



Colonial Education and Women of the Cross River Region of Nigeria, 1900 – 1960: An Appraisal

Patience O. Erim* and David Lishilinimle Imbua**

**Department of History and International Studies
University of Calabar, Nigeria*

Phone: +2348034037846; e-mail: erimpatience@yahoo.com

***Department of History and International Studies
University of Calabar, Nigeria*

Calabar

Phone: +2348038996147; e-mail: imbudadave@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Evidence abounds that women of the Cross River area braved all odds against their acquisition of Western education and, in the process, became agents of change and development. Unfortunately, this important aspect of the history of the area has not been researched and documented by historians. As a result, there is a gap to be filled in this respect, in the historiography of the Cross River region. This is the concern of this paper. The paper reveals that the women of present-day Cross River State contributed to the educational development of their communities in cash and kind. Even of greater importance is that a few of the women joined their male counterparts in nation building, and in rooting out British colonialists. But, prior to the above development, these women had laid a solid foundation on which subsequent generations of educated women such as medical doctors, teachers, pharmacists and politicians, among others, have built. The paper concludes that more attention should be given to the education of women, because they are the foundation of any nation.

Keywords: Administration; colonialism; education; discrimination; development.

INTRODUCTION

Cross River State (CRS) is one of the 36 states that constitute the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It covers an area of about 23,074,425 square kilometres,

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and has a population of about 2.6 million people. Geographically, Cross River State is located within the middle Benue and the lower Cross River Basin. It is bounded on the east by the Republic of Cameroon, on the West by Ebonyi state, on the north by Benue state and on the south by Akwa Ibom state. At the moment, Cross River State comprises 18 local government areas.

The Cross River area looms large in any recounting of the history of Western education in Nigeria. While the majority of communities in Nigeria had to wait for missionaries to bring them western education, the people of the Cross River area, specifically its historically most visible ethnic group, the Efik, were already educated in the true sense of the word before the coming of the missionaries. When Hope Waddell and his team arrived Calabar in 1846, they were surprised to find that King Eyo (of Creek Town) and his son were already literate in English, well versed in reading, writing and arithmetic. Waddell realized that neither the teacher nor the carpenter he brought along with him could match the competence of the royal couple in the three R's. Monday Noah and John Adams have written intensively on the schools that were established by the Efik in the pre-missionary period and this needs not detain us here.¹

However, the pre-missionary schools, like their counterparts in the early missionary era discriminated against women. There is no record that women were on the roll-call of the various schools. In the Cross River area, a woman was seen as a helper in the home, farm and in the training of the girl-child in accordance with what society stipulated. None of these functions was considered to be enhanced by the acquisition of "book knowledge". Okoli Maduewesi notes that:

Nigerian women were seen as passive sexual objects who were both a devoted wife and a mother for whom society has carved out defined roles, manners and acceptable characteristics. In those olden days ...women were not seen or heard... The Nigerian woman was relegated to the background, ignored, dehumanized and generally confirmed to cover status in society. She only featured when allowed and in non-descript activities... This was why when western education came to Nigeria women were shielded from its influence until very late.²

Peter Adeniyi lends credence to the above assertion in the following words:

Education is one of the key areas where women have suffered a great deal of deprivation. In some societies in Nigeria for example, the belief persists that a woman's place is in the kitchen. Even when attempts are made to send a female child to school she is either withdrawn early from school to be given out to marriage or she is stopped from advancing beyond primary or secondary education not because she does not have the ability to go further but because of existing cultural prejudice.³

The above explains why a cursory look at missionary and colonial education in the Cross River area shows an abysmal involvement of women. The main aim, if not the exclusive, concern of Mission schools, as Ayandele points out, was to produce school masters who were to graduate to catechists, deacons and then priests. Since women were not expected to play any of these roles, educating them was considered unnecessary.

