are presented in table 3A and 3B.

⁵⁰ Mamdani, *Define and rule*

Table 3A: OLS regression on years of schooling, full sample of birth cohorts 1910s-1960s

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	yrschool	yrschool	yrschool	yrschool	yrschool	yrschool
Female	-2.259*** (0.00913)	-2.275*** (0.00912)	-2.278*** (0.00908)	-2.259*** (0.00913)	-2.276*** (0.00907)	-2.284*** (0.00907)
Kampala		2.392*** (0.0433)				2.136*** (0.0430)
Distance to Kampala		-0.00738*** (4.45e-05)				-0.00278*** (6.72e-05)
Baganda			2.588*** (0.0123)		2.697*** (0.0125)	2.313*** (0.0193)
Baganda rule				0.0885*** (0.0106)		0.524*** (0.0147)
Precolonial kingdom					0.501*** (0.0122)	0.686*** (0.0134)
cohort_1910s	-1.033*** (0.0184)	-1.073*** (0.0190)	-1.101*** (0.0187)	-1.031*** (0.0184)	-1.118*** (0.0187)	-1.126*** (0.0191)
cohort_1920s	-0.654*** (0.0162)	-0.698*** (0.0165)	-0.683*** (0.0162)	-0.656*** (0.0162)	-0.684*** (0.0162)	-0.714*** (0.0164)
cohort_1930s	<i>reference category</i>					
cohort_1940s	1.002*** (0.0155)	1.052*** (0.0158)	1.055*** (0.0155)	1.003*** (0.0155)	1.060*** (0.0155)	1.083*** (0.0157)
cohort_1950s	2.076*** (0.0148)	2.088*** (0.0149)	2.098*** (0.0148)	2.079*** (0.0149)	2.104*** (0.0147)	2.124*** (0.0149)
cohort_1960s	2.842*** (0.0134)	2.718*** (0.0135)	2.779*** (0.0133)	2.845*** (0.0134)	2.776*** (0.0133)	2.749*** (0.0135)
Constant	2.934*** (0.0124)	4.514*** (0.0158)	2.581*** (0.0126)	2.912*** (0.0127)	2.471*** (0.0129)	2.928*** (0.0240)
Observations	578,089	550,118	546,372	578,089	546,372	538,308
R-squared	0.187	0.238	0.249	0.187	0.251	0.266

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: IPUMS, Uganda 1991 Census**Note:** Robust standard errors between parentheses. *** indicates significance at the 1% level, ** at the 5% levels and * at the 10% level.

Table 3B: OLS regression on years of schooling per birth cohort, 1910s-1960s (incl. beta-coefficients)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	BC10	BC20	BC30	BC40	BC50	BC60
Female	-0.987*** (0.0283)	-1.435*** (0.0235)	-2.273*** (0.0229)	-2.975*** (0.0222)	-2.743*** (0.0196)	-2.013*** (0.0151)
<i>beta</i>	-0.25	-0.31	-0.39	-0.42	-0.35	-0.26
Kampala	1.338*** (0.284)	1.033*** (0.211)	1.372*** (0.189)	1.722*** (0.148)	2.036*** (0.0938)	2.368*** (0.0550)
<i>beta</i>	0.07	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.08
Distance K'la	-0.0020*** (0.000244)	-0.0030*** (0.000206)	-0.0026*** (0.000187)	-0.0026*** (0.000172)	-0.0035*** (0.000142)	-0.0026*** (0.000104)
<i>beta</i>	-0.10	-0.13	-0.09	-0.08	-0.09	-0.07
Baganda	1.053*** (0.0738)	1.246*** (0.0622)	1.643*** (0.0547)	2.179*** (0.0517)	2.618*** (0.0416)	2.569*** (0.0290)
<i>beta</i>	0.21	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.24	0.25
Baganda rule	-0.0936** (0.0469)	-0.156*** (0.0400)	0.0257 (0.0373)	0.251*** (0.0364)	0.671*** (0.0319)	0.774*** (0.0241)
<i>beta</i>	-0.02	-0.03	0.00	0.03	0.07	0.08
Kingdom	0.225*** (0.0381)	0.245*** (0.0343)	0.235*** (0.0330)	0.310*** (0.0321)	0.628*** (0.0292)	1.007*** (0.0223)
<i>beta</i>	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.06	0.10
Constant	1.491*** (0.0799)	2.304*** (0.0689)	3.257*** (0.0605)	4.506*** (0.0554)	5.361*** (0.0450)	5.336*** (0.0325)
Observations	16,122	31,996	52,016	79,331	124,577	232,967
R-squared	0.15	0.19	0.22	0.25	0.22	0.16

Source: IPUMS, Uganda 1991 Census

Note: Robust standard errors between parentheses. *** indicates significance at the 1% level, ** at the 5% levels and * at the 10% level.

