

THE INFLUENCE OF MISSIONS ON FEMALE POLITICAL  
REPRESENTATION IN AFRICA

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VERY PRELIMINARY AND INCOMPLETE

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# 1 Introduction

## 2 Background

Within the field of economics, there has been a concerted effort to understand the notion of culture, particularly in the form of informal institutions, typically defined as beliefs, values and norms held by individuals across different ethnic and national backgrounds. These cultural differences have led to contrasting outcomes among different cultural groups around the world. This paper focuses on the historical origins of cultural differences in the context of Africa.

In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century, missionary activity spread across the African continent with the primary objective of spreading the word of God. With them they brought European crops, cattle, horses, weapons, and most importantly education.

The location of mission stations was determined by factors including access to clean water, a temperate climate, and access to an external trade route (Nunn, 2010: 147). A higher altitude was also preferred, as it provided protection from disease. The location of missionary activity is important in our analysis as it was the proximity of the local population to these missionary stations which ultimately had the greatest effect on the long-run outcomes of a country's inhabitants.

Recent studies have shown that the historical presence of European missionaries had a long-run effect on economic development today. The advent of colonialism made the benefits of European education clear to the African people (Nunn, 2010: 147), and was used successfully as a tool to entice Africans into the Church. The presence of Christian missionaries is strongly correlated with higher levels of educational attainment, which has been shown to persist for many generations (Grier, 1997; Woodberry and Shah, 2004; Bai and Kung, 2015).

Education was thus a primary mechanism through which conversion could take place, and ultimately lead to higher levels of educational attainment in African countries. Mission stations lead to improved long run education outcomes for the surrounding communities of education returns; however, the outcomes differ by gender.

(Nunn2011gender) finds a positive but insignificant impact of Catholic missionaries on long-run educational attainment. The insignificance of which is largely due to a disproportionately large positive and significant effect on male education, while the effect on female educational attainment

is estimate to be zero. Contrastingly, Protestant missionary activity was found to have a positive and significant effect on educational attainment. This finding is consistent with that of (Gallego). Furthermore, the positive impact of Protestant missionary activity was found to be concentrated solely among females. Interestingly, the author also finds that despite increasing female educational attainment, Protestant missionary activity did affect attitudes towards gender equality in modern-day Africa.

Elected members of government are often disproportionately well educated (Gallego), therefore, education can be an important factor in expanding the pool of women standing for election (Gallego: 230). Furthermore, greater levels of educational attainment is strongly correlated with voter participation, thus female educational attainment leads to higher female voting rates, which ultimately leads to the election of more women into power (Gallego: 230-240). Along with female labour force participation, it has been found that these socioeconomic factors have a positive and significant effect on female political activity across the globe.

Congruent with these findings in the literature, we expect to find a causal link between Christian missionary activity and higher levels of female political representation at the local administrative level. Furthermore, we expect to find that the effects will be larger for Protestant rather than Catholic missionary activity.

## 2.1 Literature Review

Gallego investigates the contribution of Christian missionaries on the current structure of gender inequality in Africa by concentrating on the localized impact of missionary stations in Tanzania, which formerly comprised part of German East Africa. The author analyses the relationship between the educational outcomes of individuals in modern-day Tanzania and the exposure of their ancestors to Christian missionary activities.

The author shows that missionary education propelled the human capital formation of the local population, triggering intergenerational transmission of both knowledge and aspirations for education, which manifested in persistent effects on current outcomes and significant spillovers at both the regional and national level. He further states that the social benefits of education contributed to comparatively better political outcomes, including increased support for democracy and religious liberty, and higher economic growth rates. The author goes on to draw a link between missionary works, education and the accompanying social benefits.

Contrastingly, ? disagrees with the findings of other writers such as Delacroix and Nielsen (2001), who dispute the relationship between economic prosperity and Protestantism. The author rather states that religious and cultural factors are related to behavioural traits that matter for long-term development. The author focuses on the impact of these considerations on gender roles in the precolonial societies.

