

Ekpo, Margaret

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Summary and Keywords

Margaret Ekpo was a woman leader, a pioneer parliamentarian and a human rights activist who contributed immensely to the political development of Nigeria during the colonial and pre-Civil War eras. She was actively involved in the struggle for Nigerian independence, and agitations for women's inclusion in policies and programs of government. A leading member of National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), which became the National Council for Nigerian Citizens in 1960, Margaret rose to become a member of National Executive Council (NEC) of the party as well as the Vice President of the NCNC Women Association. In 1954, she was appointed a Chief with a seat in the Eastern House of Chiefs, breaking gender barrier that had hitherto made the space a male preserve. Margaret was a patriotic Nigerian. As part of her contributions to the constitutional development of Nigeria, Ekpo attended many constitutional conferences in Lagos and London as an adviser to the NCNC. She deployed different strategies to build political consciousness among women in Eastern Region of Nigeria. Her concern on universal suffrage led her to speak unequivocally against women exclusion in political process in the Northern Region of Nigeria. Margaret was an industrialist. She founded a sewing institute named "Windsor Domestic Science Institute" where she trained women in bookkeeping, dressmaking, and home economics among other activities. She believed that women must not be idle but work to earn income to assist their husbands. Margaret founded Aba Market Women Association, which she also used as a platform to educate women on their rights. She was rights activist who utilized her position as a parliamentarian to agitate for the political, economic, educational, and cultural emancipation of her people. For instance, she fought for the welfare of workers and their fundamental human rights. She demanded gender equity in the appointment of people to the Census Board, employment in the police force, and called for more girls to be offered scholarships. Margaret mobilized women against the British colonial administrators following the killing of coal miners at Iva Valley, Enugu, known as "Enugu Colliery Massacre" in 1949, and the murder of Onyia, a wardress in Enugu prison killed in 1954 for her refusal of sexual advances of a warder. She wanted government to coordinate the processes through which Nigerian students abroad access scholarships. Margaret believed in the indivisibility of Nigeria and suffered for her conviction during the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War (1966-1970). For her services to humanity, Ekpo received several awards and honors. An airport, Margaret Ekpo Airport Calabar, was named after her in her life time. She was awarded National Officer

of the Order of Niger (NOON) and Commander of the Order of Federal Republic (OFR). Ekpo was a member of the Board of Trustees of Women's Research and Documentation Centre (WORDOC), Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. Chief Margaret Ekpo died on September, 21, 2006 at the age of ninety-two.

Keywords: Margaret Ekpo, pioneer woman politician, Nigerian colonial history, women emancipation in Nigeria, NCNC, Aba Market Women Association

Introduction

Margaret Ekpo was a pioneer and prominent Nigerian woman leader, a parliamentarian who played an active role in Nigeria political landscape during the colonial and pre-civil war eras. She rose to political prominence during colonial-era Nigeria, and became active in the agitation for the inclusion of women's interests in government policies and programs in colonial Nigeria and during the nation first republic. She was an active member of National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), which in 1960 became the National Council for Nigeria Citizens, where she rose to become a member of the National Executive Committee (NEC) in 1950, as well as Vice President of the NCNC Women Association. In 1954 she was appointed a chief with a seat in the Eastern House of Chiefs, thereby breaking down gender barriers that had hitherto existed. She contributed immensely to the constitutional and political development of Nigeria. She participated in the constitutional conferences in Lagos and London as an adviser to the NCNC. She developed different strategies to build political consciousness among women in Eastern Region of Nigeria. She was also concerned about what happened to women in the other parts of the country, particularly with reference to universal suffrage. Besides women's interests, the welfare of workers in general drew her attention as a human rights activist. She remains an iconic female figure of 20th-Century Nigeria in the history of women political participation in colonial Nigeria. As a rights activist, she maintained that more women needed to be appointed to the Census Board, employed in the Nigerian police force, and that more scholarships needed to be offered to girls. She also cared about the welfare of Nigerian students overseas and wanted the government of the day to coordinate the processes through which students access scholarships.

Margaret started her political career in Aba, southeast Nigeria, where she mobilized women against the dominant patriarchal system and developed strategies that enabled her to navigate the culture of the time, which viewed participation in partisan politics in modern Nigeria as men's preserve. She therefore fought against all forms of discrimination against women. As a parliamentarian, she was a persuasive debater who raised issues that affected the lives of the common people and rejected all forms of oppression and social exclusion. In 1954, she spearheaded the call for the investigation of a warder who killed a wardress, Onyia, at Enugu prison because she rebuffed his sexual advances. When twenty-one miners were shot dead at Iva Valley, Enugu, an event known as the Enugu Colliery Massacre, in 1949, by British colonial soldiers, Margaret mobilized

women and led a protest against the British colonial administrators. This led to the setting up of a panel of enquiry to investigate the matter.

