

Meier zu Selhausen, Felix; Weisdorf, Jacob

**Working Paper**

## Colonial influences and African women's segregation: Evidence from Anglican converts in urban British Africa

African Economic History Working Paper Series, No. 74

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

African Economic History Network (AEHN)

*Suggested Citation:* Meier zu Selhausen, Felix; Weisdorf, Jacob (2023) : Colonial influences and African women's segregation: Evidence from Anglican converts in urban British Africa, African Economic History Working Paper Series, No. 74, ISBN 978-91-981477-9-7, African Economic History Network (AEHN), s.l.

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/300120>

**Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:**

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

**Terms of use:**

*Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.*

*You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.*

*If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.*



African Economic History Working Paper

No. 74

---

# Colonial Influences and African Women's Segregation: Evidence from Anglican Converts in Urban British Africa

Felix Meier zu Selhausen, Utrecht University

[f.p.meierzuselhausen@uu.nl](mailto:f.p.meierzuselhausen@uu.nl)

Jacob Weisdorf, Sapienza University of Rome, CEPR, CAGE

[jacob.weisdorf@uniroma1.it](mailto:jacob.weisdorf@uniroma1.it)

July 2023

ISBN 978-91-981477-9-7

AEHN Working Papers are circulated for discussion and comment purposes. The papers have not been peer reviewed, but published at the discretion of the board of the African Economic History Network.

# Colonial Influences and African Women's Segregation? Evidence from Anglican Converts in Urban British Africa<sup>1</sup>

Felix Meier zu Selhausen (Utrecht University)

Jacob Weisdorf (Sapienza University of Rome, CAGE, and CEPR)

## Abstract

Using educational and occupational statistics derived from 30,000 marriage registers obtained from six major cities in British Africa, we show how early-colonial mission education helped African men access formal labour. Women were relegated to informal and homemaking activities instead, even if mission schooling facilitated their social mobility via marriage. The early-colonial rise in gender inequality was followed by a remarkable decline herein after World War II helped by *Africanisation* and *feminisation* of the civil service alongside Western women's *liberalisation movement*. This process was relatively faster in West Africa where women's precolonial tradition of economic independence contested colonial ideals of *domestic virtue*.

*JEL codes:* N37, O18, J16

*Keywords:* Africanisation, Colonisation, Development, Feminisation, Gender, Inequality, Labour, Missionaries, Schooling.

---

<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to seminar audiences at the EHES 2019 (Paris School of Economics), the Rural History Seminar (Wageningen University); the Gender, Household Labour Relations and (Post)colonialism Conference 2016 (Universitas Gajah Mada); the AEHN 2017 (Stellenbosch University); the AEHN 2018 (University of Bologna); the XIX WEHC (Boston), the German African Studies Conference 2018 (University of Leipzig); the Workshop on Political Change, Social Mobility, and Inequality in Historical Perspective 2019 (Bocconi University); the EHS Women's Committee 30th Annual Workshop 2019 (University of Manchester); the SASE Annual Meeting 2021; Economic and Rural History seminar (Wageningen University); the IUSSP Scientific Panel on Historical Demography 2021 (British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi); Global Economics and Management seminar (University of Groningen); and the ESSHC 2023 (Gothenburg University). We are particularly grateful to Ewout Frankema, Michiel De Haas, Johan Fourie, Alexander Moradi, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, Rebecca Simson, and Amy Rommelspacher for useful feedback. We also thank Benard Assimwe, Christopher Byomukama and Isumail Muhemba of Mountains of the Moon University in Uganda for excellent research assistance. The collection of data was funded by the Danish Research Council through grant no. DFF 4003-00088. Felix Meier zu Selhausen gratefully acknowledges financial support from the British Academy (Postdoctoral Fellowship no. pf160051). Contact details: Felix Meier zu Selhausen, email: [f.p.meierzuselhausen@uu.nl](mailto:f.p.meierzuselhausen@uu.nl). Jacob Weisdorf, email: [jacob.weisdorf@uniroma1.it](mailto:jacob.weisdorf@uniroma1.it).

## 1. Introduction

Colonial influences on Africa's development are receiving growing attention.<sup>2</sup> One of the most protracted debates in African economic history concerns the contributions of Christian missionaries whose activities in Africa intensified during the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the onset of European colonial rule.<sup>3</sup> Missionaries facilitated the bulk of formal education during the colonial era as part of their propagation of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The expansion of mission education prompted a genuine schooling revolution, the gender-specific legacy which is still disputed.<sup>5</sup> In particular, recent studies have documented that mission education disproportionately favoured males over females.<sup>6</sup> The widening gender gap was not just a matter of *access* to education. Mission school curricula differed markedly by gender, teaching Christian Victorian values of domesticity (e.g. needlework, cooking, and hygiene) to girls whereas reading, writing, and artisanal skills were prioritised for boys. This separation – intended to prepare females for marriage and homemaking careers while facilitating males' access to colonial labour markets instead – is believed to have segregated African women not just educationally but also professionally.<sup>7</sup> This view of gender segregation on the other hand is starkly contrasted by a still growing body of literature observing a long-lasting benign effect of the presence of colonial missionaries on gender norms and women's economic agency and education in Africa today.<sup>8</sup> However, the lack of systematic gender-specific educational and occupational information has so far prevented a comprehensive study of African men and women's relative performances alongside the European colonial and missionary agents' role in shaping these.

This study offers educational and occupational statistics from hitherto unused Anglican marriage registers collected from six major cities in five former colonies of British Africa: Sierra Leone, Southern Nigeria, and the Gold Coast in West Africa together with Uganda and Kenya in East Africa. We employ the novel data to examine the gender-specific access to mission schooling alongside the degree to which mission education translated into labour-market opportunities and social advancement among the sampled females. Our dataset includes more than 30,000 African couples who celebrated a Christian wedding in urban British Africa between 1860 and 1970. The marriage certificates reveal the spouses' signature literacy – i.e. their ability to read and write as inferred from the (lack of) their consenting signatures – indicative of their mission-school attendance. The records also disclose the couple's occupational titles at the time of their marriage, informing about the nature of their labour-market engagements (formal, informal, domestic) and thus the degree to which African women were deprived of labour-market opportunities compared to men. The occupational titles of the couples' fathers moreover allow us to explore the brides' possibilities for intergenerational social advancement; how this depended on having attended mission school; and whether women were able to achieve social upward mobility through the labour market or via marriage. We use comparable marriage certificates of British white settlers when possible to uncover whether the gender differences

---

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Frankema and Van Waijenburg 2012; Huillery 2014; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2020.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Jedwab et al 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Whitehead 1999; Frankema 2012; Rueda 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Cogneau and Moradi 2014; Nunn 2014; Dupraz 2019; Becker and Meier zu Selhausen 2023.

<sup>6</sup> De Haas and Frankema 2018; Meier zu Selhausen 2019; Aboagye 2021; Baten et al 2021; Chiseni and Bolt 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Meier zu Selhausen 2014; Meier zu Selhausen et al 2018; Wantchekon et al 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Becker and Meier zu Selhausen 2023; Fourie and Swanepoel 2015; Kudo 2017; Montgomery 2017; Nunn 2014.

observed among our sampled Africans were mirrored among their local European counterparts. The wide geographical coverage of our data also allows us to check for region-specific gender patterns across East and West British Africa.

Our sampled couples were deeply entrenched with the missionary movement. Their self-selection into the Anglican Church was not just a religious promise but a wide-ranging commitment to Western culture, closely exposing the sampled converts to the social, economic, and political changes that occurred over the course of British colonial rule.<sup>9</sup> Hence, if colonial influences left imprints on the lives of Africans, then we would expect to see footprints of these imprints on the educational and occupational achievements of the sampled couples. This empirical backdrop thus enables us to examine how regional precolonial gender norms, social backgrounds, mission schooling, and other colonial stimuli shaped the educational and occupational possibilities among and between African men and women.

Our study breaks new ground along five dimensions. First, earlier accounts of occupational developments in colonial Africa chiefly come from the archives of colonial administrations who predominantly employed male workers. The sources of previous studies therefore naturally attend to the labour-market performances of African males as oppose to females.<sup>10</sup> Our marriage registers this way push the research frontier forward by offering a fully-balanced comparison of the occupational performances of African men and women alike, both at the societal and household levels. Second, because earlier studies gleaned their occupational statistics from enumerations of the colonial administrations, their information is concentrated on males and females employed in the colonial economy thus excluding occupational activities outside the colonial sphere, i.e. in people's homes, on their farms, or in their family businesses.<sup>11</sup> Although many of our sampled African couples had certainly positioned themselves at the heart of colonial activities by their choice of religion, considerable segments of the sampled populations operated in informal labour and domestic chores and thus outside the formal colonial economy. Third, Ester Boserup's account of African women's role in development inspired a large but mostly narrative literature on women's position in colonial societies.<sup>12</sup> Our sampled African women's educational and occupational performances vis-à-vis those of men give numerical expression to these narratives regarding women's position relative to men's – both within the household and across society at large. Fourth, our marriage registers were recorded in the same systematic fashion across all of British Africa making the gendered patterns observed in West Africa directly comparable to those of East Africa including our earlier case-study of Kampala.<sup>13</sup> Lastly, the longitudinal dimension of our data enables a fine-grained exploration of gender-specific educational and occupational performances of Africans and British expats across the

---

<sup>9</sup> Mann 1981, Roberts 1962, De Haas and Frankema 2018.

<sup>10</sup> See Robertson 1984a, pp. 35-37; Byfield 2018. Also, recent studies in African economic history have reconstructed wages of unskilled African male labourers (Frankema and Van Waijenburg 2012, 2023; Rönnbäck 2014; Juif and Frankema 2018), heights of African male soldiers (Moradi 2009; Austin et al 2012; Moradi et al 2013), personnel data on the careers of policemen (Vanden Eynde et al 2018), and father-son social mobility of Christian African grooms (Meier zu Selhausen et al 2018) and white settlers (Cilliers and Fourie 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Robertson 1984a, pp. 35-37; Byfield 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Boserup 1970.

<sup>13</sup> Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf 2016; Meier zu Selhausen et al 2018.

entire colonial era. This takes us beyond earlier so-called *persistence studies* where the historical presence of missionaries are correlated with the performances of African women today.<sup>14</sup>

Our findings speak to several ongoing debates about the variegated influences of colonial activities on African women's educational and occupational attainments vis-à-vis those of men. The marriage records document that access to mission schooling among the sampled couples was fairly gender-equal across the colonial period, though with a transitory early-colonial gap when males attended mission schools more frequently than females. The gendered rewards to mission education however – as measured by access to formal labour – grew increasingly uneven during the early-colonial period when formal jobs rose in availability for men but not for women who were frequently relegated to homemaking activities instead. An important exception was women's formal employment at mission schools and hospitals. Here, our data reveal that women were more likely to be employed by the mission society during the early-colonial era if their fathers worked for the missionaries themselves or for the colonial administration. Also, while mission schooling rarely rewarded early-colonial women in terms of access to formal labour, our analyses indicate that mission education offered them the possibility for social advancement via marriage instead.

Second, we observe significant regional variation in women's *alternatives* to formal work. Women in urban West Africa were more often involved in *informal* income-generating activities during the early-colonial era than their East African counterparts who were relegated to domestic chores instead. We argue based on earlier works that these disparities were rooted in precolonial gender norms. In particular, Christian-Victorian patriarchal values appear to have better aligned with East African precolonial traditions of female domesticity than was the case in West Africa.<sup>15</sup> East Africa's male-controlled ideals, supposedly strengthened through mission-school training,<sup>16</sup> are echoed in the marriage registers with early-colonial East African women overwhelmingly recorded as homemakers and housewives. Female domesticity on the other hand did not thrive to the same degree in British West Africa where precolonial ideologies of women's economic independence helped resist the missionary ethics of women as homemakers, instead securing their continued participation in informal income-generating work well into the colonial period.<sup>17</sup>

Third, the observed segregation of early-colonial women from formal work did not persist throughout the entire colonial era. Earlier studies have described how *Africanisation* and increased *feminisation* of the British public service allowed well-educated African women to increasingly enter formal employment.<sup>18</sup> This development is clearly mirrored in our occupational statistics in both East and particularly in West Africa. We argue on the basis of our marriage statistics of British expats that the observed changes among our sampled African couples followed advancements in European women's formal-work participation post-World War II and their subsequent Western *liberalisation movement*.<sup>19</sup> We contend that precolonial emphasis on women's financial independence in coastal West Africa explains why we observe a relatively rapid shift towards women's formal-job participation in this region during

---

<sup>14</sup> Anderson 2018; Guarnieri and Rainer 2021; Henderson and Whatley 2014; Becker and Meier zu Selhausen 2023; Chiseni and Bolt 2023; Miotto 2023; Nunn 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Kyomuhendo and Keniston McIntosh 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Mann 1981, p. 211; Musisi 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Keniston McIntosh 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Simson 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Goldin 1991; Humphries and Sarasúa 2012; Schmidt and Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2012.

the late colonial period whereas East Africa's greater adherence to female domesticity procrastinated women's entry into formal jobs there. These divergent regional trends meant that gender inequality in access to formal work was largely absent among the sampled couples in West Africa at the time of independence while they still loomed fairly large in East Africa.

Over and above these regional differences, we also find that social background was eminent in determining women's educational and occupational careers in both East and West Africa. In particular, brides whose fathers were employed by the mission society or the colonial administration were significantly more likely to have attended mission school and entered the formal economy compared to brides of fathers of more traditional backgrounds, notably farmers. Brides whose fathers worked in the realm of the formal colonial economy were also less likely to experience gender inequality within their marriage with respect to educational and occupational attainments compared to brides whose fathers were engaged in more traditional trades. These findings emphasise that African women's opportunities and agency were closely linked to their fathers' professional status and ties within European colonial institutions.

We continue by describing our data in more detail and how we prepare them for analysis (Section 2). We then chart the trends in the educational and occupational structures of the sampled populations focusing on gender differences and regional comparisons herein (Section 3), after which we turn to the role of mission education and social background for women's access to formal labour and mobility via marriage (Section 4). Section 5 concludes.

## 2. Background, Data, and Sample Restrictions

The empirical base of our study comes from Anglican marriage registers recorded by the *Church Missionary Society*, i.e. the missionary arm of the Church of England overseas. The mission society was founded in 1799 and employed the same record-keeping system as the Church of England.<sup>20</sup> Among Protestant mission societies active in British colonial East and West Africa, the Church Missionary Society constituted about one quarter of all European missionaries and about half of all African mission staff and out-stations.<sup>21</sup>

The marriage registers include the date and place of the wedding, the spouses' names, their marriage ages, their prior civil statuses, their places of residence, and their occupations (if any) at the time of the marriage. The records also report the names and occupations of the fathers of the spouses. Spouses were asked to approve their marriage by leaving their signatures on the certificate. For spouses unable to write their own name, as was frequently the case during the early-colonial period, consent was given by leaving an 'X' mark or a thumbprint on the certificate, with the minister writing down the name instead. Known as *signature literacy*, someone's signatures in the sampled registers are a strong indication of their mission-school attendance.<sup>22</sup> Figure A1 in the Appendix details what an Anglican marriage registration contains in terms of information. Although Catholic and other Protestant mission societies competing for conversions in British colonial Africa also recorded certain vital events in their marriage registers, they typically lack registration of occupations and signatures.