Interestingly, even when the gates of schools were closed against them, women of the Cross River area were not adamant to Western education. They contributed huge sums of money and building materials to make the education of their male children worthwhile. Over time, discrimination against women in education could no longer be sustained in the Cross River area. Practical steps were taken to encourage parents to send their daughters to school. Increasingly, the various Christian Missions in Calabar became united in the desire to educate the female child. To this end, the Missions championed the establishment of female educational institutions such as Edgerley Memorial Girls' School, founded by the Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist and Qua Iboe Churches. This opened a floodgate for the education of women in the Cross River area and overtime, such educated women contributed to the development of the area and the nation at large. "Educate a woman and you educate a nation," is a common saying. In other words, women bear and rear the children who would grow to provide the labour force as well as future leadership. This traditional role is very vital in the development of the society and the nation. Unfortunately, this important aspect of women history has not been researched and documented by historians.

The Colonial Education system in the Cross River Area

Throughout the colonial era, the British colonial government never deviated from the belief that imperial needs must determine British priorities in the colonies. This principle guided colonial policies on education. Thus, from the onset, education ranked very low among the colonial government's list of priorities. Whatever consideration it received came largely through the Christian missions. As a result, education in our study area was, to a large extent, in the hands of the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Missions. For instance, in 1929 40 of the established schools in Ogoja Province were controlled by the above named Missions. And in 1951, the number of schools controlled by them had risen to 368.⁴ Elsewhere in Nigeria, the story was not different. This situation prompted Fafunwa to pose the question, "what would have been the nature of Nigeria's education if the Christian missions had not come to Nigeria in 1842 and thereafter?"⁵ And from all indications, both the colonial government and the Missions differed in their approaches towards educating the people. What the colonial administration aspired to accomplish in its sluggish commitment to education was the production of low-level manpower for use in the administration and

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commercial sectors. The missions, on their part, saw education as a means of evangelization and as a way of training clergymen and teachers to uphold the church.⁶ Therefore, neither the colonial government nor the Missions provided education primarily to develop the people. And none of them considered the education of the people above primary school level as a priority.

This explains why both the colonial government and the Missions showed greater interests in elementary education and in a space of 22 years (1929-1951), a total of 408 of these low-level schools were established in one Province alone by two Missions. And from all indications, education was never free in any of the schools. Ojong Tangban puts the school fees that were charged by both government and Mission schools at one shilling five pence, and one shilling, respectively. Thus, only parents who could afford the high school fees sent their children to school.⁷

Education of girls received scant attention from government, as it was regarded as less important than that of the boys. Mba posits that "the emphasis in the education of girls was on character training, domestic science and marriage training".⁸ Data are lacking on the number of women that actually benefited from primary education in our study area during the period. Monday Abasiattai asserts that they were few in number, a situation which he ascribes to high drop-out rates, shortage of funds and qualified teachers, as well as the poverty of many parents, among others.⁹ Their meager numerical strength clearly attested to the neglect of the education of girls by government.

It may not be wrong to assert that the main reason for the neglect of women education in Nigeria was the colonial government unwillingness to employ woman both in the local administration and the Civil Service. The Chief Secretary of Nigeria articulated this in 1923 when he portrayed women as lacking the ability to contribute to governance and development; he was of the view that at the appropriate time, women "could be employed as telephone operators, counter clerks or book binders". After a lapse of two decades, women began to be employed in the Civil Service Mba observes that:

By 1944 there were only seven African women in the clerical and technical services, of whom the highest paid were an Assistant Inspector of Prices (£90 per annum). The others were a Food Control Officer, a social worker, a clerical assistant, and three matrons. By 1954 there were only twenty-three women in the Senior Civil Service. In 1955 women were admitted for the first time to the Police force, after persistent efforts by women's organizations to have women police.¹⁰

Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that any of the above mentioned positions in the Civil Service was occupied by an indigene of our study area. Civil Service employment required the acquisition of Western education. The colonial government's participation in education in the Cross River area,

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was not designed for the intellectual upliftment of the indigenes, neither was it designed to prepare them for higher posts in the Civil Service. As earlier indicated, the low level of education provided by the primary schools, satisfied the general interests and needs of both the colonial government and those of the Missions. Government lack of interest in the educational development of the people of Cross River region is evident in the number of post-primary institutions that existed in the area by 1960. The table below shows the number of these schools by sex of students and proprietors.