Margaret founded the Aba Market Women Association, which she used to mobilize women during the colonial era in Nigeria. The Aba Market Women Association later became the women wing of NCNC and thus the first women's political association in Nigeria. Margaret campaigned for the adoption of universal adult suffrage in Nigeria in order for women to be able to vote and be elected to political positions in the country. She later became the first female elected parliamentarian in Nigeria. For her services to Nigeria, she received several awards and honors. She was honored with the national awards of Officer of the Order of Niger (OON) and Commander of the Order of Federal Republic (CFR).¹ The main hall of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, bears her name.² She became the first female to have a national airport named after her, that is, the Margret Ekpo Airport in Calabar. A foundation has been established in her name to pursue the goal of improving the condition of Nigerian women. She was a member of the board of trustees of the Women Research and Documentation Centre (WORDOC), Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, a center founded in 1985 with Bolanle Awe as the founding Chairperson. She remains an iconic female figure in Nigeria, one who contributed to the development of the country, especially in areas that facilitated women political consciousness and their mobilization for national development. Margaret left behind legacies of public probity, women participation in politics, and unity in diversity in a country characterized by ethnic cleavages and nepotism. Margaret died on Thursday, September 21, 2006, at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, at the age of ninety-two.

Margaret Ekpo Early Childhood and Educational Experience

Margaret Ekpo was born on July 27, 1914, at Adiabo Okurikang in Creek Town, one of the Efik communities of the present-day Cross River State of southern Nigeria. This was also the year that the southern and northern protectorates of Nigeria were amalgamated. As she was born on a Sunday, she was named Bassey, meaning "Abasi's day" or "God's day." As an unmarried woman, she was known as Margaret Sampson Ekpeyong Efa. Creek Town was an important town in the then Calabar District in the 19th century, with a population of about 8000 people, making it both administratively and politically important among the towns in the district.³ Creek Town contributed to the growth of Efik history, customs, and traditions in precolonial times. During the 19th century, when missionarization of the region was taking place, Creek Town was one of the earliest communities to receive missionaries. Presbyterian missionaries were the first to land in Calabar River area. As in other parts of Africa, early missionaries established schools for the acquisition of Western education, to promote literacy, and to improve the welfare of the people. For instance, Creek Town Training Institute was established in the town, the first of such schools established for the training of girls in eastern Nigeria during the period. Creek Town Institute offered primary, secondary, and post-secondary education, and students

received training in both technical and vocational education. As education is a major instrument of social transformation, both Creek Town and its people benefited from the social change taking place. This social environment contributed to exposing the people of the area to Western education earlier than most communities in the district. Margaret benefited from this educational development and social transformation.

Margaret was raised by parents of an inter-ethnic marriage. Her father, Okoroafor Obiasulor, hailed from Agulu-Uzo Igbo in the present-day Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. Her father, a palm produce merchant, migrated to Adiabo Okurikang in the Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State. Margaret's father became friend with Ekpeyong Efa, a native of Creek Town. Ekpeyong nicknamed Margaret's father "Sampson" as a result of the prowess he displayed in local wrestling contests. Sampson later attended Hope Waddell Training Institute while living with Ekpeyong's family. He then became a pastor for the Presbyterian mission and also took up teaching as a profession. With the passage of time Sampson adopted Ekpeyong Efa as his surname and became Sampson Ekpeyong Efa. He later married Inyang Eyo Aniemewue from the royal family of King Eyo Honesty II of Creek Town. When her husband moved to the Apostolic Church, she joined him and later became a deaconess. Margaret was the fifth child of a family of nine children. Her father was a strict disciplinarian, which contributed to the formation of his children's personalities. Margaret attended Girls Institute, Creek Town, for her primary education. She then moved to Hope Waddell Institute where she did her Standard Six examination. She passed her Standard Six examination in 1931. This was a great feat at the time for anyone, and for a woman to have achieved this was even more remarkable. She was also good at athletics, participating in such sports activities as high jump, the 100-meter race, and long jump, among others. Margaret's father died in 1934 and this had an adverse effect on her desire to further her education. She therefore, temporarily, put her education on hold, and took up teaching.

Teaching Career and Married Life

At the completion of her Standard Six education, Margaret took up a teaching career in 1932, as that was the only profession available to women. She had intended to further her education, but due to the death of her father in 1934 she lacked the funds to continue with higher education. Margaret therefore continued teaching longer than she would have wanted. She was a hardworking teacher who brought the discipline she learned from her father to bear on her work, the discipline that equally shaped her life as an individual. She was transferred several times and therefore taught in many schools, including Creek Town, Holy Trinity School, Calabar; St. Michael's School, Aba; A Man's Great Aim School, Aba; and St. George School, Aba.

While teaching in St. George School, Aba, she married Dr. John Udo Ekpo, an Ibibio doctor from the present-day Akwa Ibom State, whom she met during a ballroom dance at the African Club, Aba, in 1938. Previously she had broken off a relationship with Vincent Okoro, a clerk and Igbo man whom she met while traveling from Port Harcourt to Aba. At that

time, inter-ethnic marriages were not common in Nigeria. There were therefore oppositions to the marriage from parents on both sides. Despite the opposition, Margaret and John were married, as they were deeply in love.

