

Imperialism Academe and Nationalism

**Britain and University
Education for Africans
1860-1960**

Apollos O. Nwauwa

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Africans 1860–1960

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A. O. Nwauwa

Abbreviations

AC	Academic Council Files, University of London
ACCCAST	Advisory Committee on Colonial Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology
ACEC	Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies
ACNETA	Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa
CD&WA	Colonial Development and Welfare Act
CO	Colonial Office
Cmd.	Command Paper issued by the British Government
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CSO	Colonial Secretary's Office (Territorial)
CUGAC	Colonial University Grants Advisory Committee
EAJ	East Africa Journal
HMSO	His (Her) Majesty's Stationery Office
IUC	Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies
IUP	Ibadan University Press
JAS	Journal of African Studies
JHSN	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria
NAGA	National Archives of Ghana (Accra)

ABBREVIATIONS

NAI	National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan
NCBWA	National Congress of British West Africa
NUT	Nigeria Union of Teachers
NYM	Nigerian Youth Movement
PC	Privy Council
PRO	Public Record Office
SLA	Sierra Leone Archives at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone
SLC	Sierra Leone Collection, Fourah Bay Library
UCGC	University College of the Gold Coast
UCI	University College, Ibadan
UIA	University of Ibadan Archives
ULAP	University of London Archives and Palaeography

Introduction

The British establishment of universities in tropical Africa is a recent phenomenon, first occurring in 1948 soon after the Second World War and just before decolonization. For almost a century – 1860 to 1948 – the British had systematically ignored the demands of educated Africans for the provision of facilities for university education. The demands by James Horton and Edward Blyden for a West African university between 1860 and 1900 were frustrated by missionary opposition strongly supported by British officials in Sierra Leone. Even though their efforts ultimately resulted in the minimal degree work in Theology and Classics at Fourah Bay College, this fell short of what the African élite desired. During the heyday of indirect rule – 1900 to 1940 – efforts by the African-educated élite and ‘nationalists’ to obtain a university were utterly stifled by British officials on the spot. In both periods, the impetus for a university issued almost exclusively from Africans. The Colonial Office remained indifferent while colonial governors and administrators were generally opposed to the idea.

However, between 1940 and 1948 the Colonial Office plunged into action and was ready, even in the face of continued opposition from officials on the spot, to promote efforts towards the establishment of universities in tropical Africa. This time, the initiative came almost entirely from London and not from Africans. Why did the earlier period witness such stiff opposition while the 1940s recorded a major shift in British colonial policy in favour of African universities? Though there are a number of scholarly works devoted to the history and evolution of African universities, which will be discussed below, few have focused on the vitally political nature of the policy of university development in British Africa. This book argues that the university question is central to the understanding and analysis of colonial reform in British Africa in the 1930s and 1940s.

I do not wish to focus merely on the story of the origins of Africa's premier universities. This is a study of the impact of British imperial politics and policies on the foundation of colonial universities.

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Although this work concentrates on the former British West and East African colonies, it is necessary to define its scope further for purposes of clarity. In West Africa, the territorial focus will be on Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and the Gambia; and in East Africa the spotlight will be on Uganda which for so long held the torch of higher education in the region. In essence, this analysis will relate British imperial policy to the emergence of the first university colleges in Ibadan, Nigeria; Legon, Gold Coast; Fourah Bay, Sierra Leone; and Makerere, Uganda. These represent the institutions founded in British colonial Africa under Colonial Office authority. The development of universities in Egypt and the Sudan, though in some ways parallel, was carried through in different circumstances by the Foreign Office and the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, over which the Colonial Office had no control. Developments in South Africa, independent of Colonial Office control after 1911, were little influenced by British colonial parallels, and indeed, after 1948, diverged fundamentally from them with the introduction of apartheid and legal segregation of education there.

It is important to point out that while in theory British officials in both the colonies and London were expected to carry out Colonial Office guidelines on matters of high policy, in practice the onus remained with the officials on the spot as to whether or not to comply with orders from London. This was the case particularly in the pre-1940 era when each of the colonies was supposed to be financially self-supporting. British officials in the colonies could easily flout orders from London using the excuse that they had no resources to pursue instructions. Hence, it should not surprise the reader if sometimes, particularly on issues relating to huge costs such as the university question, the actions and attitudes of colonial administrators contradicted instructions from the Colonial Office. It was not until the arrival of Malcolm MacDonald as the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 (which provided funds for development schemes in the colonies) that the Colonial Office began to assert its claim to control both colonial policy and the means of its implementation.