The regression results confirm that the Baganda enjoyed a considerable advantage in access to schooling and that this advantage persisted throughout the entire colonial era. The BAGANDA variable is consistently positive and highly significant for all birth cohorts. Beta-coefficients of the OLS regression also indicate that this variable has a considerable weight: together with gender, Baganda ethnicity explains more than half of the variation that is picked up by our model. Place of birth mattered too. Persons born further away from Kampala had lower opportunities of accumulating schooling years and this effect remains significant across all birth cohorts included. People who were born in Kampala benefitted from proximity to the centre of British-Buganda power, but the beta-coefficients reveal a consistently larger weight for Baganda ethnicity than for being born in Kampala.

The effect of BAGANDA RULE on human capital formation is especially interesting because it changes over time, from significantly negative to significantly positive. The most plausible explanation for the negative coefficient among early birth cohorts is that Baganda sub-imperialism during the early stages of colonial rule was exclusionary. Among later birth cohorts it became an advantage for non-

Baganda people to be living in the confines of areas formerly ruled by the dominant ethnic group, profiting from the educational infrastructures that the Baganda had developed so energetically, as well as from affirmative action policies in the late-colonial and post-colonial period aided by a shift of political power towards non-Baganda ethnic groups.⁵¹ Compared to Ugandans born in acephalous areas (the reference group), people who belonged to one of the PRE-COLONIAL KINGDOMS enjoyed an advantage in access to education, albeit on a more limited scale than the Baganda. Finally, this regression analysis is in line with the conclusions on gender inequality drawn in section 2: gender inequality in educational attainment continued to rise all the way through the colonial era and consistently explains most of the variation in our specification. The logit regressions presented in Table B1 confirm these results when we take literacy as dependent variable instead of attainment levels.

5. Occupational mobility: inclusion, exclusion and the pitfalls of Eurocentric concepts

To what extent did the diffusion of education translate into occupational mobility among Ugandan Africans? MzSW observe the following striking transformation in labour market participation among the males in the Namirembe Dataset:

“White-collar work also grew, from 1 per cent to a staggering 20 per cent in the first decade of the twentieth century [...]. White-collar work for men became generally more common during the colonial era: by the time of Uganda’s independence, in 1962, nearly four in five males were employed in white-collar jobs.”⁵²

In their view, the occupational mobility of men and women in the Namirembe Dataset offers evidence of a “century-long transformation of Kampala from an entirely rural economy to one of urban modernity”.⁵³ It’s beyond doubt that the imposition of a new governance structure and the coinciding development of an urban economy in Kampala created new labour market opportunities that had not existed before. But to what extent did the observed accumulation of working skills reflect the benign effects of urban modernity under colonial rule, instead of exposing the continued privileged position of newlyweds in the Namirembe Cathedral?

We argue that the demand for African skilled workers in the colonial economy was actually extremely limited and that the colonial government lacked the incentives to invest heavily in the development of African working skills, let alone promote ‘white-collar’ work. To see our point, one has to realize that occupational mobility in the relatively small trading and administrative centres of Kampala cannot be separated from the lack of mobility among the majority of cash crop cultivators in Uganda’s countryside. Throughout the colonial era Kampala harboured just a fraction of Uganda’s total

⁵¹ Cf. Jørgensen, *Uganda*, p. 177

⁵² Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf, ‘Colonial legacy’, p. 241.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 241.

population and slow urbanization was very much a product of colonial economic policy. Even today Uganda ranks among the least urbanized countries worldwide, with only some 5 percent of the population living in the capital city (Table 4).

Indeed, the British colonial administration had a major stake in keeping Ugandan peasants in the countryside, where the great majority of households had access to land and cultivated food crops for subsistence, plus a few acres of cotton and/or coffee, to expand their consumer possibilities and fulfil their tax obligations. These smallholders formed the backbone of the export economy and the colonial treasury. At the same time, Uganda's unskilled labour market was dominated by labour migrants from Uganda's rural peripheries and neighbouring Ruanda-Urundi.

Male labourers migrated in and out of the city, while their families continued to farm in the countryside. The colonial state consciously maintained this system of circular labour migration, fearing that permanent urban settlement of large numbers of rural dwellers would destabilize the colonial order. Real wages in colonial Kampala, as shown by Frankema and van Waijenburg (2012) and, more recently, by de Haas (2016), remained close to subsistence levels and did not reveal the same upward trend as recorded in the main capital cities of British West Africa or the major mining areas in Rhodesia and the Congo.⁵⁴ Housing in the city centre was strictly regulated and a range of laws were in place to remove or incarcerate 'vagrants', 'prostitutes' and other unwanted and unproductive elements from Kampala's streets.⁵⁵

Another important component of Uganda's colonial economy is the presence of a large number of South Asian immigrants, who dominated the agricultural processing industry as well as the trade in commodities and consumer goods. South Asians established a presence in Uganda as labourers on the Uganda railway, as well as clerks and traders, shop owners and money lenders in the commercially underdeveloped early colonial economy of the interior. According to census estimates, the South Asian population grew steadily from 2,216 individuals in 1911 to 71,933 in 1959.⁵⁶ South Asians were to be found in even the most remote corners of Uganda, but many lived in Kampala. Most South Asians who chose to stay in Uganda tended to be skilled and entrepreneurial, employing Africans in their cotton ginneries, shops and sugar plantations. Figure 3 compares the ABCC Index of the South Asian population in Uganda to that of the indigenous Baganda of 'Greater Kampala', showing that the numeracy skills (the closest we were able to get to a comparable indicator of working skills) of the South Asian population were significantly higher than the indigenous population. Thus, the presence of South Asians further reduced the colonial government's incentives to invest in working skills among broad layers of the African population.

