

*Social mobility among Christian Africans: evidence from Anglican marriage registers in Uganda, 1895–2011<sup>†</sup>*

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This article uses Anglican marriage registers from colonial and post-colonial Uganda to investigate long-term trends and determinants of intergenerational social mobility and colonial elite formation among Christian African men. It shows that the colonial era opened up new labour opportunities for these African converts, enabling them to take large steps up the social ladder regardless of their social origin. Contrary to the widespread belief that British indirect rule perpetuated the power of African political elites (chiefs), this article shows that a remarkably fluid colonial labour economy actually undermined their social advantages. Sons of chiefs gradually lost their high social-status monopoly to a new, commercially orientated, and well-educated class of Anglican Ugandans, who mostly came from non-elite and sometimes even lower-class backgrounds. The study also documents that the colonial administration and the Anglican mission functioned as key steps on the ladder to upward mobility. Mission education helped provide the skills and social reference needed to climb the ladder in exchange for compliance with the laws of the Anglican Church. These social mobility patterns persisted throughout the post-colonial era, despite rising levels of informal labour during Idi Amin's dictatorship.

Colonial influences on African development remain subject to intense debate. On the one hand, it is widely accepted that the arrival of Christian missionaries prompted a genuine schooling revolution in Africa. British Africa has been

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<sup>†</sup> Earlier versions of this article were presented at the Historical Social Mobility in a Global Perspective Workshop in Utrecht; the 9th New Frontiers in African Economic History Workshop in London; the Colonialism, Growth and Development in the Southern Hemisphere, 1800–2000 Workshop in Lund; the 17th World Economic History Congress in Kyoto; the Economic Research South Africa Economic History Workshop 2016 in Cape Town; the 11th European Social Science History Conference in Valencia; the 2nd Conference of the European Society of Historical Demography at KU Leuven; and a PhD course at the University of Evora. We thank the participants for their useful comments. We are especially grateful to Tommy Bengtsson, Jean Cilliers, Denis Cogneau, Angus Dalrymple-Smith, Michiel de Haas, Shane Doyle, Johan Fourie, Ewout Frankema, Erik Green, Holly Hanson, Kris Inwood, Ineke Maas, Alexander Moradi, Jan Luiten van Zanden, the *Review's* editor, as well as three anonymous reviewers. We also thank the Dioceses of Namirembe and Ruwenzori of the Church of Uganda for opening their church books to us, and Benard Assimwe and Christopher Byomukama of Mountains of the Moon University in Uganda; Kirsten van Houdt from Utrecht University; and Olive Nsababera from the University of Sussex for their invaluable research assistance. The research was funded by the Danish Research Council through grant no. DFF 4003-00088.

particularly praised for its benign policies towards missionary schooling.<sup>1</sup> Partly subsidized by the colonial state and a central aspect of their conversion efforts, Christian missionaries provided the bulk of education across colonial British Africa.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, British colonial officials discouraged post-primary education of the general African population, which continued to be a privilege that was mainly available to sons of African chiefs in order to build African administrative capacities.<sup>3</sup> Africans from non-ruling classes were typically debarred from higher education, which therefore did not serve as a ‘ticket to upward mobility’ for the average African.<sup>4</sup>

Still, it is well documented that Christian missionary activities left their mark on African religious beliefs, living standards, literacy, and gender-unequal access to education and labour markets.<sup>5</sup> However, although mission schooling has continued to affect human capital and religious beliefs of Africans until the present day, it remains an open question to what extent mission education translated into social mobility. In particular, did mission schooling expand the possibilities for social advancement in the colonial economy, or did it merely strengthen the power of a pre-colonial minority elite?<sup>6</sup> To date, the absence of intergenerational micro-data prior to the 1980s, when census and survey statistics began to emerge, has confined empirical investigations of social mobility in sub-Saharan Africa to the post-colonial era.<sup>7</sup>

The existing, mainly qualitative, literature on African social mobility under colonial rule has conveyed two opposing views: one of optimism and one of pessimism. The optimistic view points out that new windows of opportunity opened up during the colonial era for those Africans who acquired the formal skills needed to achieve social advancement. These opportunities supposedly concerned white-collar work for the colonial administration, in railway and trading companies, and for the missionary societies.<sup>8</sup> This view also holds that many Africans welcomed mission schools as a means of adjusting to the new colonial labour market conditions, finding that the ability to read and write in the metropolitan language facilitated upward mobility.<sup>9</sup> It has been argued that mission schooling became a novel source of social stratification, which accelerated a new class differentiation among parts of Africa’s population.<sup>10</sup> According to Falola and Heaton, formal education became ‘the stepping stone to a middle-class career’ in urban centres.<sup>11</sup> Literacy helped build life-long proficiencies, which made children’s future social

<sup>1</sup> Cogneau and Moradi, ‘Borders that divide’; Dupraz, ‘French and British colonial legacies’.

<sup>2</sup> Berman, ‘African responses’; Frankema, ‘Origins’.

<sup>3</sup> Sutton, ‘Education’; Lloyd, Kaufman, and Hewett, ‘Spread of primary schooling’.

<sup>4</sup> Bolt and Benzemer, ‘Understanding’, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Nunn, ‘Religious conversion’; Wantchekon, Novta, and Klačnja, ‘Education’; Gallego and Woodberry, ‘Christian missionaries’; Fourie and Swanepoel, ‘Selection’; Meier zu Selhausen, ‘Missionaries’; Meier zu Selhausen and Weisdorf, ‘Colonial legacy’; Montgomery, ‘Gender inequality’; Nunn, ‘Gender’; Meier zu Selhausen, Moradi, and Jedwab, ‘Economics of missionary expansions’.

<sup>6</sup> Henceforth, the term ‘pre-colonial’ refers to nineteenth-century Uganda before its British annexation.

<sup>7</sup> Louw, van der Berg, and Yu, ‘Convergence’; Dumas and Lambert, ‘Educational achievement’; Bossuroy and Cogneau, ‘Social mobility’; Lambert, Ravallion, and van de Walle, ‘Intergenerational mobility’. One exception is a study on colonial Benin; Wantchekon et al., ‘Education’.

<sup>8</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, p. 230; Frankema, ‘Origins’.

<sup>9</sup> Horton, ‘African conversion’; Iliffe, *Africans*, pp. 219–29.

<sup>10</sup> Kilson, ‘Social classes’, p. 371.

<sup>11</sup> Falola and Heaton, *History of Nigeria*, p. 127.

status less dependent on their father's social position or wealth, in the form of land or livestock, for example.<sup>12</sup> African parents thus sent their children to mission schools not just for their spiritual enlightenment, but rather to promote their social advancement by way of their acquisition of formal skills,<sup>13</sup> and in order to take advantage of the large skill premium that clerical and administrative work would pay.<sup>14</sup> For a new generation of young Africans, mission schools therefore opened up 'worlds very different from those of their parents'<sup>15</sup> and became 'colonial Africa's chief generator of social mobility and stratification'.<sup>16</sup>

The pessimistic view conversely questions the extent to which mission education and the colonial economy actually benefited African social mobility. A longstanding argument in the literature is that Africans were treated as secondary people in their own country.<sup>17</sup> Colonial reluctance to build a well-educated African elite meant that mission schools rarely taught curricula beyond basic levels.<sup>18</sup> The benefits of receiving formal western education also depended on the job opportunities available to Africans in the colonial economy. In Uganda, Europeans and a burgeoning Asian community are said to have dominated the colonial labour market for skilled work, while Africans themselves were relegated to lower and unskilled manual work.<sup>19</sup> This argument is supported by evidence of racial labour discrimination and of wages for unskilled urban work being near subsistence level.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, profitable earning possibilities in cotton and coffee cultivation discouraged urban migration and thus offset the prospects for social mobility linked to secondary and tertiary sector work.<sup>21</sup> A further issue concerns 'indirect colonial rule', a British system of governance used to maintain law and order at low cost, organized through local tax-collecting administrative chiefs.<sup>22</sup> Indirect rule is widely held to have perpetuated the power of colonial political elites into the post-colonial era by placing local administrative authority in the hands of chiefs, a situation that has been described as decentralized despotism.<sup>23</sup> This chimes with evidence that the sons of chiefs were disproportionately favoured during the colonial era in terms of access to secondary education,<sup>24</sup> which consolidated the political power of chiefs while leaving ordinary Africans with limited prospects for upward social mobility. In Uganda, according to Reid, 'social mobility had, if anything, decreased under the British', with the exception of a 'narrow social group of landholders and lineages close to the British administration'.<sup>25</sup>

This article opens up a new avenue for the study of African social mobility and colonial political elite formation using hitherto unexplored source material to shed light on the debates described above. Our data originate from some of

<sup>12</sup> Kelley and Perlman, 'Social mobility'.

<sup>13</sup> Foster, *Education*, p. 66; Berman, *African reactions*, p. xi.

<sup>14</sup> Isichei, *History of Christianity*, p. 240; Apter, *Political kingdom*, p. 74.

<sup>15</sup> Reid, *History of modern Africa*, p. 210.

<sup>16</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, p. 229.

<sup>17</sup> Rodney, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, pp. 203–82; Amin, 'Underdevelopment'.

<sup>18</sup> Sutton, 'Education'; Lloyd et al., 'Spread of primary schooling'.

<sup>19</sup> Southall, 'Determinants', p. 561; Elkan, *Migrants*, pp. 48–50; Kabwegyere, 'Asian question'.

<sup>20</sup> Jamal, 'Asians'; Frankema and van Waijenburg, 'Structural impediments'.

<sup>21</sup> de Haas, 'Measuring'.

<sup>22</sup> Lugard, *Dual mandate*, pp. 175–229.

<sup>23</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and subject*, pp. 52–61; Collins, *Problems*, p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> Cartey and Kilson, *Africa reader*, p. 77; Goldthorpe, *African elite*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Reid, *History of modern Uganda*, p. 217.

the earliest Anglican parish registers in Uganda, collected from Uganda's capital city Kampala and from rural areas in Western Uganda. What makes these registers exceptional is that the Anglican Church Missionary Society was the only institution in Uganda to record systematically the occupations of both Ugandan grooms and their fathers during the colonial (1894–1962) and post-colonial (1962–present) eras. The sampled records include occupational statistics for 14,167 pairs of fathers and sons. We code the occupations using a standardized international occupational classification system (HISCO) and further organize them into social classes based on the skill-content of their work activity (using HISCLASS).<sup>26</sup> We then perform an intergenerational social mobility analysis, while tracking the changing occupational trajectories of the sampled Anglican grooms across the long twentieth century.