Literature on the history of tropical Africa normally indicates the flourishing of 'the University of Sankore' at Timbuctu in the Kingdom of Mali by the twelfth century.¹ However, Spencer Trimingham believes that Sankore did not actually exist as a

university in the strict sense but rather was a place where Muslim clerics lived.² In any case, whether it thrived as a university or not, what remains clear is that the Sankore tradition was purely religious in orientation, where Muslim clerics taught Islamic science. As Ashby noted, Sankore's curriculum aimed at transmitting 'truths' which 'rested on authority, and not on observation or enquiry'.³ Thus it was hardly a university in the modern and Western sense.

In sub-Saharan Africa, indigenous education hardly went beyond the level of that conducted by members of the extended family. Nevertheless, the educational training adequately served the needs of society. The aim of the education revolved around character training, instruction in crafts and duties to the community. Girls were specially instructed in the duties of domestic life. In his *African Survey*, Lord Hailey noted that initiation ceremonies and 'regimental training' 'are usually the culminating point' of indigenous education, aimed at fitting the youth to his or her place in traditional life.⁴ But with European contacts and the advent of colonial rule in Africa, Western education began to provide a new direction, and the missionaries provided the initiative. Since the African environment was transformed by foreign, particularly Western influences, the need arose to fit the peoples into these new conditions, and hence Western education took root. Nevertheless, whatever education the British provided at the early stage of contact was aimed at three objectives – converting the Africans to Christianity, making them intelligible to the Europeans, and 'civilizing' their ways of life. Since education served as a good tool for the conversion of Africans to Christianity, missionary societies sought to monopolize it.

However, with the establishment of colonial rule at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the British adoption, and consolidation of the indirect rule system as an ideal administrative mechanism in the 1920s, the direction and purpose of African education changed. Indirect rule depended largely upon African traditional chiefly rulers, chosen by the British for their ascribed status in 'traditional' societies, often though not always illiterate in English. There was no room in that system for educated Africans, often of low 'traditionally' ascribed status, whatever their Western-style 'class' position won through educational attainments. Thus, for the British the question arose not only as to what should constitute the content of education offered and how far and fast the process should go but also what positions the educated African should occupy in the colonial state. Under indirect

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rule, as Anthony Enahoro observed, 'The British didn't want to rush education. They built schools with reluctance'.⁵ Using Nigeria as a case study, Uduaroh Okeke has contended that:

the British rulers did not want to educate Africans for positions which provided jobs for themselves. Many of them knew that if they intensified the education of Nigerians they would hasten the end of occupation. So they rationed education cautiously, hoping that it would be many centuries before the Nigerians would be able to govern themselves. They feared that educated Africans would agitate over many things.⁶

Significantly, Hailey noted that among the many problems of Africa 'there is none that has attracted more discussion, and indeed more controversy, than that of the type of education which should be given to the African'.⁷ While Africans wanted the type of education which would make them equal to their British overlords, the British desired the kind of training which would fit Africans into subordinate positions in the colonial administrative arrangement. Hence, to the British, the type of education provided should be strictly correlated to colonial administrative requirements – in which the perpetual duty of the educated African was 'to assist his imperial masters, not to supplant them'.⁸

Since indirect rule had no place for highly educated Africans, the question of the establishment of universities in Africa naturally faced opposition from British officials. Unless the place of educated Africans under colonial rule was ascertained, the question of education would continue to be determined by political considerations. Hailey also anticipated this problem when he stated that:

what at times has been put forward by administrations as a policy of education has in truth been only the expression of a political determination, or an effort to implement the view held of the place which the African should occupy in the social economy [of the colonial state].⁹

It is therefore my aim to demonstrate how the principle and practice of indirect rule constituted a stumbling block to the British establishment of universities in tropical Africa.

It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that universities emerged in tropical Africa through a well-planned

process laid out by Britain. By this time the British had become convinced that it was far more dangerous for Africans to continue to acquire advanced training overseas than to provide them with university facilities locally. During this period British colonial policy came under attack both in London and overseas. Indirect rule began to be seen as a system which needed modifying in order to bring educated Africans into the mainstream of governance. The social, political and economic conditions in the colonial empire resulting in the West Indian riots had convinced imperial statesmen that reforms were needed if the empire were not to disintegrate. Once the Colonial Office had shown some readiness to go ahead with the university question, the African educated élite quickly seized the initiative to determine the nature of progress. It was in this climate of opinion that the British decided to establish universities in tropical Africa.