⁵⁴ Juif and Frankema, 'From coercion to compensation'.

⁵⁵ See Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen*; Elkan, *Migrants and Proletarians*; Obbo, *African women*.

⁵⁶ Uganda, *Census 1911*; Uganda, *Census 1959*.

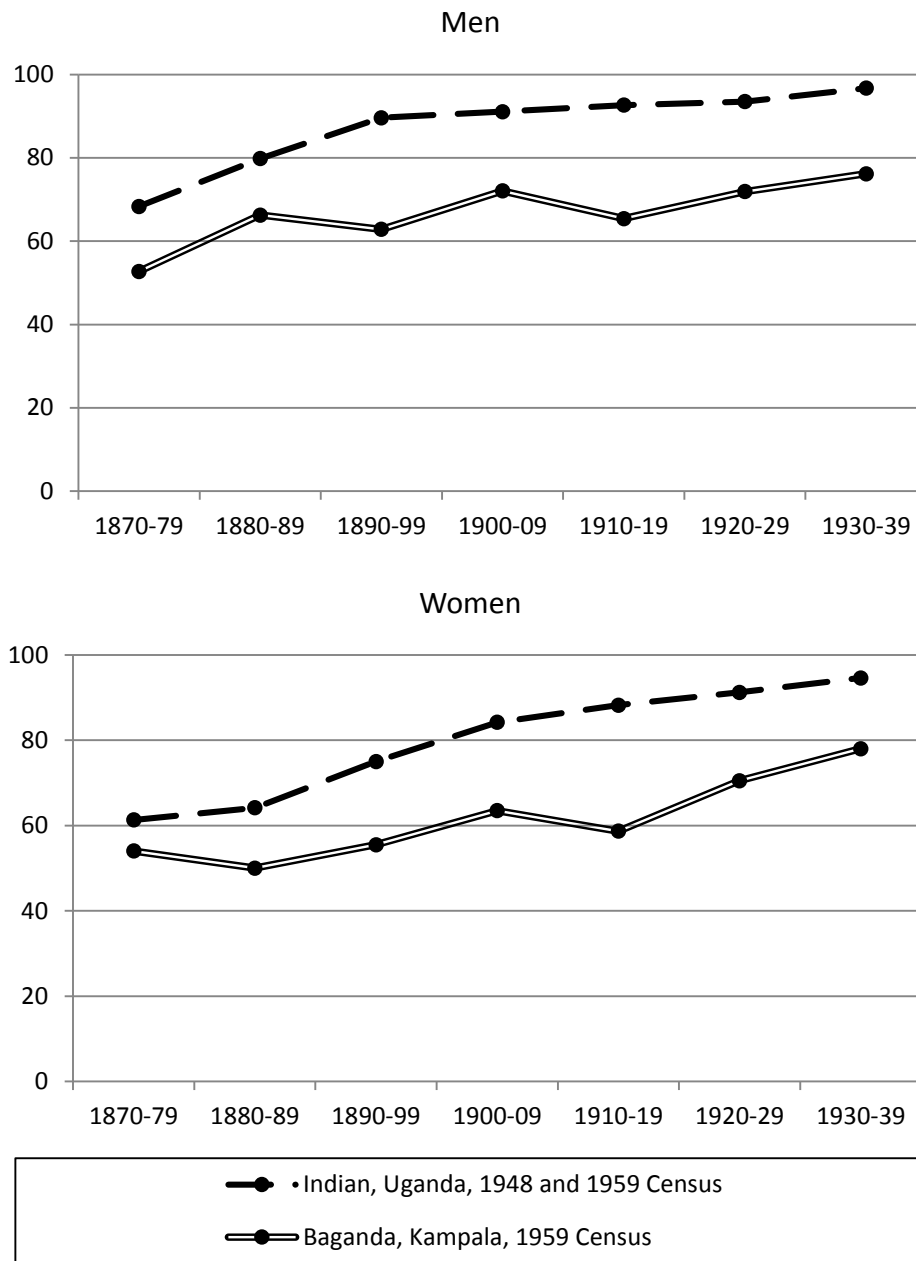
Table 4: Official Population Census estimates of Uganda and Kampala, 1921-2002

Census year	Uganda population (x1000)	Kyadondo population (x1000)	Kampala population (x1000)	Kampala share of Uganda	Urban sex ratio
1904	<i>n/a</i>	66	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
1911	2840	105	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	103
1921	3065	105	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	87
1931	3554	94	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	112
1948	4918	133	48	1.0 %	143
1959	6450	237	92	1.4 %	137
1969	9535	450	331	3.5 %	124
1980	12636	<i>n/a</i>	459	3.6 %	103
1991	16672	<i>n/a</i>	774	4.6 %	95
2002	24442	<i>n/a</i>	1189	4.9 %	92

Note: The population figures of Kampala include peri-urban areas. Sex ratios for 1911, 1921, 1931, 1948 and 1959 are for Kyadondo County.