The sampled grooms originate from all layers of Ugandan society. Their fathers' social backgrounds range from low-status jobs, such as cowherds and shepherds, to high-status jobs including medical doctors and colonial officials. Although the social backgrounds of the sampled grooms represent the entire social ladder, we do not expect the grooms themselves to represent the broader Ugandan population or, in the case of our urban sample, the wider population of Kampala. The fact that the sampled grooms celebrated an Anglican church marriage meant they were born to parents who, by their choice of religion and compliance with the rules and regulations of the Anglican Church, had positioned their children in a social network that afforded them a wide range of educational and occupational opportunities. Therefore, if mission schooling led to social advancement among the general population in colonial Uganda, then we would expect to see it materialize among the sampled grooms.

Our social mobility analysis shows that the occupational possibilities for the sampled grooms expanded dramatically across the colonial era, resulting in greater and considerably more equal opportunities for upward social mobility. That is, our Christian-educated grooms were able to take large intergenerational jumps up the social ladder regardless of their social origin. The micro-evidence presented also suggests that the colonial labour market was remarkably fluid, gradually eroding pre-colonial and colonial-period political power structures. During the early colonial era, sons of chiefs were more likely than sons of lower-class fathers to reach the top of the social ladder. However, towards the end of the colonial era, traditional claims to status no longer conferred automatic advantages upon the sons of chiefs. Moreover, we do not observe a 'buffer zone' preventing sons of blue-collar fathers from entering white-collar work. On the one hand, this indicates that meritocratic principles grew in importance as a determinant of social status, with mission education and the colonial economy providing new means to achieve social advancement among our sampled Anglicans. On the other hand, compliance with the laws of the Anglican Church may have presented a new barrier to social advancement into the upper echelons of colonial Uganda.

## I

By the time of the Scramble for Africa, in the 1880s, the kingdom of Buganda was the most advanced entity of the four co-existing central states (Ankole, Bunyoro,

<sup>26</sup> van Leeuwen, Maas and Miles, *HISCO*; van Leeuwen and Maas, *HISCLASS*.

Busoga, and Toro) in today's Uganda.<sup>27</sup> Buganda owed its affluence to its well-drained and fertile lands allowing for intensive banana cultivation, which supported one of the greatest agglomerations of population in the interior of East Africa.<sup>28</sup> Buganda was ruled by a *kabaka* (king), who administered the kingdom through his *katikkiro* (prime minister) along with an administrative apparatus of appointed and hereditary chiefs at various regional levels that in turn commanded and taxed the local *bakopi* (farmers).<sup>29</sup> Though most engaged in farming, Buganda's population also specialized in a variety of craft skills, such as barkcloth, leather, pottery, canoe-making, and iron-working crafts.<sup>30</sup>

Political office and territorial chieftainship in Buganda were based neither exclusively on inheritance, nor on kinship.<sup>31</sup> Although sons of chiefs had an advantage over others, appointment as chief depended on winning the king's favour during his regency or aligning with influential royal networks during the process of succession after a king's death.<sup>32</sup> This system of 'meritocracy' created acquisitive social structures, where men competed for social positions at the royal court.<sup>33</sup> Farmers and chiefs alike strived to send their sons to the royal palace to serve as *mugalagala* (pages) in the hope of establishing a path for their children's social advancement.<sup>34</sup> The result was that upward social mobility in Buganda was determined by 'an extraordinary rat-race of rivalry'<sup>35</sup> with 'strongly marked differentiation of wealth and status, but at the same time something like equality of opportunity'.<sup>36</sup>

By the late 1870s, Anglican and Catholic missionaries had reached the kingdom of Buganda. The Baganda<sup>37</sup> embraced mission schools and literacy from the very beginning, and Christian converts quickly made up a considerable body of adherents at the Buganda court.<sup>38</sup> Religious confrontations and the *kabaka's* fear of losing his political power meant that war broke out in the late 1880s between different religious factions. In 1893, the 'flag' followed the 'cross'. Britain restored order and subsequently annexed Buganda as a Protectorate in 1894, governing through indirect rule as constituted in the *Uganda Agreement* of 1900.

Under the *Uganda Agreement*, over half of Buganda's land was allotted to Baganda chiefs and private landowners.<sup>39</sup> The Agreement marked the political victory of Anglican chiefs in Buganda who were overwhelmingly favoured in terms of land distribution. This reinforced their dominant position within the ruling elite.<sup>40</sup> Landed county- and sub-chiefs also became salaried colonial-state officials, who collected the colonial hut tax, enforced compulsory labour schemes, and administered local justice. This arrangement redirected the authority of traditional

<sup>27</sup> See online app. S1 which shows the geographical location of Uganda's kingdoms.

<sup>28</sup> Wrigley, 'Buganda'.

<sup>29</sup> Wrigley, 'Changing economic structure', p. 19; Reid, *Political power*, pp. 3–5.

<sup>30</sup> Roscoe, *Baganda*, p. 356; Reid, *Political power*, p. 97.

<sup>31</sup> Roberts, 'Sub-imperialism'.

<sup>32</sup> Kodesh, 'Renovating'.

<sup>33</sup> Fallers, 'Despotism'; Wrigley, *Crops and wealth*, p. 73; Twaddle, 'Ganda receptivity'.

<sup>34</sup> Fallers, *King's men*, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Taylor, *Growth*, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Wrigley, 'Changing economic structure', p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> The term 'Baganda' is the plural form of the word referring to the indigenous population of Buganda.

<sup>38</sup> Oliver, *Missionary factor*, p. 77.

<sup>39</sup> Jørgensen, *Uganda*, p. 49.

<sup>40</sup> Southall, 'Determinants', p. 575.

Baganda chiefs<sup>41</sup> away from traditional royal ties and towards the colonial state and the Christian mission.<sup>42</sup> It enabled chiefs to extract substantial rents from the peasantry, who became their tenants and cultivated increasing quantities of cotton and coffee.

Close ties with Christianity became an avenue to social and political status.<sup>43</sup> The Anglican Church and the British colonial administration strengthened Baganda influence over the distribution of political and clerical posts in the Protectorate, at the expense of Catholics and Muslims as well as other ethnic groups.<sup>44</sup> More than anywhere else in British Africa, mass conversion to Christianity soon occurred at all echelons of society in Buganda, triggered by a considerable demand for mission education, spread by Ugandan evangelists and teachers.<sup>45</sup>

Kampala, the capital city of Buganda, formed the heart of missionary efforts. The fact that missionaries ‘established schools based on achievement criteria’ meant that ‘status achievement and social mobility quickly became associated with schools’, and that ‘schooling and mobility soon became synonymous’.<sup>46</sup> This facilitated ‘significant changes in Ugandan society and would enable successful students to enjoy a degree of social mobility unknown to their parents’.<sup>47</sup>

## II

The Anglican marriage registers used for the social mobility analysis below have been collected from four parish archives—Namirembe Cathedral in Kampala, as well as three parishes from the Ruwenzori Diocese in Western Uganda: St John’s Cathedral in Fort Portal, St Barnabas’ Church in Bundibugyo, and St Peter’s Church in Butiti.<sup>48</sup> These parishes are among the longest-running mission churches in Central and Western Uganda, allowing us to study the extent to which the colonial era represented a break with pre-colonial social mobility and socio-political power structures.

Namirembe Cathedral, situated adjacent to Buganda’s royal palace in Kampala, is Uganda’s oldest cathedral and most prestigious place of Protestant worship. Kampala was the principal node of the British Protectorate’s administration. The population of ‘greater Kampala’ (Kyadondo County) grew from 37,000 in 1900 to over 105,116 in 1921 (table 1) to reach 330,700 in 1969 and 774,241 in 1991.<sup>49</sup> Kampala remained Uganda’s largest urban centre by far during the colonial and post-colonial eras. It offered the country’s best educational opportunities<sup>50</sup> and the largest per-capita concentration of Anglican mission churches and schools (table 1).

<sup>41</sup> By 1935, 10 of 18 county chiefs and 92 of 153 sub-county chiefs were Anglicans; Peterson, ‘Politics’, p. 207.

<sup>42</sup> Hanson, *Landed obligation*, pp. 114–15; Musisi, ‘Morality’.

<sup>43</sup> Kasozi, *Bitter bread*, p. 13; Twaddle, ‘Bakungu chiefs’.

<sup>44</sup> Roberts, ‘Sub-imperialism’; Hansen, *Mission*, p. 325; de Haas and Frankema, ‘Gender’.

<sup>45</sup> In 1904, for instance, 2,500 Africans taught in 170 Protestant primary schools and served in 162 stations, while European missionaries only represented 3% of the total number of Protestant church workers; Dwight, *Blue book of missions*, p. 36; Oliver, *Missionary factor*, p. 184; Hastings, *Church in Africa*, pp. 464–78.

<sup>46</sup> Berman, *African reactions*, p. 26.

<sup>47</sup> Paige, *Preserving order*, p. 32.

<sup>48</sup> See online app. S1 which shows the geographical location of sampled parishes.

<sup>49</sup> Uganda, *Census Returns 1921*; MoFPED, *Census 1969*; UBOS, *Census 1991*.

<sup>50</sup> de Haas and Frankema, ‘Gender’.

Table 1. *Christian population, Anglican followers, churches, and schools in Kampala and Toro*

		<i>Total population</i>	<i>Christian followers</i>	<i>Anglican churches</i>	<i>Anglican primary schools</i>
1921	Kampala <sup>a</sup>	105,116	44,207	94	48
1921	Toro District	117,397	28,295	104	17
1945	Kampala <sup>a</sup>	133,000 <sup>b</sup>	54,017	99	n/a
1945	Toro District	216,106	79,799	204	n/a

Notes: a Kyadondo County consisted of Kampala, its peri-urban areas, and some rural areas.

b Denotes the population of Kyadondo in the year 1948.

Sources: Uganda, *Census Returns 1921*; East African Statistical Department, *African Population*; Uganda, *Blue Book* (1945).

This, along with Kampala's transport infrastructure and commercial enterprises, probably provided the greatest prospects for social mobility in colonial Uganda.

Efforts to Christianize the traditional centre of African power were not confined to Buganda. They also took place in Western Uganda's Toro Kingdom, where the Anglican mission was promoted by the *omukama* (king) Kasagama. By 1921, 37 per cent of Toro's population were affiliated with Christian churches (table 1), of which one in three were Anglican. When British protection was extended to Toro in 1896, Kasagama sought a strategic alliance with the Anglican mission in Buganda,<sup>51</sup> causing Christian conversion to thrive in Toro as well.<sup>52</sup>

The three parishes from Western Uganda are all located in Toro County, which is positioned in an agricultural zone stretching along the Rwenzori mountains about 300 kilometres west of Kampala. Commercial agriculture intensified there when smallholders began to grow cotton in the 1920s and coffee in the 1930s, but there were limited earning opportunities outside farming. Fort Portal was the most populated place, hosting the seat of the king of Toro and the British district headquarters. It was home to the first Anglican church in Toro, founded in 1896. Fort Portal's population grew from 1,824 in 1921 to over 8,000 in 1969, reaching 33,000 by 1991. Butiti emerged in 1900 as a mission station east of Fort Portal. Bundibugyo, the main town of Bundibugyo District, is remotely located west of Fort Portal near the Congo border. Bundibugyo grew from about 3,000 people in 1969 to some 7,000 in 1991.

