



Durham
University



**The absence/presence of Durham's black history: A
Literature Review of Durham's Colonial legacy**

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Introduction:

This review will examine the literature on Durham University's colonial legacy, focusing particularly on the University's relationship with its affiliated colleges - Fourah Bay College (FBC) in Sierra Leone and Codrington College in Barbados. Durham University was founded by the Church of England in 1832, financed primarily by the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral *. With these strong Anglican foundations, Durham was eminent as a theological institution, prompting its' subsequent affiliations with the missionary Colleges Codrington College in 1875 and FBC in 1876, respectively owned by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) and the Christian Missionary Society (CMS). Amidst rising internal pressures for higher education, the affiliations enabled imperial domination through education under the guise of appeasing the colonial subjects, maintaining British political hegemony. Education was thus utilised as an instrument to evangelize, civilize and control (Ajayi et al., 1996; Falola, 2001; Nwauwa, 1997; Paracka, 2003), with Durham University serving as the interim institution to establish colonial interests. In the case of FBC, this same attempt to control the knowledge supply nonetheless planted the seeds for self-determination amongst the FBC graduate intelligensia, birthing the nationalist and Pan-African movements for liberation and revealing the potential of education to both dominate and liberate. Both institutions can be viewed as 'socio-cultural microcosm[s]' (Paracka, 2003, p.5) through which both colonial control and colonial resistance was effected, thus cannot be analysed separately from the imperial context underpinning their establishment. Similarly, the affiliation itself will be examined in this light, questioning to what effect the Colleges benefitted from such a relationship. Durham's lack of interest in both training staff, financing the Colleges (particularly during periods of financial trouble) and establishing a secular curriculum suited to the native cultures suggests the relationship was both top-down and

distant, carried out to maintain colonial influence rather than educate Africans in their own right. This review will start by analysing Durham University's relationship to slavery and missionary education, before examining the manifestations of colonial policy overseas within Codrington and FBC's operations. Lastly, the nature of Durham's affiliation will be explored.

Durham University's Historical Background:

The history of Durham University is intertwined with the Church of England, an institution which was heavily involved in, and benefitted from the transatlantic slave trade (BBC News, 2006). Slavery was accepted and sanctioned by both the Bible and human law (Glasson in Bush, 2023, p.11), with the Church stressing the morality of slaveholding. Durham University's early benefactors were indeed the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral, whose riches were augmented by the Anglican dioceses' heavy profits from the slave trade (Bush, 2023), with nearly 100 clergymen receiving compensation for slavery plantations from the Slavery Compensation Act (1837) (Draper, 2010).

The Church of England enabled colonial expansionism through the SPG, a missionary society with the self-proclaimed responsibility of 'educating, clothing, civilizing and instructing the poor Natives' (SPG, 1706, p. 5). The SPG also owned its own slave plantation (Codrington College) until 1833, which then became an Anglican Seminary following slavery's abolition. This shift from domination through slavery to domination through control of education signifies the use of missionaries as 'agents to represent the interests of their governments' (Akinwumi, 2008 in Bangura, 2019, p.3), rendering the missionary venture as largely political, rather than solely religious. The Bishops of Durham who were in governance of the University had strong links to the SPG (Mookherjee, 2022), demonstrating how the University's Anglican foundations necessarily implicated it in the imperial systems of

domination instituted in the colonies the 19th century. Being financed by the Church, receiving one-fifth of the income of the Deanery of Durham and the Cathedral Stalls alongside a £1,800 annual donation, the University was financially dependent on the Anglican diocese which governed it (Bush, 2023). The stronghold of the Church on the University continued from its founding in 1832, until the University of Durham Act in 1908, when Anglican governance ceased. Recognising the University's own foundations as an institution controlled by the Church is necessary to analyse the purposes of its affiliation with Codrington and FBC. Education was an essential aspect of missionary expansion, with missionaries acting on behalf of colonial authorities (Matasci, et al., 2020). The affiliation must therefore be understood as a political attempt to assert colonial control over the natives by limiting education to strictly Anglican missionary training, with the University facilitating this goal. The involvement of Durham University in 1860 with the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), which trained black priests for missionary activity reflects the use of education and universities as political tools in the British imperial strategy. It is therefore unsurprising that the affiliations were so tenuous, serving to indoctrinate rather than educate (Paracka, 2003) and therefore benefitting primarily Britain in its imperial quest. The British recognised that controlling education and curtailing 'the production of a highly educated class' (Borsali, 1983, p.115) was essential to preventing a political future of self-governance in the colonies.