Source: Uganda, *Census 1911*; Uganda, *Census 1921*; Uganda, *Census 1931*; East African Statistical Department, *African population 1948*; Uganda, *Census 1959*; Uganda, *Census 1969*; Uganda *Census 1980*; Uganda, *1991 Census*; Uganda, *2002 Census*; Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen*, p. 6

Figure 3: ABCC Indices for Baganda (Kampala) and South Asians (Uganda), per decade of birth



Note: An ABCC index of 100 means that all ages are equally represented in the birth cohort. In the case that everyone reports rounded ages (ending on 5 or 10), the ABCC will be 0. The higher the ABCC index, the higher we may expect the numeracy of the population to be. See A'Hearn, Baten & Crayen for more information. The South Asian figure does not include smaller minorities of 'Goans' (1948, 1959) and 'Pakistani' (1959).

Source: East African Statistical Department *Non-native Census 1948, Uganda Census 1959*.

The skill gap, as well as discriminatory colonial policies resulted in a segregated labour market. An investigation into trade in Uganda from the early 1950s, found that there were only 27 (!) officially licensed African traders in Kampala, compared to 50 Europeans and 1.014 South Asians.⁵⁷ This, of course, does not mean that Africans did not trade, but most African traders in the colonial era were part-time petty traders, who were either self-employed or hired by larger South Asian traders. The investigation pointed out that “comparatively few [African traders] could be making a living from trading.” Another colonial-era field study from the 1950s noted that “although some traders do well, the great bulk scrape by with rather a miserable existence.”⁵⁸ The exclusion of Africans in trade and industry was so real and frustrating that Idi Amin’s decision to expel non-Ugandan Asians in 1972 and redistribute their assets among Ugandan citizens was greeted with considerable enthusiasm.⁵⁹

Taking this context into account, it is difficult to assess whether the 8 per cent of the grooms in the Namirembe Dataset who were self-reported ‘traders’ belonged to the large group of African petty traders in Kampala, or if they instead belonged to the small minority of well-established, licensed African traders. On the basis of the HISCO classification, MzSW classify traders in the Namirembe Dataset as ‘skilled’, ‘waged’ white collar employees. Ironically, this classification may in fact be right, not because African traders in Kampala were ‘skilled’ in general, but because those who married in the Namirembe Cathedral happened to belong to this tiny minority that actually was.

If we ignore, for the moment, that Kampala’s clerks and traders would not have had a job without the majority of Uganda’s population remaining in the countryside as to produce the cash crops underpinning the economy and state finances of colonial Uganda, there remains the question whether Kampala’s occupational transformation was really so spectacular. An in-depth anthropological study from the mid-1950s provides us with a glance into Kampala’s labour market which stands in sharp contrast with the occupational activities of the Namirembe individuals. The study was conducted in Mulago, one of Kampala’s African neighbourhoods. The occupational composition of the Mulago sample is reported in Table 5.

⁵⁷ Uganda, *Advancement of Africans in Trade*, p. 15.

⁵⁸ Gutkind, ‘Town life’, p. 43.

⁵⁹ Jamal ‘Asians in Uganda’, also Ehrlich ‘Some consequences’ and Jørgensen *Uganda*.

Table 5: Occupations of sampled men and women in Mulago, Kampala (1956)

Type of occupation	Sampled individuals		Share of the total sample		Average monthly income (shs)		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	F/M
Not working	36	286	5%	68%	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>
Working	621	135	95%	32%	92	59	0.64
Unskilled waged	263	24	40%	6%	58	44	0.76
Unskilled independent	58	59	9%	14%	88	60	0.69
Skilled waged	225	33	34%	8%	126	72	0.57
Skilled independent	75	19	11%	5%	113	50	0.44
TOTAL	657	421	100%	100%	87	19	0.22

Note: Southall & Gutkind did not follow a formal sampling strategies, but made an effort to interview all households in the Mulago area of Kampala. They observe 64 different occupations in their sample, which they classify as (1) ‘unskilled employed’, (2) ‘unskilled selfemployed’, (3) ‘skilled employed’, (4) ‘supervisory’, ‘professional & managerial’, (5) ‘professional & managerial selfemployed’, (6) ‘domestic service’, (7) ‘property ownership’ and (8) ‘clerical work’. I recode these into waged (1,3,4,5,6,8), independent (2,5,7), skilled (3,4,5,7,8) and unskilled (1,2,6). Note that they classify ‘shop assistants’ and ‘shop boys’ as unskilled and waged, ‘food sellers’ as unskilled and independent and ‘shopkeeper’ and ‘cattle seller’ as skilled and independent. ‘tailor’, ‘seamstress’ and ‘matmaker’ are considered skilled independent. Prostitutes are classified as unskilled independent. Note that cotton and coffee growers are considered skilled and independent. Since the bar for being classified as skilled seems fairly low (i.e. not conditional on primary education) the skilled shares should be interpreted cautiously.