Table 1: The present-day Cross River area: Post primary institutions in 1960.

Proprietor	Secondary School	Teachers Colleges	Training	Sex of Students	Year Established
Presbyterian Mission	1) Hope Waddell Training Institute, Calabar	NIL		All boys	1895
	2) Girls' Institute, Creek Town			All girls	1896
	3) Edgerly Memorial School, Calabar			All girls	1898
	4) Duke Town Secondary School, Calabar			Mixed (i.e. co-educational)	1931
Roman Catholic Mission		1) St. Thomas's Teachers' Training College, Ogoja		Mixed (i.e. co-educational)	1937
	1) St. Patrick's College, Ikot Ansa, Calabar.			All boys	1943
	2) Mary Knoll College, Ogoja			All boys	1948
	3) Holy Child Secondary School, Calabar			All girls	
					1954
Professor Eyo Ita	West African People's Institute (WAPI), Calabar		Nil	Mixed (i.e. co-educational)	1943

Source: Monday Abasiattai, "Western Education" 250.

Table 1 above indicates that by 1960, a total of nine post-primary institutions existed in the present-day Cross River Area. Eight of these institutions were established by the Missions, one by a private individual and none by government. However, both government and the Presbyterian Mission ran and maintained the Hope Waddell Training Institution as partners. Evidence has also shown that local contribution of money, labour and materials was

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very significant in the development of educational institutions in our study area. It has been observed that:

...starting from Old Calabar an enduring lesson in educational development in Southern Nigeria has left behind the effect that education is the concern of everybody and therefore demands the co-operative effort of everybody. Furthermore, the lesson was taught firmly that in educational planning and development, no government can go alone. What is needed is partnership or co-operative effort.¹¹

One thing is certain. The above quotation is in line with colonial government's policy of relying essentially on indigenous efforts in the execution of policies that had direct bearing on the development of the people. It therefore, presupposes their educational upliftment could only be achieved through their co-operative efforts. And women in the present-day Cross River State never lacked the ability to contribute to governance and development.

During an oral interview session, Regina Nentui observed that women contributed huge sums of money and assorted building materials towards the building and running of the schools in Calabar, because of the seriousness they attached, and still attach to education.¹² She stressed that Ikom women actively participated in the building and running of schools in their area during the colonial period. A group of Ikom women contributed the sum of £300 in 1951 to enable the Ikom Council repair the roof of an all-girls school.¹² Without doubt, the children who were educated in all the primary and post-primary institutions in our study area, or elsewhere, were born and nurtured by women who, also, assisted in their education and upkeep. Presumably, these children grew up to constitute a formidable labour force, and some became great leaders of Nigeria, as will be shown presently. In effect, the establishment of both primary and post-primary institutions in our study area during this period was achieved with substantial women participation.

Educated women of the Cross River Area, 1900 – 1960

As earlier indicated, a total of nine post-primary institutions existed in the present-day Cross River State by 1960. Three of these institutions were all girls' schools, while three were co-educational. Two of the all girls' schools, namely, Girls' Institute Creek Town (Odukpani) and Edgerly Memorial School, Calabar (Calabar South), grew out of existing primary schools. For the most part, these institutions produced some of the earliest educated women in the state. The late Chief (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo (nee Margaret Sampson Ekpenyong Efa), one of the frontline women political activists in Nigeria, is said to have started her primary school at the Girls' Institute, Creek Town; and in 1931, she passed the standard six examination.¹³ It

should be emphasized, however, that, although the stress then was on the education of boys, some families still encouraged the education of their girls. Attoe and Jaja further assert that Sampson Ekpenyong Efa (father of the late Margaret Ekpo), a pastor and teacher, described by the authors as “a very enlightened man considering the standard of the time,” educated all his children; including the girls (he had six girls and three boys).¹⁴

Professor Eyo Ita’s West African People’s Institute (WAPI) Calabar, complemented the efforts of the Missions. Faced with the problem of obtaining teachers, the Roman Catholic Mission, opened St. Thomas’s Teachers’ Training College, Ogoja and the Holy Child Teachers’ Training College, Ifuho, respectively (Today, Ifuho is in the present-day Akwa Ibom State). Many women in our study area were products of the above named Teacher Training Colleges, either through family sponsorships or by the mission where the individual was considered exceptionally brilliant.