---

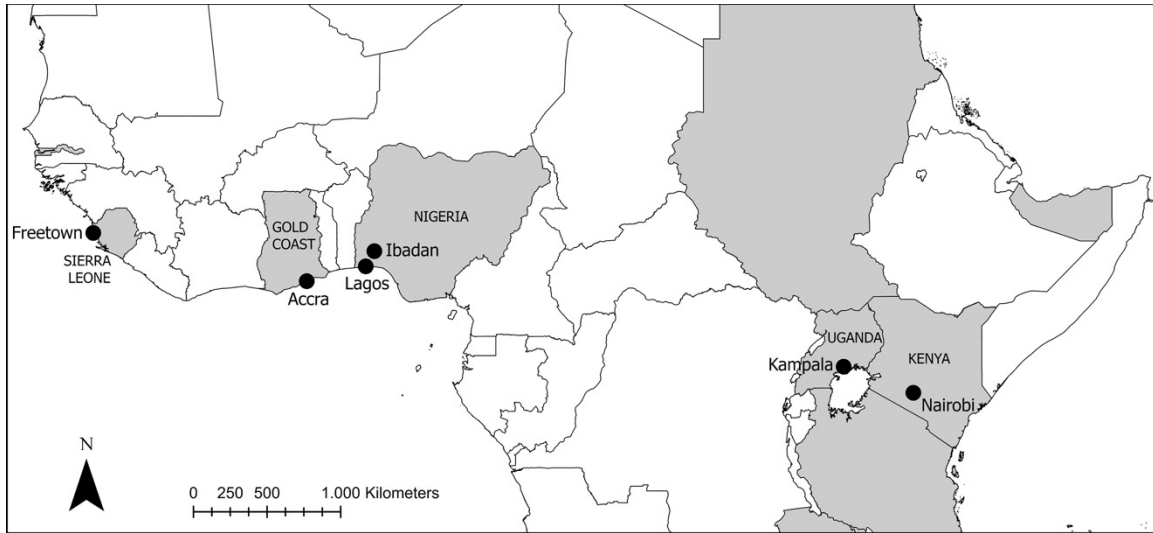
<sup>20</sup> Wrigley and Schofield 1989; Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Beach and Fahs 1925, pp. 87-90, 108-113.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Schofield 1973; Rachal 1987.

**Figure 1**

The sampled cities in British (grey-shaded) colonial Africa



Anglican vital records of African converts are predominantly found in former British colonial Africa. We sought to collect as many registers as possible from a total of six major cities. For West Africa, this includes the cities of Freetown in Sierra Leone, Accra in Ghana, and Lagos and Ibadan in Nigeria (see Figure 1). For East Africa, the sampled cities comprise Kampala in Uganda and Nairobi in Kenya. In Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria, we preserved the marriage registers *in situ* at the parishes. In Sierra Leone, we digitised the marriage registers from the Registrar General Office in Freetown to which the Anglican Church Missionary Society parishes were obliged to submit its copies. In the case of Ghana, we transcribed the civil marriage registers from the District Registry of Marriages at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department in Accra. The time coverage differs from city to city (see Table A1 in the Appendix) with the registers jointly spanning the period 1828-1970. The earliest years are very thin in terms of observations and hence excluded, effectively starting our data records in 1860. The total number of marriages of African Christians includes 27,556 couples prior to our data restrictions conducted further below. Where possible, i.e. in Lagos and Nairobi, we supplemented the registers of African converts with comparable statistics for white European (primarily British) couples who married in the colonies. The European (pre-restriction) sample includes 2,845 couples who solemnised their Anglican marriage between 1913 and 1969. Our full sample thus comprise 30,401 registers concerning African and European couples.

#### *Urban background information*

After the gradual abolition of the slave trades in the early 19th century, West Africa was the first region in sub-Saharan Africa to transition to tropical commodity exports and to be targeted by missionary efforts that preceded developments



in East Africa.<sup>23</sup> Freetown in Sierra Leone with its natural harbour became a major relocation settlement for almost 100,000 liberated slaves in the aftermath of the abolition of the slave trade and Britain's first African crown colony in 1808.<sup>24</sup> The missionaries of the Church Missionary Society who arrived in 1804 found the uprooted liberated Africans more receptive to Christianity than the local Muslim population. Freetown became the country's chief port and focal point from where local missionaries were trained and diffused in British West Africa. Missions expanded rapidly also in Lagos, a Yoruba fishing settlement and slave trade centre, located on an island off the coast of Southern Nigeria, after the British annexation in 1861 to protect her interest in the palm oil-kernel trade.<sup>25</sup> The first Anglican mission in the Yoruba city-state of Ibadan, about 100 km into the hinterland of Lagos, was founded in 1852 and integrated in the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1893. The extension of the railway from Lagos to Ibadan transformed Ibadan into a major regional trading centre of rubber and cocoa.<sup>26</sup> Accra along the West African coast became the capital of the British Gold Coast in 1877 and thus the colony's foremost port and terminal of the Accra-Kumasi railroad in 1908.

In contrast to the coastal West African metropolises, the more recently founded East African cities of Kampala and Nairobi, located in the rural hinterlands with limited involvement in external trades, had barely any urban settlement in their areas by the onset of British colonial rule in the 1890s. Nairobi emerged as an administrative centre of the colonial administration and the Uganda Railway in 1899. Centrally located in Kenya, it became the colony's main administrative and distributional trade centre. It attracted sizeable populations of British settlers and expats as well as African male casual labourers and Asian traders who mushroomed into the largest non-coastal urban centre.<sup>27</sup> Kampala, the densely populated centre of the Buganda kingdom's political and administrative activities, formed the heart of intense missionary efforts since the mid-1880s. When the British Protectorate was established in 1894, Kampala hosted both colonial and Buganda urban administrations and became the centre of impressive missionary expansion through African initiative.<sup>28</sup> With a limited European presence in all of these cities, except for Nairobi, colonial administrations and missionaries relied heavily on educated Africans in bureaucratic, educational and ecclesiastical functions. All our sampled cities eventually grew to become the most urbanised, best connected, and most commercialised locations in each colony. West Africa was however relatively more commercialised and urbanised (see Table A2) during the 19th-century missionary expansion and British colonisation, preceding developments in British East African territories by about three decades.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, per-capita GDP levels and urban real wages were consistently higher in British West Africa's Southern Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Ghana by the early 20th century than in British East Africa's Kenya and Uganda.<sup>30</sup>

Historical West and East Africa differed not only in terms of demographic and economic development. An oft-cited distinction relevant to our study – one that dates back to precolonial times – concerns women's roles in the public

---

<sup>23</sup> Frankema et al 2018; Jedwab et al 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Lovejoy and Schwarz 2015, pp. 2-5.

<sup>25</sup> Ajayi 1965; Hopkins 1973.

<sup>26</sup> Mabogunje 1962.

<sup>27</sup> Van Zwanenberg and King 1975, pp. 263-267.

<sup>28</sup> Burton 2002, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> Meier zu Selhausen 2022; Frankema et al 2018; Jedwab et al 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Frankema and Van Waijenburg 2012; Broadberry and Gardner 2022.

domain and in economic activities.<sup>31</sup> Although domestic work was the preserve of married women, West African women's involvement outside the domestic sphere were in many ways comparable to those of men.<sup>32</sup> Unlike in Victorian Britain and in many other regions of East Africa, 19th-century women in much of coastal West Africa were fully engaged in the economic life of their communities – as cultivators, traders, or crafts-manufacturers, granting them high levels of autonomy. In the urbanising societies of coastal towns, such as our sampled cities of Freetown, Accra, Lagos, and Ibadan, women organised themselves in powerful market associations and dominated local and partly long-distance market trading of fish, foodstuff and imported goods, affording them status and significant contributions to household earnings.<sup>33</sup> East African women in contrast seldomly enjoyed comparable degrees of autonomy in income-generating activities outside of their homes. In central Kenya patrilineage, opportunities for female cooperative trade, partnerships, and entrepreneurship was largely restricted to the barter of foodstuffs and beer near the homestead, while men monopolised long-distance trade in livestock and food crops and controlled women's profits from local trade.<sup>34</sup> In Uganda, checked by cultural constraints on their agency, women barely engaged in any commercial activities at all, as they were commonly relegated to domestic work and food farming.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Sample-selection bias*

It is imperative to understand any biases caused by the self-selection of Africans into our sample. An Anglican wedding was not just a pledge to Christianity and the Anglican Church but a commitment to Western culture more widely. There were both opportunities and requirements with such a commitment, as pointed out in earlier studies of Christian conversion in Africa.<sup>36</sup> In British Africa, devotion to the Anglican Church opened opportunities for self-advancement and career-building which began in mission schools and churches.<sup>37</sup> First, reading was usually a precondition for an adult baptism which in turn was required for an Anglican church wedding to take place. Reading skills were taught at mission schools, and Anglicans this way acquired an educational advantage compared to their non-converting counterparts. Second, the strict adherence to the Christian and Western lifestyles, such as the adoption of a Christian name alongside the reading and writing requirements that accompanied these, placed Anglican converts and their offspring in privileged positions when it came to occupational opportunities in the colonial economy.<sup>38</sup> This does not imply that African Anglican converts were raised to the absolute highest social ranks in British colonial Africa which was a reserve of European administrators and local chiefs. But the careful process of self-advancement including mission education and involvement in Western religion and professional life set Anglican converts apart from their non-converting counterparts.<sup>39</sup> Western marriage thus “provided a major justification for their claim of

---

<sup>31</sup> Denzer 1994; Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 19; Byfield 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Keniston McIntosh 2009, pp. 18-19; Cooper 2013, pp. 348-349.

<sup>33</sup> Falola 1995; Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 3; Berger 2016, p. 11, 14; Byfield 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Marris and Somerset 1971, p. 30-43; Kitching 1980, p. 11-12; Robertson 1997, p. 66-67.

<sup>35</sup> Kyomuhendo and Keniston McIntosh 2006, p. 57; Southall and Gutkind 1957, p. 176.

<sup>36</sup> Saleh (2018).

<sup>37</sup> Berman 1974; Mann 1981; Peterson 2016; De Haas and Frankema 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Mann 1981; Roberts 1962; Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 45; Peterson 2016; De Haas and Frankema 2018; Meier zu Selhausen et al 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Peterson 2016; De Haas and Frankema 2018; Mann 1981; Meier zu Selhausen et al 2018.

these privileges.”<sup>40</sup> As such, we expect our sampled Africans to have achieved mission education and entered the colonial economy (and hence formal work) with higher frequencies than the average urban African population.<sup>41</sup>

One critical prerequisite to Christian church marriage was that African Anglican converts “had to model their marriages – and their religious lives – after a British template,” something that often conflicted with African customary marriage practices.<sup>42</sup> For example, the Christian ordinances strictly forbade polygamous relationships and, if standing, such relationships had to be dissolved prior to the Anglican marriage.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, mixed marriages, e.g. between an Anglican and a Roman Catholic, were barred, and the children of polygamous or earlier marriages were refused an Anglican baptism and denied lineal inheritance by the colonial legislation.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, both customary marriage and bride-wealth payment often continued to precede celebration of an Anglican church marriage.<sup>45</sup> Overall, an Anglican marriage thus tended to separate those Africans who were prone to a Christian-educated Western lifestyle from those more inclined to maintain customary matrimonial practices.

### *Sample restrictions*

The full data sample was truncated as follows. Registers with missing male occupational information were excluded (4%) since these did not allow us to study the gender gaps in occupational performance. Registers including the occupation of the male but not the female (23%) were retained on the usual assumption that the bride was a housewife. The occupational titles of *pensioner*, *prisoner*, *retired*, *unemployed* and *student* (<1% in total), which disallowed a categorisation of the recorded occupations into formal, informal, and domestic work, were also dropped from the sample. With polygamy banned by the Anglican Church, no records of remarrying existed other than in the cases of ‘widow’ and ‘widower’. Both were removed from the sample to avoid repeated entry (13%). We further dropped males and females under the age of 15 or over the age of 50 (<1%) in order to avoid outlier spouses. About 25% of the sampled spouses, due to Church-minister idiosyncrasies, had missing age-information. Rather than discarding these, we opted to impute their ages by assigning them the average age of their local peers who married during the same decade. Our findings below are qualitatively similar if we discard the marriages with missing age-information instead. Our joint restrictions left us with a baseline sample of 22,352 African and 2,588 European (predominantly British) husbands and wives whose marriages were recorded between 1860 and 1970. The total number of observations across time is illustrated in Figure A2 in the Appendix. For the graphical presentation of the data (though not for the later regression analysis), we required a minimum of ten marriages in each location and five-year interval for a number to appear in the graph.

---

<sup>40</sup> Mann 1981, p. 228.

<sup>41</sup> For example, some women migrated to those cities where they participated in the informal economy, selling beer and sexual services to working men (Stichter 1977; White 1990). Since, those activities were not suitable for a respectable Anglican bride it is no surprise that occupational titles, such as “prostitute”, “sex worker” or “brewer” are not found in Anglican marriage registers.

<sup>42</sup> Peterson 2016, p. 96; Mann 1981.

<sup>43</sup> Strayer 1978, p. 79; Hansen 1986, p. 274; Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 79.

<sup>44</sup> Taylor 1956; Keniston McIntosh 2009, pp. 94-96; Peterson 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Mann 1981; Kanogo 2005, p. 141; Taylor 1958, pp. 177-178.

### *Occupational categories*

One of our main aims is to examine whether and to what degree women were marginalised relative to men in terms of access to formal work. To this end, we split the sampled occupational titles in three categories – formal, informal, and domestic work – using the same approach as in our earlier study of Kampala in Uganda.<sup>46</sup> Formal and informal work both concern income-generating activities while domestic work refers to unpaid household chores. Formal work involved jobs that paid a salary. During the colonial period, formal work for women predominantly meant work either within the mission society or the colonial bureaucracy, including occupational titles such as *teacher*, *nurse*, and *clerk*. Informal work mostly appeared as self-employment outside the realm of the colonial economy. Women’s informal income-generating activities included occupations such as *weaver*, *trader*, and *cook*. Table A3 in the Appendix reports the top-10 most frequent occupations by gender, location, and time period for both Africans and British expats.