This study demonstrates that Catholic and Protestant missionaries both contributed to higher levels of education in Africa. However, in Catholic societies, the level of female education and therefore overall socioeconomic status is lower than mens in the same society. It corroborates previous findings on the relevance of intergenerational transfer of colonial legacies through missionaries, in particular with regard to educational outcomes and the persistence of missionary norms.

Gender inequality and female disempowerment within African cultures pre-dated the arrival of missionaries and colonizers. However, Montgomery (2017) refers to the argument that the marginalization of women in Africa is largely rooted in colonial times. Women in these societies played an important role in production and household management prior to the arrival of missionaries. This dynamic was altered by Christian missionaries who had strong convictions about the importance of a patriarchal nuclear family style.

The author finds that education was an enabling factor and source of empowerment in missionary-led societies. The education an individual attained generally reflects socioeconomic standing and can therefore be used to measure gender inequality in the society.

Furthermore, Montgomery (2017) finds that the missionary schooling structure was biased on two levels with regards to gender. First, missionary activities were focused on uplifting indigenous African populations by civilizing local cultures. This Western notion of civilization prescribed strict sets of gender roles. He argues that these structural gender biases led to the gender inequality and the differences in mens and womens socioeconomic status common in African societies today. Second, women received a lower level of education than their male counterparts as certain content was omitted from the female syllabus. Women were required to read and write by the time of baptism, however, the required level of skill and knowledge was generally very low in comparison to men. This was done in order to preserve gender preferences of missionaries as it ensured that women were prepared for a life as devoted Christian housewives. The author found that women comprised only 33 percent of the student body at the time. Another important finding was that the teaching body, consisted primarily of men. It must be noted, however, that this does not hold

for mission stations in other regions in Africa such as Basutoland (now Lesotho) (?).

Montgomery (2017) identifies three different denominational missionary groups in German East Africa; Christian, Protestant and Anglican. The Anglican groups, however, had a significantly lower impact as they had a limited number of stations in the country. The author found that each of these denominations created different legacies of gender inequality, focusing his study on the two former groups. He identified three notable differences between how these two denominational groups operated their respective stations. First, Protestant missionaries were comparatively more hesitant to interfere with the customs and traditions of the indigenous people whereas Catholic missionaries desired to create Christian communities similar to their European communities. Second, contemporary Catholicism did not officially recognize the principle of religious liberty and advocated the use of Latin in worship and scripture reading. In contrast, Protestants emphasized literacy in their curricula to enable people to read the Scriptures in their own language.

Finally, Catholic missionaries neither had wives nor, in most cases, direct interaction with the female student population at missionary schools. In fact, most of the female education at Catholic missionary schools was conducted in cooperation with sister orders. One can observe here how certain gender norms can be developed. As a result, Montgomery (2017) argues that formal colonial education via missionaries and the various denominational activities of these missionaries has been transmitted from generation to generation to this day, causing cultural shifts, manifesting a negative effect on gender equality; at least on the socioeconomic dimension.

Nunn (2011) provides compelling evidence to support the hypothesis that missionary activity in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century had a long-term impact on socioeconomic outcomes in modern-day Africa. The author found a positive effect between the historic presence both Protestant and Catholic missionary activity across several African regions on the educational attainment of persons who were exposed to these missions. Congruent with the findings of Montgomery (2017), the author found that the effect of Protestant missions was far more positively significant and robust in contrast to the effect of Catholic missions. According to Nunn (2011), at the arrival of missionaries Christianity came to be seen as part of a larger order. In the 1940s, 97% of the student population in Ghana and Nigeria were from missionary schools. Similarly in South Africa during this period, there were 5,360 mission-sponsored schools and only 230 state-sponsored schools. Therefore, we can see that the effects of missions were far-reaching and had a significant impact on cultural norms via the education channel.