Fourah Bay College

The Bishop of Durham, Right Reverend Shute Barrington, was responsible for the establishing of the Christian Institution FBC in Freetown in 1875. As chairman of the CMS, the purpose of the College was for 'promoting Christian knowledge' (CMS, 1902, p.3)

through education, which ‘would enable liberated Africans to develop a better way of life’ (Harding, 1968, p.143). The primary concern of the missionaries was the teaching of literacy in European languages to native populations to enable the preaching of Christianity. By separating students from their cultural backgrounds and overriding local knowledge (Azikiwe, 1977), religious organisations functioned as the arbiters of colonial policy, enabling control over students and the curriculum by ‘denationalising’ them (Faduma 47). The CMS only admitted a few students who were not devout Christians, with Christian theology being a mandatory module, and two FBC students were granted CMS scholarships annually provided they pledge themselves to undertake missionary work upon completion of their studies (Paracka, 2003). Indeed, during the nineteenth century, the British government offered less financial assistance to Sierra Leone than missionary organisations (Simmons, 1968). This financial parsimony was a consequence of British reluctance to spend in the colonies, resulting in the use of missions to maintain colonial influence through the imposition of an Anglican, Western curriculum. This set up the tension between missionary and colonial education that was to characterise Fourah Bay College throughout their affiliation with Durham.

In 1876, FBC was affiliated with Durham University, marking a shift from missionary education to colonial education. This was in response to intensifying calls for a West African University by African reformers such as James Africanus Horton, Rev James Johnson and Edward Blyden (Paracka, 2003). The affiliation was essentially a compromise, offering a degree from a British University, but nonetheless retaining a Western, Anglican curriculum through Durham. The CMS was thus able to respond to internal pressures for a Western-style university while reinforcing FBC’s church-related ties, a political effort by Britain to maintain total control over education. Durham teachers ‘set the papers and marked the scripts’ (Paracka, 2003, p.82), with FBC faculty prevented from examination responsibilities,

and Durham largely set the curriculum. The oversight of FBC by European faculty fundamentally excluded local concerns, creating graduates who were more familiar with British history than their own. Moreover, utilising English and French as the languages of instruction was an essential part of colonial divide and rule strategy (Corby, 1990), creating an urban elite (Wolfe, 1982) defamiliarized from the local context. Nonetheless, through the affiliation, FBC was able to incorporate a growing and more well-qualified teaching staff, opening new departments for an Advanced English Course and Academical Studies (Coleman, 1993).

Indeed, pleas for a Durham University staff member to teach in the Physical Sciences in the 1878 Durham University Journal report led to Samuel Farmer of the Newcastle division setting and marking exam papers of FBC students studying Science under the tutelage of Sierra Leonean doctors (Greene, 1948). FBC also capitalised on the Western prestige of the affiliation, expanding their field of recruitment beyond Sierra Leone into other West African countries such as Nigeria. However, the student population languished, with a drop reported in the Durham University Calendar from fourteen students in 1883 to eight students in 1884 (Nicol, 1960). The CMS's failure to appoint a Sierra Leonean principal who would act on behalf of the local desire for a secular university certainly hurt enrolment, particularly following a year-long stint where FBC was without a principal after Principal Reichardt's death (Paracka, 2003). Despite these troubles relating to calls for secularisation, the appointment of Principal Nevill in 1885 instead involved a reinforcement of the original intention of the founders – 'This college is first of all to be a training place for missionaries' (Paracka, 2003, p.84). This retained the 'narrow curriculum', in line with colonial conditions, which was incompatible with educational notions of autonomy and academic freedom (Mazrui, 1975).