Dr. Ekpo later resigned from the Medical Hospital in Aba in response to discrimination against indigenous staff by the Europeans in the colonial administration. Doctors trained in Nigeria, for instance, were discriminated against and denied promotions and paid lower wages than European doctors or those with overseas training. To enjoy certain rights they needed to train overseas. Dr. Ekpo was trained in the Yaba Medical School, Lagos, Nigeria. After his resignation, he set up a medical clinic called the Windsor Clinic. The name Windsor was symbolic to both Margaret and her husband, as it referenced the Duke of Windsor, who relinquished the throne to marry someone of a lower social status.⁴ Margaret resigned from her teaching career and set up a sewing institute in Aba called “Windsor Sewing Institute”, where she trained young women in sewing, knitting, book-keeping and homemaking. Her husband was a hardworking and devoted husband who gave her the needed support to pursue her heart’s desire, both in business and in politics. Margaret and John had two sons, Edward John Udo Ekpo and Winston Udo Ekpo, who later became a journalist and military man respectively. As a retired army general, Winston became a businessman.

Dr. Ekpo suffered a stroke in 1946 and was flown abroad for treatment. This was a traumatic experience for Ekpo’s family. It was difficult to find the funds to pay the hospital bills abroad. The family sold their landed property in Aba in order to fund his medical bills in Dublin, Ireland. While in Dublin, Margaret enrolled in the Rathmine School of Domestic Economy between 1946 and 1948 and obtained a diploma certificate in Domestic Economy, a clear demonstration of her ingenuity and foresight. While in Ireland, Margaret observed the lives of European women. This gave her insights into the daily lives of women in Europe contrary, to what is observed of European women in Africa. On her return to Nigeria, she wrote a book titled *European Women as I See Them*. According to Margaret, from what she observed of European women while in Europe, they were much like women in Nigeria—doing house chores like women in other societies. She also noted that, as in other societies, some were rich while others were not so comfortable. She saw contradictions in the way European women conducted themselves in Europe and the way they behaved in Nigeria. To her, Nigerian women did not need to feel inferior to European women. In *European Women as I See Them*, she intended, among other things, to “re-awaken Nigerian women from their slumber, to expose to them a lot of things about European women and help to liberate Nigerian women from the clutches of colonial mental slavery and lethargy.”⁵ Her contributions to Nigeria development in diverse areas probably would not have been possible without her husband’s support, who never shared the opinion that women’s position is restricted to the kitchen, as was commonly believed at the time. In 1974, Margaret lost her husband.

Chief Margaret Ekpo: A Politician and a Nationalist

The precolonial southeastern region of Nigeria where Margaret spent part of her life was a society with a “dual-sex” political system, where gender was taken into consideration in the management of the affairs of the society. Among the Igbo west of the River Niger, for instance, the *Omu* (a woman), with her cabinet members, was in charge of women affairs and also regarded as the mother of the community, while the *obi* (a man) was the leader of the community. Among the Igbo east of the River Niger, the *umuada* institution (association of lineage daughters) and the *inyom di* (association of wives) greatly impacted on women status in the society, particularly in conflict resolution.⁶ These two women associations also existed among the Igbo west of the River Niger. Women power bases and structures were, however, cemented and their invisibility was perpetuated following colonialism. Within the same period male chiefs were given recognition and appointed as Warrant Chiefs to assist the colonialists in native administration.⁷ Indeed, in precolonial Igbo society, “all adult men and women had access to political participation through separate political institutions.”⁸ And, as C. K. Green rightly observed, women in Igbo society could hold titles.⁹ Margaret’s dual ethnic heritage impacted on her life and personality, integrating her into the two ethnic groups of Igbo and Ibibio. During her childhood, both the Igboland and Efik communities were regarded as part of eastern Nigeria. Women in precolonial Ibibio society participated in the affairs of their society, including during periods of conflict. Talbot reported that among the Ibibio, of which Efik is a sub-group, in wartime “strong women on both sides act as scouts ... They know that they will not be killed, so they go before the main body fearlessly spying upon the enemy.”¹⁰ These two cultural contexts contributed to molding a fearless woman who confronted the injustice perpetuated by the despotic colonial administration, as well as the emerging Victorian notion of the place of women in society that was being propagated through Western education and missionarization. Ifi Amadiume has argued that the dual-sex political system of precolonial Igbo society is mediated by the existing gender ideology in the cultural systems of the Igbo in general, and the Nnobi community where her study was based, in particular. She contended that in Igbo culture, gender was separated from biological sex, unlike in Western social thought. In Igbo culture, daughters could become sons, and consequently males. Again, daughters and women in general could be husbands to their wives.¹¹