Domestic work was an exclusive territory of women. The two most common occupational descriptors falling within this category were *homemaker* and *housewife*. The titles of *basket maker*, *seamstress*, and *needle worker* also appear in this category. While these homecraft occupations may evoke the impression of informal income-earning activities, earlier studies have emphasised that these occupations were non-commercialised and typically conducted from and for the home. Indeed, commercial sewing and the use of sewing machines was largely a domain of male tailors until the 1950s.<sup>47</sup> Women’s homecraft occupations can instead be interpreted as missionary success in instilling Victorian ideologies of domesticity into women’s occupational identification.<sup>48</sup> Some scholars have argued that women’s seamstress work in Southern Nigeria became increasingly commercialised after 1930.<sup>49</sup> We accordingly tried to recode *seamstress* from domestic to informal work in this region and time period. But since this recoding procedure made no difference to our qualitative conclusions below, we kept *seamstress* in the category of domestic work throughout for consistency. Table A4 reports the summary statistics of the sampled individuals’ educational and occupational performances across the six cities. The local patterns and trends across time are described below.

### **3. Educational and Occupational Trends**

This section explores the educational and occupational developments by gender across time and space. We first examine the evolution in access to mission schooling captured by signature literacy rates; how the sampled males and females differed in this regard; and how West and East Africa represented by Freetown and Kampala varied in terms of gender inequality herein. While the timing of the arrival of missionaries and hence the starting point of mission schooling differed by region, the patterns of gender inequality were surprisingly similar displaying an inverse u-shape. The size of the peak in gender inequality meanwhile varied considerably by region. That is, the gender gap in access to mission schooling was twice as large in the relatively patriarchal East African cities than in the more female-emancipated West African locations as we discuss further below.

---

<sup>46</sup> See Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Little 1973, p. 33.

<sup>48</sup> Musisi 1992, p. 181; Kyomuhendo and Keniston McIntosh 2006, p. 54, 103-104; De Haas and Frankema 2018, p. 989.

<sup>49</sup> Denzer 1992, p. 128; Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 71.

Second, we investigate the evolution of labour-force participation in both formal and informal work across time and space alongside the gendered differences herein. The gender gaps in formal employment were much more pronounced and long-lasting than the gender gaps observed in access to mission schooling. The differences between men and women's access to formal employment were large across all of British colonial Africa and persisted until after World War II. Women's subsequent *liberalisation movement* then spread – first across West Africa and with some delay across East Africa – with women gradually catching up to men in terms of formal work participation. Although women were generally barred from access to formal labour in both East and West Africa up until the beginning of the 1930s, there were clear regional differences with respect to how women spent their time *instead* of participating in the formal economy. In particular, West African women were far more frequently employed in informal income-generating activities compared to their East African counterparts who engaged almost exclusively in domestic chores instead. Many of the differences observed in our data conform to the narratives presented in earlier studies.

### 3.1 Gender differences in mission-school attendance

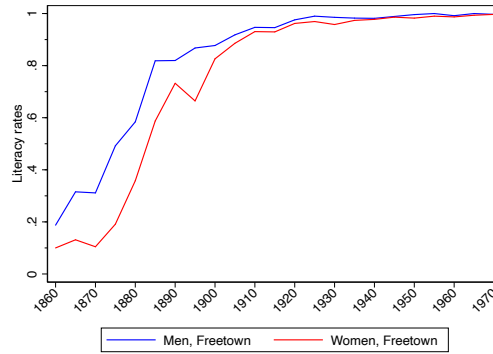
Two of our sampled cities – Freetown in West Africa and Kampala in East Africa – provide a remarkably detailed insight into the long-term trends of educational development during the colonial era. Figure 2 shows how male and female literacy rates of the sampled couples evolved between 1860 and 1970. In order to avoid age-related compositional effects, the graphs report the signature literacy at the time when the individual was 25 years of age. This enables us to meaningfully compare generational inequality in mission school attendance across time and space.

Figure 2 displays a genuine schooling revolution for the sampled Africans. Our Christian converts effectively went from zero to almost complete (signature) literacy in some 50 years. The timing of the onset of literacy was strongly associated with the arrival of Christian missionaries. Starting in West Africa in the early 19th century, Protestant missionaries later expanded into East Africa where they set up schools in the late 19th century. Panel C of Figure 2 compares the gender gaps in literacy attainment across the two cities. The gaps were constructed by giving the value one for a signature and zero for a mark or thumbprint, then computing the signature literacy rate by gender in each city, and finally subtracting the female literacy rate from that of males. The graph this way reports the estimated percentage-point differences in male and female mission-school attendance at the age of 25.

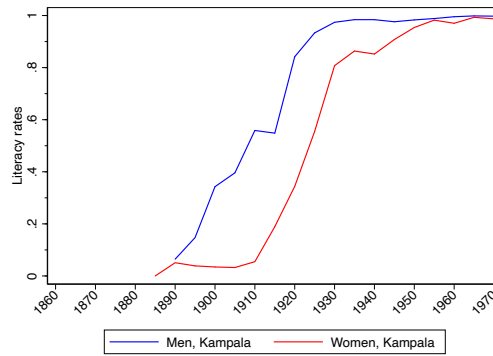
The panels in Figure 2 jointly convey three messages. First, gender inequality in mission-school attendance followed an overall inverted u-shaped pattern – a *gendered* Kuznets curve. That is, men generally accessed mission education earlier than women, yet women relatively quickly caught up with their male counterparts. Second, the length of the *literacy revolution* alongside the gender differences herein varied by region. In Freetown, the process took somewhat longer and the gender gap thus extended across more years than in Kampala. Third, whereas the gender gaps in British West Africa barely exceeded 20 percentage points, the gap was more than twice as high in British East Africa, peaking at over 40 percentage points. At the peaks, for every five literate men, only three out of five women in Kampala were literate against four out of five Freetown women. We consider the probable reasons behind the sizable gender-gap peaks further below.

**Figure 2**

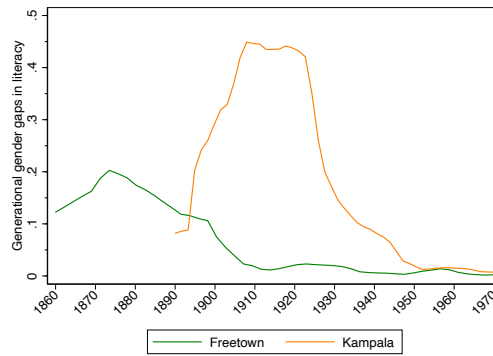
Signature literacy rates and gender gaps herein



*Panel A:* Gender-specific literacy rates in Freetown (West Africa)



*Panel B:* Gender-specific literacy rates in Kampala (East Africa)



*Panel C:* Gender gaps in literacy in Freetown (West Africa) and Kampala (East Africa)

*Notes:* Literacy rates are inferred from the spousal signatures on the marriage certificates and serve as proxies for male and female mission-school attendance. The graphs are based on five-year averages.

### 3.2 Gender differences in colonial labour markets

Turning to men and women's labour-market participation, we start by presenting the occupational structures before and after 1930. This time-separation has three reasons. First, it allows us to take a deeper look at the occupational structure in what is commonly termed the *early* and *late* colonial periods. Second, the observation made above – that virtually all our sampled men and women were able to write their names after 1930 – means that we can only use variation in literacy skills *before* 1930 in order to explore the statistical correlation between educational attendance and access to formal employment (see further below). Third, the 1930s marked the starting point of a significant change in women's labour market attendance, as will become evident below. Two key insights transpire from studying the sampled occupational structures. The first is that access to formal work for men rapidly increased in the early part of the colonial period with the rise of the colonial economy. The second is that access to formal work for women escalated much later, i.e. in the latter part of the colonial period in response to *Africanisation* and *feminisation* of the colonial economy – events discussed in detail below.

Turning to the gendered occupational patterns, men and women's work-related landscapes differed severely before 1930. Table A3 lists the ten most frequent occupations by city and gender, showing that males were much more often engaged in income-generating activities than females during this period. The sampled men predominately worked as clerks in the colonial administrations, missionary schools, and churches, in various artisanal crafts and building occupations, or as traders and merchants.<sup>50</sup> In Accra, Ibadan, and Kampala about one in four men were farmers. The relatively many farmers reflect the moderate size of the sampled cities during the early colonial period (see Table A2). The frequency of boat- and seamen in Freetown mirrors the city's status as a major port. The large share of people engaged outside of the top-ten most frequent occupations documents Freetown's more urbanised and developed early colonial economy.

Women's occupational range prior to 1930 were considerably narrower than men's, with the vast majority of females involved with domestic chores. While two out of three of the sampled African men were employed in the ten most frequent occupations, as few as six occupational titles covered most of the sampled females (Panels A and B in Table A3). The dominance of housewives including seamstresses and matmakers testifies (as discussed above) to the mission school triumph of instilling the British Victorian middle-class ideology of domesticity into a new generation of Christian African women.<sup>51</sup> This pattern of female domesticity broke down after the 1930s along two lines. First, women were able to expand their representation in mission schools and hospitals as teachers, nurses, and midwives. Second, the *feminisation* of the civil service offered inroads for women into other waged professions as clerks and typists in the colonial bureaucracy.<sup>52</sup> During the late colonial era, with colonial independence looming on the horizon, British colonial officials began to support the higher education and employment of Africans in professional and

---

<sup>50</sup> Kampala stands out with one in ten men being chiefs or sub-chiefs. This attests to British *indirect* colonial rule in Uganda and the strategic alliance between the Anglican Church and Ugandan chiefs (Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf 2016).

<sup>51</sup> Leach 2008b; Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2009; Cooper 2013, p. 348; Turshen 2016, p. 50.

<sup>52</sup> Simson 2019.

administrative positions thus further expanding women's access to formal work.<sup>53</sup> We explore the types of formal occupations that women accessed after 1930 in more detail below.

### 3.3 Gender gaps in formal labour

Above, we established a brief transitory gender gap in access to mission schooling, which was largely closed by the 1930s. The same was not true of the gender gap in access to formal work. The reality, therefore, was that women's access to education translated poorly into access to formal work.

Figure 3 displays the shares of the sampled populations engaged in formal work by gender and location. Where missionaries arrived ahead of the colonisers, such as in Ibadan and Kampala, the impact of westerners on the labour markets is not only very clear but also highly gender specific. Starting from zero, the share of males engaged in formal jobs in Kampala, for example, immediately shot up as soon as formal labour opportunities emerged within the colonial economy. The massive gender gap in formal employment that subsequently materialised was not unique to Kampala. Despite the lack of coverage in other regions going back to the beginning of the colonial periods, the graphs for Lagos and Nairobi suggest that similar patterns formed with the onset of colonial rule across our six urban centres in British colonial Africa. Indeed, if we take stock around 1930, more than 60% of the sampled males were employed in formal work across urban British Africa while barely more than 10% of the sampled women had followed suit in this regard.

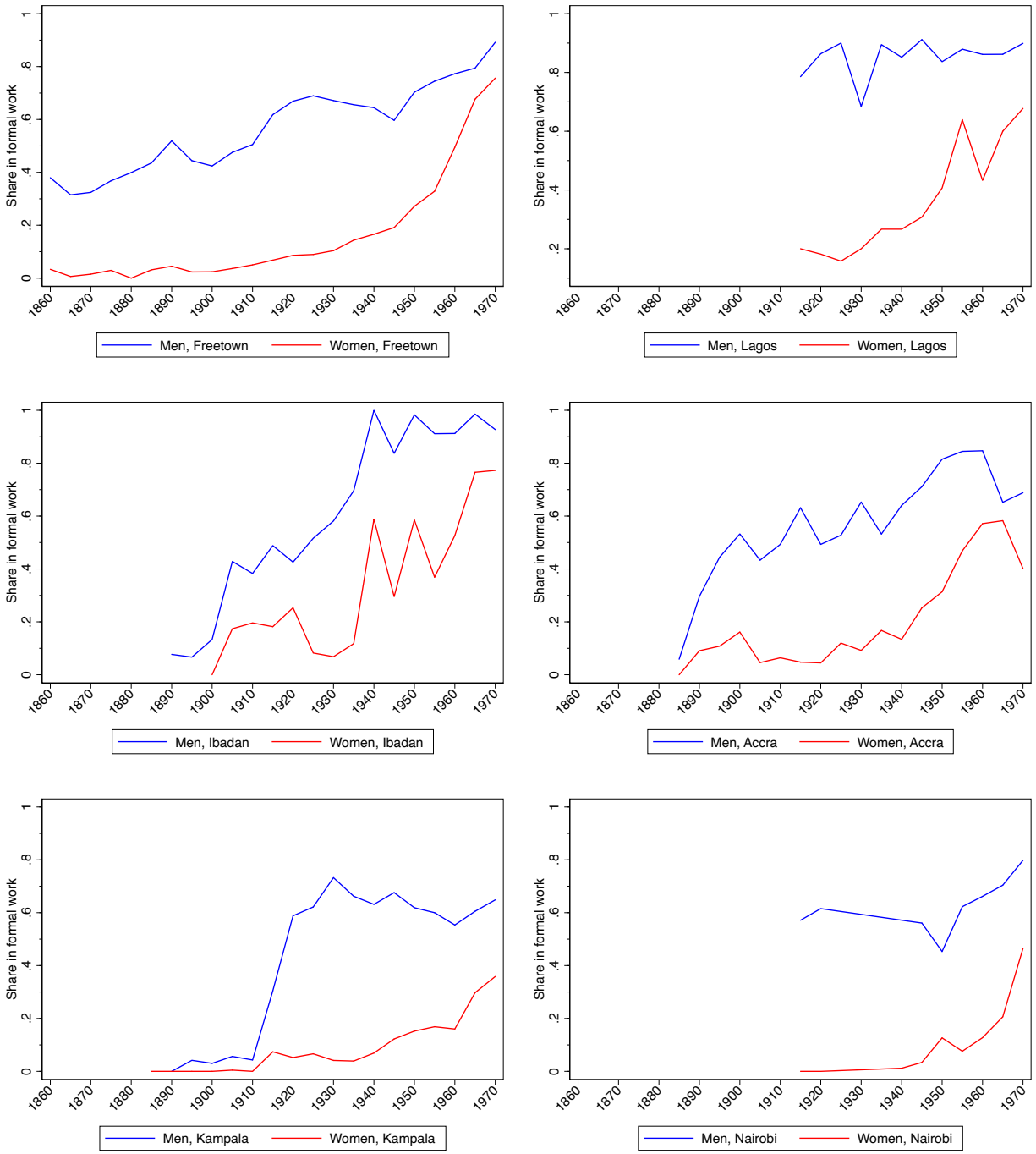
Panel A of Figure 4 compares the shares of women engaged in formal work across urban British Africa, showing that women's work patterns were strikingly similar across vast geographical distances. Figures 3 and 4 also jointly reveal that the late colonial period saw considerable changes across the board in women's access to formal work. Hovering around 10% in the 1930s, women recorded in formal employment rose to some 20% during the 1940s and 1950s to reach well over 50% in most of our urban centres at the time of colonial independence. Men's shares also rose modestly during this period but not as much as for women. Panel B of Figure 4 thus shows the consequence of women's catching up to men in terms of access to formal labour. The gender gaps gradually shrunk from some 50 percentage points in the 1930s down to about 20 percentage points around independence. Again, it is remarkable how similar the gender gaps in access to formal work were across all of urban British Africa – following an inverse Kuznets-like u-shape. East African cities, which were exposed to colonial rule relatively late, interestingly saw a relatively rapid catch-up to the levels of gender inequality observed in the places where colonisation took place somewhat earlier. It is also noteworthy how urbanised East Africa, represented by Kampala and Nairobi, saw mildly slower change than among West African urbanites (Panel A of Figure 4) – an observation we return to further below.