The appointment of William Humphrey as Principal in 1890 serves as a particularly interesting example of the continued suppression of university teaching by the CMS. He decided to restrict educational training simply to the 'Licentiate in Theology' and to those being trained as teachers, being granted 'unlimited power' by the owners to do so (Sierra Leone Weekly News, 1892). In 1892, the students presented a grievance regarding their ability to pursue the Arts course prior to Theology and in response, Humphrey dismissed fifteen of the seventeen students currently enrolled. With such a 'little matter' assuming 'such serious proportions' (Sierra Leone Weekly News, 1892), it seems clear that maintaining FBC's missionary curriculum was valued over ensuring FBC's survival, with any resistance suppressed. This lack of local agency is particularly apparent when considering that the students' grievance centred on the comparison with their affiliated University, Durham, which allowed students to choose their courses accordingly as fee-paying customers, while FBC forced all students to undertake Theology. This contrast demonstrates the top-down enforcement of colonial power that restricted freedom of choice within FBC (Ajayi et al., 1996), forcibly imposing missionary studies over university studies on all graduates. It is therefore unsurprising that the number of university students pursuing the Arts degree dramatically declined under Humphrey, who sought to 'replace them with missionary students' (Paracka, 2003, p.95). Durham's lack of participation and support during Humphrey's leadership underscores the fragile nature of the affiliation, highlighting how its involvement only went so far as exam marking, while its own students were afforded more say. The battles between Church and state over higher education therefore continued to be won by the Church.

Fourah Bay's rocky beginnings continued early into the twentieth century, with Durham playing little to no role in proceedings. Due to lack of funds and students, the economic viability of continuing FBC as a missionary institution began to be questioned by the CMS

(Paracka, 2003). Principal Rowan, unlike his predecessors, advocated for the addition of a separate school of theology and courses to transform the College into a non-denominational university. However, these recommendations were again thwarted by the Anglican Bishop of Sierra Leone in 1905, who expressed his disapproval of FBC administration being turned over to a secular body (Anderson; Baker, 1969). This led to Principal Rowan's resignation in 1906 over differences with the CMS, which valued an evangelistic programme in line with colonial policy over a university programme. Vice Principal Hewitt also resigned in 1908, which prompted the C.M.S to decide to close the College, withdrawing its yearly contributions of approximately 1000 pounds. However, following appeals primarily made by the Right Reverend James Johnson to the Pan-Anglican Conference in 1908 (Foray, 1979), 5000 pounds were raised. The CMS appointed Sierra Leonean principal Charles Lewis for the first time, and decided to maintain support for three years, closing FBC at the end of the period if it proved incapable of supporting itself financially (Sumner, 1964). Within this troubled period, one may question Durham's role in the proceedings. The apparent disinterest in financially contributing to the College apart from the offering of one scholarship a year demonstrates the indifference of a mother institution which did not seek to deepen or support its affiliated College, limiting FBC under its 'dead hand' (Fyfe, 1971, p. 12). Nonetheless, while FBC was essentially abandoned by colonial powers, the opportunity to be 'self-supporting and independent' (Lawson, 1908, p.2) led to the number of degree-seeking students rising from seven to twenty in two years. This positive shift away from Christian teachings, with two thirds of the 1911 financial deficit incurred in educating graduates for secular callings (Durham University Journal, 1911), demonstrates the beginning of FBC's path to independence. control