Some of the observed population growth in Kampala is explained by labour migration from Belgian-ruled Ruanda-Urundi, which grew in importance during the colonial era.<sup>53</sup> According to Uganda population censuses, 3 per cent of the adult male population in greater Kampala were migrants from Ruanda-Urundi in 1931, and 0.2 per cent in the Fort Portal area.<sup>54</sup> Those shares increased to 22 per cent of Buganda inhabitants and 10 per cent of Western Uganda's total population by 1959.

Our marriage registers furnish the earliest individual-level data available for the study of intergenerational social mobility in Uganda. They provide information

<sup>51</sup> Hansen, *Mission*, pp. 126–33.

<sup>52</sup> Ingham, *Kingdom of Toro*, p. 87.

<sup>53</sup> Richards, ed., *Economic development*, pp. 29–51.

<sup>54</sup> Uganda, *Census Returns 1931*; idem, *Census Returns 1959*.

about dates of marriage; names and ages of spouses; marital status before marriage (that is, bachelor/spinster, widow/widower); and places of residence of spouses at the time of marriage. Baganda names overwhelmingly dominate the register. The colonial-era migrants coming from Ruanda-Urundi, identified by Kinyarwanda or Kirundi names, only make up 0.8 per cent of our Kampala sample between 1930 and 1960 and hence do not represent an important share of our sampled grooms.<sup>55</sup>

The original forms used to record the marriages, filled out by Anglican ministers, were pre-printed in London. This ensures a systematic and time-consistent recording of ecclesiastical events, exactly as in Britain. The Church of England stipulated that the Church Missionary Society recorded the occupations of both groom and bride, as well as those of their fathers. While almost all occupations are recorded in English, the earliest of our Kampala registers (1895–8) include occupations in Luganda, the language spoken in Buganda. We translated these into English.<sup>56</sup> In order to indicate approval of their marriage, spouses left either their signature on the marriage certificate or an ‘X’ mark or thumbprint in case of illiteracy. This so-called ‘signature literacy’ is widely used among historians to assess a person’s ability to read and write.<sup>57</sup> In our case, a signature provides a very strong signal of mission school attendance by a sampled groom.

Anglican missionaries were not the only Christian missionaries in Uganda. Protestant Mill Hill missionaries along with Catholic mission societies, including the White Fathers and the Verona Fathers, also competed for ‘souls’. Conjugal statistics from the early colonial period report that one-third of all Christian marriages were Protestant and two-thirds Catholic.<sup>58</sup> Other mission societies did not, however, follow the Anglican practice of recording spouses’ occupations, which prevents us from conducting comparative social mobility analyses between different religious groups.

Social mobility analysis requires an occupational coding scheme. For this, we use the Historical International Classification of Occupations, known as HISCO.<sup>59</sup> HISCO is the historical equivalent of ISCO, a contemporary coding scheme used by statistical agencies worldwide for the purpose of international work comparisons.<sup>60</sup> Similar to ISCO, HISCO contains more than 1,600 detailed descriptions of work activities, classifying virtually all forms of work that existed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries worldwide. The use of HISCO therefore makes our Ugandan social mobility analysis directly comparable to other HISCO or ISCO studies carried out in other regions, today and in the past.

Once our occupations were classified in HISCO (see below), we grouped them into a multiple social-class system based on skill levels and known as HISCLASS. HISCLASS was originally designed to map occupational titles into 12 social classes to distinguish work activities according to four dimensions: manual versus non-manual labour; supervisory versus non-supervisory labour; primary versus

<sup>55</sup> Doyle, ‘Parish baptism registers’, pp. 290–1, only observed 5% non-Ganda names in Catholic marriage registers in Buganda.

<sup>56</sup> Hanson, *Landed obligation*, pp. 243–6; Taylor, *Growth*, pp. 282–3.

<sup>57</sup> Rachal, ‘Measuring’; Schofield, ‘Dimensions’.

<sup>58</sup> Meier zu Selhausen, ‘Missionaries’.

<sup>59</sup> van Leeuwen et al., *HISCO*.

<sup>60</sup> ILO, *International standard classification of occupations*.



Table 2. *Occupational groups according to the original and our adapted HISCLASS scheme*

HISCLASS 12	HISCLASS 6	HISCLASS label	Examples	Work type
1 2	I	Higher managers Higher professionals	Chief, interpreter, landholder, lawyer, medical doctor	Non-manual
3 4 5	II	Lower managers Lower professionals Lower clerical/sales	Clerk, medical assistant, policeman, shop owner, sub-chief, teacher, trader	Non-manual
6 7	III	Foremen Semi-skilled workers	Carpenter, cook, mason, mechanic, smith, tailor	Manual
8	IV	Farmers	Cultivator, farmer	Manual
9	V	Lower skilled workers	Barkcloth maker, builder, domestic servant, mat maker, office messenger, petty trader, soldier	Manual
10 11 12	VI	Lower skilled farm workers Unskilled workers Unskilled farm workers	Farm worker, cowherd, fisherman, houseboy, shepherd, sugarcane worker	Manual

Source: Based on authors' condensed version of HISCLASS; van Leeuwen and Maas, *HISCLASS*, pp. 131–81.

non-primary sector labour; and finally, higher-, medium-, lower-, or unskilled labour.<sup>61</sup> Manual work is generally considered to be of lower status than non-manual work; supervisory jobs of higher status than subordinate ones; and labour involving a higher degree of human capital is generally of a higher status than labour needing fewer skills.

The original 12 HISCLASS groups are sometimes condensed into fewer groups, either for particular research questions or because the data are too thin for some classes. Here, we have collapsed the 12 classes into six, as reported in table 2.<sup>62</sup> This categorization sets the social-class limits wide enough to allow certain occupational titles to change their social standing over time without breaking the social-class boundaries. Also, even if the social status of a barkcloth maker or basket maker increased or decreased relative to that of a doctor or a teacher, the latter occupations would still remain of higher status than the former.

It was occasionally necessary to contextualize certain Ugandan occupations. The title 'chief',<sup>63</sup> because of the nature of job functions in colonial Uganda, was coded as 'legislative official'.<sup>64</sup> 'Sub-chiefs' received the auxiliary status code for being subordinate, since they earned a quarter of the annual salary of county chiefs.<sup>65</sup> 'Teachers' have been coded as 'primary school teachers', since most schools in colonial Uganda were primary schools.<sup>66</sup> This coding decision may underestimate

<sup>61</sup> van Leeuwen and Maas, *HISCLASS*.

<sup>62</sup> A detailed breakdown by class of sampled occupations is provided in online app. S2.

<sup>63</sup> Three hierarchical ranks of chiefs existed in Uganda: county chief (*saza*), sub-county chief (*gombolola*), and parish chief (*muluka*). The titles of 'chiefs' in the marriage registers, however, do not always allow us to disentangle their hierarchy.

<sup>64</sup> Richards, *East African chiefs*, pp. 41–77; Gartrell, 'British administrators'.

<sup>65</sup> Jørgensen, *Uganda*, p. 88.

<sup>66</sup> Ssekamwa, *History and development*, pp. 40–1.

the status of ‘teachers’ in the late colonial and post-colonial eras, when secondary schooling and technical colleges grew in importance, but this has no implications for our overall conclusions.

The absence of information about acreage of land, types of crops grown, or number of farm-hands employed makes it somewhat difficult to classify the occupational title ‘farmer’. We believe that the majority of farmers found in our registers were tenants on chiefs’ lands, at least until the mid-colonial era. No advanced agricultural technology (for example, the ox-plough) was used, and the average land size was less than six acres.<sup>67</sup> Farming tools were mainly iron hoes, and fertilizers and pesticides were rare.<sup>68</sup> On the one hand, because agricultural technology was rather rudimentary, and since only a minority of the Baganda population presided over large estates with dozens of tenant farmers,<sup>69</sup> it may be tempting to categorize the many ‘farmers’ that we observe as ‘subsistence farmers’. On the other hand, owners of *mailo* (freehold) estates could earn substantial returns from cotton and coffee cultivation.<sup>70</sup> Since the information available in the registers does not allow us to distinguish between freeholders and tenants, we have placed ‘farmers’ in class IV of our condensed version of the HISCLASS scheme (see table 2). This positions ‘farmers’ higher in the social hierarchy than ‘subsistence farmers’ and ‘agricultural workers’, who both appear in class VI, but lower than ‘major landowners’, who appear in class I. A similar coding hierarchy was used in an earlier social mobility analysis of Western Uganda.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, farmers rank higher in HISCLASS than low-waged workers, such as office messengers and domestic servants, but are deemed to be of lower status than high-waged employees, such as clerks, lawyers, and medical doctors.

If HISCLASS is supposed to be relevant in an African context, then we would expect to find that income and occupational status are somehow associated. To explore the case of colonial Uganda, we used monthly incomes of male workers reported by Jørgensen and by Southall and Gutkind.<sup>72</sup> Jørgensen lists only salaried workers, whereas Southall and Gutkind also include self-employment. In total, these studies contain 75 different occupations of more than 600 African workers in Kampala around 1952–3. All six of our social classes in table 2 are represented. Figure 1 shows a clear and positive association between monthly income and social class as defined by HISCLASS. The distinction made by Elkan between skilled and unskilled earnings in Kampala in 1957, set to 80 *Ush*,<sup>73</sup> is clearly visible in figure 1: classes I to IV never earned less than 86 *Ush*. This exercise inspires confidence that social mobility, as measured by HISCLASS, proxies well for income mobility in colonial Uganda.

We have digitized a total of 16,783 marriage certificates from the Kampala parish and another 3,069 certificates from the three rural parishes. The Kampala records concern the years 1895 to 2011, except for the registers covering 1899–1907, which were lost after lightning set fire to the cathedral in 1910. The records of Fort

<sup>67</sup> Mukwaya, *Land tenure*, p. 37; de Haas, ‘Measuring’.

<sup>68</sup> Wrigley, ‘Buganda’.

<sup>69</sup> Richards, ed., *Economic development*, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> de Haas, ‘Measuring’.

<sup>71</sup> Kelley and Perlman, ‘Social mobility’.

<sup>72</sup> Jørgensen, *Uganda*, p. 115; Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen*, pp. 115–17.

<sup>73</sup> Elkan, *Migrants*, p. 75.