---

<sup>53</sup> Kyomuhendo Mcintosh 2006, p. 91.



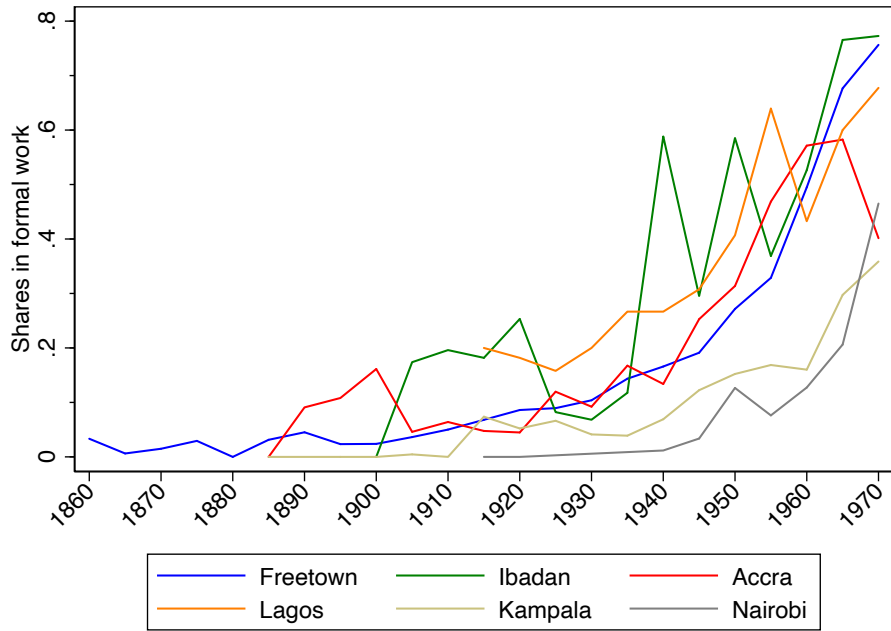
**Figure 3**  
The shares of males and females employed in formal work across urban British Africa



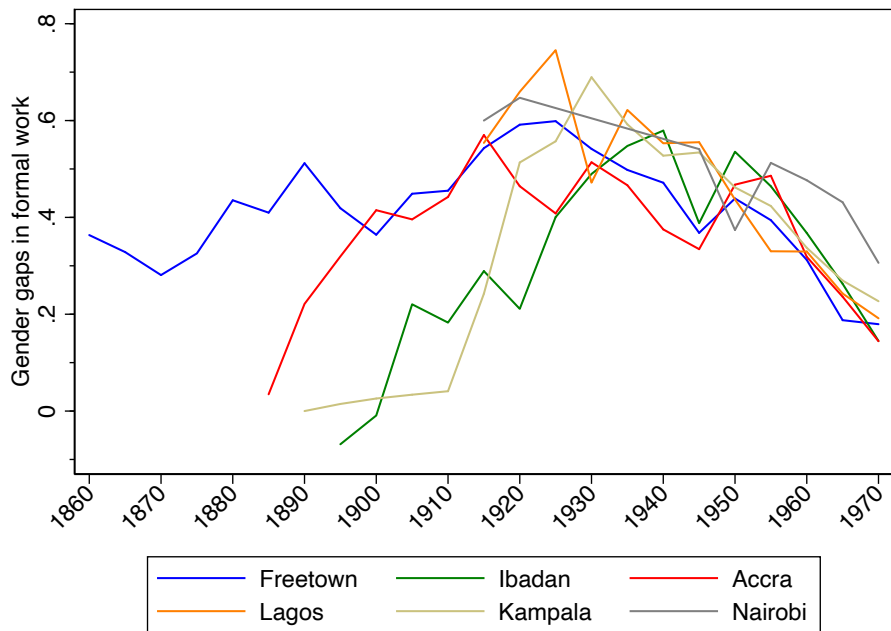
Notes: Formal (waged) work is categorised as explained in the text. The graphs are based on five-year averages.

**Figure 4**

Women's formal labour force participation and gender inequality herein across urban British Africa



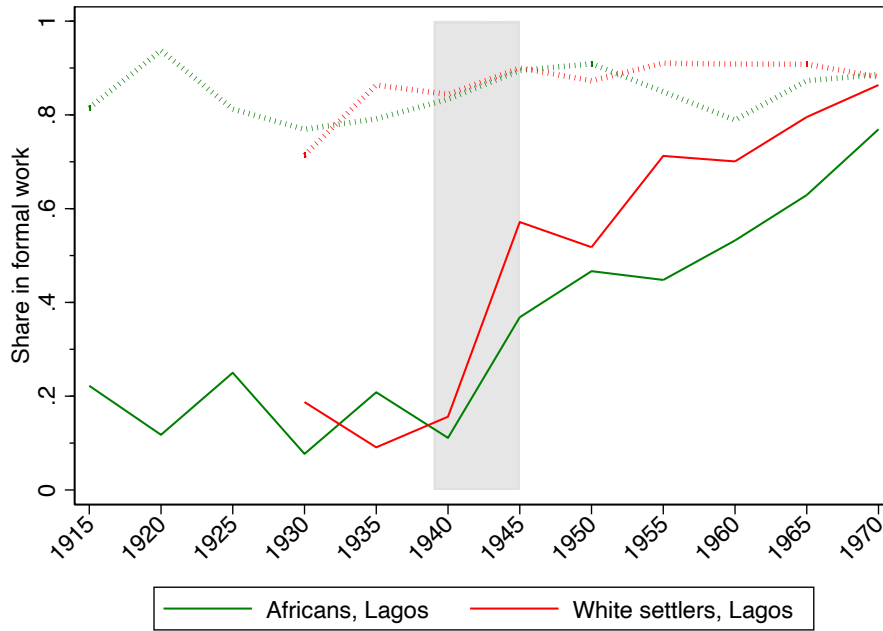
*Panel A:* Women's formal labour force participation



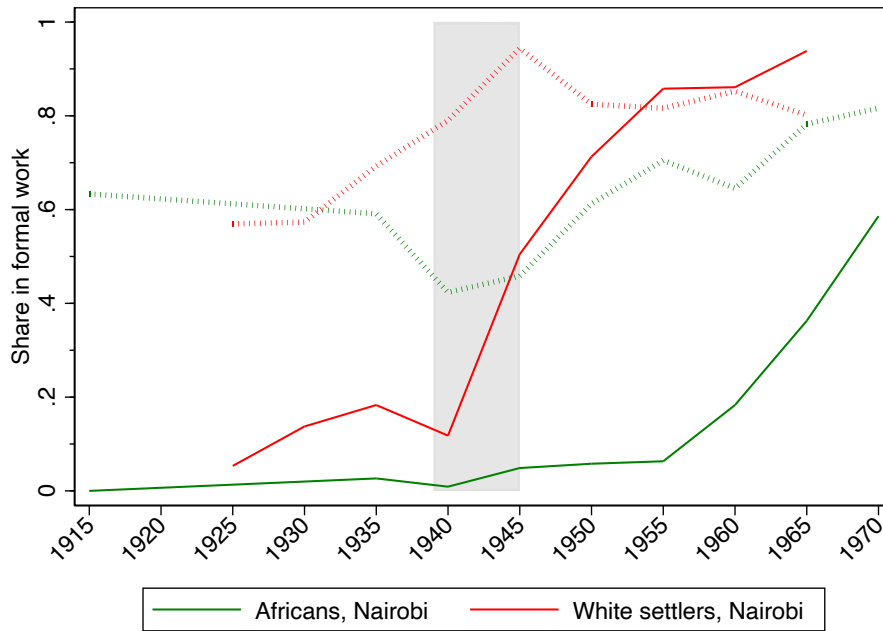
*Panel B:* Gender inequality in formal labour force participation

*Notes:* Formal (waged) labour force participation is categorised as explained in the text. The graphs are based on five-year averages.

**Figure 5**  
Men and women's shares of employment in formal work



*Panel A: Women in Lagos (West Africa)*



*Panel B: Women in Nairobi (East Africa)*

*Notes:* Solid lines concern females and dotted lines males. The grey areas signify the official years of World War II, marking a breakpoint in women's access to formal jobs. Formal work is categorised as explained in the text. The graphs are based on five-year averages.

The sample of British settlers marrying in colonial Lagos and Nairobi helps support the idea that the rising rates of African women employed in formal work followed a pattern of western women's growing labour-force participation post-World War II.<sup>54</sup> In Britain, a narrowly male breadwinner model became increasingly challenged during the 1930s and 1940s when attitudes towards married women's labour-force participation gradually changed.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the 1940s represented a broad turning point for married women's labour force participation across Europe and North-America with a significant expansion post-1950 in clerical work in particular.<sup>56</sup> Figure 5 illustrates how the shares in formal work of British female expats in Lagos and Nairobi floated around 10 to 20% up until the late 1930s (solid red lines). This was barely more than their sampled African counterparts (solid green lines) who found themselves employed in comparable occupations to their British peers (Table A3). Despite the fact that World War II was not fought in British Africa, the war years marked a clear starting point for women's increased access to formal labour, first among the sampled British settlers and expats, and more or less immediately after among the sampled Africans. This suggests that the documented surge in formal work of Anglican African women followed the upward trend in formal-job participation happening among married women in Western Europe after World War II and plausibly reflecting a shift in British colonial policy towards accepting metropolitan women's occupational liberalisation. It is once again noteworthy that the increased access to formal labour among the sampled African women took significantly longer in East compared to West Africa.

#### *What work did the sampled women do after World War II?*

Figure 6 compares the two largest city-samples in our data – Freetown in West Africa and Kampala in East Africa – with regard to the main types of formal work that women engaged in. The graphs show that an overwhelming share of income-earning women by 1930 were involved in teaching at mission schools across both cities. Smaller shares were employed in healthcare and administrative work. Also, while administrative work in Freetown was a main source of expansion in women's formal work, employment in healthcare was largely responsible for women's growing formal activities in Kampala.

These findings echo observations made in earlier studies. Expansion in the areas of healthcare and female education during the late colonial era was one reason. That is, while mission hospitals and dispensaries provided the bulk of African healthcare during the early colonial era, by the 1930s colonial governments had expanded their investment into health which increased the demand for female maternity and nursing personnel.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the anticipation of independence had made colonial governments increase focus on female education as early as the 1940s,<sup>58</sup> thus inflating the recruitment of female school teachers.<sup>59</sup> A second reason for the increased access to formal

---

<sup>54</sup> Killingsworth and Heckman 1986; Hatton and Bailey 1988; Goldin 1990, 1991; Humphries and Sarasúa 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 71; Hatton and Bailey 1988.

<sup>56</sup> Killingsworth and Heckman 1986; Goldin 1990, 1991; Humphries and Sarasúa 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Kanogo 2005, pp. 188-192; Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006, p. 61; Keniston McIntosh 2009, pp. 175-176; Prevost 2010, p. 183; Doyle et al 2020; Bolt and Cilliers 2023.

<sup>58</sup> Baten et al 2021.

<sup>59</sup> Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006, p. 101; Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 170, 177, 176; Byfield 2018, p. 156; Whitehead 1999; Tripp 2004.

work for women was decolonization. This not only led to an increased *Africanisation* of the administrative bureaucracy,<sup>60</sup> but also to a *feminisation* of the civil service with government offices increasingly hiring African women's as secretaries and clerks post-1940.<sup>61</sup>

After World War II, there was an increased readiness of secondary schools to also teach girls commercial subjects and clerical work including bookkeeping, shorthand writing, and typing.<sup>62</sup> Their formal education and proficiency in English made the sampled Anglican women well-positioned to move into a growing range of well-paid occupations. For example, *telephonists, secretaries, typist, and stenographers* were progressively hired by the colonial government and private businesses in British West Africa from the late-1940s onwards as Table A3 suggests. Comparable developments were observable in the East African cities though only from the late 1950s onwards (Figure 3). These patterns resonate with those reported by Furedi (1973, p. 277) that “it was not until after 1952 that women came to constitute an important part of Nairobi’s African labour force.” The lagging behind of our sampled East African women by almost two decades could be due to the presence of significant South Asian migrant populations in Kampala and Nairobi. These migrants dominated commercial trading and lucrative semi-skilled colonial civil service positions which – together with the large British settler population in Nairobi – constrained female Africans from participating in the emerging formal-job opportunities.<sup>63</sup> The steep rise in women’s formal-labour participation observed in our data from the 1940s onwards suggests that well-educated Anglican women were in pole position to access formal jobs once the colonial economy increased its demand for female labour. But despite the expansion in clerical work of late-colonial African women, Panels C and D of Table A3 emphasise that about 90% of the sampled women were confined to working in the top-10 most common occupations.

#### *Female labour market agency: East versus West Africa*

The patterns of women’s participation in formal labour shown in Figure 4 above followed largely similar trends across all of our sampled British African cities. However, when African women’s formal labour-force participation rose after World War II, the surge in West Africa preceded that of East Africa by almost two decades. What prompted these regional differences?

Figure 7 offers insight into a core difference between East and West African women’s labour market activity beyond participating in formal jobs. The graph conveys the degree to which women in West Africa represented by Freetown and Accra were participating in *informal* income-generating activities compared to women in East Africa represented by Kampala and Nairobi. The difference is striking. Whereas one in three women on average in Freetown and Accra contributed to household income through informal trading activities, barely any females in Kampala and Nairobi made the same contribution, with the bulk of women there being engaged in unpaid domestic activities.

---

<sup>60</sup> Cooper 1996, pp. 443-448; Furedi 1973.

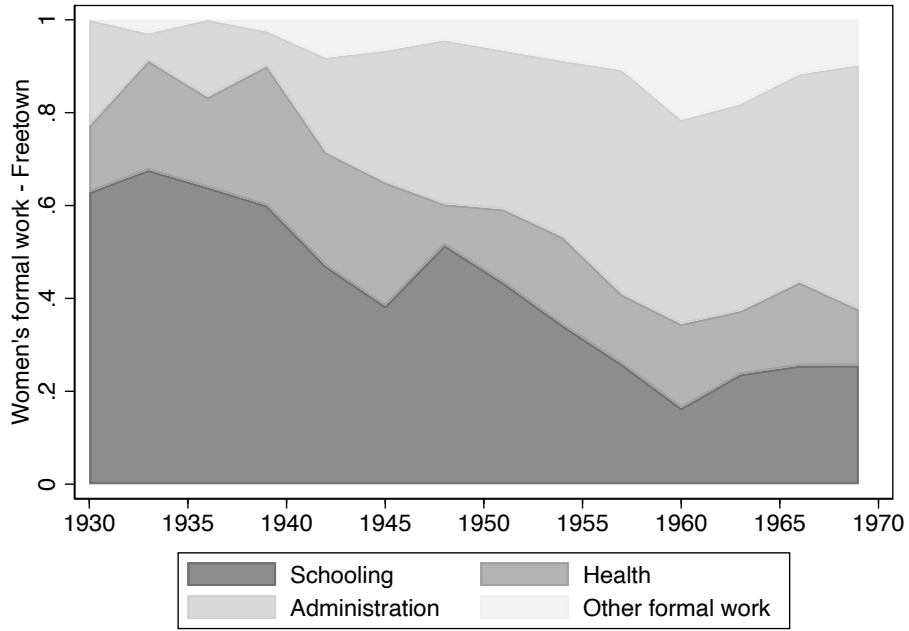
<sup>61</sup> Simson 2019, 2020.