Undoubtedly, the rise of Pan-Africanism and nationalism can be attributed to early advocates and former students of FBC such as James Horton, Edward Blyden, and later actors such as Peter Olanwuche Esedebe. These thinkers recognised the necessity for established educational institutions to produce knowledge workers (Blyden 1994), enabling self-determination and eventually independence from colonisation. In this way, the affiliation with Durham, while tenuous, can be viewed positively, granting graduates access to a Western education that was internationally recognised. As Hinton (1981) argues, for Africans to resist colonial subjugation, they had to 'learn and understand his [colonial] ways...to fight back' (p.26). While it is beyond the scope of this essay to analyse FBC's contribution to the rise of Pan-African nationalism within its call for secularisation, it is important to recognise that while limiting in some ways, the affiliation did enable FBC graduates to better understand their own subjugation. Education empowered students to act upon notions of freedom, autonomy, and rights, enabling them to collectivise against colonial constraints through the nationalist Pan-African movement celebrating African culture as a shared history. Nonetheless, Durham's clear disinterest in training staff and supporting the College financially reflects the sponsor-client relationship of the affiliation - a manifestation of colonial rule (Paracka, 2003). To understand why FBC was able to be transformed into 'The Athens of West Africa', it is useful to compare the relative failure of Codrington College which did not achieve secularisation, inhibiting its ascent into a prominent institution of higher education for the West Indies. C. Smith's (2003) secularisation model highlights the role of agency in enabling secularisation, showing how the agency of certain actors (such as James A. Horton), who capitalised on political opportunities (the affiliation), helped build the College into the cradle of West African education, aided by culture and ideology. While the affiliation may have aided FBC, with many of the future nationalist leaders of West Africa being FBC graduates (such as Henry Carr, Kojo Botsio and Thomas Leitus

Decker), it was an *opportunity* rather than a key factor in FBC's success. Thus, Durham's colonial legacy in the case of Fourah Bay, while capitalised on by certain actors, nonetheless appears to be one characterised primarily by absence and indifference despite pleas for more support. This is most evident in Canon Dawson-Walker's speech to Durham for the Jubilee and Centenary Celebration, asking if the mother institution will turn 'a deaf or an attentive ear' (Durham University Journal, 1927, p.100) to FBC's troubles. The answer, again, was one of absence, a theme that only intensified in the years before the affiliation was severed.

Codrington College:

While the analysis of Fourah Bay College primarily focused on its formative years, the analysis of Codrington will centre on the areas where the literature is more prevalent – as such, the years prior to the end of the affiliation. As mentioned previously, Codrington College became an Anglican seminary in 1830 under the guidance of the Bishop of Barbados, having previously been owned by the SPG. Similar to FBC, the religious constitution of the College was the largest inhibitor of Codrington's success, however, this appeared to stultify the College more so than Fourah Bay. Perhaps this is due to the lack of individual actors to unite resistance against Anglican rule, in line with Smith's (2003) aforementioned secularisation model, however Codrington's roots as a former slave plantation certainly derailed progress. As Simmons (1968) notes, it was not until the children of the emancipated slaves had developed 'enough to benefit from university education' that Codrington's theological curriculum was recognised to be 'hopelessly inadequate' (p.492) to meet the needs for a West Indian University. The generational length of time it took for educational demands to increase among the native West Indians thus rendered Codrington no longer able to take on this role, instead remaining stuck as a colonial artefact of its time.

During the 19th century, there were two attempts to give the College ‘national character’ (Simmons, 1968, p. 486). The Education Acts of Barbados in 1850 and 1878 both failed to incorporate Codrington College into the educational system of the island (HMSO, 1910). The 1876 debate by the House of Assembly on Education Commission highlighted the responsibility of the state, rather than Anglican missionaries, to provide education – something deemed essential to ensuring ‘a high state of national life’ (The West Indian, 1876). However, both Acts were stultified by Anglican authorities, who deemed university education incompatible with missionary education, a venture that would ‘untheologise’ (Simmons, 1968, p. 486) the College. Nonetheless, while the Acts failed, Codrington did increase the Barbadian presence of Grammar schools through educating students who then went on to teach. In particular, Principal Rawle, a former student, had a notable influence over education within Barbados, setting up the first teacher training scheme in the West Indies in 1848. However, it appears clear that the pushes for change occurred too early, with Codrington never being able to fully expand beyond Barbados and incorporate students from neighbouring islands such as Jamaica.