The 1929 Aba Women’s War, also known as the Igbo Women’s War, came in the wake of the African people’s resistance to colonial administration, which was widespread during the colonial period. The war, documented in British reports as a “riot,” was described as “historic” and “dramatic” by Eyo B. E. Ndem. It started in Ibibioland and “spread into other contiguous geographical areas.”¹² For young people growing up at the time, it would be impossible not to have been affected by the growing political consciousness and the possible role women could play in the dawn of the new reality engendered by colonial encounter. Margaret was fifteen years old at the time of the Aba Women’s War of 1929.¹³ The war was marked by a series of demonstrations, protests, and riots involving tens of

thousands of Igbo- and Ibibio-speaking women in Abak, Opobo, Aba, and other regions. At the end of the uprising, more than fifty unarmed women had been killed by British troops, and approximately fifty wounded. The war marked a turning point in African people's resistance to the despotic rule of the British administration of the colonies. In the regions of West Africa, the Aba Women's War left an indelible impression on all who witnessed it, both Britons and Africans, and especially on young people, including Margaret. Thus, Eyo B. E. Ndem reasoned,

In less than twenty years since the Aba Riot [sic.] in 1929, a socio-political turmoil had engulfed and disturbed the idyllic romantic life of Abeokuta. This time, a traditional ruler with full legitimation was at the centre of the conflict And responding with what may now be termed a characteristic opposition to unconstitutional and despotic act of a ruler [T]he Abeokuta women led by the legendary Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti stormed the palace of the Alake of Abeokuta in 1946. The Alake was forced to flee his throne.¹⁴

The Aba Women's War therefore triggered unprecedented resistance to colonialism that shook the foundation of British occupation of colonial Nigeria. At the end of the war, the colonial government set up a commission of inquiry. In her book *African Women*, Sylvia Leith-Ross, the wife of a colonial officer, writing on Igbo women, stated:

It is certain that amongst the Ibo [sic.] the women do play an influential part, not only by the native customs but because of their inherent vitality, independence of views, courage, self confidence, desire for gain and worldly standing. More than men, they seem to be able to cooperate, to stand by each other even in difficulties, and to follow a common aim.¹⁵

This contradicts the prevailing opinion in the Western documented literature at the time that presented women in Africa as chattels of their husbands, in contrast to the actual status of women in Igbo society. In reaction to such reports, V. C. Uchendu noted:

The African woman regarded as a chattel of her husband who has made a bride wealth payment on her account, is not an Igbo woman who enjoys a high socio-economic and legal status. She can leave her husband at will, abandon him if he becomes a thief, and summon him to a tribunal where she will get a fair hearing. She marries in her own right and manages her trading capital and her profits as she sees fit.¹⁶

Little wonder that women in the eastern region rejected the colonial administration, particularly its attempt to impose a poll tax on them, without consultation. Women in pre-colonial Igbo society were watchdogs of public morality. The realization that unjust policies can be rejected must have informed Margaret's disposition and encouraged her to get involved in the colonial political activism in Nigeria. As a woman politician, she broke through every barrier that would have constituted an obstacle to women involvement in the prevailing political landscape.

Ekpo, Margaret

Margaret's contributions to the constitutional and political development of Nigeria made her a trail blazer. Her participation in partisan politics, contributing to shaping the lives of women in the eastern region of Nigeria in general, and in Aba in particular, in the 20th century, points to the role women could play in nation-building in postcolonial Nigeria. As a woman leader, Margaret ensured that she brought along the women under her influence, sensitizing and mobilizing them to add their voices to government decisions that would affect their lives. She utilized every available opportunity to add her voice to anything she believed would better the lives of Nigerians, particularly women and workers. During the colonial era, Margaret was convinced, based on her participation in partisan politics and her attendance at meetings and conferences where issues that were germane to the development of the country were raised, that Nigerians deserved more than they were getting under the British administration.

Margaret had the opportunity to add her voice to the criticism of the British government second-class treatment of Nigerians in 1945, when she represented her husband in a meeting organized by nationalists including Nnamdi Azikiwe, Herbert Macaulay, and Mbonu Ojike, among others. Her husband, as an employee of the colonial government administration, could not attend such meetings. The meeting was called to discuss the unfair treatment of indigenous medical doctors by the colonial administrators. Margaret's decision to attend the meeting cannot be viewed as a sudden decision. Rather, it was certainly an offshoot of a patriotic zeal and conviction that the Nigerian people deserved a better deal from the colonial administrators. That meeting marked her entrance into partisan politics and the Nigerian political landscape. Politics in Nigeria at the time was viewed as men's preserve. In the meeting, she listened attentively to the speeches of many great nationalists, including Macaulay, Azikiwe, and Ojike, among others. She was convinced that the positions taken by the speakers were right for the country. Margaret took the issues these nationalists raised to the members of the Aba Market Women Association, which she founded.