The centrality of the role of universities in the development of the social, cultural, economic, and political conditions of a society in the contemporary world can hardly be over-emphasized. To this, a host of scholars agree. Ashby has observed that 'Universities have become absolutely essential to the economy and to the very survival of nations.... Under the patronage of modern governments, they are cultivated as intensive crops, heavily manured and expected to give a high yield to the nourishment of the state.'¹⁰ For J. F. Ade Ajayi, himself the product of overseas university education in Britain and a pioneer historian at the Ibadan University, education constitutes 'a mechanism by which society generates the knowledge necessary for its own survival and sustenance, and transmits this to future generations through processes of instruction to the youth', and the university 'describes the apex of the pyramid where the most fundamental ideas about the society are explored, new knowledge and fresh insights into the old are generated, and the leaders and the élite are trained.'¹¹ Chinweizu agrees. For him, 'Universities serve as finishing schools for those who have to lead and develop the traditions of a society.'¹² Thus to deny any society the necessary facilities for university education is to frustrate its ordered and sustained development. Why then did the British oppose the idea of an African university despite awareness of the important role universities play in the development of a society?

This book will further examine how racism, the nature of British administration, and the place Africans were expected to fill in society

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informed British negative attitudes towards the idea of a university. I will also attempt to show how and why the establishment of universities in Africa became a matter of high policy in the Colonial Office calculations in the 1940s. Many factors influenced this shift in policy: the fear of American influence, and the growth of nationalism in the colonies; the activity of the British academic lobby in favour of colonial universities; the 'anticipatory factor' generated by the West Indian crisis; the Second World War and the reform process initiated by Malcolm MacDonald which created the need for the expansion of the African educated class, and the broadsides on British imperial policy by critics of empire within and outside Britain.

Specific literature on the origins of the various universities in tropical Africa is not entirely lacking. Much work has been done on the University College of Ibadan, Nigeria,¹³ and Margaret Macpherson's study on Makerere University College, Uganda provides some glimpses into the origins of the institution.¹⁴ However, for the Gold Coast University College and Fourah Bay College, there are no existing works of any significance except when treated under a general study on education.¹⁵ Most of these regional works say little about the period before 1948 when the universities were founded and, in addition, their analysis tends to concentrate on the internal workings of the emergent institutions. A. M. Carr-Saunders' *New Universities Overseas*, and I. C. M. Maxwell's *Universities in Partnership* belong to this category since they focus on the activity of the Inter-University Council in the actual foundation of the colonial university colleges.¹⁶ Where some of these works explore the period before 1948, they hardly attempt an explanation of why the idea of an African university was resisted by the British for nearly a century.

Except for Eric Ashby's classic work, *Universities: British, Indian, African*,¹⁷ no one has attempted a unified study of the establishment of universities in tropical Africa. There has been no effort to correlate the emergence of these institutions to the exigency of the British colonial policy framework emanating from London. Despite the fact that Ashby's work is broad, encompassing the evolution of British and Indian universities, it gives a profound account of the history of universities in English-speaking tropical Africa. Viewing the emergent African universities as mere transplantations of the British model, Ashby insists that in a modern state a university 'cannot remain a facsimile of some foreign model'.¹⁸ It was to this question of adaptation that Ashby devoted his earlier work *African Universities*

and *Western Tradition*, published in 1964.¹⁹ Using Ghana and Nigeria as models Ashby illuminated the interaction between higher education and African society, arguing that as Western education changed the patterns of thought all over Africa, the forces arising from African nationalism were also changing the patterns of Western education.