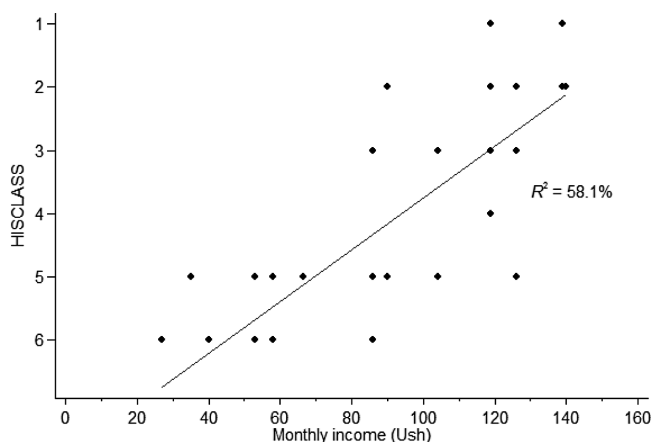


Figure 1. *Monthly income and social class of male workers in Kampala, 1952–3*

Note: County- and sub-county chiefs are not included, because they received free housing and government pensions, and owned large estates that generated income which is not included in the reported earnings; Jørgensen, *Uganda*, p. 88.

Source: Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen*, pp. 115–17; Jørgensen, *Uganda*, p. 88.

Portal cover the period 1911–2012, Butiti the years 1928–65, and Bundibugyo the years 1936–74.

Some of the certificates were unsuited for social mobility analysis. First, to avoid repeated entries of the same person, we included only bachelors (98.5 per cent in Kampala and 96.2 per cent in the rural parishes). Out of these, we were able to assign HISCO codes to 96.8 per cent (16,004) of Kampala grooms and to 98.1 per cent (2,898) of grooms from the three rural parishes. Moreover, HISCO codes were assigned to 74.1 per cent (11,852) of Kampala fathers and to 91.6 per cent (2,898) of rural fathers. Either the remaining fathers had died or their occupation was unrecorded.<sup>74</sup> Overall, we coded the occupations of both father and son in 11,554 cases for Kampala and in 2,613 cases for the three rural parishes.<sup>75</sup> Table 3 reports the summary statistics.

Marriage registers are not without limitation when it comes to using them for social mobility analysis. First, the registers report fathers' and sons' occupations at the time of the son's marriage. Observed at different stages during their life cycles, the father's career may thus be more advanced than when he was his son's age.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, our estimates of social mobility across the life cycle accordingly suggest that our fathers do better on average when we observe them at their son's wedding than when we supposedly detect them at the time of their own wedding.<sup>77</sup> This seems to indicate that our estimates of intergenerational social mobility tend, if anything, to underestimate upward mobility among the sampled grooms.

<sup>74</sup> If fathers' death prior to the sons' marriage was correlated with low social status, it may lead to a systematic exclusion of lower-class families (Delger and Kok, 'Bridegrooms'). However, we find no apparent differences in the social-class distribution among sons with a deceased father compared to those whose fathers were alive (see online app. S3). This suggests that our restricted sample does not suffer from biases caused by the exclusion of records where the father's occupation is missing.

<sup>75</sup> Frequencies of father–son pairs are shown in online app. S4.

<sup>76</sup> Long, 'Surprising'.

<sup>77</sup> A detailed description of our investigation of life-cycle mobility is reported in online app. S5.

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics*

	Kampala ( <i>N</i> = 11,554)			Toro parishes ( <i>N</i> = 2,613)		
	Min.	Max.	Mean	Min.	Max.	Mean
Year of marriage	1895	2011	1967	1911	2011	1952
Age at first marriage, groom	16	78	29.33	15	98	29.43
Literacy, groom	0	1	0.97	0	1	0.70
Father of groom deceased	0	1	0.07	0	1	0.05
Parish of marriage						
Kampala			0.81			
Fort Portal						0.11
Butiti						0.05
Bundibugyo						0.03
Social class of groom (HISCLASS)						
I: Higher managers/professionals			0.16			0.05
II: Lower managers/professionals			0.49			0.34
III: Semi-skilled			0.14			0.12
IV: Farmers			0.09			0.30
V: Lower skilled			0.10			0.13
VI: Unskilled			0.02			0.06

Sources: Namirembe Cathedral archives, Kampala, marriage registers; St John's Cathedral archives, Fort Portal, marriage registers; St Peter's Church archive, Butiti, marriage registers; St Barnabas' Church archive, Bundibugyo, marriage registers.

Table 4. *Education in Buganda by religion, 1959*

	Anglican	Catholic	Non-Christian <sup>a</sup>
Total population (6–15 years)	72,800	158,100	51,100
Share primary schooling (6–15 years)	76.8%	56.9%	14.7%
Total population (16–45 years)	231,500	450,400	126,000
Share primary schooling (16–45 years)	64.1%	49.3%	3.4%
Share secondary schooling (16–45 years) <sup>b</sup>	47.9%	24.3%	20.9%

Notes: a Non-Muslim.

b >4 years of education.

Source: Uganda, *Census Returns 1959*, p. 47.

Second, the absence of Catholics, Muslims, and other non-Christian families raises questions about the sample's representation of the wider Ugandan population. Christianity in Uganda spread faster than anywhere else in colonial Africa.<sup>78</sup> Colonial censuses suggest that about one in four Buganda were Christian followers in 1911, 58 per cent in 1931, and about three in four in 1959. In Toro, the Christian share grew gradually from 16 per cent in 1911 to 30 per cent in 1931, reaching 54 per cent in 1959. In 2002, 85 per cent of Ugandans were Christians, equally distributed between Protestants and Catholics.<sup>79</sup>

There are good reasons to believe that sampled Anglican grooms performed better on average than both their Christian and non-Christian counterparts. Table 4 shows that Anglicans in late colonial Buganda had a clear advantage over Catholics and non-Christians in terms of primary and secondary schooling. Our church-marrying Anglican men were also more often literate, indicated by their signatures, than the average Anglican in Buganda. While 64.1 per cent of adult Anglicans

<sup>78</sup> Oliver, *Missionary factor*, p. 184; Hastings, *Church in Africa*, pp. 464–78.

<sup>79</sup> UBOS, *Census 2002*.

had received primary schooling in 1959, 99.8 and 87.9 per cent of our sampled Anglican grooms in Kampala and Toro, respectively, could sign their marriage certificate. Ugandan census data confirm this view.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the rapid process of Christianization, the majority of Ugandans who declared themselves Christian continued to marry according to traditional African custom. According to the 1931 Uganda census, 70 per cent of African males in 'Greater Kampala' identified themselves as Christian, but only 30 per cent had celebrated a church wedding. In Western Uganda, in the districts of Mwenge and Burahya, 19 per cent of males were married under Christian law. This pattern persisted over time: the Church Missionary Society reported in 1956 that only 25 per cent of all married Anglicans in Buganda had celebrated a Christian 'ring marriage'.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, it has been estimated that 80 per cent of all marital unions in the 1950s in Western Uganda were informal.<sup>82</sup>

Why did so many declared Christians continue to marry according to African custom? The answer is that Anglican ordinances and practices in Uganda were numerous and complex. First of all, a Christian wedding was by no means costless. In preparation for their marriage, non-Christian men had to undergo baptism and, for this, had to demonstrate reading ability in the vernacular.<sup>83</sup> Financially, and in addition to the traditional bridewealth, a church-marriage fee, free-will donations, and other church-fund payments added to the liabilities.<sup>84</sup> Christian husbands also lost their conventional right to reclaim their bridewealth if their wife deserted them,<sup>85</sup> and their marriage could only be dissolved in the colonial courts.<sup>86</sup> This made church weddings unattractive for many Ugandans.

Far more important than this, and with later consequences for their offspring (discussed below), Christian husbands had to commit to monogamy. This way, African husbands and wives ideally 'modelled their marriages—and their religious lives—after a British template',<sup>87</sup> perceiving it as 'an essential mark of civility'.<sup>88</sup> Ugandan men who wished to baptize or marry according to Anglican bylaws therefore had to divest themselves from all but one wife.<sup>89</sup>

Meanwhile, about half of all Anglican men, who married under the Christian Marriage Ordinance, subsequently took another wife under customary rites.<sup>90</sup> The Anglican Church penalized this behaviour by refusing infant baptism of the children of polygamous men. This meant their children did not enjoy unencumbered lineal inheritance of their father's land through the colonial registry of freehold lands. Later in life, they would also be barred from marrying in an Anglican church.<sup>91</sup> Not

<sup>80</sup> de Haas and Frankema, 'Gender'.

<sup>81</sup> Taylor, *Growth*, p. 176.

<sup>82</sup> Perlman, 'Law'.

<sup>83</sup> Peterson, 'Politics'.

<sup>84</sup> Taylor, *Growth*, pp. 177–8.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>86</sup> Gutkind, 'Town life', p. 43.

<sup>87</sup> Peterson, *Ethnic patriotism*, p. 96.

<sup>88</sup> Peterson, 'Politics', p. 208.

<sup>89</sup> Hansen, *Mission*, p. 274.

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, *Growth*, pp. 143, 181, 185.

<sup>91</sup> As a response to those prerequisites, many Baganda enrolled in alternative village schools and were baptized into alternative Christian movements that had less strict requirements, such as the Malakite Church (see Peterson, 'Politics'), the Catholic Church (see Doyle, 'Parish baptism registers'), and also many village schools scattered across Uganda (see Hanson, 'Indigenous adaptation').

only can this explain why many declared Christians did not celebrate a Christian wedding; the reprisal made by the Anglican Church against polygamous men also introduces a selection bias in our sample, since only sons of fathers entirely devoted to Anglican ordinances and practices could be admitted to an Anglican ring marriage.

Thus the decision made by Ugandan males about whether to adhere to the rules of the Anglican Church had potential consequences for whether their offspring could enjoy the full social advantages that came with participation in the life of the Anglican Church. These advantages included access to a limited number of secondary mission schools and to social networks that were beneficial for their sons' professional advancement. In other words, polygamous fathers supposedly constrained the social mobility prospects for their illegitimate children compared to children born to monogamous men within legitimate Anglican marriages. We therefore expect that our sampled grooms were in a more favourable position, in terms of access to higher education and social advancement, than those illegitimately born to polygamous Anglican fathers.<sup>92</sup> Importantly, the selection into this arguably more favourable position was not dependent on the fathers' social status, but rather on compliance with the canon law of the Anglican Church. We return to this important matter later on.

### III

This section describes the occupational structure and intergenerational social mobility of the sampled grooms and analyses how they evolved over time. Figure 2 shows how the sampled Kampala grooms were distributed over time across the six social classes described in table 2. Note first that, among the first generation of Baganda to marry in the Anglican Church, nearly one in five had close links to the Buganda royal court. This included clan leaders, chiefs, headmen, and royal guards (classes I and II). The fairly high representation of class I and II individuals in the data suggests that there was a strong liaison between the ruling classes of Buganda and the Anglican mission from the beginning.

Figure 2 illustrates three main waves of occupational change across the long twentieth century. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, an initial and rather abrupt shift took place, from agriculture (class IV) towards craftsmanship and low-skilled formal work (classes III and V). Among those marrying before 1900, four in five worked in agriculture, as farmers and fishermen, or in traditional crafts such as barkcloth making. However, early in the colonial period, with the onset of the twentieth century, manual work had been replaced by more skill-demanding, non-manual jobs (class II).