Source: Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen*, p. 262

Among the men in the Mulago sample, 34 per cent was classified as ‘skilled’, ‘supervisory’, ‘professional’ or ‘clerical’ wage labourer, which included masons and carpenters, drivers and plumbers, telegraphists and hairdressers. Note that the one out of three males employed in ‘skilled occupations’ in the Mulago sample in 1956 does not even come near the “nearly four in five males employed in white-collar jobs” observed in the Namirembe Dataset in 1962. Particularly striking is the difference in the frequency of clerks: 17 per cent of grooms in the 1950s in the Namirembe Dataset compared to only 3 per cent of the sampled males in the Mulago sample. MzSW admit that the transition in the occupation structure they observe has probably been “slightly less radical”, a qualification that finds support in earlier work by Meier zu Selhausen, who observed that the grooms

in the Namirembe Dataset are underrepresented in the production sector and overrepresented in white-collar jobs.⁶⁰

We conclude that the degree of occupational mobility must have been *far less radical*, exactly because occupational mobility in colonial Uganda was hampered by deliberate colonial policies of inclusion and exclusion, instead of being stimulated as MzSW suggest.⁶¹ The lack of attractive wages for skilled labour and limited opportunities in the commercial sector meant that one of the few ways to obtain a lucrative waged position was to rub shoulders with the missionaries and the mission-educated local government and merchant elites. The ‘happy few’ who managed to attain such a position indeed show up as ‘clerks’ (984 individuals, 17 per cent of the sample) and ‘teachers’ (505 individuals, 8 per cent of the sample) among grooms in Namirembe Dataset during the period 1895-1959.

6. Gender inequality in a colonial context: European ‘modernity’ versus African ‘tradition’?

We now return to the central issue of the changing position of women in colonial Uganda. We have already shown in section 4 that, for the Ugandan population at large, gender inequalities in terms of literacy and educational attainment persisted throughout the colonial era. Can we attribute these persistent inequalities to African hostility towards ‘benign’ European influences? And how useful is the dichotomy of ‘European modernity’ versus ‘African tradition’ to explore developments in African gender inequality?

To tease out the effect of exposure to European gender norms, MzSW exploit the variation among the brides observed in the Namirembe Dataset. They observe that daughters from fathers working in what they classify as the ‘traditional sector’ performed worse on gender equality indicators than daughters from fathers occupied in what they call the ‘modern sector’ and ultimately suggest that this may point to “African discrimination against a modernized (European-style) economy”.⁶²

MzSW rightly point out that pre-colonial Buganda was a deeply patriarchal society. In contrast to the urbanized areas of West Africa where local trade was dominated by women, Baganda women were legally, sexually and economically subjugated to their husbands.⁶³ However, before invoking traditional African norms to explain the different performance of women from different types of household, we need to give some consideration to the possibility that families and households allocate resources in view of both expected benefits and their overall spending capacity: as sons had a chance at formal employment in the colonial economy, families usually choose to allocate their scarce financial resources to educate their sons first, while expecting daughters to contribute to the

⁶⁰ Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf ‘Colonial legacy’, p. 242. Cf. Meier zu Selhausen *Women's empowerment in Uganda*, 46-48

⁶¹ See also Meier zu Selhausen, Van Leeuwen and Weisdorf, ‘Social mobility’, p.1

⁶² Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf, ‘Colonial legacy’, p. 257

⁶³ Kyomuhendo & McIntosh, *Women, work*; Hanson, *Landed Obligation*; Musisi, ‘Elite Polygyny’.

household's limited domestic labour resources.⁶⁴ If parents working in the 'traditional sector' had fewer means to send their children to missionary schools, daughters were (and still are) the first to lose out, but what is particularly "African" about such pragmatic household decisions?

And how emancipatory was the exposure of Christian wives of Buganda's *upper social strata* to European gender norms, education and occupational opportunities after all? The large shares of tailors, (29 per cent), weavers (21 per cent), mat makers (16 per cent) and basket makers (4 per cent) among the brides in the Namirembe Dataset reflect a Christian influence. Protestant and Catholic mission schools for girls were primarily aimed at training women to be 'good wives' to the new generation of Christian leaders, which meant inculcating 'domestic virtues' such as the production of household crafts. Kyomuhendo & McIntosh note that "encouraging women to be diligent mistresses of efficient households, [mission schools] instructed girls and adult members on how to keep their homes and children clean, how to feed their families in nutritious ways, *and how to sew or do handicrafts*" (our emphasis).⁶⁵ One particular petition to open an Anglican school for girls in 1911 summarizes the spirit of the time particularly well:

"it is absolutely necessary for the welfare of the country that the girls should also be educated to a degree suitable for their conditions in life. To teach the girls to lead pure, clean lives, and become industrious. To shew <sic> them the best methods for cultivating their gardens, and keeping their homes clean, and to teach them what I may call "Home Industries" e.g., mat making, basket making, sewing etc."⁶⁶