It is pertinent at this juncture to provide brief insights into the life of some of the early beneficiaries of Western education, as well as their roles in the development of our study area during the period under reference. Regrettably, a good number of them have left this world but, their relations obliged useful information. Of note was the late Elder (Mrs.) Jenny Eno Ekum said to have been sponsored by the Mission and, thus, became the first indigene of Usumutong (Abi) to obtain the Teachers’ Grade Two Certificate and, for many years, headed several schools in the area.¹⁵ And in Yakurr area, the late Mrs. Jenny Ekanem Ikpi (nee Jenny Jonah Ekpiken, 1920-1960), was one of the pioneer students of the Women Teachers’ Training College, Umuahia in the present - day Abia State. After obtaining her Teachers’ Grade Two Certificate, Ikpi taught briefly at the Women’s Training College, Illesha, in the present-day Osun State, and later studied Domestic Science in the United Kingdom. She returned to Nigeria to head the Domestic Science Centre, Moore Plantation, Ibadan until her death in 1960. Our informants, Professor Ekanem Braide, former Vice Chancellor, Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH), currently Vice Chancellor, Federal University, Lafia, Nasarawa State, and Dr. Obal Otu, a successful private Medical practitioner, are among the late Ikpi’s children who, in diverse ways have contributed immensely to the development of Cross River State in particular, and Nigeria in general.

Mrs. Clara Isu Essien (Yakurr), another woman educationist, also attended the Women Teachers’ Training College Umuahia (under mission sponsorship). She became the first Grade Two teacher in the whole of Abakaliki Province in the 1950s.¹⁶ Ibiang Ewa disclosed that Essien was so brilliant as a student, that at the end of her schooling, she was offered immediate employment by her sponsors to teach in the College. And in 1952, the late Chief (Mrs.) Ekeng Edem Henshaw (1926-2004), (daughter of the late Hon. Etubom Richard Henshaw, a one time Efik Political Agent) started her educational career also at the Women Teachers’ Training College, Umuahia. A knowledgeable informant, Asi Henshaw asserted that her mother’s family was rich enough to sponsor all the children’s education in

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institutions of learning. Excerpt from the study of Anne Eyo corroborates the above claim in respect of Richard Henshaw (1865-1925) and other Efik Political Agents.¹⁷ Henshaw is said to have started her teaching career at St. Peter's Primary School Ogbete, Enugu, in the present-day Enugu State. And in 1984, she returned to Calabar and headed the Primary School, Mayne Avenue, until her retirement. In Ikom area, Mma Regina Achi Nentui (1930 – date) who attended the Holy Child Teacher Training College, Ifuho, in the 1940s, was among the first four Ikom women to receive Western education.¹⁸ The other women were: Mma Ekuma, Mma Gertrude Njar and the late Mma Marcellina Enimeba Etta. What needs to be stressed is that, at the end of their schooling at the various Teacher Training Colleges, these women, and their counterparts elsewhere, were awarded the Teachers' Grade Two Certificate, which happened to be the highest level of education attained by most people in this region of Nigeria during the period. Other women that opted for secondary education in institutions not controlled by the Missions, often travelled out of the area for the purpose, as will be shown presently.

Most holders of the Teachers' Grade Two Certificate engaged in teaching or other occupations for their benefits, and that of the societies in which they were inserted. Mma Regina Achi Nentui was no exception. After her educational career which was sponsored by the Roman Catholic Mission, Nentui started her teaching career at Roman Catholic Primary School, Ugep (Yakurr). She later returned to Ikom where she taught in a few other schools before she went into politics.