A second wave of structural change emerged in Kampala between 1920 and 1960. This involved a gradual shift away from informal towards formal work. In this period, our Anglican grooms entered newly formed social strata of

<sup>92</sup> In practice, the baptism of infants of polygamous men was postponed until the child was old enough to enter a baptism class. It has been noted, however, that these children rarely received adult baptism; see Taylor, *Growth*, p. 243. On the other hand, nearly half of all pupils (49%) in Uganda's most prestigious Anglican boarding school (Budo) in the 1950s were born to polygamous fathers, which seriously questions the effectiveness of the struggle of the Anglican Church against polygamy; see *ibid.*, p. 143.

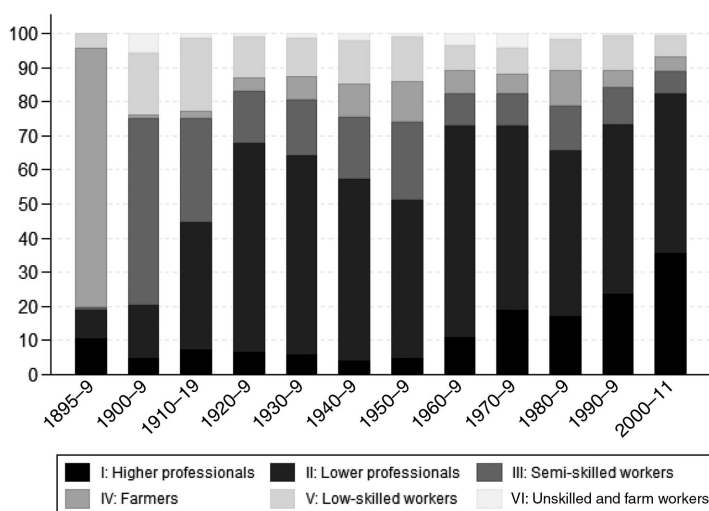


Figure 2. *Class structure of Kampala grooms (%)*, 1895–2011

Note: The decade 1900–9 is limited to the years 1908–9.

Source: Namirembe Cathedral archives, Kampala, marriage registers.

Ugandan society, working as salesmen for Asian businesses or as self-employed commercial traders. Alternatively, they worked for the colonial government as clerks, interpreters, policemen, and chiefs. Also, one out of four non-manual occupational titles were linked to the mission society, including those of clergyman, teacher, dispenser, and medical assistant. This shows how the Anglican mission played a vital role in Africanizing formal work, at least among their religious affiliates. The third and final wave of occupational change, which occurred in the post-colonial era, involved an even greater formalization of labour, with a staggering two out of three of our Kampala grooms working as lower or higher professionals.

Colonial class formation within Christian Buganda society has been clearly documented in earlier works, which describe how new windows of opportunity gradually created a new Christian middle and upper class during the colonial era.<sup>93</sup> Christian mission schooling was an important driver of this process, expediting not only reading and writing skills, but also technical training in medical care and vocational training in carpentry and sewing.<sup>94</sup> The training of African catechists, teachers, and medical workers was crucial for the spread of the gospel, which in turn depended on the recruitment of mission school and hospital staff.<sup>95</sup> Mission school training also catered to a growing demand for skilled African administrative workers, especially from the late 1920s on. The British authorities from the very beginning relied on hundreds of appointed Baganda clerks and administrators to oversee the Protectorate's provinces outside Buganda.<sup>96</sup> This allowed competent Baganda to exercise 'sub-imperial authority'<sup>97</sup> over Uganda's peripheries and

<sup>93</sup> Hansen, *Mission*, p. 259.

<sup>94</sup> Hattersley, *Baganda at home*, pp. 198–9; Mullins, *Wonderful story*, p. 18; Taylor, *Growth*, p. 85.

<sup>95</sup> Kaplan, 'Africanization'.

<sup>96</sup> Low, *Fabrication*, pp. 150–83.

<sup>97</sup> Roberts, 'Sub-imperialism'.

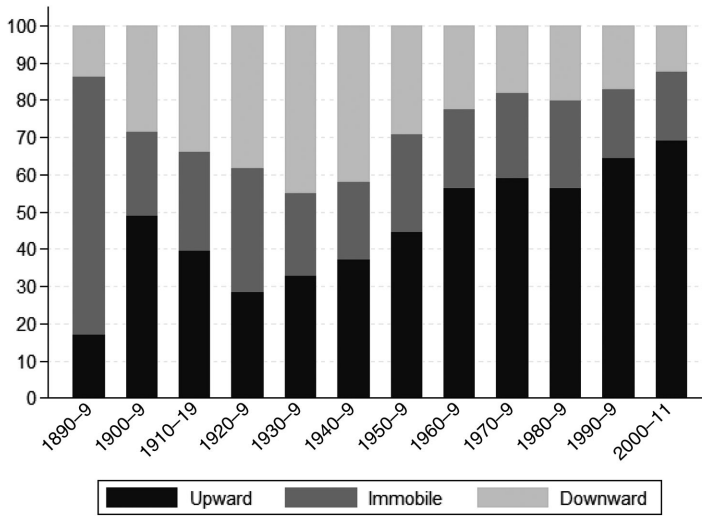


Figure 3. *Intergenerational social mobility in Kampala (% of total grooms), 1895–2011*

Source: As for fig. 2.

coincided with the foundation of the British government’s technical training college of Makerere and Mulago Medical School.<sup>98</sup>

What did the shifts in the occupational structure look like in terms of social mobility? Figure 3 presents the shares of sons subject to up- and downward mobility as opposed to those staying in their class of origin. Presenting the social mobility rates by the grooms’ year of marriage, figure 3 suggests that Buganda society—as captured by our Kampala grooms—was comparatively immobile at the onset of British rule, with three out of four sons remaining in their class of origin in the last decade of the nineteenth century. This high degree of social ‘reproduction’ decreased dramatically over the course of the colonial era. By 1910, less than two decades after the British annexed Uganda, an astonishing three in four sons moved to a class different from that of their father. This portrays a colonial labour market that appears remarkably fluid, at least for the sampled grooms.

Up until the 1940s, and after an initial increase in upward mobility, downward mobility in Kampala was on the rise. This was linked to a growing number of Europeans and Asians found among Kampala’s higher professionals.<sup>99</sup> However, downward mobility was also caused by the fact that many sons of chiefs (class I) dropped down the social ladder, as landed chieftainships gradually shrank in number during this period.<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, in the late colonial and early post-colonial periods, after the Asian trading monopoly was broken and the colonial administration became increasingly Africanized,<sup>101</sup> upward mobility became the leading mobility outcome. The

<sup>98</sup> Iliffe, *East African doctors*, pp. 60–1; Goldthorpe, *African elite*, pp. 1–23.

<sup>99</sup> Uganda, *Census Returns 1911*; idem, *Census Returns 1959*; Jamal, ‘Asians’; de Haas and Frankema, ‘Gender’.

<sup>100</sup> Southall, ‘Determinants’; Hanson, *Landed obligation*, pp. 150–4.

<sup>101</sup> Elkan, *Migrants*, pp. 48–74.



considerable rates of social advancement shown in figure 3, with close to 50 per cent of the sampled grooms moving up the social ladder, illustrate a surprising degree of social mobility among Ugandans situated in a favourable social and political environment. Upon Uganda's independence in 1962, the formation of an Anglican-dominated political party strengthened the already strong relationship between the Anglican Church and the state apparatus.<sup>102</sup> So when European and Asian civil servants were replaced by Ugandans, Anglicans were favoured over Catholics and other religious groups, causing the share of higher professionals (class I) among the sampled Anglicans to increase during the 1960s (figure 2) and their rate of upward mobility to rise even further than during colonial times (figure 3).

In the 1970s, an extended period of military conflict and economic decline emerged with the presidencies of Idi Amin (1971–9) and Milton Obote II (1980–5). Currency depreciations caused the cost of living to increase between 200 and 500 per cent during this period. Plunging real wages in several sectors of the economy forced many Ugandans to leave their wage-earning jobs and escape urban poverty by resorting to rural work.<sup>103</sup> Amin's expulsion of the Asian population in 1972, which was intended to transfer Asian shops and businesses to Ugandans,<sup>104</sup> also led to the rise of the *magendo* (an informal, black-market economy). Although this did not have much effect on our observed occupational structures (figure 2) or rates of upward mobility (figure 3), both of which remained largely stable during the Amin presidency, the shift towards more informal work is visible deeper down in our data. The share of informal or self-employed class II professions, including 'traders', 'businessmen', and 'shop owners', doubled between 1962 and 1986, from 11 to 22 per cent, and was counterbalanced by declining shares of formal (that is, waged) class II occupations, such as 'clerks', 'policemen', and 'teachers'.<sup>105</sup> The shift away from wage employment towards informal entrepreneurship illustrates the occupational change among the middle class that resulted from the collapsing Ugandan economy and Amin's efforts to disempower and replace the Anglican state apparatus.<sup>106</sup> With the end of political turmoil, upward mobility rates quickly began to grow again after 1985, with an overwhelming 60–70 per cent of our Anglican grooms moving up the social ladder.

Tables 5 and 6 take a closer at these developments using outflow mobility rates. These rates provide information about the social-class destination of the sampled sons conditional on their social origin (their father's class). We have divided the Kampala sample into colonial (table 5) and post-colonial (table 6) sub-samples. The percentages reported in the diagonals in italics represent the shares of sons, who remained in their class of origin. Upward mobility appears to the left of the diagonals and downward mobility to the right.

Table 5 conveys several important messages about social mobility in colonial Kampala. It confirms that social mobility was remarkably common among the Anglican grooms, and that the colonial labour market was surprisingly fluid. Among the more immobile groups, lower professions (class II) had three in five sons staying

<sup>102</sup> Ward, 'History of Christianity'.

<sup>103</sup> Jørgensen, *Uganda*, pp. 298–300; Kasfir, ed., *State*, p. 91.

<sup>104</sup> Jørgensen, *Uganda*, p. 299.

<sup>105</sup> See online app. S6.

<sup>106</sup> Pirouet, 'Religion'; Jørgensen, *Uganda*, pp. 306–7.