Ashby's *Universities: British, Indian, African* has been an important reference for this present study, not only because it provides a strong historical background but also because it reproduces some important primary sources (Channon's papers on colonial universities, and the correspondence on Fourah Bay between Blyden, the Sierra Leone government and the Colonial Office). Nevertheless, Ashby's work is weak on the political aspects of the university question. It lacks analysis of the important political considerations at the heart of the British policies in Africa between 1860 and 1939 on the one hand and between 1940 and 1948 on the other. Ashby also fails to place either the pre-1940 British negative attitudes to the idea of an African university within the larger imperial spectrum of the exigencies of indirect rule, or the positive action of the 1940s within the ambit of the reform process, which required the creation of a large body of educated Africans. This is not surprising. Since his study was extensive in scope and content, including both British and Indian material and was not entirely devoted to tropical African universities, it was bound to be much in the nature of a survey. Ashby appeared to be aware of this when he noted: 'Our task is unfinished.... We hope that other scholars, particularly in Africa, will continue the work we have begun'.²⁰ This present work is an attempt not only to respond to Ashby's appeal but also to try to suggest a broader and more analytical approach.

Since it is a study of British imperial policy and attitudes, this analysis relies heavily on Colonial Office (CO) materials from the Public Record Office, London (PRO). Furthermore, as the University of London played a dominant role not only in the external degree arrangements in the colonies but also in the actual foundation of colonial universities under the scheme of special relationship, it was necessary to consult the records of that university. Eureka! I discovered a large body of relevant documents preserved at the University's Archives and Palaeography (ULAP) which no scholar before me, including Ashby, seems to have consulted. These documents are valuable evidence of the motives and aspirations of

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the London University's own faculty, who had powerful vested interests as well as idealism and pride in their own institution, and illuminate the role of the university and the Colonial Office in the forging of the scheme of special relationship between the University of London and the new colonial university colleges.

Any study of the origins of universities in British Africa would be incomplete without careful exploration of archives and collections in Africa itself.²¹ These are particularly important for locating the 'voice' of Africans in shaping university development, and for analysis of the crucial way in which African opinion, often reflected and pushed forward by colonial governments, succeeded in West Africa in revising decisions made in London. The use of these local archives was extremely rewarding. In fact, Chapter 6 relies almost entirely on such source materials. Sometimes, Colonial Office documents which could not be found even at the Public Record Office in London were procured from the African archives as well as the special sections of university libraries.

Unfortunately, I was unable to visit Makerere University as a result of the civil war which was raging in Uganda in the later part of 1990. Worse still, the news from the country confirmed that both the Ugandan National Archives and the Makerere Library had been so pillaged that there was little or nothing a researcher could procure from the war-ravaged country to augment the materials from London. In any case, this predicament and the seeming imbalance in the East African sources has been compensated for by the huge body of documents obtained from the PRO combined with other sources. Chapter 3, which deals with the establishment of Makerere as a higher college, draws heavily from the extensive Colonial Office materials from London which no scholar has yet utilized. Indeed, since this book revolves more on the politics of the establishment of African universities correlated to changing British attitudes towards colonial development, the Colonial Office sources must be central to what is, after all, a study of the 'imperialism of decolonization'.

NOTES

1. See Basil Davidson, *Old Africa Rediscovered*, Gollancz, London, 1961, pp. 90-91; Flora Shaw, *A Tropical Dependency* (first published in 1906), reprinted by Frank Cass, London, 1964, pp. 202-208; and Joseph E. Harris, *Africans and Their History*, Mentor Books, New York, Revised Edition, 1987, pp. 60-61.
2. J. Spencer Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, p. 98.