Nentui became the first female Chairman of Ikom Council between 1960 and 1962, having contested and won Council election on the platform of the N.C.N.C. According to Nentui, the Women-Councillors under her Chairmanship included Mma Gertrude Njar and the late Mma Marcellina Enimeba Etta. However, five years later in 1967, Nentui joined the Civil Service for reasons which may not be unconnected with better service conditions. To further develop her skill and knowledge, Nentui decided in 1979, to pursue a certificate programme in Social Work at the University of Benin, which resulted in her elevation to the rank of Social Welfare Officer 1 in the Civil Service. She retired from service in 1992.

Whether as an educationist, politician or civil servant, Nentui was engaged in the development of Cross River State. The same could be said of her counterparts both in Ikom and elsewhere in the Cross River area. They all played significant roles in this regard. This was also true of the children born and nurtured by the women, including those with whom they interacted in diverse ways, or taught, in the course of their service or teaching career. They all grew to constitute a formidable labour force; while some of them are today great leaders of Nigeria. Mr. Kenneth Efa of the Central Bank of Nigeria is Nentui's first son; Senator Victor Ndoma-Egba, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria and one of the frontline politicians in Nigeria, is Nentui's second son; Mr. Roy Ndoma-Egba, Special Adviser on International Donor Support in Cross River State, is Nentui's third son. An excerpt from *A Memorial*

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Tribute (1996) to the late Marcellina Enimeba Etta (1926-1996) is also revealing. The *Tribute* describes her as:

...one of the few educated women of her time and possessed great foresight and business acumen. She was hard-working and affable-traits exhibited in all her varied occupations as housewife, teacher, local community leader and politician, business woman and philanthropist.¹⁹

In effect, the late Etta's early exposure to Western education gave her and her contemporaries, the opportunity to contribute their share to the development of Cross River area during their life time. Barrister Rose Atsu, a Director General in the Cross River State Rural Electrification Agency, is one of Etta's children.

The same could be said of their counterparts in Bendege Ekiem (Etung). The early beneficiaries of Western education in the area include: Mma Sarah Ndifon, Mma Ara Ausaji Ayuk and Mma Orita Ogar, among others. Mma Ara Ausaji Ayuk knew the value of Western education quite early in her life. According to our source, she successfully championed the promotion of Adult Education and Literacy Programmes in Bendege Ekiem in 1954.²⁰ In their various roles, both Mma Sarah Ndifon and Mma Orita Ogar sought to promote both intra and inter-group relations within and outside their immediate community. In her chiefly capacity (1958-1963), Mma Sara Ndifon assisted in settling disputes among people in the area. Her kinswoman, Mma Orita Ogar, in 1958 assisted the clan heads to avert a possible war between Bendege Ekiem and Akparabong.²¹ In effect these women promoted harmonious relationships and social well-being, which were essential for the socio-political and economic development of their community.

Indeed, the expansion of women education in the Cross River area has been attributed to the Roman Catholic Mission's Society of the Holy Child Jesus that founded these institutions.²² He further observes that the sound academic and moral standards for which the Holy Child institutions were generally reputed, made the colonial authorities to be favourably disposed to the mission. We are also aware that the education of some of the women in the various Teacher Training Colleges, both within and outside the Cross River area, was sponsored by the Missions. However, evidence has also shown that some women, who received their secondary education from institutions not controlled by the Missions, achieved that objective through family sponsorship. Two indigenes of our study area who were educated at Queens College Lagos (established in 1927), will be considered here.