Table 5. *Outflow mobility rates in Kampala (row percentages), 1895–1962*

Father's class	Groom's class						Total	N
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI		
I: Higher professional	10.4 <sup>a</sup>	57.4 <sup>a</sup>	12.7 <sup>a</sup>	6.5 <sup>a</sup>	11.9 <sup>a</sup>	1.0	100	1,057
II: Lower professional	4.5 <sup>a</sup>	58.6	17.5 <sup>a</sup>	6.5 <sup>a</sup>	11.6 <sup>a</sup>	1.3	100	955
III: Semi-skilled	1.7 <sup>a</sup>	34.2	42.6 <sup>a</sup>	5.0	14.1	2.3	100	298
IV: Farmer	5.2 <sup>a</sup>	42.4 <sup>a</sup>	16.1 <sup>a</sup>	24.0 <sup>a</sup>	11.1 <sup>a</sup>	1.2	100	1,905
V: Lower skilled	3.1 <sup>a</sup>	37.3	32.1 <sup>a</sup>	5.7	19.7	2.2	100	458
VI: Unskilled	2.8 <sup>a</sup>	29.2 <sup>a</sup>	37.5 <sup>a</sup>	8.3 <sup>a</sup>	15.3	6.9	100	72
Total (%)	5.8 <sup>a</sup>	47.8 <sup>a</sup>	19.2 <sup>a</sup>	13.4 <sup>a</sup>	12.5 <sup>a</sup>	1.4 <sup>a</sup>	100	
N	273	2,268	909	636	592	67		4,745

Note: <sup>a</sup> Outflow mobility during the colonial era is significantly different from the post-colonial era (tab. 6):  $p < 0.05$ .  
Source: Namirembe Cathedral archives, Kampala, marriage registers.

Table 6. *Outflow mobility rates in Kampala (row percentages), 1963–2011*

Father's class	Groom's class						Total	N
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI		
I: Higher professional	33.1	48.1	6.1	3.8	6.7	2.2	100	640
II: Lower professional	25.2	54.8	7.5	4.2	6.0	2.3	100	1,419
III: Semi-skilled	15.6	41.1	26.4	6.1	8.7	2.2	100	231
IV: Farmer	21.9	50.6	9.6	7.7	8.4	1.7	100	4,095
V: Lower skilled	24.8	37.2	16.8	4.9	14.2	2.2	100	226
VI: Unskilled	18.7	53.0	7.1	2.5	9.6	9.1	100	198
Total (%)	23.4	50.6	9.6	6.3	8.0	2.1	100	
N	1,593	3,443	654	430	545	144		6,809

Source: As for tab. 5.

put, while two in five sons remained immobile among craftsman fathers (class III). In the remaining groups, no more than one in four sons stayed in their class of origin. This illustrates a remarkable degree of social mobility among our sampled grooms regardless of their parental social background.

The movers did not simply change to the neighbouring classes, but assumed positions across the entire social ladder. This resonates with Currie's observation that the occupational status of Ugandan school graduates was highly independent of their fathers' educational and occupational backgrounds.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, table 5 portrays a society in which sons of blue-collar workers (classes III–VI) were clearly able to enter white-collar work (classes I–II). A remarkable 45 per cent of sons from a farming background (class IV) moved into white-collar work. This also captures the ongoing structural change in colonial Kampala. Similarly, one in three sons of craftsmen (class III) moved into non-manual work. These findings contradict the 'buffer zone thesis', proposed by Goldthorpe, that sons of blue-collar fathers in Victorian England struggled to enter white-collar work.<sup>108</sup>

Our findings from Anglican Kampala align with evidence from colonial Ghana and Senegal which shows that secondary education was very common among the sons of farmers, herders, and fishermen and was used as a means to enter

<sup>107</sup> Currie, 'Family background'.

<sup>108</sup> Goldthorpe, *Social mobility*, pp. 47–55.

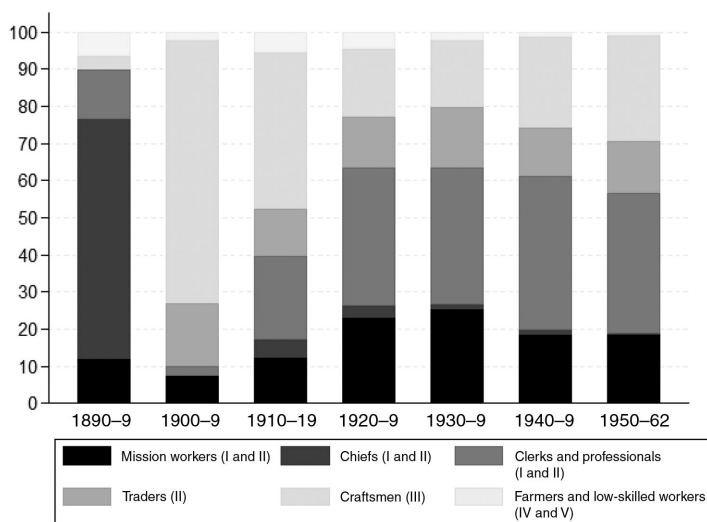


Figure 4. *Types of work of upwardly mobile sons in Kampala, 1895–1962*

Source: As for fig. 2.

white-collar work.<sup>109</sup> Table 5 also demonstrates a notable degree of upward mobility among sons of lower-class (class V) fathers. Less than 7 per cent of sons of fathers from the unskilled section of society (class VI) remained in their class of origin. A startling one in three of them made it all the way to the top of the social ladder (classes I and II). At the same time, sons coming from the social segments above the lowest social class very rarely dropped to the bottom of society (class VI).

Were grooms who came from the countryside more likely to experience upward mobility than those based in Kampala? While we do not know the birthplace of the sampled grooms, we do have information about their place of residence at the time of marriage. Around 50 per cent of sampled grooms lived outside the wider area of modern Kampala during the colonial era, dropping to 38 per cent during the post-colonial era. Online appendix S7 sheds light on this matter, showing that the social mobility patterns were indeed very similar: upward mobility was not statistically significantly different between two groups and downward mobility trends also moved in tandem. Hence, rural residence does not seem to have influenced the likelihood of social advancement.

How were those great leaps of social mobility that we observe achieved? What type of work did the grooms engage in when they moved up the social ladder? Did they move into *any* sector of the colonial economy, or was upward mobility restricted to specific sectors? Figure 4 presents six different occupational categories that upwardly mobile sons went into: ‘mission workers’ (for example, teachers, clergymen, medical assistants); ‘clerks and professionals’ (for example, interpreters, policemen); ‘traders’; ‘farmers and low-skilled workers’; ‘craftsmen’ (for example, carpenters, masons); and ‘chiefs’ (and sub-chiefs). On the eve of Britain’s annexation of Uganda, upward mobility was mainly linked to chieftaincy,

<sup>109</sup> Foster, ‘Secondary schooling’; Iliffe, *Africans*, p. 231.

but social advancement quickly became associated with moving into craftsmanship instead during the 1900s. In the 1920s, formal employment in the colonial economy, including mission work, overtook traditional craftsmanship as the most frequent category for upward mobility. This pattern stabilized after the 1940s, and formal employment continued to remain an important path to upward mobility until independence. The pre-colonial avenue to higher status—chieftaincy—concurrently lost its former importance.

Table 6 illustrates that the social mobility trends of the late colonial period (table 5) continued after independence. There was a significant degree of upward mobility among the sampled grooms born to the lowest social classes and a continual transfer of sons from blue-collar family backgrounds into white-collar work. Among grooms coming from farming backgrounds (classes IV, V, and VI), nearly two in three made it into the upper layers of society (classes I and II). This remarkable transfer out of agriculture resonates with Bossuroy and Cogneau's finding that intergenerational mobility between farm and non-farm work was more common in post-colonial Uganda than in other African countries.<sup>110</sup> In fact, our Anglican sons from Kampala and the three rural parishes were twice as likely to move into non-farm work compared to the general Ugandan male population.<sup>111</sup> Key reasons for this difference are that our Anglican grooms were mainly drawn from Kampala and that Anglicans were more successful on average in attaining education (see table 4).

#### IV

Pre-colonial political power in Buganda resided with the king and his landed chiefs who ruled over the peasantry. Although chieftaincies had their roots in pre-colonial times, this institution was significantly reshaped by colonial indirect rule. Compared to the arguably more open pre-colonial succession process of traditional chiefs, described in the existing literature, the nature of eligibility changed under indirect rule when linked to Christianity.<sup>112</sup> Under indirect British rule, many Baganda (and mostly Anglican) chiefs became colonial officials who were employed to extract profits from cash-cropping farmers.<sup>113</sup> This put them in a supreme position for consolidating their pre-colonial societal power. Evidence from colonial and post-colonial Nigeria and Uganda<sup>114</sup> and from present-day Sierra Leone as well as Namibia<sup>115</sup> have congruently suggested that indirect rule (described as 'decentralised despotism') continued and even perpetuated the power of chiefs into the post-colonial era. It is also held that British colonial officials discouraged post-primary education of the general population, except for the sons of chiefs, whose training was aimed at building local administrative capacities.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Bossuroy and Cogneau, 'Social mobility'.

<sup>111</sup> The share of farmers' sons working in non-farm sectors was even three times higher in our Anglican sample compared to Uganda's male population. See online app. S8.

<sup>112</sup> Kodesh, 'Renovating'.

<sup>113</sup> Wrigley, *Crops and wealth*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>114</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and subject*, pp. 52–61.

<sup>115</sup> Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson, 'Chiefs'; Lechler and McNamee, 'Decentralized despotism'.

<sup>116</sup> Sutton, 'Education'; Lloyd et al., 'Spread of primary schooling'.

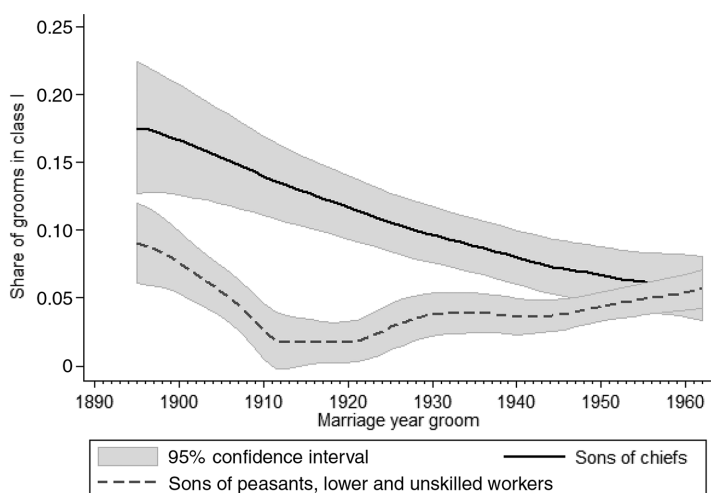


Figure 5. *Conditional probability of entering class I, Kampala, 1895–1962*

Note: Polynomial smoothed lines.

Source: As for fig. 2.