<sup>62</sup> Keniston McIntosh 2009, pp. 72-73.

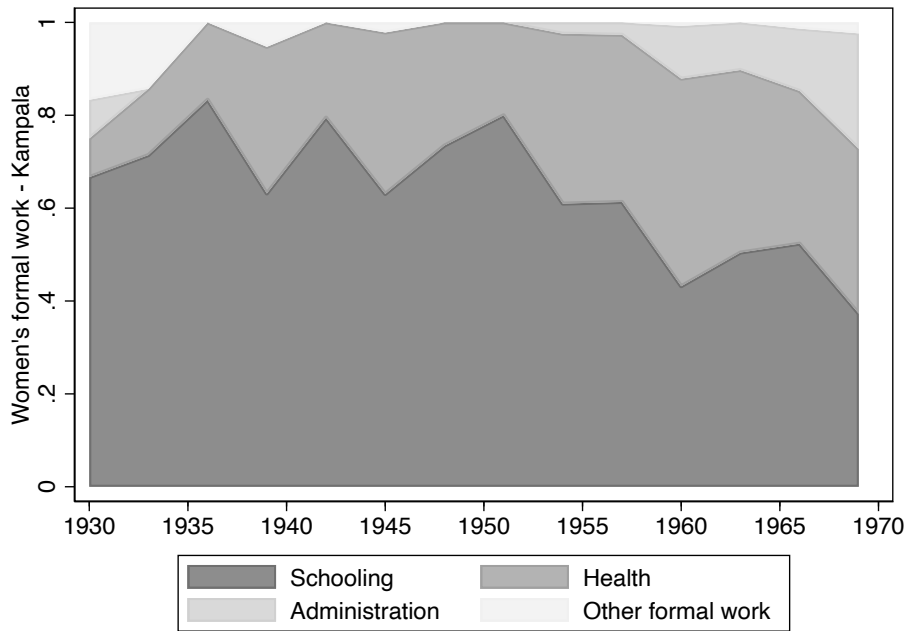
<sup>63</sup> Jamal 1976; De Haas and Frankema 2018.

**Figure 6**

Women's formal-work categories, 1930-70



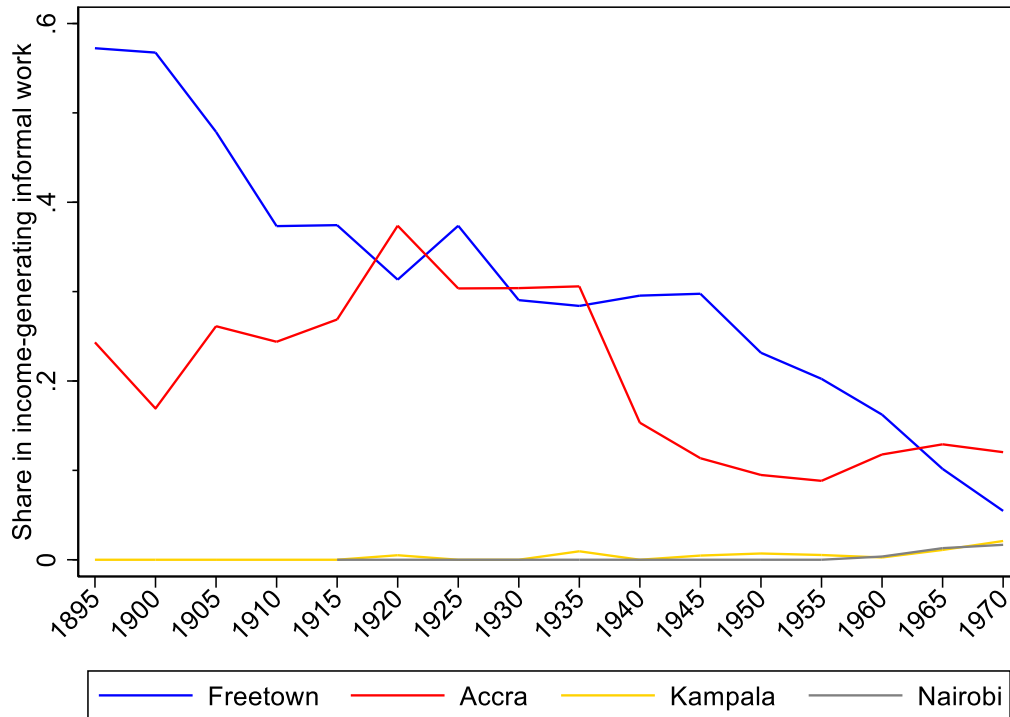
*Panel A: Freetown (West Africa)*



*Panel B: Kampala (East Africa)*

*Note:* The graphs are based on three-year averages.

**Figure 7**  
 Women's informal income-generating work  
 in Freetown and Accra (West Africa) and Kampala and Nairobi (East Africa)



*Note:* The graphs are based on five-year averages.

Earlier studies have accordingly emphasised West African women's long-standing precolonial engagement in the trading of agricultural goods, fish, cooked food, and imported goods such as soap and textiles. These informal income-generating activities continued into the colonial era. In fact, the informal incomes of West African women often exceeded those attainable from formal work.<sup>64</sup> For example, market trading among Southern Nigerian women paid better than the wages offered in mission schools and hospitals.<sup>65</sup> Figure 7 this way provides numerical expression to a largely narrative literature that emphasises how women's economic status and full dependence on men in East Africa differed markedly from those observed in urbanised areas of West Africa where married women's earnings outside of their homes contributed to household income.<sup>66</sup> If we combine formal and informal work, our sampled Anglican women in West Africa were nearly fourfold more likely to labour outside the homestead for most of the colonial era than their East African counterparts. Note that West African women's declining participation in informal work during the late colonial era was largely offset by their increased contribution to formal work (Figure 4) mainly through administrative jobs (Figure 6).

<sup>64</sup> Allman and Tashjian 2000; Johnson 1986; Mann 1983; Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 19; Little 1973, pp. 33-34.

<sup>65</sup> Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 170; Little 1973, pp. 44-45; Cooper 2016, p. 349.

<sup>66</sup> Ekechi 1995; Denzer 1994; Mann 1983; Kyomuhendo and Keniston McIntosh 2009, pp. 56-57.

The imposed missionary model of women's *domestic virtue* in East Africa collided diametrically with West African women's precolonial entrepreneurial role and considerable level of economic independence. The large incidence of traders among our sampled West African women clearly documents that the mission schools' philosophies of female domesticity did not succeed in dismantling deep-rooted West African women's informal labour activities. Part of the reason was local support from contemporary African commentators. For example, Nigerian newspapers commonly criticised the narrowly domestic training in mission schools, warning that married women would lose their financial independence as a result.<sup>67</sup> Although Anglican women marrying in West African cities interacted with colonial and Christian conceptions, they managed to a large degree to preserve their precolonial economic status in society. This impelled British government officials in Southern Nigeria to complain that the wives of Anglican converts did not fully aspire to missionary *domesticity* expectations but continued to trade in the public sphere.<sup>68</sup> In Uganda in East Africa in contrast, missionary emphasis on women's domestic roles conformed much more with precolonial roles of female domesticity, patriarchal interests, and opposition to the idea of wives' work participation outside of the home, thus reinforcing the marginalisation of female labour opportunities.<sup>69</sup>

#### *Where has all the female education gone?*

Our data conveyed that the sampled women's access to formal work was highly constrained until the 1930s (Figure 4) confined to recruitments by the mission societies. The literacy attainment of women was however remarkably high (Figure 2). The stark contrast between women's high mission-school attendance rates and their lack of formal work participation begs the question: why did parents send their daughters to mission school if their schooling efforts did not translate into formal jobs? The question is especially pertinent in light of the fact that mission education came at a cost, not least in terms of the forgone farm or household labour of the school-attending girls.<sup>70</sup> The mission school focus on female domesticity alongside women's exclusion from formal jobs insinuate that parents' decision to invest in their daughters' education was motivated by factors other than economic returns. So, why were women educated?

---

<sup>67</sup> Keniston McIntosh 2009, p. 71; Mann 1983.

<sup>68</sup> Mann 1983.

<sup>69</sup> Kyomuhendo and Keniston McIntosh 2006, p. 56.

<sup>70</sup> Boserup 1970, p. 34; Robertson 1984b, pp. 139-141.



**Table 1**

The effect of women's education on their access to formal work and to social mobility via marriage before 1930

<b>Outcome</b>	(1) <b>Formal labour</b>	(2) <b>Formal labour</b>	(3) <b>High-status husband</b>	(4) <b>High-status husband</b>	(5) <b>Upward mobility</b>	(6) <b>Upward mobility</b>
Schooled wife	0.835*** [0.166]	0.838*** [0.168]	0.513*** [0.0773]	0.362*** [0.0855]	0.636*** [0.0900]	0.230** [0.0793]
Marginal effect	0.055*** [0.005]	0.053*** [0.006]	0.498*** [0.012]	0.387*** [0.012]	0.430*** [0.016]	0.367*** [0.011]
Wife informal work			-0.712*** [0.0553]	-0.423*** [0.0591]	0.621*** [0.0708]	0.131* [0.0566]
White-collar father	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Father-class FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Location FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Decade FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	3,392	3,233	3,204	2,808	1,912	2,976

*Notes:* Probit models with robust standard errors. A *high-status husband* (Columns 3-4) is someone whose occupation belongs to HISCLASS 1-2 (higher and lower professionals) as explained in the text. *Upward mobility* (Columns 5-6) is the difference between the high-status of the father of the bride and that of the groom (e.g. upward mobility is one if the groom is high-status and the bride's father is not). Asterisks report statistical significance at 1% (\*\*\*), 5% (\*\*), and 10% (\*) levels, respectively. The model considers Freetown, Kampala, and Ibadan.

Our analysis indicates that the answer has two dimensions. First, mission education actually *did* benefit women in terms of access to the limited (often mission-society related) formal jobs, though only at the time when literacy was not a common privilege among the sampled couples, so before the 1930s. Second, even women who did not access formal work still benefitted from mission education in terms of social mobility through marriage. A main reason is that female mission-school curricula intended to prepare girls for work in the domestic sphere.<sup>71</sup> Columns (1) and (2) of Table 1 concurrently report the results of regressing the sampled women's formal-work status (yes/no) on their mission-school attendance (yes/no) proxied by their signature literacy. The Probit model includes location- and decade-fixed effects and controls for the age group of the husband and wife as well as for whether the wife's father was alive at the time of her marriage. The regression informs that female mission school attendance increased the probability of the wife being engaged in formal-work participation by five percent. For women not engaged in formal labour, however, mission education still carried benefits. Mission-school attendance for women increased the

<sup>71</sup> Musisi 1992; Denzer 1992; Kyomuhendo and Keniston McIntosh 2006.

likelihood of marrying a white-collar husband (Columns 3 and 4) by 38 to 50% depending on the specification. Similarly, the probability of marrying a husband of a higher social class than that of the father (Columns 5 and 6) increased by 37 to 43% when the wife was mission schooled. Female mission schooling was thus a rational choice from the perspective of social advancement, even if it did not lead to employment.

These findings shed numerical light on earlier qualitative assessments. Within the increasingly meritocratic and class-stratified society of colonial Freetown, for example, advanced education prepared boys for formal employment while girls' social mobility, according to Leach (2008a, p. 338), had to be acquired through marriage to a man looking for a "fitting and accomplished marriage companion." Mission schools also offered legitimate opportunities to socialise with boys.<sup>72</sup> For example, Kanogo (2005, p. 142) contends that in colonial Nairobi "economic considerations loomed large in choosing prospective sons- and daughters-in-law." In this context, again according to Leach (2008, p. 338), "Christian education increased enormously a girl's chances of making a good marriage in 19th century Freetown." In Ghana, following Masemann (1974, p. 483), high-status parents enrolled their daughters into mission schools to "prepare girls for marriage to a young man of similar or usually higher educational attainment" and with the intention to "impress with her Western sophistication his own social superiors."<sup>73</sup> These references all point to the same pattern: that social mobility through marriage played an important role in parents' decision to mission school their daughters despite the modest rewards to education in terms of access to formal work.

#### **4. The Role of Social Background**

So far we have studied the general patterns and trends in male and female educational and occupational performances at the regional levels. We have shown that there were both differences and similarities in the gendered performances of the sampled spouses across time and space. The similarities appeared to follow global trends while the differences seemed rooted in region-specific gender norms of precolonial times. However, whereas the local samples seemed homogeneous with respect to regional values, individuals from similar social backgrounds might have looked more like their intracontinental peers than their local neighbours of different social ranks. This section sets out to explore the role of social background for women's educational and occupational attainments, both absolutely and relative to men. That is, we explore the importance of the father's degree of engagement with the colonial economy for the daughter's school attendance, formal career-building, and within-marriage gender inequality.

In particular, the observed social classes might have deviated both with regards to affordability and openness towards their daughters' educational attainment and labour-market participation. Openness here is not just a matter of parental or paternal attitudes towards women's financial independence. It also concerns the parental or paternal approval of maintaining close ties with colonial government and missionary institutions. For example, a father who worked in the realm of the mission society (i.e. the church, schools, or hospitals) or for the colonial bureaucracy might have been more prone to both afford and assist his daughter's education and career-building possibilities compared to men working in more traditional trades. For example, because colonial employment often paid relatively well and

---

<sup>72</sup> Robertson 1984b, p. 141.

<sup>73</sup> Little 1972, p. 277.

involved more colonial connections and hence opportunities for daughters to access formal work,<sup>74</sup> the professional engagement of the father could potentially impact on the educational and occupational attainments of his daughter.

The following setup explores whether such effects were at play. To this end, we divided the sampled bride's fathers into six social classes based on the fathers' occupational titles. Here, again, we followed our earlier study of colonial Kampala, which indicated that social background was an important catalyst both for access to mission-schooling and for social advancement.<sup>75</sup> More specifically, we divided the occupations of the fathers of the brides into social classes inspired by the social classification system known as HISCLASS.<sup>76</sup> These classes, ordered from most to least by their formal engagement with the missionaries and colonial economy, are (a) mission work; (b) clerk; (c) other formal work; (d) chief; (e) trader; (f) craftsman; and (g) farmer.