Lady Dr. Ekpo Essien Offiong (nee Ekpo Edet Ekpo Basse, 1929 – date), comes readily to mind. Offiong passed the Senior Cambridge Examination in 1948, and proceeded to the University of Ibadan (established in that year) and, thereby became one of the pioneer students (5 female and 100 male) of that institution. Mba puts the number of female students at the

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University of Ibadan at 4. Offiong later opted for Pharmacy at the Yaba School of Pharmacy, and qualified as a Pharmacist in 1951.²³ Ten years later in 1961 she qualified as a Medical Doctor from the University of Birmingham and, thereby, became the first female medical doctor in our study area. Dr. Offiong later specialized in Paediatrics and thereafter, returned to Nigeria where she made her mark in the medical profession. She worked briefly at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital; and later as Consultant Paediatrician with the Armed Forces Medical Services for 22 years, before her retirement in 1989. She subsequently worked at the General Hospital Calabar on contract for 16 years (1993-2009) before she finally retired from medical practice.²⁴

It is important to stress that Dr. Offiong's track record in Medical practice in Lagos and Calabar provided a great deal of incentive to subsequent generations of female medical doctors, beside contributing to the expansion of health facilities in these areas. It is a well known fact that, like in education, health matters weighed low on the colonial government's list of priorities in the Cross River area. The result was the shortage of indigenous medical personnel. In effect, no indigenous female Medical Doctor was produced in our study area, either by the colonial government or by the Missions during the period under reference.

The late Mrs. Ekanem Bassey Ikpeme (nee Ekanem Ekpenyong Ana, 1919 – 2008), was another early beneficiary of Western education in our study area. And like Dr. Offiong, Ikpeme also received her secondary education at Queens College, Lagos. Thereafter, she proceeded to read Pharmacy at the Yaba School of Pharmacy and qualified on 2nd July, 1940, to become the first female Pharmacist in West Africa. An informant revealed that Ikpeme worked in many Hospitals in Nigeria namely: Lagos, Kaduna, Forcados, Enugu and Calabar. Dr. Kofi Ikpeme, a renowned Medical practitioner in Cross River State is the late Ikpeme's son; Dr. Iwo Ogisi, an Ophthalmologist, is her only daughter. The late Ikpeme is said to have worked briefly at St. Margaret's Hospital Calabar, (established in 1897), as the Chief Pharmacist before her retirement in 1967.

Indeed, the late Ikpeme contributed to the growth of health services in Cross River State. Of note was her Pharmacy located at No. 30, Eyo Edem Street Calabar, which saw to the health and employment needs of many residents of Calabar South. Furthermore, the late Ikpeme's children, Kofi and Iwo, have continued from where their mother stopped, by rendering medical services to humanity. Again, Ikpeme's track record in Pharmacy, both within and outside Cross River State, encouraged many indigenes to go into that profession. The following are only a sample of female pharmacists in the area: Professor Mbang Oyewo, Dr. Dorothy Oqua, Henrietta Olukoya, Grace Edet, Mimi Ijele Obongha, Irene Chuku, Patricia Odo, Wendy Peters and Hannah Eka, among others.²⁵

In retrospect, the numerical strength of the above named female Pharmacists far surpasses the colonial tradition. It was a period when one had to contend with a government that was apathetic to women education and

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employment; a government that lacked commitment to the expansion of health facilities. Ogisi disclosed that her mother's education at all levels was funded by the family, for the simple reason that they wanted their daughter to be educated. This is understandable when it is realized that education was the only means by which one could get into the colonial service. And because of government resistance to the employment of women, a high educational attainment by women was a necessity. This is evident in a government circular A/16/1951 to that effect that:

Only in exceptional circumstances should a woman be considered for appointment to senior grade posts in scales F and G. The exceptions were in the cases of well-qualified women which were unlikely to involve the control of staff or labour not of their own sex.²⁶

Considering the living standard of the period, it is not unlikely that families that were committed to ensuring high educational attainment for their daughters would need to deny themselves of some basic necessities of life. Little wonder that only one indigenous female Pharmacist was produced in this region of Nigeria during the period covered by this study. Today, the number has increased and from available evidence, most of them are involved in diverse ways, in the provision of health services in Cross River State and beyond.