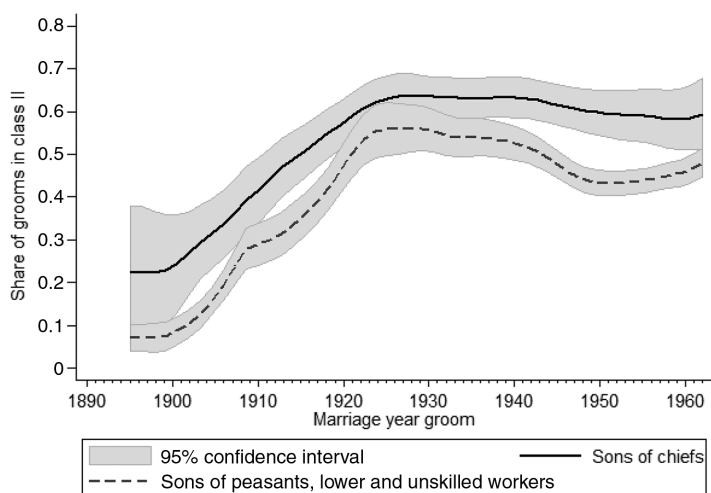


Figure 6. *Conditional probability of entering class II, Kampala, 1895–1962*

Note: Polynomial smoothed lines.

Source: As for fig. 2.

The declining role of chieftaincy for upward mobility indicated in figure 4 raises important questions about the colonial legacy of indirect rule in Uganda. The nature of our data enables us to explore the persistence of power among the colonial political elite (that is, chiefs) across the colonial era. To this end, figures 5 and 6 compare the conditional probability of sons of chiefs with that of sons from the three lowest social classes (classes IV, V, and VI) of entering social classes I (higher professionals) and II (lower professionals) respectively. Initially, sons of chiefs had significantly higher probabilities of reaching class I than lower-class sons

(figure 5). This resonates with earlier evidence that Ugandan chiefs' descendants enjoyed privileged access to mission high schools, such as King's College Budo, and that this placed them in an advantageous position for the future recruitment of chiefs, administrative clerks, and interpreters.<sup>117</sup>

Towards the end of the colonial period, however, there was no longer a statistical difference. Around 5 per cent of sampled sons made it to the highest section of society, regardless of whether their father was a chief or belonged to the lowest social classes (figure 5). This development implies that meritocratic criteria eventually matched status ascription for attaining the highest social status in Kampala. Although sons of chiefs faced mildly higher odds of becoming lower professionals (class II) than their low-social-class counterparts during the entire colonial era (figure 6), the probabilities increased markedly for both groups, with more than half of all sons of lower-class fathers entering class II by the time of independence. These conclusions challenge the perception of 'chiefs as despots'<sup>118</sup> in the sense that indirect colonial rule in Uganda did not extend the power of pre-colonial and colonial political elites (that is, chiefs) into the post-independence era, at least not among those with an Anglican pathway to social mobility.

The weakening power of chieftaincies in colonial Buganda has many explanations. One is that chieftaincy was not exclusively obtained by lineal descent.<sup>119</sup> More importantly, colonial laws introduced in the late 1920s, which reduced rents and levies on cash crops, favoured smallholders and tenants and insured them against the oligarchy of landed chiefs.<sup>120</sup> The elimination of hundreds of chieftainships, the reduction of rents imposed on farmers by chiefs, and the breakup of larger estates after 1930 arguably made it harder for chiefs to secure a high-status position for their offspring. Colonial land reforms also helped thousands of non-elite Baganda to purchase land, which they paid for through their earnings from wage work or profits made in cotton cultivation.<sup>121</sup> The new landed class received substantial rents from cotton and coffee exports,<sup>122</sup> which helped them finance the education and upward social mobility of their sons.

The colonial elevation of descendants from the lower classes to high-status positions also informs us that secondary education was not just a privilege granted to the sons of chiefs. King's College Budo, the most prestigious Anglican high school in Buganda, testifies to the inclusiveness of mission schooling by the late colonial era: only 8 per cent of the school's attendees came from a chiefly background, whereas 61 per cent were of farmer descent and 21 per cent had a father engaged in mission work or the colonial administration.<sup>123</sup> This helped create a new Christian-educated class, which 'would increasingly challenge the old system, feeling itself excluded from social status and political authority'.<sup>124</sup> Our findings also give numerical expression to earlier narratives about the rapid expansion

<sup>117</sup> Fallers, 'Despotism'; Cartey and Kilson, *Africa reader*, p. 77; Musisi, 'Colonial and missionary education'.

<sup>118</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and subject*, pp. 52–61 (quotation p. 37).

<sup>119</sup> Fallers, *King's men*, p. 10.

<sup>120</sup> Southall, 'Concepts of elite'; Powesland, *Economic policy and labour*, pp. 22–7; Richards, ed., *Economic development*, p. 5.

<sup>121</sup> Hansen, 'Church and state in early colonial Uganda'; Hanson, *Landed obligation*, p. 194.

<sup>122</sup> Elkan, *Migrants*, pp. 13–14; de Haas, 'Measuring'.

<sup>123</sup> Taylor, *Growth*, p. 277.

<sup>124</sup> Reid, *History of modern Africa*, p. 185; Nugent, *Africa since independence*, pp. 13–14; Collins, *Problems*, pp. 86–7.

Table 7. *Class I occupations of sons by fathers' social background, Kampala, 1895–1962*

<i>Groom's occupation</i>	<i>Father</i>		<i>Groom's occupation</i>	<i>Father</i>	
	<i>Chief (I)</i>			<i>Class IV–VI</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Chief	54	63.5	Chief	31	27.0
Medical doctor	9	10.6	Engineer	22	19.1
Engineer	8	9.4	Medical doctor	17	14.8
Interpreter	6	7.1	Accountant	16	13.9
Accountant	2	2.4	Interpreter	6	5.2
Clan leader	2	2.4	Clergyman	5	4.3
Clergyman	2	2.4	Journalist	4	3.5
Architect	1	1.2	Scientist	3	2.6
Pharmacist	1	1.2	Pharmacist	2	1.7
			Other professionals	9	7.8
Total	85	100.0		115	100.0

Source: As for tab. 5.

and importance of mission education in Uganda. This includes Iliffe's contention that 'African education did more to foster social mobility than to entrench old privileged classes, largely because tropical Africa has no long-established literate elites',<sup>125</sup> and because salaried careers, functionally divorced from landownership and production, became a corridor to high-status attainment regardless of social background.<sup>126</sup>

The new income-earning opportunities and social mobility of the lower social classes deprived chiefs of their monopoly over the labour market, while 'cash wages, taxes in rupees, and labour demands slowly began to undermine the economic and social logic of chiefly authority'.<sup>127</sup> Table 7 highlights this, comparing the most frequent class I occupations held by sons of chiefs and sons of lower-class fathers, respectively. Although chieftaincy was relatively more common among the sons of chiefs, other higher professions, in mission schooling and medical care or administrative work, presented descendants from the lower social classes with a new path to high social status. The occupational patterns of sons of chiefs and sons of lower-class fathers entering class II were remarkably similar (table 8). These illustrations show how Baganda chiefs gradually lost their initial advantage in placing their offspring in high-status positions under indirect colonial rule.

## V

The sample from Toro County was obtained by merging our three rural parishes in Western Uganda. Table 9 reports the occupational structures by social class in each of the three rural parishes. As in Kampala, we observe an initial shift towards non-agricultural activities in Toro's capital Fort Portal and in Butiti by

<sup>125</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, p. 230.

<sup>126</sup> Consistently, it has been shown that fathers' lack of education and social standing did not disadvantage their sons' educational attainments, social positions, or standards of living; Wantchekon et al., 'Education'.

<sup>127</sup> Hanson, *Landed obligation*, pp. 150–2.

Table 8. *Class II occupations of sons by fathers' social background, Kampala, 1895–1962*

<i>Groom's occupation</i>	<i>Father</i>		<i>Groom's occupation</i>	<i>Father</i>	
	<i>Chief (I)</i>			<i>Class IV–VI</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>		<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Clerk	219	43.0	Clerk	349	34.9
Trader	86	16.9	Trader	201	20.1
Teacher	77	15.1	Teacher	197	19.7
Medical assistant	39	7.7	Medical assistant	44	4.4
Policeman	14	2.8	Policeman	39	3.9
Dispenser	10	2.0	Dispenser	23	2.3
Shop owner	9	1.8	Shop owner	23	2.3
Sub-chief	9	1.8	Sub-chief	17	1.7
Surveyor	7	1.4	Headman	15	1.5
Other	37	7.3	Other	92	9.2
Total	509	100.0		999	100.0

Source: As for tab. 5.

Table 9. *Class distribution of grooms from Toro parishes, 1910–2011*

<i>Fort Portal</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>N</i>
1910–19	5.7	22.9	32.2	10.2	22.9	6.1	245
1920–9	3.3	47.0	20.8	8.7	15.3	4.9	183
1930–9	2.5	33.1	16.5	22.3	23.1	2.5	121
1940–9	3.5	30.4	8.7	18.3	25.2	13.9	115
1950–9	2.0	46.3	10.1	18.8	14.8	8.1	149
1960–9	9.0	50.6	10.1	15.7	9.0	5.6	89
1970–9	6.5	40.5	3.3	37.9	7.2	4.6	153
1980–9	9.3	28.4	2.1	46.2	3.4	10.6	236
1990–9	10.0	68.6	4.3	10.0	4.3	2.9	70
2000–11	34.2	42.1	6.6	6.6	10.5	0.0	76
<i>Butiti</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>N</i>
1928–9	0.0	30.0	14.0	8.0	28.0	20.0	50
1930–9	1.1	24.9	13.9	30.4	16.5	13.2	273
1940–9	1.6	42.5	7.1	29.1	16.5	3.2	127
1950–9	1.1	39.8	17.1	15.9	23.3	2.8	176
1960–5	3.5	33.7	15.1	26.7	8.1	12.8	86
<i>Bundibugyo</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>N</i>
1940–9	0.0	22.5	1.3	62.5	10.0	3.8	80
1950–9	1.6	26.1	3.2	67.0	1.6	0.5	188
1960–9	1.5	16.5	3.0	79.0	0.0	0.0	133
1970–4	0.0	9.5	0.0	85.7	4.8	0.0	21

Sources: St John's Cathedral archives, Fort Portal, marriage registers; St Peter's Church archive, Butiti, marriage registers; St Barnabas' Church archive, Bundibugyo, marriage registers.

the mid-colonial era, whereas the more remote parish of Bundibugyo remained predominantly agricultural throughout. The significantly lower shares of non-manual labour opportunities compared to Kampala, however, clearly stand out. Rural occupational structures were also more sensitive to economic instability under Amin and Obote in the 1970s–80s, when Fort Portal and Bundibugyo saw rising shares of agricultural workers. This was accompanied by falling shares of



Table 10. *Intergenerational mobility in rural Toro parishes (% of total grooms), 1911–2011*

	<i>Fort Portal</i>				<i>Butiti</i>				<i>Bundibugyo</i>			
	<i>Up</i>	<i>Down</i>	<i>Immobile</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Up</i>	<i>Down</i>	<i>Immobile</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Up</i>	<i>Down</i>	<i>Immobile</i>	<i>N</i>
1910–19	63.7	23.3	13.0	245								
1920–9	61.5	22.5	15.9	182	46.0	24.0	30.0	50				
1930–9	39.7	32.2	28.1	121	36.6	24.5	38.8	273				
1940–9	33.0	44.4	22.6	115	49.6	22.8	27.6	127	27.0	11.4	61.6	74
1950–9	39.2	36.9	23.9	148	45.5	33.0	21.6	176	27.1	7.0	65.9	188
1960–9	51.7	32.4	15.9	89	50.0	24.1	25.9	87	19.6	0.8	79.7	133
1970–9	36.6	17.0	46.4	153					9.5	4.8	85.7	21
1980–9	35.2	13.6	51.3	236								
1990–9	64.3	12.9	22.9	70								
2000–11	51.3	15.8	32.9	76								
Total (%)	47.4	24.4	28.2	100.0	47.1	26.2	26.7	100.0	23.6	5.5	70.9	100.0
N	680	351	405	1,436	336	187	190	713	98	23	295	416

Sources: As for tab. 9.