Although "home industries" contributed to the household income, they probably did not contribute much to female economic independence. About the late colonial period, Kyomuhendo and McIntosh note that craftwork could be an option to bring in some cash, but that, generally, "craftware made by some women in a community could be made by others too, so there was little demand."⁶⁷ One of their interviewees pointed out that "the missionaries encouraged women to learn handicrafts mainly to improve their own homes," although craftwork was sold in some cases.⁶⁸

Only 5 per cent of the women in Mulago sample reported 'matmaker', 'seamstress' or 'tailor' as their occupations, while two out of three women reported to have no (cash) earnings at all. Moreover, the Mulago sample shows that even women engaged in skilled independent occupations (i.e. seamstresses and matmakers) earned only 44% of their male counterparts (tailors, carpenters, blacksmiths, etc.). Taking these realities into account, we would conclude that, the high prevalence of domestic craft 'occupations' in the Namirembe Dataset shows that missionaries were particularly successful in

⁶⁴ That female agricultural labour was highly valued, is shown by the hefty bride money that grooms were willing to pay to the bride's family. Musisi 'Gender and "Bad Women"'

⁶⁵ Kyomuhendo and McIntosh *Women, work*, p. 54

⁶⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, *Women, work*, p. 54

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, *Women, work*, p. 103-4

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, *Women, work*, p. 104

inculcating their model of ‘domestic virtue’ among well-off Anglican households in Kampala, and that this new institution in fact resulted in a new type of gender inequality on the emerging formal labour market.⁶⁹

At the same time, scholars, including Meier zu Selhausen, have rightly pointed out that missionary schools did provide pathways to a limited number of women into a limited number of occupations outside the domestic sphere.⁷⁰ The relatively high number of ‘teachers’ (7 per cent) and ‘nurses’ (2 per cent) among the brides in the Namirembe Dataset testifies to the existence of such possibilities. It is important to note that these ‘service careers’ for women were encouraged and facilitated by some factions within the missionary movement – particularly female Anglican missionaries⁷¹ – and were only hesitantly embraced by the colonial state.⁷² In fact, some scholars have argued that the few Ugandan women who did make it into the professional ranks should be primarily credited *themselves* for skilfully exploiting missionary and colonial infrastructures to serve as a ‘stepping stone’ to a professional or business career.⁷³

Again, we would like to emphasize the interaction between social class and religion to explain changing gender roles. Even for Christian women, it was widely felt that women pursuing public service careers should be the exception. Kyomuhendo & McIntosh note that “no one argued that peasant women too should be free to earn their own incomes.”⁷⁴ Female labour market participation was “implicitly class based” and “limited to those women whose parents had been able to pay for the education and whose labor was not needed at home. [...] The ability of educated women to work relied upon cheap, unskilled female workers to take their place within the household.”⁷⁵ One statistic neatly sums up the limited scale of professional skill attainment among women in Uganda at large: in 1959, only 295 African girls (compared to 2,819 boys) were enrolled in senior secondary schools, all Christian.⁷⁶ And in a wider comparative perspective, Ugandan women appeared to be marginalized in education. According to the *African Survey* of Lord Hailey, the share of girls enrolled in primary schools in Uganda in 1950 was even the lowest (c. 20%) of nine British East and West African colonies.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ This interpretation differs considerably from Meier zu Selhausen who argues that the predominance of domestic work among Christian women signifies ‘the presence of deeper pre-colonial roots of female labour segregation in Uganda that continued to play an important role in women’s subsequent agency during the colonial era.’ Meier zu Selhausen ‘Missionaries and female empowerment’, p. 91

⁷⁰ Kyomuhendo and McIntosh, *Women, work*, p. 58; Meier zu Selhausen, ‘Missionaries and female empowerment’

⁷¹ Tripp ‘A new look’

⁷² Kyomuhendo and McIntosh, *Women, work*, pp. 50-1, 99. Note that female agricultural labour underpinned Uganda’s smallholder cash crop economy, and that colonial authorities were deeply concerned about low fertility rates and population decline. See Musisi, ‘The politics of perception’, De Haas ‘Measuring rural welfare’

⁷³ Tripp and Ntiro, ‘Women’s Activism’; Obbo, *African women*.

⁷⁴ Kyomuhendo and McIntosh, *Women, work*, p. 83

⁷⁵ Ibid, *Women, work*, p. 76.

⁷⁶ Ibid, *Women, work*, p. 83

⁷⁷ “The percentage of girls among the pupils attending primary schools in 1950 was 33 in Northern Rhodesia, 40 in Nyasaland, 27 in Kenya and Tanganyika, 20 in Ugandan, 25 in Zanzibar, 22 in Nigeria, 21 in the Gold Coast, and 30 in Sierra Leone” Lord Hailey *African Survey Revised* (1957, p. 1186), quoted in Akyeampong and Fofack, *The Contribution of African Women*, p. 27

To conclude, the issue of gender inequality exemplifies the complex interactions of African realities and European influences in the colonial era. Even though women in the vicinity of missionaries may have attained literacy and obtained some specific ‘working skills’ more quickly than their rural, unexposed counterparts, their education was primarily supposed to benefit them and their families in the domestic sphere. The missionaries propagated the picture of a ‘good Christian housewife and mother’ that reflected the gender roles that were typical of “middle-class patriarchy in late Victorian Britain”, which can hardly be called ‘equal’, ‘modern’ or ‘emancipated’.⁷⁸ Buganda’s social norms discriminated against women, but it was their interaction with the values of the Anglican Church that produced a new system of institutionalized gender inequality.⁷⁹ Slowly but progressively, women managed to use the existing infrastructures to increase their economic independence and expand their role in the public sphere, but it seems unwarranted to attribute this development to the modern values introduced by European agents of colonial rule.