Margaret utilized the Aba Market Women Association as a platform for mobilization and sensitization of women on the political situation in colonial Nigeria. She attended many rallies and campaigns for the decolonization of the country. She ensured that women were not left out of the struggle for Nigeria independence from the British government. When she discovered that husbands were discouraging their wives from attending the women meetings, Margaret devised a novel strategy. Following the end of World War II, there was a scarcity of salt and other essential commodities. Margaret used the opportunity to buy up a large quantity of salt from companies such as the United African Company (UAC) and John Holt, which she hoarded. She only sold the salt to registered members of the Aba Market Women Association who regularly attended meetings. As wives must prepare meals for their husbands with salt, they had no choice but to attend the meetings in order to be able to purchase salt, and husbands grudgingly allowed their wives to attend. During the meetings, she educated the women on the political situation in the country and the need for decolonization, which many nationalists were clamoring for at the time. Margaret also informed the women that their husbands and children could aspire to any position, such as matrons in hospitals or district officers, and could even live in Euro-

pean quarters. This motivated the women to join in the decolonization movement. As Margaret put it,

I would tell the women, do you know that your daughter can be the matron of that hospital? Do you know that your husband can be a District Officer (D.O.) or Resident? Do you know that if you join hands with us in the current political activities, your children could one day live in European quarters? I used to tell them these things every time and so they became interested.¹⁷

In the early days of pre-independence Nigeria, Margaret became an active member of the NCNC led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. In 1951 she became the first woman vice president of the NCNC Eastern Working Committee, and in 1953 she was appointed special member of the Eastern House of Assembly. She was also appointed a Chief in the Eastern House of Chiefs in 1954. She was articulate, bold, courageous, and eloquent in “making demands on behalf of women.”¹⁸ For instance, she raised a motion that the police authorities needed to employ more women in the police force. The motion was passed. Subsequently women were employed in the police force in Enugu and later Lagos. She was also appointed a member of the Aba Urban Council Care Taker Committee, when Denis Osadebey was the chairman.

Margaret contributed immensely to Nigeria’s constitutional development through her participation in the Constitutional Conferences both in Lagos and in London that led to Nigeria independence in 1960. In 1953, for instance, she participated in the Constitutional Conference in London as an NCNC adviser. Before leaving Nigeria she issued a press statement in which she promised that she would not compromise as “far as the political and social emancipation of women is concerned.”¹⁹ She was again appointed as an unofficial adviser to the 1958 conference. In the London conference of 1958, when she discovered that there would be no special or nominated members in the houses of assembly in Nigeria, which would mean women would be excluded, as at the time they could not vote, she argued that this was unacceptable and demanded adult suffrage for all Nigerian women twenty-one years and above to enable women to vote and be elected to office. After 1960, when the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons became the National Council of Nigerian Citizens, as the president of the party’s women association she argued unequivocally for the need to include women in the political processes.

Margaret transformed the Aba Market Women Association into the women wing of the NCNC, and subsequently became the leader of the NCNC Women Association in Aba. Her ability to adapt to changing situations to maintain women involvement in shaping their lives and history by remaining politically relevant can be seen in the transformation of the Aba Market Women Association. Indeed, such adaptation to changing circumstances is necessary if indigenous women groups are to remain relevant in a changing world. In the 20th century, the culture of “sitting on a man,” which was a sort of makeshift pressure group in precolonial Igbo society, was already waning due to urbanization and migration.²⁰ The Aba Market Women Association provided a platform for the mobilization of women in Aba, most of whom were traders. Margaret’s leadership capacity was mani-

fested in the way she was able to carry the women along in the changing cultural landscape.

Apart from fighting for the interest of women, under her leadership women also fought for the interests of the whole community. She was elected in her own right to the NCNC NEC in 1950. This enabled her to take part in the decision-making of the party at the national level. She traveled to different parts of the country with the leaders of the party for campaigns. In 1958, she was elected to the Eastern Working Committee. Margaret criticized the employment of the wives of the Resident Officers while African women did not have such an opportunity. She made demands for women's education and criticized the Minister of Education for neglecting women education. As a human rights activist and an advocate of continuing education for married women, Margaret criticized the attempt to stop married women from teaching, and argued that it was a violation of their fundamental human rights. She demanded the inclusion of women in the Eastern Regional Marketing Board and other government corporations. When the house was dissolved in September 1954, she was no longer appointed as a special member. However, she had the opportunity to continue her leadership role when she was appointed as a special member of the House of Chiefs, and as president of the Eastern Nigerian NCNC Women Association. This took place following the 1959 federal elections. Nnamdi Azikiwe was the premier of the Eastern Region then. Together with Janet N. Mokelu, who was also a member of the House of Chiefs, she consistently bore in mind that she was representing the interests of women, and made demands in areas such as more schools and scholarships for girls, the creation of industrial centers for women, the appointment of women to the Eastern Broadcasting Service and other corporations, improvement in rural roads and transport services for women to carry their produce to markets, and the appointment of more women police, among other demands.