Table 11. *Outflow mobility rates (row percentages), rural parishes, 1911–62*

<i>Father's class</i>	<i>Groom's class</i>						<i>Total</i>	<i>N</i>
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>		
I: Higher professional	12.2	37.4 <sup>a</sup>	15.7 <sup>a</sup>	14.8	13.9	6.1	100	115
II: Lower professional	1.1 <sup>a</sup>	46.6	12.9	16.3	17.4	5.6	100	178
III: Semi-skilled	1.3 <sup>a</sup>	16.0 <sup>a</sup>	29.3	32.0	17.3	4.0	100	75
IV: Farmer	2.0 <sup>a</sup>	32.1	13.1 <sup>a</sup>	33.2 <sup>a</sup>	15.1 <sup>a</sup>	4.5	100	1,092
V: Lower skilled	2.1	25.3 <sup>a</sup>	21.1	11.6	34.7 <sup>a</sup>	5.3	100	95
VI: Unskilled	1.2 <sup>a</sup>	32.3	16.3	14.4	16.7	19.1 <sup>a</sup>	100	257
Total (%)	2.4 <sup>a</sup>	32.9	14.8 <sup>a</sup>	26.5 <sup>a</sup>	16.6 <sup>a</sup>	6.8	100	
N	44	596	268	480	301	123		1,812

Notes: *a*  $p < 0.05$ .

Outflow mobility during the colonial era is significantly different from the post-colonial era (tab. 12).

Sources: As for tab. 9.

formal professions and coincided with plunging real wages and evidence of de-urbanization at the time.

Except for the 1970s–80s, when almost every second groom remained in his class of origin, usually no more than one in four stayed put (table 10). In these relatively fluid rural societies, upward mobility generally outperformed downward mobility, with half of all grooms moving up the social ladder in Fort Portal as well as in Butiti. The trends (though not the magnitudes) of social mobility in Fort Portal largely followed those of Kampala during the post-colonial era. These patterns contrast with the socially static parish of Bundibugyo, where about two in three grooms remained in their class of origin (meaning farmers) after independence. The virtual absence of non-agricultural market activities undoubtedly put a firm lid on the prospects for social mobility in this area.

As in colonial Kampala, rural sons subject to social mobility literally moved into any social layer (table 11). At one extreme, while half the sons of higher and lower professionals (classes I and II) stayed in their class of origin, the remaining half went into blue-collar work, with almost one in five dropping to the bottom of society

Table 12. *Outflow mobility rates (row percentages), rural parishes, 1963–2011*

Father's class	Groom's class						Total	N
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI		
I: Higher professional	20.0	54.0	2.0	10.0	12.0	2.0	100	50
II: Lower professional	21.4	49.5	6.8	8.7	9.7	3.9	100	103
III: Semi-skilled	22.2	44.4	22.2	11.1	0.0	0.0	100	9
IV: Farmer	7.9	32.7	3.5	48.5	3.5	3.9	100	594
V: Lower skilled	7.7	61.5	7.7	14.4	7.7	0.0	100	13
VI: Unskilled	6.3	21.9	3.1	12.5	6.3	50.0	100	32
Total (%)	10.5	36.3	4.1	38.6	5.0	5.5	100	
N	84	291	33	309	40	44		801

Sources: As for tab. 9.

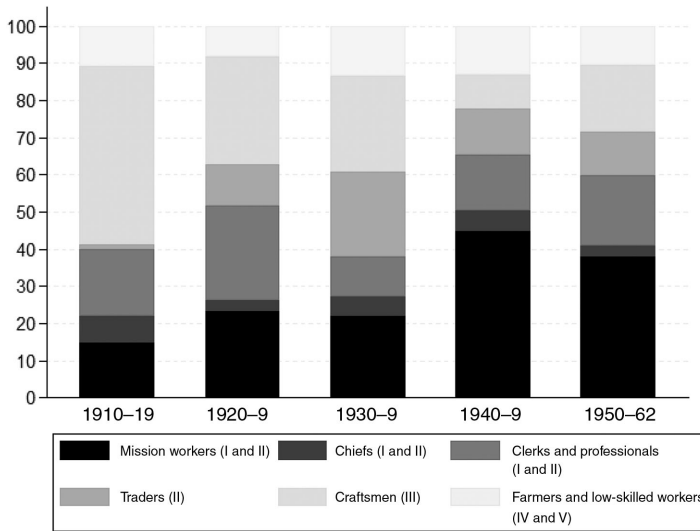


Figure 7. *Types of work of upwardly mobile sons in rural Toro parishes, 1911–62*

Sources: St John's Cathedral archives, Fort Portal, marriage registers; St Peter's Church archive, Butiti, marriage registers; St Barnabas' Church archive, Bundibugyo, marriage registers.

(classes V and VI). At the other extreme, sons of farmers (class IV) faced a 50 per cent chance of upward mobility, while one in three sons of unskilled workers (class VI) reached the two highest classes (classes I and II). Again, these large leaps in social status describe a society with only limited social barriers, as least among our sampled Anglicans. The post-colonial period displayed similar trends (table 12), but with the important exception that the likelihood of sons of upper-class fathers staying in white-collar work increased to 70 per cent, and that the sons of unskilled fathers remained at the bottom of society more often than during colonial times. The probabilities of sons of farmers and craftsmen (classes III and IV) dropping down into the lower classes also became less likely after independence.

The lack of major structural changes in the rural parishes during the colonial era raises questions about the type of work that upward mobility involved. As in Kampala (figure 4), rural social advancement was initially linked to craftsmanship (figure 7). Formal-sector employment came to dominate from the 1920s onwards,

but with the important difference that mission work, in the absence of a large colonial bureaucracy, was the main means of climbing the social ladder.

## VI

This article has offered a first glance at intergenerational social mobility in colonial Africa. Our sampled grooms, even though they came from all layers of Ugandan society, in many ways represent a privileged group of Christian Africans. They were privileged in terms of access to higher education and labour market opportunities, which they could enter through their parents' conversion and strict commitment to the rules and regulations of the Anglican Church. This created a pathway for the sampled grooms into a remarkably fluid colonial economy in which traditional claims to status did not confer automatic advantages to pre-colonial elites (that is, chiefs), and where the barrier between blue- and white-collar work was surprisingly low. Even the most modest families could hope that their sons, helped by mission education and close ties between the Anglican Church and the colonial state, could climb the social ladder and reach the higher levels of Ugandan society.

Although many Ugandan chiefs were appointed as administrative officials under indirect colonial rule and in this way exercised both political and economic power over the local population, our micro-evidence portrays a society in which access to secondary education and a labour market seemingly based on meritocratic criteria caused chiefs' colonial power gradually to disappear. This shift, which was helped by colonial land reforms and increased African access to Kampala's formal labour market, challenges the perception of British indirect rule as 'decentralised despotism'.<sup>128</sup> It also illustrates how mission education did more to foster social mobility among our sampled grooms than to entrench the traditional privileged classes. Upward social mobility among our Kampala grooms grew persistently from the mid-colonial period up until the present, although with some reversal towards informal and agricultural work during the economically devastating presidencies of Amin and Obote. In rural areas, where the colonial economy was less developed than in Kampala, employment in mission churches, schools, and hospitals opened important windows of opportunity for social advancement into formal work.

Returning to the debates outlined in the introduction, this demonstrates that the colonial economy in Uganda did issue 'tickets to upward social mobility', at least to a new generation of Christian Africans, whose parents self-selected into the religious and political networks surrounding the Anglican Church. This included not just the sons of traditional Ugandan elites, but all social classes. However, although the occupational backgrounds of the sampled fathers did not appear to present any hindrance for social advancement among their sons, tickets to upward mobility arguably came with other strings attached. These involved a break with traditional customs of African religious beliefs and marital living in exchange for a way of life modelled after a western template. Career-building in this context began with Anglican baptism and was followed by school and vocational training and later monogamous church marriage in compliance with the laws of the Anglican Church. The social mobility experienced by our Ugandan grooms demonstrates that new

<sup>128</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and subject*, pp. 52–61 (quotation p. 37).

possibilities for social and political advancement in colonial Uganda were opened up by adherence to Anglican Christianity. More liberal forms of Christianity, such as the Malakite Church, which arose out of protest against the rigidities of the Anglican Church and merged traditional Baganda culture and Christian theology by baptizing children born to polygamous men, were suppressed by the Baganda establishment with the assistance of the colonial government.<sup>129</sup> In this light, it would appear that Anglican Ugandans made themselves legible in the eyes of the British colonial authorities through a careful career-building process. A possible interpretation of this, and a reason for the enhanced performance of Anglican Ugandans described in earlier studies,<sup>130</sup> would be that Anglican Christianity essentially functioned as a ‘screening device’ among the common population, that was used by the colonial government to fill pre-eminent positions within the colonial administration and possibly the broader formal labour market.

<i>Date submitted</i>	13 March 2016
<i>Revised version submitted</i>	10 June 2017
<i>Accepted</i>	28 June 2017

DOI: 10.1111/ehr.12616

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<sup>129</sup> The Malakite Church was a protest revival movement against the religious and social inequities as well as the demographic exclusivity of Anglican Christianity in Buganda. See Peterson, ‘Politics’, pp. 197–203.

<sup>130</sup> Roberts, ‘Sub-imperialism’; Peterson, ‘Politics’; de Haas and Frankema, ‘Gender’.

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### Supporting information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web-site:

- S1. Geographical location of Uganda's kingdoms and sampled parishes
- S2. Top five occupations of grooms and their fathers by social class
- S3. Class distribution of son, valid and non-valid samples
- S4. Frequency of linkage between sons and fathers
- S5. Life-cycle mobility estimates and method of investigation
- S6. Share of formal and informal work in class I and II under post-colonial dictatorships in Uganda
- S7. Social mobility patterns of Kampala residents vs. migrant grooms
- S8. Mobility and structural change among sampled Anglican males vs. total Uganda from Bossuroy and Cogneau, 'Social mobility in five African countries'