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3. Eric Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966, p. 147.
4. Lord Hailey, *An African Survey*, Oxford University Press, London, 1938, p. 1207.
5. Anthony Enahoro, *Nigerian Daily Times*, 5 March 1963.
6. P. Uduaroh Okeke, 'Background to the Problems of Nigerian Education', in Okechukwu Ikejiani (ed.), *Nigerian Education*, Longman, Ikeja, 1964, p. 4.
7. Hailey, *An African Survey*, p. 1208.
8. Okechukwu Ikejiani, 'Nigerian Universities' in Ikejiani (ed.), *Nigerian Education*, p. 130.
9. Hailey, *An African Survey*, p. 1208.
10. Eric Ashby, *Adapting Universities to a Technological Society*, Jose-Brass, San Francisco, 1974, p. 7.
11. J. F. Ade Ajayi, 'The American Factor in the Development of Higher Education in Africa', *James Smoot Coleman Memorial Papers Series*, African Studies Centre, University of California at Los Angeles, 1988, p. 3.
12. Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of us*, Random House, New York, 1974, p. 322.
13. See Nduka Okafor, *The Development of Universities in Nigeria*, Longman, London, 1971; J. F. Ade Ajayi and Tekena N. Tamuno (eds), *The University of Ibadan 1948-1973*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1973; K. Mellanby, *The Birth of Nigeria's University*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1958; Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Power and Privilege at an African University*, Schenkman Publishing Company, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973; Chukwuemeka Ike, *University Development in Africa: The Nigerian Experience*, Oxford University Press, Ibadan, 1976; A. Babs Fafunwa, *A History of Nigerian Higher Education*, Macmillan, Yaba, 1971; and J. T. Saunders, *University College, Ibadan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1960.
14. Margaret Macpherson, *They Built for the Future: A Chronicle of Makerere University College, 1922-1962*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964. There is also a profound treatment of the Makerere University College history in O. W. Furley and T. Watson, *A History of Education in East Africa*, Nok Publishers, New York, 1978.
15. Refer to H. O. A. McWilliam and M. A. Kwamena-Poh, *The Development of Education in Ghana*, Longman, London, New Edition, 1978; R. J. Mason, *British Education in Africa*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959; and Colin G. Wise, *A History of Education in West Africa*, Longman, London, 1956.
16. A. M. Carr-Saunders, *New Universities Overseas*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1961 and I. C. M. Maxwell, *Universities in Partnership: The Inter-University Council and the Growth of Higher Education in Developing Countries 1946-1970*, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1980.
17. Eric Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, op. cit.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
19. Eric Ashby, *African Universities and Western Tradition*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1964.
20. Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. xiii.
21. I consulted the National Archives of Nigeria at Ibadan (NAI), National Archives of Ghana, Accra (NAGA), and Sierra Leone Archives at Fourah Bay College (SLA). Materials located on the reserve sections of the University of Ibadan Library; Africana Collection, Balme Library of the University of Ghana; and Sierra Leone Collection (SLC) of Fourah Bay College Library, Freetown were also very useful.

1 African Initiatives for a West African University and their Frustration, 1862–90

The ideas which in the twentieth century led to the creation of the African universities were articulated, in their essentials, by Africans between 1865 and 1874. The desire of the emerging African educated class to enter the élite ranks of the bureaucracy and participate in central political institutions and the establishment of European-style 'self-governing' states remained fundamental in both the nineteenth- and twentieth-century concepts of an African university. The late-nineteenth-century ideas never came to fruition, except in the minimal shape of Durham University degrees in theology and classics at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone. This chapter seeks to examine why these earlier ideas of an African university were frustrated and crushed by British colonial officials and missionaries. The causes of this early failure can illuminate the enormous contrast with the situation and policies of the initiatives, feebly initiated in the 1920s but strengthened in the 1930s, which culminated in the successful foundation of universities in British tropical Africa in the 1940s.

African demand for the provision of university facilities, which began in the second half of the nineteenth century, consistently faced formidable opposition from British colonial officials and missionaries, particularly those of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), until the late 1930s. Sometimes Colonial Office officials seemed sympathetic to African aspirations, and sometimes, too, they turned their back entirely against such agitations. The posture of the Office usually depended upon the dispositions of the colonial officials on the spot, and missionary bodies upon whose budgets the execution of projects such as the university scheme depended.

Colonial governments opposed the idea of an African university not only because of the problem of funding but also to secure the positions of British officials against African competition; missionary agencies resisted it because university proponents called for a secular institution under government control. Missionaries cherished their controlling influence over education because it had become their most successful instrument of evangelization. Thus, any interference in education, whether by the government, interest groups, or individuals, constituted an invasion of their sphere of influence. They opposed it fiercely.

In West Africa, the demand for the provision of an indigenous university was initiated by the Creoles of Sierra Leone whose contact with Western civilization had imbued them with a literary consciousness as early as the 1840s.¹ In tropical Africa it was the Creoles who bore the torch of transplanted Western culture in the region, having come into contact with foreign influences during their sojourn overseas as victims of the slave trade. In East and Central Africa, however, the 'liberated Africans' only developed 'freed slave' settlements from the 1870s, hence the development of similar intellectual awareness was delayed until the effective establishment of colonial rule in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Thus it is hardly surprising that the early demands for an indigenous university in Africa emanated from West Africa, and almost entirely from Sierra Leone.