In the 1961 election, both Margaret and Mokelu won elections to the Eastern House of Assembly, a legislative body.²¹ As members of the House, both Margaret and Mokelu, and then Young, who became a member of the House of Chiefs, protested over what they believed to be inflated census results from northern Nigeria following the 1962 and 1963 national census. They spoke unequivocally against what they believed to be official manipulation of the census results in favor of northern Nigeria. For Ekpo:

We the women of the south wonder what is going to happen to us if the representation in the Federal House will be on the basis of the inflated census figures

And then, I, Margaret Udo Ekpo, Mokelu and Madam Young will leave the floor of this house because the women will not vote again.²²

The exclusion of women from the Census Board could negatively impact on their political participation. Margaret's position therefore is germane in the context of the outcome of the 1962 national census results, where it was feared that inaccurate figures were allocated to the north.

Ekpo, Margaret

Aspiring to an elective position in the NCNC was not devoid of gender-based discrimination and prejudice. For instance, in the 1957 regional election, Margaret's attempt to contest the election was frustrated by the party when the leaders maintained that the elections were too crucial to risk putting women in the contest. When, in the 1958 federal elections, she ran to represent Aba North Constituency against a man, Felix Okoronkwo, who was then Chairman of the Aba branch of the NCNC, Margaret alleged that the party had selected Okoronkwo based on male prejudice. Her party later advised her to run for the Eastern Regional House of Assembly under the NCNC to represent Aba Urban North Constituency in 1961. She ran and won, and she served as a member of the Eastern House of Assembly until 1966, when the military took over the leadership of the country.

As a nationalist, a patriot, and an industrialist, she believed that locally made goods would encourage local industries to thrive. She therefore encouraged members of the assembly to patronize locally made goods. She challenged the ministries of Agriculture and Commerce to encourage and patronize Nigerian craftsmen and women. She maintained that though there were regional plans in place, there should also be a national economic plan to complement the regional plans to ensure that the entire country was moving in the same direction. Margaret understood the destructive power of corruption in any country. She was a social crusader. As early as pre-independence Nigeria, she joined an organization known as the "Bribe Scorners League", which was led by J. K. Ladipo as the President General. The group spoke out against all forms of bribery and corruption. She presided over the meeting of the organization on several occasions, and was the only woman in the country to have played such a role.

Margaret loved ballroom dance but never liked Efik traditional dances. This may have been the result of having been brought up in the Anglican tradition in an era when African cultures were regarded as "primitive." She nevertheless promoted Nigerian cultural values. For instance, she fought against the presentation of cowboy films and pornographic and immoral programs at Aba TV in Aba. She contended that chieftaincy titles need not be commercialized, having realized that unscrupulous individuals were being given chieftaincy titles. Little wonder that she rejected all other chieftaincy titles offered her except the one she was given when she became a member of the Eastern House of Chiefs in 1953. As a member of the Eastern House of Assembly, 1961–1966, her concerns covered many social issues such as youth employment, grants for motherless children, employment of science teachers in schools, working conditions of workers including teachers and journalists; enfranchisement of women in Nigeria, and promotion of local industries through the discouragement of imports.

For Margaret, public office holders occupy such positions on trust for the common good, and therefore must uphold high public probity, and serve the people with minimal pecuniary benefits. In Nigerian society at the time, though politics was men's space she proved by her self-less service to the people that one could be a politician with high integrity.

Ekpo, Margaret

Margaret believed that Nigerian Civil War was avoidable, and that disputations would be better handled through the strategies of dialogue, discussion, and conferences.²³ For her refusal to support the course of the Biafrans, she was labeled a saboteur. In several meetings held in eastern Nigeria prior to the war, one in Aba Township Hall in 1967, on the issue of the position of southeasterners in the development of the country at the time, and the second meeting in Umuahia in May 1967 where the secession of eastern Nigeria, the name of the new country, and how it would relate to Nigeria was discussed, Margaret never shared the convictions of those agitating for the secession.²⁴ She did, however, have certain convictions:

The independence of Nigeria was not won on a platter of gold. It was won from the British after so much suffering and loss of human lives. It was won through protracted negotiations, conferences and meetings. No one should do anything to compromise Nigeria's independence, no matter the extent of threat, provocation or enticement.²⁵

Margaret believed in one Nigeria and was ready to die for her convictions. During the Nigerian civil war, she was arrested and detained by the Biafra fighters between 1967 and 1970.²⁶ When she was released from detention in 1970, she moved to Lagos and settled there, setting up a sewing institute named "Marg's Boutique." She believed that every politician must remember those who voted them into office, and their hometown where they would retire to after active service to their fatherland.