7. Conclusion

Using missionary church records in studies of African human capital formation and related aspects of gender inequality and social mobility is both promising and problematic. In this study we sought to demonstrate how selection biases in church record data may provoke overly optimistic accounts of European influences on educational and occupational opportunities and gender emancipation in Africa. We pointed out how the individuals captured in the marriage registers of the Anglican Namirembe Cathedral in Kampala constituted the wealthy and well-connected upper strata of society who benefited disproportionately from schooling and labour market opportunities, which remained out of reach for the majority of Ugandans, including the majority of Kampala inhabitants. Literacy rates and school attainment in Kampala grew during the colonial era, but at a pace more modest than the Namirembe marriage registers suggest. The exposure of African men and women to Anglican missionaries helped to acquire new labour skills and offered new job opportunities, but these were neither as unequivocally beneficial and emancipatory, nor as transformative for the colonial economy as some have proposed.

That specific groups of Africans selected into the marriage registers of missionary churches does not mean that these sources are useless for tracing aspects of human capital diffusion and occupational mobility in twentieth century Africa. They provide a captivating glance into human capital development and occupational change within the upper strata of African societies, a topic that deserves investigation in and of itself. Moreover, when church record data are complemented by other sources such as census or survey data, in which issues of selection bias are more limited, a highly promising research agenda opens up. It allows us to explore questions of social stratification and social mobility

⁷⁸ Cf. Meier zu Selhausen, ‘Missionaries and female empowerment’

⁷⁹ See for a discussion of the interaction of African and Western notions of domesticity Hansen ‘African encounters’

in greater depth and study more closely the variegated economic, social and political effects of colonial rule, religious conversion and education among various groups of Africans.

The crux of our message, however, relates to the way in which colonial influences and legacies are to be conceptualized. Firstly, to understand processes of transformation during the era of colonial rule in Africa, it is crucial to acknowledge and incorporate the role of African agents. Colonial states were not capable of defining, organizing and financing their activities without active involvement of certain sections of the indigenous populations, and their interaction determined subsequent paths of (uneven) development. Secondly, our study has reiterated that European influences were not just *diffusive*, they also tended to be *divisive*. Evaluations of colonial legacies become much more constructive and balanced when dynamics of inclusion and exclusion – which in the case of Uganda contributed to a violent and tragic post-colonial history⁸⁰ – are properly addressed. Finally, we have argued that a dichotomy between ‘African tradition’ and ‘European modernity’ is of questionable value in understanding developments in the colonial era, whether they pertain to gender equality or any indicator of social, economic or political development. Colonial and missionary agents brought different, ambiguous and sometimes conflicting new ideas into their colonies, and these ideas interacted with those of African agents in similar variegated fashion. It is exactly these complex dynamics between European influences and African realities which innovative research approaches and new datasets can help to unravel.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Green *Politics of ethnonationalism*, Jorgensen *Uganda*, Mamdani *Citizen and subject*

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Appendix table A: Share of cohort born 1914-43 with >0 and >4 years of schooling

		Any schooling		More than 4 years	
		Census	Census	Census	Census
		1991	1959	1991	1959
Buganda	Men	75%	53%	41%	24%
	Women	48%	36%	20%	11%
Eastern	Men	49%	39%	27%	21%
	Women	12%	6%	4%	4%
Northern	Men	52%	32%	29%	17%
	Women	7%	6%	3%	1%
Western	Men	48%	33%	22%	11%
	Women	12%	8%	4%	2%

Source: Uganda, *Census 1959*; IPUMS, *Uganda 1991 Census*

Note: The 1959 census reports shares for the age cohort 16-45 (thus born between 1914 and 1943). We may expect that the younger individuals in this cohort were still accumulating years of schooling, which explains part of the difference. The remainder of the difference with the reported education of the same cohort in the 1991 census can be attributed to the upward biases of the 1991 census data discussed in section 2 of this paper (survival bias of educated individuals and/or adult education).