Figure 8 illustrates the bride's likelihood of mission-school attendance and formal labour-market participation by her social background. We broke the sampled marriages down into two periods: the early colonial era (Panels A and B) and the mid to late colonial era (Panel C). The reference category (dashed line) is fathers being farmers. The coefficients and 95% confidence intervals are based on a Probit model regression with location- and decade-fixed effects and robust standard errors. Panel A shows that daughters of fathers working for the mission society, e.g. as teachers, clergymen, or medical assistants, or as clerks in the colonial administration, were more likely on average than any other social group to have attended mission school during the early colonial era, i.e. before 1930. Daughters of chiefs, traders, and craftsmen were also relatively more likely to have attended school than the remaining groups. The daughters of the residual social groups – i.e. father's involved either in other formal or informal work – were not statistically significantly different from the daughters of farmers in their tendency to have been schooled. These patterns suggests that fathers of the farming class were less likely to send their daughters to school than fathers who worked directly either for the missionaries or the colonial service. Panel B shows a largely similar pattern of fathers' social background determinants with respect to their daughters' likelihood of entering formal labour pre-1930. Finally, Panel C illustrates that the likelihood of daughters entering the formal economy increased among all groups relative to the daughters of farmers post-1930s when formal labour markets increasingly accommodated women. Summing up, fathers with close professional ties to colonial networks through missionary employment or colonial office work were significantly more likely to mission school their daughters and to see them entering into formal jobs than fathers in less well-paid occupations more distant from the colonial economy.

Figure 9 explores the sampled women's likelihood of entering gender-unequal marriages by their social background. Marital gender inequality here informs whether the husband and wife differed in their educational or occupational performances. For example, if the husband had attended mission school and the wife had not, then their gender-inequality score in education would be one. If the wife had also attended mission school, then their gender-inequality score would be zero instead. Panel A shows that daughters of fathers working for the missionaries or the colonial administration were significantly less likely to enter into gender-unequal marriages compared to daughters of

---

<sup>74</sup> E.g. Frankema and Van Waijenburg 2012; Meier zu Selhausen et al 2018.

<sup>75</sup> Meier zu Selhausen 2014; Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf 2016.

<sup>76</sup> Van Leeuwen and Maas 2011. See Meier zu Selhausen et al 2018 for an application of HISCLASS in colonial Uganda.

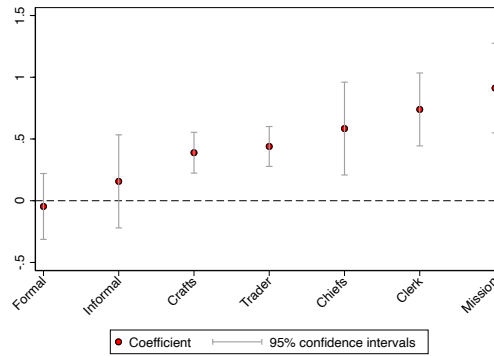
fathers whose work was of a more traditional nature and outside the realm of the formal economy. Panels B and C show the same tendencies, though this time with respect to formal-work participation. The early colonial period, i.e. up until 1929, witnessed significantly more marital gender inequality in access to formal work among all social groups compared to farmers. This suggests that the daughters of farmers tended to marry men who – like the women they married – were not engaged in formal jobs. Marital gender inequality among all other social groups was relatively larger, reflecting the fact that their daughters tended to marry men employed in the formal economy, but that they were rarely employed in formal labour themselves before 1930. After the 1930s, when women started to increase their participation in formal labour, daughters of fathers working for the mission society or the colonial service once again entered into relatively gender-equal marriages compared to occupational groups more distant from the colonial economy. These patterns thus suggest that the daughters of fathers in close occupational contact with the colonial economy were significantly more likely to marry partners with comparable qualifications thereby lowering gender inequality within the household.

Figures 8 and 9 thus indicate that social background mattered for female agency. Fathers who were entrenched with the missionary movement or worked within the public colonial service may have used their institutional ties and status as an opportunity to improve the livelihoods of their daughters. They were less likely to embrace the missionary model of *domestic virtue* instead helping their daughters secure economic independence this way positioning them in marriages where they were on more equal foot with their husbands. Fathers engaged in more traditional trades were oppositely less likely to educate their daughters thus lowering their daughters' chances of entering formal labour and this way increasing their probability to engage in gender-unequal marriages. These findings speak to Ester Boserup's views regarding the colonial impacts on labour market segregation of African women. Boserup (1970) was sceptical about the idea that European cultural influences in Africa had an emancipatory impact on African women, which De Haas and Frankema (2018) used to fuel the argument that missionaries and colonial officials tended to coalesce with indigenous patriarchal interests in order to domesticise East African (i.e. Ugandan) women.

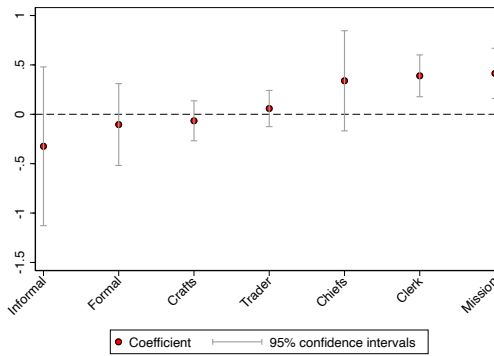
On the one hand, we accordingly observe that East African women were more often relegated to domestic chores compared to their West African counterparts (Figure 7). On the other hand, we also document that the tendency among African males to position themselves professionally in the realm of the colonial economy – and this way in the networks of opportunities that this entailed for themselves and their daughters – was positively and universally correlated with their daughters' financial independence through access to education and formal work. Hence, while Christian mission schooling may have aligned with indigenous patriarchal interests through the training of women for housework rather than formal labour, Africans employed in the realm of the colonial economy tended to reject the missionary model of domestic virtue this way offsetting colonial tendencies towards women's marginalisation. Both Boserup and De Haas and Frankema therefore appropriately alluded to the fact that missionary churches and schools helped facilitate the spread of patriarchal attitudes and as such foster gender inequality in education. At the same time, our data reveal a counterbalancing effect whereby certain Christian-educated African social groups took advantage of the emancipating opportunities offered by the formal economy to dampen societal patriarchal inclinations.

**Figure 8**

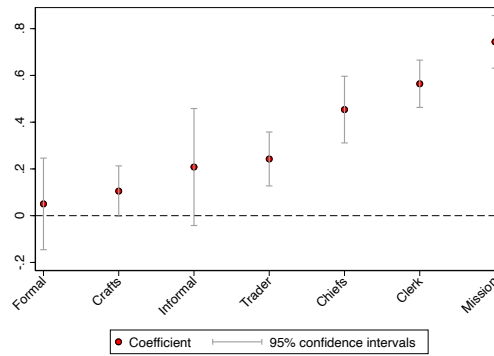
Wife's likelihood of mission school and formal work participation by her father's occupation



*Panel A:* Mission school attendance, 1860-1929



*Panel B:* Formal work participation, 1860-1929

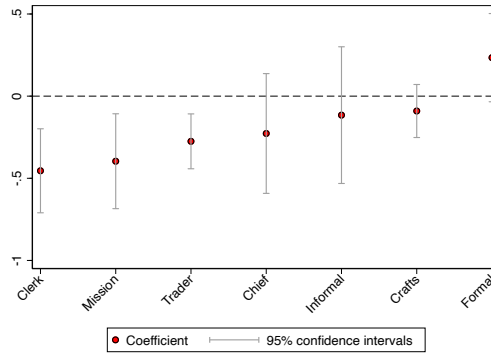


*Panel C:* Formal work participation, 1930-1970

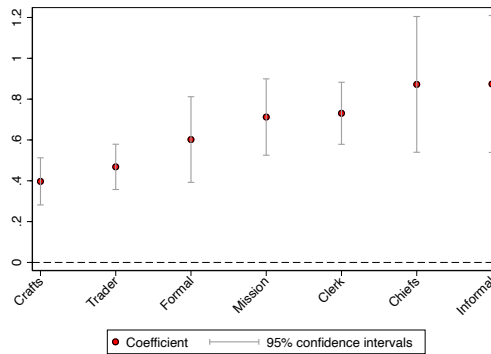
*Notes:* The reference category for social background, i.e. farmers, is represented by the dashed line. The coefficients and 95% confidence intervals are based on a Probit regression model with location and time fixed effects and robust standard errors. The model considers Freetown, Kampala, and Ibadan.

**Figure 9**

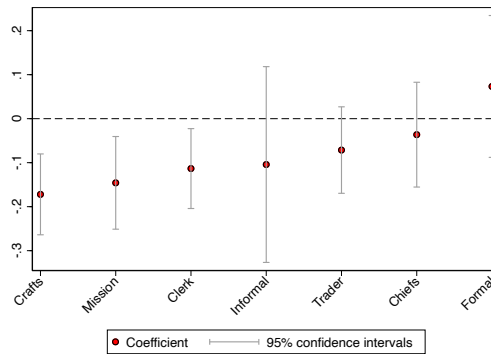
Gender inequality between spouses by the wife's father's occupation



*Panel A:* Gender inequality in mission school attendance, 1860-1929



*Panel B:* Gender inequality in formal work participation, 1860-1929



*Panel C:* Gender inequality in formal work participation, 1930-1970

*Notes:* The reference category for social background, i.e. farmers, is represented by the dashed line. The coefficients and 95% confidence intervals are based on a Probit regression model with location and time fixed effects and robust standard errors. The model considers Freetown, Kampala, and Ibadan.

## 5. Conclusion

We have used a novel dataset of Anglican marriage registers from six major cities of British colonial Africa to trace the movements and determinants of women's educational and occupational performance relative to men's across the colonial era. Our findings are threefold. First, colonial administrations and missionaries tended to enhance or even introduce patriarchal ideals into their colonies which interacted with those of African agents in variegated fashions. The colonial ideals tended to promote male dominance within formal labour markets, though more in British East than West Africa. With women severely limited in terms of access to formal work until the mid-colonial era, we established that mission schooling served women's marriage mobility instead. Women's restricted access to formal labour however resulted in rising gender inequality during the early colonial era, with women's official work confined to employment in mission schools and hospitals; positions that daughters of fathers working for the colonial government or mission society enjoyed privileged access to. These patterns highlight the dual role played by Christian missionaries in Africa. While they furnished indigenous and colonial patriarchal interests through school curricula, they also opened the door for women's formal labour through employing (a limited number of) them in mission schools and hospitals. Furthermore, women's participation in formal labour was statistically significantly linked to their fathers' professional ties or lack thereof with the colonial economy.

Second, the rise in gender inequality in formal labour-force participation until the mid-colonial era was followed by an equally impressive decline herein starting in the 1940s. We observed that World War II marked a turning point for our sampled African women in accessing formal labour instigated by the *Africanisation* and *feminisation* of the civil service in anticipation of independence and with the expansion in public education and health. We argued that the sampled women had assumed a privileged position – both through their education and religious affiliation and through their fathers' colonial ties – when it came to access these unfolding opportunities. The post-1940s surge in women's labour-force participation and declining gender inequality within the household were not unique to our Anglican African sample. The patterns were mirrored among British expat women marrying in the colonies. We reasoned on this basis that the developments observed among the sampled females reflect broader emancipatory movements in Western cultures after World War II – tendencies that quickly swept across the colonies.

Third, we established that women's precolonial autonomy concerning income-generating activities and financial independence were reflected in their labour-force participation during the colonial era. Our figures this way offer numerical expression to the success of East African missionaries in keeping Christian wives at home and away from commerce, something that aligned with precolonial traditions of East African women being relegated to housework activities. Our numbers also show however that the missionary model of female domestic virtue collided with West African women's precolonial entrepreneurial roles and financial independence. The high and stable occurrence of colonial female traders among our sampled West African women bears witness that the missionary values of Victorian domesticity did not eradicate women's deep-rooted precolonial individuality. Although our sampled Christian-educated women's work opportunities were constricted by European colonial and missionary agents, the sampled women in West Africa still preserved their pre-existing economic roles affording them a faster transition into formal work after World War II than was the case among their East African counterparts.

## References

- Aboagye, Prince Y. (2021). Inequality of education in colonial Ghana: European influences and African responses. *Economic History of Developing Regions* 36(3): 367–391.
- Ajayi, J. F. Ade (1965). *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite*. London: Longmans.
- Allman, Jean Marie, and Victoria B. Tashjian (2000). *"I Will Not Eat Stone": A Women's History of Colonial Asante*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Anderson, Siwan (2018). Legal Origins and Female HIV. *American Economic Review* 108(6): 1407-39.
- Austin, Gareth, Joerg Baten, and Bas van Leeuwen (2012). The biological standard of living in early nineteenth-century West Africa: new anthropometric evidence for northern Ghana and Burkina Faso. *Economic History Review* 65(4): 1280-1302.
- Baker, Pauline H. (1974). *Urbanisation and Political Change: The Politics of Lagos*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Baten, Joerg, Michiel de Haas, Elisabeth Kempter, and Felix Meier zu Selhausen (2021). Educational Gender Inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Long-Term Perspective. *Population & Development Review* 47(3): 573-879.
- Beach, Harlan P., and Charles H. Fahs (1925). *World Missionary Atlas: containing a directory of missionary societies, a classified summaries of statistics, maps showing the location of missions stations throughout the world, a descriptive account of the principal mission lands, and comprehensive indices*. New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research.
- Becker, Bastian, and Felix Meier zu Selhausen (2023). Women on a Mission: Protestant Legacies of Gender Equality in Africa? *African Economic History Network Working Paper* No. 72.
- Berger, Iris (2016). *Women in Twentieth-Century Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Berman, Edward H. (1974). African responses to Christian mission education. *African Studies Review* 17: 527–540.
- Bolt, Jutta, and Jeanne Cilliers (2023). The expansion of colonial public healthcare services in British Africa ca. 1900-1960. Unpublished manuscript, Lund University.
- Boserup, Ester (1970). *Woman's Role in Economic Development*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Broadberry, Stephen, and Leigh Gardner (2022). Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1885-2008. *Explorations in Economic History* 83: 101424.
- Burton, Andrew (2002). *The Urban Experience in Eastern Africa c. 1750–2000*. Nairobi: British Institute in Eastern Africa.
- Byfield, Judith A. (2018). African Women in Colonial Economies. In Martin Shanguhia and Toyin Falola (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan (pp. 145-170).
- Chiseni, Chanda, and Jutta Bolt (2023). Left behind: Tracing the roots of educational development and gender inequality in education in Northern Rhodesia 1924-1990. Unpublished manuscript, Lund University.