Margaret Ekpo and Women Emancipation in Nigeria

Margaret Ekpo played a crucial role in the women emancipatory movement in the colonial era and during Nigeria first republic. As a grassroots politician, she mobilized women of all classes and educated them on the socio-political realities of the time. She struggled for women economic and political emancipation. Despite the Victorian notion of women that had been imported into Africa, which associated women with domesticity and that was pervasive in the emerging social thought in colonial Nigeria, Margaret navigated this social terrain to place women's voices in partisan politics of the era in the eastern region of Nigeria. British colonial administrators promoted the anti-feminist cultural prejudice of Europe in Africa and concentrated power in the hands of sole male native rulers.²⁷ This biased, gendered ideology denied African women space in the emerging socio-political structure. Thus, when Margaret was appointed to the Eastern House of Chiefs, many disapproved as she would be sitting with chiefs, that is, male leaders. As a chief she ensured that women's issues were included on the agenda. According to Ndem,

Ekpo's dynamism combined with an extraordinary political gumption, and not without a touch femininity endeared her to the entire Eastern Region which was

her constituency. Her example encouraged other women in the Cross River to venture into the exclusive domain of the male politics.²⁸

As a nationalist, Margaret rallied women of different ethnic nationalities and enlightened them on women marginalization in the newly emerging state structure of then-colonial Nigeria and the need for women to take control of their lives by demanding their rights. She believed that if women's lives were to be improved, they needed to get involved in decision-making processes and activities that affect their well-being. In 1954, when a wardress in Enugu prison, Onyia, was murdered for refusing the sexual advances of a warder, she mobilized women from Aba and traveled to Enugu to demand that justice be done. Previously, in 1949, she had fought on behalf of the widows of the coalminers at Iva Valley, Enugu who were shot, several of them fatally, for demanding a salary increase and better conditions of service, in an event known as the Enugu Colliery Massacre. Margaret seized the opportunity of this crisis to mobilize women against the colonial administration. She joined other nationalists in the rallies organized in Aba to whip up sentiment against the continued British colonization of Nigeria. Although she and some of the other agitators were arrested for making inflammatory statements, she never regretted her participation in such rallies. She was later released. The rallies generated positive results as they led to the setting up of the Fitzgerald Commission of Inquiry with the mandate of investigating the crisis and making recommendations to the British administrator. The report of the commission and the white paper that emanated from it was a watershed in the struggle for independence of Nigeria. A portion of the white unequivocally recommended that Nigeria was ripe for self-determination.²⁹

Margaret understood the power of partnership and networking in achieving goals. Little wonder that she linked up with Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of western Nigeria, whom she had heard and read much about. Margaret was able to bring her to eastern Nigeria in 1948 to talk to the women and enlighten them. The visit and tour provided an important platform "for women mobilization, political awareness campaign, and for establishing her legitimacy as a woman leader among Nigerian women."³⁰ She utilized networking and collaboration to achieve women emancipation. She was humble, willing to learn from both her superior and her subordinate alike, which must have enhanced her acceptability across ethnic groups and classes. Aba Market Women Association, was modelled after Funmilayo's Abeokuta Women Association. With the formation of the Nigerian Women's Union (NWU) in 1949 by Funmilayo, Margaret became an active member of the union and rose to become the National Secretary of the NWU. After Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's visit to Eastern Nigeria in 1948, Margaret was motivated to print the constitution of the NWU Aba Branch in English, Efik, and Igbo.³¹

The Aba Market Women Association later metamorphosed into the Aba NCNC Women Association. Flora Azikiwe was the president of NCNC Women Association of Eastern Nigeria formed in 1956 while Margaret became the vice president. As an executive member of the NCNC Women Association, she, in the company of other women, led by Azikiwe and Mokelu, visited many communities in the eastern region, encouraging women to register for the forthcoming elections. This form of grassroots mobilization, sensitization, and en-

lightenment led by women seems to be lacking in the Nigerian political space in the early 21st century. Margaret later became president of the NCNC Women Association of Eastern Nigeria in 1960, when Flora Azikiwe, the wife of the Eastern Region Premier, left her post to pursue further studies at Howard University in the USA..

Rallies and campaigns for Nigeria independence provided opportunity for Margaret to equip herself with the necessary information to educate the women of eastern Nigeria and later the whole country, on the need to reject all forms of second-class citizenship. She organized many rallies to inform women about developments in the country. In all the conferences she attended, she was active in the proceedings and never missed any opportunity to identify where women might be disadvantaged. For instance, when she returned from the London conference in 1958, she organized several political campaigns and rallies “to address women in various parts of Nigeria informing them that they had no voting rights in the country.” She encouraged them to vote her party, NCNC, into power, as Azikiwe had promised to enfranchise Eastern Nigerian women.³²

Although Margaret was just fifteen years old at the time of the Aba Women’s War, she noted that the war greatly inspired many young women of her generation.³³ Many first-generation Nigerian politicians, such as Kuti, a member of the Western House of Chiefs in the 1950s; Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, a popular female politician from Northern Nigeria; Mokelu, a member of the Eastern House of Assembly in the early 1960s; Ekpo Young, a member of the Eastern House of Assembly in the 1960s; and Wuraola Esan, the first female senator in Nigeria in the early 1960s, fell into that category. Margaret’s landmark contributions to Nigerian constitutional and political development, and to women social and political emancipation, remain a watershed in the history of women’s participation in politics in 20th-century Nigeria, particularly during colonial and pre-civil war independent Nigeria. A recipient of several awards, with many centers and halls named after her, she remains an icon in the history of Nigerian political and constitutional development in pre-independence and pre-civil war Nigeria. She was an active member of many gender-based societies, such as the National Council of Women’s Societies, Nigerian Women Union, Women in Nigeria, and Nigerian Red Cross, among others.