Indeed, the early beneficiaries of Western education in the present-day Cross River State contributed to the development of both their immediate community and the country at large, out of proportion to their meager numerical strength. For instance, the late Chief Margaret Ekpo who later obtained a Diploma Certificate in Domestic Economy from the Rathman School of Domestic Economy, Dublin (1946-1948), was one of the elites in the vanguard of the constitutional movements that won Nigeria her political independence from the British in 1960.²⁷ The late Ekpo is also said to have mapped out strategies for better economic development of Eastern Nigeria, during her tenure as a member of the Eastern House of Assembly. To this end, Ekpo is said to have articulated the policy of self-reliance which encouraged the building of local industries, and discouraged the importation of those goods that could be manufactured locally. She established the Windsor Sewing and Domestic Science Institute in Aba, which attracted different categories of women to study sewing and domestic science. The institute must have been a source of comfortable income.

Eyo Ndem provides further insights into the developmental roles of some other women in our study area. Those identified by him include Ekpo Young (Councillor in the 1950s and from 1961, member of Eastern House of Assembly); Abo Bassey Eyo Ndem and Hannah Otudor (Councilors in the 1950s); Nkoyo Ironbar (a political activist, an educationist and proprietor of Ironbar Memorial School, Calabar).²⁸ Similarly, Winifred Akoda, an Efik scholar, refers to one Nkoyo Isikalu (nee Ekpenyong) as "the first Efik

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Barrister". Nkoyo Isikalu describes another Efik woman, Eme E. Ekpenyong (nee Eme Etim Basse) as a journalist of repute, and the first media woman in Calabar. Eme Ekpenyong is said to have maintained a column called "Eve Corner" in the Calabar-based newspaper, *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, from 1935-1936. Her weekly contributions on matters of interest to womenfolk, not only entertained but also, kept the Nigerian woman abreast of national and international developments.²⁹

It deserves to be stressed that through the Western education provided by the Christian missionaries and, to a lesser extent, by the colonial government, as well as the accompanying job opportunities, these Nigerian women acquired new economic power and social status. They were, as a result of this, in a position to contribute to the development of their communities, and the Cross River area during their days.

CONCLUSION

In this discourse, we argued that as a carry-over from the traditional environment, missionary and colonial agents discriminated against women in educational opportunities. Rather than bemoaning their predicament, women of the Cross River area braved all odds and were able to make significant contribution to the development of their various communities. Apart from making financial and material donations toward the improvement of the learning environment, women attended various schools that were established both within and outside the area, and they excelled in their studies. This enhanced their participation in the development process.

Our analysis of the role played by the educated women of the Cross River area indicates that if properly groomed and educated, women will be a great asset in the development of their communities. Education is recognized world wide as the fulcrum around which the development of any polity revolves. The historic role played by the educated women of the Cross River area as demonstrated in this paper, should encourage all stakeholders to devote greater attention and resources to women education.

END NOTES

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14. Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo*, 10-12.
15. Patience Anani, Oral Interview held at Abi in Cross River State of Nigeria. Anani, who is a secondary school teacher is 52 years of age. The interview was conducted on 16th February, 2009.
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17. Anne Eyo, "Efik Political Agents of Old Calabar, 1891-1924" in *Old Calabar Revisited*, ed. S. O. Jaja et al (Enugu: Harris Publishers, 1990), 47.
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21. Ajijie, Oral Interview.
22. Abasiattai, "Western Education," 251-252.

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23. Mba, *Nigerian Women*, 66.
24. Ekpo Offiong, Oral interview conducted at Calabar on September 1, 2011. Aged 82, Offiong is a retired Medical Practitioner.
25. Paul Agbulu, Oral Interview held at Calabar on September 8, 2011. Agbulu is the Chairman, Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria, Cross River State Chapter.
25. Mba, "Nigerian Women," 65.
27. Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo*, 1-17.
28. Eyo Ndem, "Women in Constitutional and Political Development," in *Women in Development: Cross River Experience*, ed. S. O. Jaja et al (Calabar: Media Women Printers, 1988), 33 – 42.
29. Nkoyo Isikalu, "The Revolt and Civil Liberties of Women," in *Women in Development.*, 67.

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