- Cilliers, Jeanne, and Johan Fourie (2018). Occupational Mobility during South Africa's Industrial Take-Off. *South African Journal of Economics* 86(1): 3-22.
- Cogneau, Denis, and Alexander Moradi (2014). Borders that Divide: Education and Religion in Ghana and Togo since Colonial Times. *Journal of Economic History* 74(3): 694-729.
- Cooper, Frederick (1996). *Decolonization and African society: The labor question in French and British Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cooper, Barbara M. (2013). Women and Gender. In John Parker and Richard Reid (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (pp. 338-358).
- Denzer, LaRay (1992). Domestic Science Training in Colonial Yorubaland, Nigeria. In Karen Tranberg Hansen (ed.), *African Encounters with Domesticity*. New Brunswick (NJ): Rutgers University Press (pp. 116-142).
- Denzer, LaRay (1994). Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study. *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 27(1): 1-39.
- De Haas, Michiel, and Ewout Frankema (2018). Gender, ethnicity, and unequal opportunity in colonial Uganda: European influences, African realities, and the pitfalls of parish register data. *Economic History Review* 71(3): 965-994.
- Doyle, Shane, Felix Meier zu Selhausen, and Jacob Weisdorf (2020). The Blessings of Medicine? Patient Characteristics and Health Outcomes in a Ugandan Mission Hospital, 1908-1970. *Social History of Medicine* 33(3): 946-980.
- Dupraz, Yannick (2019). French and British Colonial Legacies in Education: Evidence from the Partition of Cameroon. *Journal of Economic History* 79(3): 628-668
- Ekechi, Felix K. (1995). Gender and economic power: The case of Igbo market women of Eastern Nigeria. In B. House-Midamba and F. K. Ekechi (eds.), *African Market Women and Economic Power: The role of women in African economic development*. Westport CT: Greenwood Press (pp. 41-58).
- Falola, Toyin (1995). Yoruba market women and economic power. In Bessie House-Midamba and Felix K. Ekechi (eds.), *African Market Women and Economic Power: The role of women in African economic development*. Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press.
- Fourie, Johan, and Christie Swanepoel (2015). When selection trumps persistence. The lasting effect of missionary education in South Africa. *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 12(1): 1-29.
- Frankema, Ewout (2012). The origins of formal education in sub-Saharan Africa: was British rule more benign?. *European Review of Economic History* 16(4): 335-355.
- Frankema, Ewout, and Marlous van Waijenburg (2012). Structural Impediments to African Growth? New Evidence from British African Real Wages, 1880-1965. *Journal of Economic History* 72(4): 895-926
- Frankema, Ewout, Jeffrey G. Williamson, and Pieter Woltjer (2018). An Economic Rationale for the West African Scramble? The Commercial Transition and the Commodity Price Boom of 1835-1885. *Journal of Economic History* 78(1): 231-267.

- Frankema, Ewout, and Marlous van Waijenburg (2023). What about the race between education and technology in the Global South? Comparing skill premiums in colonial Africa and Asia. *Economic History Review*, forthcoming.
- Furedi, Frank (1973). The African Crowd in Nairobi: Popular Movements and Élite Politics. *Journal of African History* 14(2): 275-290.
- Goldin, Claudia (1990). *Understanding the gender gap: An economic history of American women*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Goldin, Claudia (1991). The role of World War II in the rise of women's employment, *American Economic Review* 81(4): 741-756.
- Guarnieri, Eleonora, and Helmut Rainer (2021). Colonialism and female empowerment: A two-sided legacy. *Journal of Development Economics* 151, 102666.
- Hansen, Holger B. (1986). Church and state in early colonial Uganda. *African Affairs* 85: 55–74.
- Hatton, Timothy J., and Roy E. Bailey (1998). Female Labour Force Participation in Interwar Britain. *Oxford Economic Papers* 40(4): 695-718.
- Henderson, Morgan, and Warren Whatley (2014). Pacification and Gender in Colonial Africa: Evidence from the Ethnographic Atlas, *MPRA Working Paper* No. 61203.
- Hopkins, Antony G. (1973). *An Economic History of West Africa*. London: Longman.
- Huillery, Elise (2014). The black man's burden: The cost of colonization of French West Africa. *Journal of Economic History* 74(1): 1-38.
- Humphries, Jane, and Carmen Sarasúa (2012). Off the Record: Reconstructing Women's Labor Force Participation in the European Past. *Feminist Economics* 18(4): 39-67.
- Jamal, Vali (1976). Asians in Uganda, 1880-1972: Inequality and Expulsion. *Economic History Review* 29(4): 602-616.
- Jedwab, Remi, Felix Meier zu Selhausen, and Alexander Moradi (2022). The Economics of Missionary Expansion: Evidence from Africa and Implications for Development. *Journal of Economic Growth* 27: 149-192.
- Johnson, Cheryl (1986). Class and Gender: A consideration of Yoruba women during the colonial period. In Claire Robertson and Iris Berger (eds.), *Women and Class in Africa*. New York: Africana Publishing Company (pp. 237-254).
- Juif, Dacil, and Ewout Frankema (2018). From coercion to compensation: institutional responses to labour scarcity in the Central African Copperbelt. *Journal of Institutional Economics* 14(2): 313-343.
- Kanogo, Tabitha (2005). *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya: 1900-1950*. London: James Currey.
- Keniston McIntosh, M. (2009). *Yoruba Women, Work and Social Change*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Killingsworth, Mark R., and James J. Heckman (1986). Female labor supply: A survey. In Orley C. Ashenfelter and Richard Layard (eds.), *Handbook of Labor Economics*. Elsevier (pp. 103-204).
- Kitching, Gavin (1980). *Class and economic change in Kenya: The making of an African petite-bourgeoisie 1905-1970*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.

- Kudo, Yuya (2017). Missionary influence on marriage practices: Evidence from the Livingstonia Mission in Malawi. *Journal of African Economies* 26(3): 372–431.
- Kyomuhendo, Grace B., and Marjorie Keniston McIntosh (2006). *Women, Work & Domestic Virtue in Uganda, 1900-2003*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Leach, Fiona (2008a). African girls, nineteenth-century mission education and the patriarchal imperative. *Gender and Education* 20(4): 335-347.
- Leach, Fiona (2008b). Resisting conformity: Anglican mission women and the schooling of girls in early nineteenth-century West Africa. *History of Education* 41(2): 133-153.
- Little, Kenneth (1972). Voluntary associations and social mobility among West African women. *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6(2): 275-288.
- Little, Kenneth (1973). *African Women in Towns: An Aspect of Africa's Social Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lovejoy, Paul E., and Suzanne Schwarz (2015). *Slavery, abolition and the transition to colonialism in Sierra Leone*. London: Africa World Press.
- Mabogunje, Akin (1962). The growth of residential districts in Ibadan. *Geographical Review* 52(1): 56-77.
- Mann, Kristin (1981). Marriage Choices among the Educated African Elite in Lagos Colony, 1880-1915. *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 14(2): 201-228.
- Mann, Kristin (1983). The dangers of dependence: Christian marriage among elite women in Lagos Colony, 1880-1915. *Journal of African History* 24: 37-56.
- Marris, Peter, and H. C. Anthony Somerset (1971). *African Businessmen: A Study of Entrepreneurship and Development in Kenya*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Masemann, Vandra (1974). The "Hidden Curriculum" of a West African Girls' Boarding School. *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8(3): 479-494.
- Meier zu Selhausen, Felix (2014). Missionaries and Female Empowerment: New evidence from Anglican Marriage Registers in Uganda. *Economic History of Developing Regions* 29(1), 74-112.
- Meier zu Selhausen, Felix (2019). Missions, Education and Conversion in Colonial Africa, in David Mitch and Gabriele Cappelli (eds.), *Globalization and the Rise of Mass Education*. Palgrave Macmillan (pp. 25-59).
- Meier zu Selhausen, Felix (2022). Urban migration in East and West Africa since 1950: Contrasts and Transformations. In Michiel de Haas and Ewout Frankema (eds.), *Migration in Africa: Shifting Patterns of Mobility from the 19th to the 21st Century*. London: Routledge (pp. 281-308).
- Meier zu Selhausen, Felix, and Jacob Weisdorf (2016). A colonial legacy of African gender inequality? Evidence from Christian Kampala, 1895–2011. *Economic History Review* 69(1): 229-257.
- Meier zu Selhausen, Felix, Marco H.D. van Leeuwen, and Jacob Weisdorf (2018). Social mobility among Christian Africans: evidence from Anglican marriage registers in Uganda, 1895–2011. *Economic History Review* 71(4): 1291-1321.

- Michalopoulos, Stelios, and Elias Papaioannou (2020). Historical Legacies and African Development. *Journal of Economic Literature* 58 (1): 53-128.
- Miotto, Martina (2023). Colonialism, Cash Crops and Women in Africa. *CERGE-EI Working Paper* No. 750.
- Montgomery, Max (2017). Colonial Legacy of Gender Inequality: Christian Missionaries in German East Africa. *Politics & Society* 54(2): 225-268.
- Moradi, Alexander, Gareth Austin, and Joerg Baten (2013). Heights and Development in a Cash-Crop Colony: Living Standards in Ghana, 1870-1980. *African Economic History Network Working Paper* No. 7.
- Moradi, Alexander (2009). Towards an Objective Account of Nutrition and Health in Colonial Kenya: A Study of Stature in African Army Recruits and Civilians, 1880-1980. *Journal of Economic History* 69(3): 720-755.
- Musisi, Nakanyike B. (1992). Colonial and Missionary Education: Women and Domesticity in Uganda, 1900-1945. In Karen Tranberg Hansen (ed.), *African Encounters with Domesticity*. New Brunswick (NJ): Rutgers University Press (pp. 172-194).
- Nunn, Nathan (2014). Gender and Missionary Influence in Colonial Africa. In Emmanuel Akyeampong, Robert H. Bates, Nathan Nunn, and James Robinson (eds.), *Africa's Development in Historical Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press (pp. 489–512).
- Peterson, Derek R. (2016). The politics of transcendence in Uganda. *Past & Present* 230: 196–225.
- Peterson, Derek R. (2012). *Ethnic patriotism and the East African revival: a history of dissent, c. 1935–1972*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Prevost, Elizabeth E. (2010). *The Communion of Women: Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rachal, John R. (1987). Measuring English and American historical literacy: A review of methodological approaches. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 6(3): 185-198.
- Roberts, Andrew D. (1962). The Sub-Imperialism of the Baganda. *Journal of African History* 3(3): 435-450.
- Robertson, Claire C. (1984a). Women in the urban economy. In Margaret J. Hay and Sharon Stichter (eds.), *African Women South of the Sahara*. Essex: Longman (pp. 33-50).
- Robertson, Claire C. (1984b). *Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socioeconomic History of Women and Class in Accra, Ghana*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Robertson, Claire C. (1997). *Trouble showed the way: Women, men, and trade in the Nairobi area, 1890-1990*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Rönnbäck, Klas (2014). Living standards on the precolonial Gold Coast: a quantitative estimate of African laborers' welfare ratios. *European Review of Economic History* 18(2): 185-202.
- Rueda, Valeria (2023). Evaluating the Long-Term impact of Christian Missions. In Robert M. Sauer (ed.), *The Economics of Religion*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. (pp. 97-110).
- Saleh, Mohamed (2018). On the Road to Heaven: Taxation, Conversions, and the Coptic-Muslim Socioeconomic Gap in Medieval Egypt. *Journal of Economic History* 78(2): 394-434.

- Schmidt, Ariadne, and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (2012). Reconsidering The “Firstmale-Breadwinner Economy”: Women’s Labor Force Participation in the Netherlands, 1600–1900. *Feminist Economics* 18(4): 69-96.
- Schofield, Roger S. (1973). Dimensions of illiteracy, 1750-1850. *Explorations in Economic History* 10(4): 437-454.
- Simson, Rebecca (2019). Africa’s clientelist budget policies revisited: public expenditure and employment in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, 1960-2010. *Economic History Review* 72 (4): 1409-143.
- Simson, Rebecca (2020). The rise and fall of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie: Public sector employees and economic privilege in postcolonial Kenya and Tanzania. *Journal of International Development* 32(5): 607-635.
- Southall, Aidan, and Peter C. Gutkind (1957). *Townsmen in the making: Kampala and its suburbs*. Kampala: Uganda Bookshop.
- Stichter, Sharon (1977). Women and the labour force in Kenya, 1895-1964. *IDS Discussion Paper* No. 258.
- Strayer, Robert W. (1978). *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875-1935*. London: London Publishers.
- Taylor, John V. (1958). *The growth of the church in Buganda. An Attempt at Understanding*. London: S.C.M. Press.
- Tripp, Aili Mari (2004). New Look at Colonial Women: British Teachers and Activists in Uganda, 1898-1962. *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 38(1): 123-156.
- Turshen, Meredith (2016). *Gender and the Political Economy of Conflict in Africa: The persistence of violence*. London: Routledge.
- Vanden Eynde, Oliver, Patrick Kuhn, and Alexander Moradi (2018). Trickle-Down Ethnic Politics: Drunk and Absent in the Kenya Police Force (1957-1970). *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 10(3): 388-417.
- Van Leeuwen, Marco H. D., and Ineke Maas (2011). *HISCLASS: a Historical international Social Class Scheme*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Van Zwanenberg, R. M. A. and Anne King (1975). *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda 1800–1970*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- White, Luise (1990). *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wantchekon, Leonard, Marko Klašnja, and Natalija Novta (2015). Education and human capital externalities: evidence from colonial Benin. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130 (2): 703-757.
- Whitehead, Clive (1999). The Contribution of the Christian Missions to British Colonial Education. *Paedagogica Historica* 35(1): 321-337.
- Wrigley, Edward A., and Roger S. Schofield (1989). *The Population History of England, 1541-1871*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

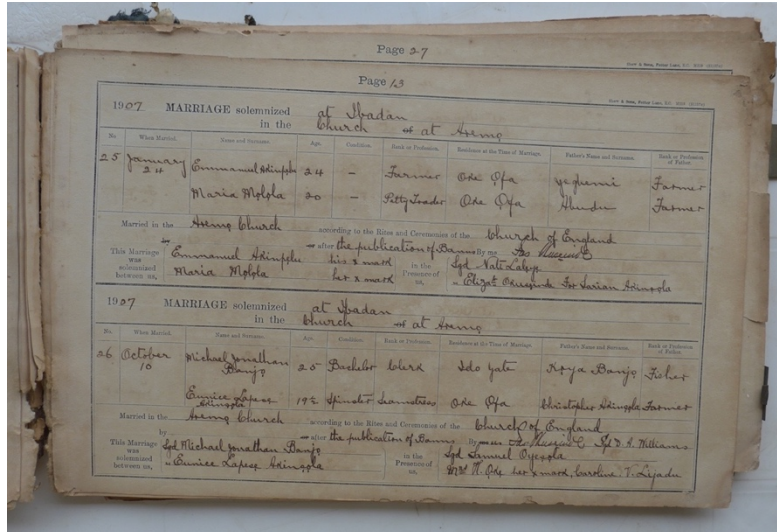
### **Primary sources**

The marriages of Africans have been digitized from the registers in the following Anglican parishes: Lagos (St. Jude's Cathedral, Holy Trinity, St. John's, All Saints' Church); Ibadan (St. James', St. Peters', St. David's Cathedral); Kampala (St. Paul's Cathedral Namirembe, Mackay Martyrs Church); Nairobi (St. Stephen's Cathedral, All Saints Cathedral, St. Paul's Kabete Church). The parish of Kabete (c. 10 km from Nairobi Central), although not directly located in Nairobi was an Anglican segment extending west from Nairobi into the county of Kiambu. Kabete was nearest to Nairobi and became intertwined with the town with much daily commuting by foot or bus into Nairobi, located agricultural research centre and theological college (Robertson 1997, pp. 13-14). The marriages of Europeans were digitized from the following Anglican parishes: Lagos (St. Saviour's Church) and Nairobi (All Saints' Cathedral, St. Mark's Church Parklands). Kenya Colony and Protectorate (1952). Labour Department Annual Report 1952. Nairobi: Government Printer. Uganda (1911). Population Census 1911. Entebbe: Government Printer.