Durham University became affiliated with Codrington College in 1875. As with Fourah Bay, it set the curriculum, marking exam papers and in turn granting the Durham degree to graduates. While raising the status of Codrington academically, Durham’s strictly Anglican and conservative roots were similarly imposed on the College. This set up the clash between national sentiments desiring state-controlled education, and a lagging institution subject to external and alien academic criteria. Codrington became an institution isolated from its local context, ‘a debilitating effect’ which robbed both graduates and teachers from the ‘critical, self-examining spirit’ so necessary to universities (Simmons, 1968, p.484). It was the colonial insistence to preserve the 18th century archaic goals of the Founder, Christopher

Codrington, that froze any progress for Codrington. As seats of intellectual life, universities can both support the status quo, or foster radical alternatives to transform it. However, the superfluous wish to maintain the purposes of Codrington's original establishment, which were to train ministers - and included the maintenance of around 300 slaves – was incompatible with a modern institution, certainly inhibiting Codrington's ability to spearhead change. The affiliation with Durham University thus strengthened this conservatism, placing colonial interests at the forefront of Codrington's academic activities and overriding local concerns. This rendered 'so fine a building and so favourable an endowment'(Governor of Barbados, 1881) as ultimately dependent on Durham, itself an imperialist tool of suppression, ensuring 'the permanence of a curriculum ill-suited to the islands' (Simmons, 1968, p.493). Indeed, no research or literature was ever produced at Codrington, and as Simmons (1968) notes, there was never a collection of scholars pursuing research freely, liberated from the academic constraints imposed by Durham. Lacking the conditions necessary to create ideas which challenged authority, it seems unsurprising Codrington that. never advanced into a self-supporting University. As this system of educational dependence continued, so did Barbados's political dependence on Britain, demonstrating the correlative relationship between the university and the state. A university forced to satisfy alien conditions necessarily relegates local concerns as secondary, preventing its transformation into 'the intellectual centre of a region' (Irvine Committee Report, 1945). In this way, it appears a lack of individual actors and Durham's suppression of individual agency to compel change stunted Codrington's growth into a West Indies University, in comparison to FBC, whose graduates arguably birthed the important nationalist movements that facilitated its academic progress and ultimate independence.

Indeed, Codrington's growth into an international institution appears to have been stunted before it could become secularised. Durham's role in effecting this emerges as more significant following Durham's 1952 termination of awarding degrees in Codrington as a result of the establishment of a Jamaican secular college affiliated with the University of London (later to become the University of the West Indies). This establishment went hand in hand with greater colonial independence for Jamaica, when universal suffrage was granted in 1944 (Shaw, 2009). Meanwhile, Codrington became exclusively a theological seminary, with missionary education persisting despite external political gains regarding independence . Freedom to choose the curriculum one's nation pursues is a necessary tenet of the democratic principle, thus for education to be meaningful, it must be state-led and available 'to all members of the community' (Barker, 1957, p.209). An educative institution which itself was undemocratic, controlled by an external force, could thus have never progressed in tandem with its' state. Colonial colleges were thus necessarily interconnected with their contextual climate, reflecting political relations of dependence.

Simmons (1972) work analysing the letter correspondences between Durham and Codrington proves particularly useful to understand a weakening relationship in the post-war period. The relationship appears in particular to be one of absence, more so than FBC, which Sir James Duff (Vice-Chancellor of Durham) laments in a letter to Dr Grave (Principal of the University of the West Indies) in 1953. Durham never had 'the intimate knowledge' that it had of FBC. Moreover, Durham would 'quite gladly' cease the granting of Durham degrees once the University College was fully established (Duff in Simmons, 1972, p.57). The eagerness with which Durham sought to break the affiliation demonstrates its redundancy following decolonisation – the relationship no longer served Britain – revealing the political nature inherent to its establishment as a top-down imposition of colonial power. While Sir