From 1865, when James Africanus Horton first pleaded for the establishment of a West African university, to 1872 when Edward Wilmot Blyden reiterated it, British official hostility, and CMS opposition towards such a demand were quite predictable. For one thing, this was well before the scramble for African territories which began in the 1880s and Britain had hardly established an effective administration anywhere in its tropical African possessions except, perhaps, in Sierra Leone, where British officials had governed since its settlement in 1787. This was also the period when Victorian England was reconsidering the wisdom of setting up permanent administrations, and was contemplating an ultimate withdrawal from Africa. Britain believed it could hold its own under free trade, without territorial acquisition in the emerging legitimate commerce of West Africa. Spending British taxpayers' money in founding a West African university under these circumstances appeared imprudent, despite the Creole arguments that a university would be viable.

The first recorded appeal for a university in tropical Africa was made by Horton in 1865. He was a Creole, born in Freetown, Sierra Leone in 1835. His father was a recaptive of Igbo descent.² Horton graduated from Fourah Bay College in 1855. Fourah Bay Institution was founded by the CMS in 1827, but partly funded by Sierra Leone under Charles Macarthy, for the purpose of training Africans as schoolmasters, catechists and clergymen. From the onset, liberated Africans had been impressed with the role of Western education in the material and mental development of Africans, and had sought such good training for their children.³ It was in the light of this that a school had been founded at Leicester Mountain, Sierra Leone, in 1816. But increasingly the CMS found it difficult to recruit Europeans for its work in Sierra Leone and, two years later, the school was transformed into a seminary 'designed primarily for the training of ministers and catechists'.⁴

Shortly afterwards the school was moved to Regent, Freetown, where it remained in operation until 1823. However, it lay dormant from 1823 until the CMS reopened it at Fourah Bay in 1827.⁵ In 1828 new and larger premises were acquired from the estate of the late Charles Turner for £320 11s 6d.⁶ Henceforth the college, which would play a significant role in the higher education of Africans, took root. From its inception in 1827 the life of Fourah Bay College remained precarious. Ashby has suggested that the chequered history of the college was due to the difficulty of finding suitable staff.⁷ This is true. What this reflected, however, was the problem of adequate funding, which overwhelmed every other consideration.

Horton was one of the brilliant and fortunate three Sierra Leoneans who were selected from Fourah Bay College in 1855 to be trained as medical officers at the University of London King's College at the insistence of the War Office.⁸ It was decided to train some African students to replace British medical officers serving in West Africa, whose mortality and morbidity rates were high. The British had realized that the physical make-up and resilience of Africans in coping with the harsh climate (and particularly malaria), made them useful agents of interior penetration. Thus the British concern for the education of these Africans, as noted by Wyse, reflected no real commitment to higher education, but merely an assertion of self-interest.⁹

Horton completed his studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1859, having left King's College because the institution would not

award an MD after four years of studies.¹⁰ Edinburgh would do so, and since the War Office urgently needed African medical officers, Horton proceeded to Edinburgh after spending three years in London working for an MRCS (Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons). At Edinburgh, he completed the fourth year and was awarded an MD.¹¹ While in Edinburgh, Horton adopted the name 'Africanus' as he began to see himself as an epitome of African achievement. His doctoral thesis was later published as *The Medical Typography of the West African Coast*. Thereafter he returned to Sierra Leone and was appointed as assistant surgeon in the British army stationed in the Gold Coast. While in the Gold Coast, he 'participated in the Ashanti Wars and played a significant, though behind the scenes, role in the Fanti political revival of the period'.¹² Consequently, military duties took him to many parts of West Africa where he familiarized himself with the people, their institutions and their social conditions. As one of the first West Africans to earn a doctor's degree, Horton fully realized the necessity of education if Africans were to make any meaningful advance. He was determined to arouse intellectual consciousness among his people by advocating the provision of university facilities in Africa.

Horton's interest in education began in 1861 when he proposed a local preliminary medical education for British West Africans. Realizing the value of an indigenous institution, he appealed to the War Office for the establishment of a small medical school in Sierra Leone. His scheme for the school was that 'certain young men, and not above the age of twenty, be selected ... [and] be prepared in the preliminaries of Medicine ... for a certain period, from one year and a half to two years' before proceeding to England.¹³ He argued that an African instead of a European should be appointed to oversee the affairs of the proposed institution because 'he will take a far greater interest in performing what will tend to elevate his country'.¹⁴ Indeed, he suggested himself for the job. Horton wanted to put Africans in control of medical services since they were more likely to work in sympathetic harmony with the people than European doctors.