## Appendix

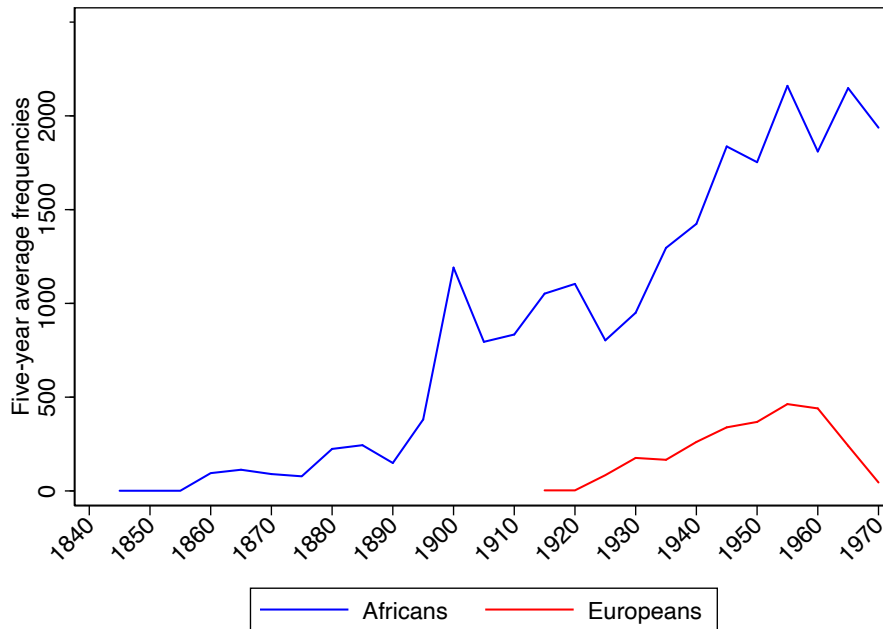
### Figure A1

Page from the book of marriage registers of St. Peters Cathedral in Ibadan, 1907



### Figure A2

The total number of sampled marriages by five-year intervals



**Table A1**

Sources, periods, and sample sizes

Colony	City	Mission parish	Denomination	Period	N
Uganda	Kampala	St. Paul's Cathedral, Namirembe	CMS	1891-1970	7710
		Mackay Martyrs Church	CMS	1913-1970	220
Kenya	Nairobi	St. Stephen's Cathedral	CMS	1912-1970	897
		All Saints' Cathedral *	CMS	1921-1964	1685
		St. Mark's Church, Parklands *	CMS	1924-1959	553
		All Saints' Cathedral	CMS	1965-1970	238
		St. Paul's Church, Kabete	CMS	1931-1970	1118
Southern Nigeria	Ibadan	St. Peters Cathedral, Aremo	CMS	1877-1965	321
		St. David's Cathedral	CMS	1893-1970	403
		St. James' Cathedral	CMS	1911-1970	298
	Lagos	St. Jude's Cathedral	CMS	1942-1970	280
		All Saints' Church	CMS	1958-1970	237
		Holy Trinity Church	CMS	1910-1970	169
		Our Saviour's Church *	CMS	1900-1960	454
Sierra Leone	Freetown	Office of the Registrar General	CMS	1828-1970	8963
Gold Coast	Accra	Administrative archives in Accra	Christian and civil	1873-1970	6733

Notes: The acronym CMS means *Church Missionary Society*. Asterisks denote marriages of British congregations.

**Table A2**

City populations in 1911 and 1921

	1911	1921
Freetown	75,520	85,163
Lagos	74,937	98,303
Ibadan	175,000	238,094
Accra	18,574	38,049
Kampala	32,441	40,000
Nairobi	16,107	24,000

Note: Population for Freetown refers to the Colony of Sierra Leone, which includes the population of both Freetown and the peninsula. Sources: Annual report of the colonies 1911 and 1921: Colony of Sierra Leone, Southern Nigeria, Uganda Protectorate, East Africa Protectorate; Van Zwanenberg and King (1975, p. 259); Myers (2003); Mabounje (1962); Thomas (1979), Wikipedia – Timeline Lagos, Encyclopaedia Britannica.



**Table A3**

The top-10 most common occupational descriptors by grooms and brides

	<b>Freetown</b>	<b>Accra</b>	<b>Ibadan</b>	<b>Lagos</b>	<b>Kampala</b>	<b>Nairobi</b>					
Writing clerk	15.0	Clerk	28.3	Farmer	28.7	Clerk	51.3	Farmer	24.8	Saddler	8.0
Carpenter	9.7	Farmer	19.9	Clerk	19.5	Trader	7.9	Clerk	9.9	Farmer	6.0
Trader	8.4	Carpenter	10.6	Carpenter	11.1	Teacher	7.9	Tailor	7.5	Soldier	6.0
Stonemason	4.7	Teacher	5.6	Trader	9.6	Civil servant	5.3	Teacher	6.2	Contractor	4.0
Farmer	4.5	Trader	3.9	Catechist, Clergy	6.0	Tailor	5.3	Trader	5.4	Lieutenant	4.0
Tailor	4.2	Catechist	3.6	Teacher	4.6	Catechist, Clergy	3.9	Servant	4.6	Mechanic	4.0
Sea/Boatman	4.2	Goldsmith	2.9	Tailor	2.7	Dispenser	2.6	Chief	3.5	Office boy	4.0
Clerk	3.8	Tailor	2.8	Sanitary officer	1.9	Goldsmith	2.6	Carpenter	3.4	Salesman	4.0
Policeman	3.6	Blacksmith	2.0	Sawyer	1.2	Printer	2.6	Sub-chief	2.9	Med. doctor	4.0
Fisherman	3.2	Merchant	2.0	Shoemaker	1.2	Blacksmith	2.6	Med. assistant	1.8	Clerk	4.0
<b>Total %</b>	<b>61.3</b>	<b>81.6</b>	<b>86.5</b>	<b>92.0</b>	<b>70.0</b>	<b>48.0</b>					
<b>No. of obs.</b>	<b>4,826</b>	<b>1,627</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>2,308</b>	<b>50</b>					

Panel A): Groom occupations (%) 1858-1929 (African sample)

	<b>Freetown</b>	<b>Accra</b>	<b>Ibadan</b>	<b>Lagos</b>	<b>Kampala</b>	<b>Nairobi</b>					
Housewife	30.6	Housewife	45.8	Trader	42.9	Seamstress	68.4	Housewife	44.6	Housewife	100.0
Trader	29.7	Trader	9.7	Housewife	15.2	Mistress	13.2	Matmaker	26.3		
Seamstress	28.0	Seamstress	9.5	Seamstress	14.7	Trader	5.3	Tailor	11.6		
Laundress	4.7	Farmer	9.2	Laundress	10.4	Housewife	4.0	Basketmaker	6.8		
Teacher	2.8	Petty trader	7.8	Mistress	5.8	Dressmaker	4.0	Farmer	5.7		
Marketer	1.8	Baker	7.7	Teacher	3.6	Laundress	2.6	Seamstress	1.8		
Nurse	0.8	Teacher	2.1	Housemaid	1.9	Nurse	1.3	Teacher	1.4		
Secretary	0.4	Dumpling maker	1.9	Servant	1.4	Teacher	1.3	Cook	0.7		
Clerk	0.2	Housemaid	1.7	Mat weaver	1.0			Nurse	0.3		
Farmer	0.1	Clerk	1.0	Farmer	0.7			Clerk	0.2		
<b>Total %</b>	<b>99.1</b>		<b>96.4</b>		<b>97.6</b>		<b>100.0</b>		<b>99.4</b>		<b>100.0</b>
<b>No. of obs.</b>	<b>4,826</b>		<b>1,627</b>		<b>415</b>		<b>76</b>		<b>2,308</b>		<b>50</b>

Panel B): Bride occupations (%) 1858-1929 (African sample)

	<b>Freetown</b>		<b>Accra</b>		<b>Ibadan</b>		<b>Lagos</b>		<b>Kampala</b>		<b>Nairobi</b>	
Writing clerk	13.3	Clerk	16.8	Teacher	38.3	Clerk	28.6	Clerk	17.2	Clerk	19.8	
Civil servant	9.6	Teacher	8.9	Clerk	15.8	Teacher	6.0	Teacher	9.7	Peasant	9.0	
Clerk	8.5	Civil servant	8.7	Civil servant	5.1	Civil servant	4.3	Farmer	8.9	Teacher	6.2	
Carpenter	7.1	Farmer	5.3	Catechist, clergy	4.6	Trader	3.5	Trader	8.1	Driver	3.2	
Teacher	3.5	Merchant	4.1	Technician	3.2	Electrician	3.3	Carpenter	5.2	Mechanic	3.0	
Fitter	3.2	Carpenter	3.5	Medical officer	2.3	Accountant	3.2	Driver	4.2	Laboratory assistant	2.8	
Motor mechanic	3.2	Trader	3.2	Trader	2.3	Technician	3.2	Builder	3.9	Trader	2.8	
Policeman	3.0	Manager	2.7	Secretary	1.7	Engineer	2.7	Mechanic	3.4	Carpenter	2.6	
Driver	3.0	Engineer	2.5	Engineer	1.4	Printer	2.5	Tailor	2.9	Railway employee	2.0	
Engineer	2.8	Soldier	2.2	Nurse	1.2	Medical officer	2.2	Med. assistant	2.2	Labourer	1.9	
<b>Total %</b>	<b>57.2</b>		<b>57.9</b>		<b>75.9</b>		<b>59.5</b>		<b>65.7</b>		<b>53.3</b>	
<b>No. of obs.</b>	<b>3,458</b>		<b>4,867</b>		<b>653</b>		<b>601</b>		<b>5,533</b>		<b>1,910</b>	

Panel C): Groom occupations (%) 1930-70 (African sample)

	<b>Freetown</b>	<b>Accra</b>	<b>Ibadan</b>	<b>Lagos</b>	<b>Kampala</b>	<b>Nairobi</b>					
Seamstress	34.4	Housewife	34.7	Teacher	32.8	Housewife	25.6	Seamstress	29.4	Housewife	49.3
Trader	21.7	Seamstress	13.5	Seamstress	19.3	Teacher	20.3	Weaver	21.6	Domestic duties	12.0
Teacher	10.7	Teacher	13.1	Trader	16.7	Seamstress	15.3	Matmaker	13.8	Teacher	11.3
Housewife	8.3	Petty trader	5.1	Nurse	5.8	Clerk	8.8	Teacher	10.4	Peasant	8.5
Nurse	3.6	Trader	4.4	Housewife	5.2	Nurse	5.7	Housewife	4.6	Secretary	3.7
Clerk	3.6	Nurse	4.0	Sewer	4.7	Trader	3.3	Needleworker	4.2	Nurse	3.7
Writing clerk	2.4	Clerk	3.0	Clerk	4.3	Typist	3.3	Nurse	4.2	Typist	2.4
Typist	1.9	Midwife	2.3	Civil servant	3.2	Telephonist	3.0	Basketmaker	2.8	Clerk	2.0
Civil servant	1.5	Secretary	2.1	Domestic worker	2.3	Civil servant	1.7	Farmer	2.1	Midwife	0.8
Telephonist	1.5	Civil servant	1.8	Midwife	1.5	Nurse assistant	1.5	Midwife	2.0	Seamstress	0.7
<b>Total %</b>	<b>89.6</b>		<b>84.0</b>		<b>95.8</b>		<b>88.5</b>		<b>95.1</b>		<b>94.4</b>
<b>No. of obs.</b>	<b>3,458</b>		<b>4,867</b>		<b>653</b>		<b>601</b>		<b>5,533</b>		<b>1,910</b>

Panel D): Bride occupations (%) 1930-70 (African sample)

Nairobi (1921-1970)				Lagos (1913-1970)			
Grooms		Brides		Grooms		Brides	
Military Forces	18.2	Housewife	41.4	Manager	13.9	Housewife	36.8
Civil Servant	10.0	Stenographer, Typist	15.3	Engineer	11.8	Secretary	24.0
Farmer, Planter	7.3	Secretary	9.0	Civil servant	9.9	Nurse	9.6
Engineer	6.1	Nurse assistant	5.5	Admin. officer	6.1	Teacher	5.7
Policeman	4.6	Nurse	4.5	Bank officer	4.9	Clerk, Bank clerk	3.7
Accountant	4.6	Br. Military Forces	3.6	Accountant	4.0	Civil servant	3.4
Settler	2.5	Teacher	3.5	Merchant	4.0	Typist	3.0
Bank officer	2.2	Clerk, Bank clerk	3.0	Soldier	3.7	Medical doctor	0.8
Admin. officer, Clerk	2.1	Civil servant	2.6	Policeman	3.2	Receptionist	0.8
Medical doctor	2.1	Telephonist	1.2	Civil engineer	2.5	Dispenser	0.7
<b>Total %</b>	<b>59.7</b>		<b>86.8</b>		<b>64.0</b>		<b>88.5</b>
<b>No. of obs.</b>	<b>2,193</b>		<b>2,193</b>		<b>595</b>		<b>595</b>

Panel E): Groom and bride occupations (%) 1913-70 (European expat sample)

*Note:* “Housewife” includes imputed housewives (i.e. no occupation stated). “Military Forces” for women in Nairobi includes the occupational title “Women’s Auxiliary Air Force”.

**Table A4**  
Summary statistics

	Ages		Literate		Formal work		Informal work		Domestic	Period	Obs
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	F		
<i>All</i>	29	23	93%	86%	63%	25%	37%	14%	61%	1842-1970	25,060
<i>Africans</i>											
Accra	30	24	47%	12%	62%	24%	38%	19%	57%	1873-1970	4,261
Freetown	30	25	92%	88%	61%	18%	39%	31%	51%	1842-1969	7,197
Ibadan	29	23	88%	79%	73%	41%	27%	32%	27%	1877-1970	1,030
Kampala	26	20	91%	81%	54%	16%	46%	1%	84%	1895-1970	7,316
Lagos	29	23	100%	100%	85%	50%	15%	7%	43%	1910-1970	665
Nairobi	27	22	100%	96%	69%	27%	31%	8%	65%	1912-1970	2,002
<i>Europeans</i>											
Lagos	30	26	100%	100%	89%	61%	11%	2%	37%	1913-1969	514
Nairobi	28	25	100%	100%	80%	56%	20%	3%	41%	1921-1964	2,075