Nunn (2011) went further and examined the differing effects of Christian missionaries by gender. While the impact of Protestant missions on education was strongest for females, the impact of Catholic missions was strongest for males. He also noted that Protestant missionary activities were rather open to educating minorities in general. He based his reasoning for this pattern on the fact that Protestants believed that both men and women had to be able to read the Bible to go to heaven. It may also be that the Protestant missionaries changed not only how individuals viewed the importance of female education, but also the role of women in society more generally. However, Nunn (2011) does not find substantial evidence of such effect on attitudes about gender equality. Therefore, although the evidence of his study is consistent with Protestant missionary activity affecting long-term female educational attainment, it does not prove nor debunk the possibility of an effect on gender equality. Nunn (2011) agrees with Montgomery (2017) on the basic nature of missionary education. He also found that although women were educated in reading and writing, the greatest emphasis was placed on teaching them practical domestic skills, such as laundry, housework, and cooking, rather than providing them with the highest levels of education. We can see that missions did have an effect on collaborative behaviour, and possibly also created a path dependence in aid absorption capacity in Africa as discussed below.

Missionaries are believed to have brought with them the first micro-development projects to the African continent. ? focused their paper on Christian missions in accordance to this notion. The authors argue that this is an important factor in understanding the localization decisions of aid projects and ultimately their effectiveness. The authors find a strong and positive within-country correlation between the historic location of Christian mission stations in Africa, and the location of development aid projects in the early twenty-first century. This is achieved using data on the historic location of Christian mission stations and the location of World Bank aid in the period 1995-2014. The authors also disaggregate their findings between Catholic and Protestant missions and their long-run effects, and find that both denominations had a positive effect on aid allocation, however, the effect was more pronounced for Catholic missions. Alpino and Olsen (2016) conclude that the historic presence of Christian mission stations increased the capacity of African countries to absorb foreign aid by providing local aid-infrastructure through better local informal institutional quality. Thus, areas exposed to missionary activity were more attractive locations for foreign aid in the early twenty-first century as they were perceived to be more likely to succeed.

## 2.2 Research Methods

Montgomery's (2017) analysis is based on an interestingly new georeferenced dataset. It includes a digitized version of colonial maps showing the tribes and languages from the Ethnographic Atlas and the location of missionary societies originally published by ? and digitized by Nunn (2010). This dataset also includes extensive historical records available in the German colonial archives of German East Africa, and the most recently available DHS-surveys focusing on Years of education and Literacy as the two outcome measures. However, Geographical analyses of long-term effects from historical events always carry two important limitations that may weaken the results obtained; an endogeneity problem and the internal mobility within the measurement period. Regarding the first problem, the author controls for these factors including temperature and altitude, precolonial and colonial population density, and proximity to colonial networks. Montgomery (2017) also controls for colonial state presence and violent incidents between the colonial state and the local population. Montgomery correctly controls for these factors as they were a determining factor in the placement decisions of colonial missionaries.

With regards to the second problem, since internal mobility in the period between the measurement of the independent variables and the outcome variables could have potentially interfered with his results, Montgomery (2017) stated that the level of such mobility was sufficiently low and that the effect of the presence of Christian missionaries in the colonial period should still be measurable at the village level. Although we are given assurance of this, it still remains necessary to note that these results may be slightly diluted and possibly weakened by migration since the colonial period.

In a similar fashion to Montgomery (2017), Nunn (2012) uses the location of mission stations from Roome (1924) combined with the historic locations of ethnic groups from Murdock (1959) to examine the exposure of African ethnic groups to missionary activity. This information is then linked to the reported ethnicities of respondents in the third round of the Afrobarometer surveys. With this data, Nunn (2012) uses OLS estimation techniques to test the relationship between the educational outcomes of survey respondents and the exposure of their ancestors to missionary activity, while controlling for country fixed effects.