On receipt of Horton's request, the Secretary of State for War transmitted it to the Principal Medical Officer and the Officer Commanding on the Gold Coast for comments on whether the replacement of European medical officers by Africans 'is likely to be successful'. Predictably, British officials presented 'a combined and

warm opposition' as they advised the War Office that Africans preferred European rather than African doctors.¹⁵ Even though Governor Pine of the Gold Coast felt strongly that the medical profession should be cleansed of its 'mischievous prejudice against colour', the War Office remained apathetic.¹⁶ Consequently the Secretary of State, George Lewis, acting through the Under-Secretary, rejected Horton's appeal stating that he 'does not consider it necessary to enter into the scheme'.¹⁷ It would appear that the vested interest of European medical officers ultimately coalesced against Horton's scheme.

Nevertheless, while Horton's effort appears to have been guided by patriotism it also seems to have been influenced by self-interest. Being one of the few 'pure' Africans to secure a medical doctorate and be employed by the War Office, Horton certainly desired to be accorded equal respect with his European counterparts. Having trained in the most prestigious universities in Britain he could not tolerate subordinate positions in the medical services. Thus he craved for a medical school where he could build a reputation as well as self-employment for himself. No doubt the difficulties he experienced in Britain prompted his proposal for a preliminary course before students proceeded to England. For him, it was absurd for African students unacquainted with medical matters to compete with those who generally had obtained preliminary education on some of the subjects before they entered university. Yet his insistence that 'the Master of the establishment' must be an African¹⁸ meant that while Horton was enamoured with European culture he vehemently pushed for Africanization of the medical profession.

Horton seems to have envisaged a private medical college controlled by Africans (with himself as the head), and funded by the British Government. He should have known better. The futility of such a proposal was predictable since the British Parliament was yet to be convinced of the economic value of colonial possessions in Africa. Worse still, the British Government remained convinced that West Africa was the 'white-man's grave', particularly after the disaster of the Niger Expedition of 1841. Forty-eight Europeans who had ascended the Niger River died from malaria. Led by humanitarians such as Fowell Buxton and fully backed by the British Government, the expedition had been intended to 'open up' Africa, to stop the slave trade at source, and to introduce model farms at Lokoja for the promotion of legitimate trade in the African interior. This tragedy

resulted in the withdrawal of all white personnel from the interior.¹⁹ On a different level, it is surprising that Horton would be unaware that his demands struck at the vested interests of European medical officers. By arguing indiscreetly that his project aimed at replacing European officials 'who are opposed to the African race and who would not in any way favour any plan that tend[ed] to better their condition', Horton's proposal was bound to be stillborn.²⁰ He appealed to the War Office over the heads of the local European doctors and, in fact, the War Office might have found his scheme much cheaper in the long run. However, although Horton's appeal for a medical school failed, his educational ideas soon began to grow more ambitious.

In the meantime, Britain was not comfortable with its presence on the west coast of Africa. British involvement in Lagos politics in 1851 and the subsequent annexation in 1861, the ferocious Ashanti-Fanti conflicts which were taking their toll in men and resources, and the high mortality and morbidity rate of British officials had compelled policy-makers in London to reconsider the political and economic prudence of retaining British possessions in West Africa. A withdrawal began to be contemplated. Thus in 1863 when the Ashanti army invaded the coast, demanding that Governor Pine surrender some refugees, Britain advised against a counter-offensive fearing that it might mean the extension of spheres of influence. The Ashanti invasion coupled with other difficulties convinced staunch imperialists that 'energies were better directed to colonies in Australia and New Zealand than to the "white-man's grave" of West Africa'.²¹

Such a withdrawal could have entailed the training of Africans who would have replaced European bureaucrats in the administration of the colonies on behalf of Britain. It is, therefore, not surprising that prior to the establishment of colonial rule, the British Government and officials were more willing to create an educated African middle class which, having been educated in England, would constitute an important link between Britain and Africa should the former choose to withdraw from the political administration of its settlements.²² These Africans were thought to be more resistant to the deadly malaria, and it was felt that they would also 'civilize' their own people more easily. No doubt, the education of Horton and his colleagues was undertaken with the same considerations.

But as quinine became effective as an antidote against malaria, and