Appendix table B1a: Logit regression on literacy, full sample of birth cohorts 1910s-1960s

VARIABLES	(1) lit	(2) lit	(3) lit	(4) lit	(5) lit	(6) lit
Female	-1.353*** (0.00592)	-1.421*** (0.00629)	-1.472*** (0.00644)	-1.354*** (0.00593)	-1.483*** (0.00649)	-1.495*** (0.00657)
Kampala		1.088*** (0.0365)				0.807*** (0.0381)
Distance to K'la		-0.00446*** (3.07e-05)				-0.00161*** (4.67e-05)
Baganda			1.887*** (0.0101)		2.000*** (0.0103)	1.777*** (0.0145)
Baganda rule				-0.145*** (0.00668)		0.174*** (0.00994)
Precolonial kingdom					0.504*** (0.00822)	0.564*** (0.00914)
cohort_1910s	-0.927*** (0.0227)	-0.973*** (0.0240)	-1.076*** (0.0253)	-0.931*** (0.0227)	-1.093*** (0.0252)	-1.104*** (0.0257)
cohort_1920s	-0.518*** (0.0161)	-0.560*** (0.0170)	-0.594*** (0.0177)	-0.515*** (0.0160)	-0.596*** (0.0177)	-0.610*** (0.0180)
cohort_1930s	<i>reference category</i>					
cohort_1940s	0.586*** (0.0115)	0.629*** (0.0122)	0.671*** (0.0125)	0.585*** (0.0115)	0.682*** (0.0126)	0.693*** (0.0128)
cohort_1950s	1.142*** (0.0108)	1.193*** (0.0115)	1.253*** (0.0118)	1.139*** (0.0108)	1.268*** (0.0118)	1.282*** (0.0120)
cohort_1960s	1.560*** (0.0103)	1.562*** (0.0109)	1.657*** (0.0112)	1.558*** (0.0103)	1.667*** (0.0112)	1.662*** (0.0114)
Constant	-0.239*** (0.00943)	0.719*** (0.0120)	-0.498*** (0.0104)	-0.202*** (0.00961)	-0.612*** (0.0106)	-0.295*** (0.0176)
Observations	580,313	552,184	548,447	580,313	548,447	540,343

Source: IPUMS, Uganda 1991 Census

Note: Robust standard errors between parentheses. *** indicates significance at the 1% level, ** at the 5% levels and * at the 10% level.

Appendix table B1b: Logit regression on literacy per birth cohort, 1910s-1960s

VARIABLES	(1) BC10	(2) BC20	(3) BC30	(4) BC40	(5) BC50	(6) BC60
Female	-1.784*** (0.0522)	-1.933*** (0.0338)	-2.090*** (0.0239)	-1.977*** (0.0173)	-1.580*** (0.0132)	-1.135*** (0.00962)
Kampala	0.555*** (0.193)	0.426*** (0.151)	0.600*** (0.129)	0.621*** (0.107)	0.761*** (0.0878)	1.077*** (0.0631)
Distance to K'la	-0.00264*** (0.000387)	-0.00293*** (0.000252)	-0.00189*** (0.000176)	-0.00135*** (0.000128)	-0.00190*** (9.30e-05)	-0.00138*** (6.51e-05)
Baganda	1.282*** (0.101)	1.442*** (0.0673)	1.677*** (0.0501)	1.770*** (0.0391)	1.877*** (0.0310)	1.932*** (0.0228)
Baganda rule	-0.228*** (0.0862)	-0.208*** (0.0520)	-0.0702** (0.0358)	0.0945*** (0.0267)	0.247*** (0.0199)	0.235*** (0.0141)
Precolonial kingdom	0.552*** (0.0696)	0.515*** (0.0456)	0.407*** (0.0319)	0.443*** (0.0244)	0.541*** (0.0185)	0.637*** (0.0132)
Constant	-0.886*** (0.120)	-0.320*** (0.0774)	0.134** (0.0543)	0.607*** (0.0400)	1.072*** (0.0292)	1.056*** (0.0204)
Observations	16,150	32,031	52,085	79,423	124,730	234,624

Source: IPUMS, Uganda 1991 Census

Note: Robust standard errors between parentheses. *** indicates significance at the 1% level, ** at the 5% levels and * at the 10% level.

Appendix table B2: Summary statistics of human capital regressions

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Literacy	585,749	0.50	0.50	0	1
Years of Schooling	583,516	3.50	3.83	0	18
Female	585,749	0.51	0.50	0	1
Kampala	585,749	0.01	0.12	0	1
Distance to Kampala	557,063	204.65	104.64	0	373
Baganda	553,456	0.16	0.37	0	1
Baganda Rule	585,749	0.24	0.43	0	1
Precolonial Kingdom	585,749	0.17	0.38	0	1

Source: Uganda 1991 Census.

Appendix table B3: Correlation matrix of human capital regressions

	yrschool	literacy	female	kampala	distance	baganda	bagrule	kingdom
years of schooling	1.00							
literacy	0.83	1.00						
female	-0.29	-0.29	1.00					
kampala	0.13	0.09	0.00	1.00				
distance to kampala	-0.23	-0.21	0.01	-0.24	1.00			
baganda	0.25	0.25	0.00	0.20	-0.56	1.00		
baganda rule	0.01	-0.05	0.00	-0.06	-0.31	-0.26	1.00	
precolonial kingdom	-0.01	0.02	-0.01	-0.04	0.12	-0.21	-0.28	1.00

Source: Uganda 1991 Census.