Nunn (2012) also tested the hypothesis that Protestant missions may have played an important part in changing the beliefs in society regarding the role of women. He constructed a variable from the Afrobarometer survey which questioned the perceived role of women in society. The first question asked the respondent whether or not they agree with the following two statements: (A) In



our country, women should have equal rights and receive the same treatment as men, (B) Women have always been subject to traditional laws and customs and should remain so. The respondent can choose to agree very strongly with (A), agree strongly with (A), agree strongly with (B), or agree very strongly with (B). The second question asks the respondent their view on the following two statements: (1) Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men, (2) Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women. From these responses, a categorical variable ranging from 1-4, increasing in A and decreasing in (B), was created to capture the respondent's belief that men and women should have equal rights.

The author finds that, although these set of questions seem to be formulated extremely, the estimates for both Catholic and Protestant fail to provide consistent evidence that historical Protestant missionary activity in fact promoted attitudes reflecting gender equality.

Alpino and Olsen (2016) used two main sources of data for their analysis. The information on the location of Christian missions was also derived from Roome (1924) map. Regarding aid, they restricted their attention to World Bank IBRD/IDA projects, with supporting evidence using data on Chinese-sponsored aid. These data were selected due to the availability of a georeferenced dataset on the universe of development projects in the period 1995-2014, and the comprehensive coverage of the disbursements of funds. By looking only at variation within second level administrative levels, the authors effectively ruled out that the relationship that may have been driven by differences in formal subnational institutions. Furthermore, the baseline model excluded desert and densely forested cell areas, and controlled for a rich set of variables at the cell-level that may be confounding factors in the location of both missions and aid.

The authors methodology is comprehensive in controlling for endogeneity issues that may arise within spatial analysis. The unit of observation is obtained from the PRIO-GRID dataset (Tollefsen et al., 2012). The dataset divides the world into 0.5 x 0.5 degree cells, corresponding to roughly 50x50 kilometre areas of the globe (Alpino Olsen, 2016:7). The grid covering the African is then extracted from the dataset. Cells which contain more than 90% barren land or forest, as according to the ISAM-HYDE historical land use dataset, are excluded from the analysis. To control for the possibility of missionary activity influencing settlement patterns, a simple mediation analysis is run on measures of current population and night time lights data. Where cells cover two or more countries, the cells are split according to information obtained from GADM. The location of foreign aid injections is obtained from AidData (2015). This is then overlaid with the cells created prior to this. The location of Christian missionary stations is obtained from Roome (1924) and overlaid

with the aforementioned cells.

Alpino and Olsen (2016) then use a linear probability model to estimate the effect of historical missionary activity on the number of aid projects within several African regions. The authors then found that the historic presence of a Catholic mission within a cell increased the probability of receiving a development project by 22 percentage points, relative to non-missionary cells in the same country. The corresponding number for Protestant missions is 16 percentage points. They also provide evidence that this correlation was not merely due to the generic presence of Europeans during colonial age.

Considering the research methods and data obtained from these three respective papers the literature finds that current gender inequality is linked to the historic effect of Christian missionaries on long-run educational outcomes, gender norms and foreign aid distribution. The baseline information used in all three papers is taken from a map created by Roome (1924). The map provides the exact location of all Protestant and Catholic missions in Africa in 1924. These authors further extended the scope of analysis to incorporate factors that have historically shaped the salience of social structures and gender roles in Africa. Missionary activity in German East Africa particularly, contributed to the proliferation of gender inequalities by injecting a religiously influenced German ideal of gender roles in the indigenous population. Missionaries changed the formerly prevailing conceptualization of the gender-based division of labour, social, and political tasks in Tanzania.

This review critically synthesized the work of Montgomery (2017), Nunn (2012) and Alpino and Olsen (2016) which focused on investigating the possible influence of missions on female political representation in African societies. There is a general consensus that historic missionary activity has had a long-run effect on the attainment of a higher levels of education and that the presence of mission stations increased the capacity of these societies to absorb foreign aid by improving local institutional quality and that the effects of this influence persisted and still remains in play today.

## **3 Empirical Analysis**

### **3.1 Data**

### **3.2 Methodology**

### **3.3 Results**

## **4 Discussion**

## **5 Conclusion**

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