James appears to gloss over the colonial roots underpinning the relationship - 'Whatever may have been the justification for affiliating a small missionary college in Barbados in 1875', he nonetheless stresses the 'absurdity' of the affiliation being maintained following the same purpose by which it was established. With 'little or no correspondence with the college', and no 'prospects of Codrington being revived in the way Fourah Bay has been revived' (Duff in Simmons, 1972, p.57), Sir James suggested the severance of all ties. While Durham's motivation may have been purely bureaucratic in seeking to relieve the question of this affiliated institution, it nonetheless reflects British self-serving imperialism. Just as Britain colonised Barbados and then quickly abandoned it when it was no longer useful, so did Durham neglect to uphold its self-proclaimed duties as a mother institution, neither financing nor greatly improving Codrington, and subsequently seeking to remove obligation by transposing it onto the University of Jamaica instead. While Durham certainly had agency in establishing colonial education policy, with Sir James Duff a particularly prominent actor in this field, Durham was also in some respect an imperial pawn. With the University under the control of the Anglican Church when the affiliation was established, its autonomy regarding decisions (such as the forming of a relationship with a colonial College), was also somewhat impeded. It seems both Codrington and Durham were subject to British political demands, which characterised the relationship.

The tenuousness of the relationship is highlighted when in 1954, an announcement appeared in the Times of London delineating the SPG's seizure of Codrington College's management, while Durham had not yet been made aware of the fact (Simmons, 1972). This prompted the Registrar of Durham to draft a letter in December of that year, highlighting the steps towards termination of the affiliation, with reason in part being given to 'lack of communication' and 'academically unsatisfactory' staff (Registrar of Durham in Simmons, 1972, p.59). While Sir James' letter to Professor Burn (member of the Durham Senate) stressed the importance of

severing the relationship, Burn's response is notable for underscoring Durham's failings as the mother institution. He states 'we have not done all that we might...for the College and may be in some sense to blame for its present condition...in its decline, we may appear...to be withdrawing such slight support as we could give ...It might be our duty to retain the present relationship' (Burn in Simmons, 1972, p.60). This acknowledgment of Durham's negligence to provide meaningful support, and its contribution to Codrington's decline depicts the affiliation as indeed harmful for an institution which was only damaged through the relationship - Durham was 'to blame'. While Sir James' response relates the worry over inadequate staffing at Codrington being under Durham's auspices, he appears favourable to helping Codrington - 'the help or sponsorship of Durham University'(Duff in Simmons, 1972, p.61). Nonetheless, what remains clear is that Durham did not fulfil its duty throughout the duration of the affiliation, and the meagre offerings of support were offered too little and too late. As Professor Duguid (1955) outlined (in a letter to Duff), 'Britain had neglected the islands...in matters of finance...sympathetic cooperation, and encouragement' (Duguid in Simmons, 1972, p.71). When the relationship became meaningless to the British political agenda, it was deemed unimportant, and ties were severed, with any duties Durham had to Codrington left unchecked. The relationship can thus more accurately be described as one of domination, utilised as a political tool to ensure British cultural control over Barbados through Durham. Preventing Codrington from flourishing in the direction of its national character, it became dependent on conservative, Western tradition which ultimately catalysed its decline. It is thus unsurprising that academic affiliation, aside from theology, officially ceased in 1965, with Durham failing to resuscitate the College it was responsible for.

Conclusion

This review has sought to understand Durham's colonial legacy particularly in regard to its' affiliated colleges. What has emerged as telling of the affiliations is the relationship between politics and higher education, with the political contexts of Sierra Leone and Barbados often reflecting the condition of the respective affiliation. Durham's role appears to time and time again be one marked by absence, indifference, and passivity. The affiliation with FBC is more paradoxical, with education both being used by Britain to maintain conservative traditions, yet equally being the key to birthing the important nationalist movements that contributed to Sierra Leone's rise as a nation state. While Durham limited the deliverance of a free and localised education in the Colleges through the affiliation, it was also controlled by the Anglican church and subject to its demands. *(add importance of religion to higher education?) In this way, it is religion which functioned as the ultimate arbiter of colonial policy, effecting British political demands through the pretence of evangelical motivations, and controlling the affiliation. Nonetheless, following Durham's own independence from the Church, the Colleges did not receive the same benefits, effectively ignored by their mother institutions and still subject to the same alien demands. While this review has been brief, it has sought to expose the complex relationships of power behind Durham's colonial legacy, and Durham's contribution to the suppression of educational independence in the colonies.

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