Legacies of Margaret Ekpo

Margaret Ekpo’s name remains a colossus that bestrides the historical narrative on Nigeria political and constitutional development, even in death. She left a legacy that is impossible to exclude in the annals of women’s participation in politics in Nigeria. At her death, the *Guardian Nigeria*, a Nigerian daily newspaper, reflected on her contributions and impact on the Nigerian political space, calling her one of the “Women of Valour” in Nigeria, a pioneering female political icon and someone who helped in the “restructuring of Nigerian politics”; a women rights activist, social mobilizer, and female politician in the first republic.³⁴ Similarly, writing on the contributions of Margaret and Sawaba, Paul Mamza noted that both women had “the manhood muscles and the compassionate inertia of womanhood,” which launched both into “national consciousness.” Margaret was described as

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“a living legend in political determination and social mobilization.”³⁵ Mamza further observed that Margaret’s participation in politics took her beyond the shores of Nigeria to international conferences where she represented Nigerian women. For instance, she was a Nigerian representative at Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in 1964, Nigerian representative at World Women’s International Domestic Federation Conference in 1963, member of parliament government of Nigeria from 1960–1966, women interest representative at Nigerian Constitutional Conference in 1960, a delegate at the Nigerian Constitutional Conference in 1953, 1957, and 1959, the representative of the interest of women in Eastern House of Chiefs Nigeria, 1954–1958, and a member of the Eastern House of Chiefs Nigeria, 1948–1966.³⁶ Her legacy continues in scholarship on women’s and feminist movements in Nigeria, alongside Kuti, Mokelu, and Sawaba. At her death at the age of ninety-two, Bolanle Omonijo noted that the last of the matriarchs had passed. She left a legacy of lack of ethnic bias in a country bedeviled by all forms of ethnicism and nepotism.³⁷ Her appointment to the Eastern House of Chiefs was historic. For a woman to attend meetings with prominent traditional rulers was unimaginable. Yet it signified the triumph of merit over all considerations, the will of the people over godfatherism and nepotism, and was a symbol of pride for all women.

Margaret left a legacy of unity in diversity. Her birth in the year the southern and northern protectorates were amalgamated to become Nigeria is symbolic in a way. That is, it represents unity in diversity. Throughout her political career she pursued the goal of maintaining the unity of her country. During the Nigerian civil war (1966–1970) she maintained that the Nigerian State must remain undivided. For her conviction she was arrested and detained by those clamoring for secession. She spoke unequivocally on the need for the diverse ethnic groups that make up Nigeria to remain united, as the majority ethnic groups need the minority ethnic groups and vice versa. She left behind a legacy as a politician that truly represented the members of her constituency and consistently provided them with feedback. In her political career, she fought for the rights of women both in the southern and the northern parts of the country, and maintained that women in the northern part of the country needed enfranchisement to effectively participate in politics. She broke through ethnic boundaries in her political career. Her ability to connect with both lower and upper echelons of society was demonstrated when she won election to the Eastern House of Assembly to represent Aba Urban, beating the men who ran against her. She also broke through ethnic barriers when she did not consider the ethnic difference between her and Kuti, but traveled to meet her to learn how she could help in the mobilization of women in the Eastern Nigeria. Margaret was convinced that only through mobilization, enlightenment, and networking among women groups could women pull down ethnic barriers and patriarchal ideologies. This contributed to the successes she recorded in her political career, and remains unparalleled, and a legacy that is yet to be surpassed.

Margaret launched Cross River State women into party politics. Women, such as Mary Iquo Ededem, fondly called “Ma May,” joined the NCNC, and “was in the vanguard of the women wing of the party.” Other women in this group included Chief Abo Bassej Ndem, Councillor; Hannah Otudor, Councillor; and Ekpo Young, Councillor; and later Asi Okoi

Arikpo (a sister of Ekpo Young) and Nkoyo Orok Ironbar (also known as Jack). Others included Ema Brown and Rebecca Ekpo. Thus, in the Cross River State political scene, “a revolutionary and nationalist group of women emerged.”³⁸ Part of Margaret’s legacy therefore is the emergence and evolution, in any political party in Cross River State, of “a wing of women activists. Some literate and educated, others with little formal education but with profound dedication and commitment to the ideologies or slogans of their parties.”³⁹ During political campaigns these women connect with the grassroots in the mobilization of voters for their parties.

In service to her fatherland, Margaret left a legacy of accountability and public probity in the service of one’s nation. She fought against corruption in several instances, including as a member of the Bribe Scorners’ League. She was both theoretical and practical in her approach to issues. She spoke against the falsification of census figures to favor the northern part of the country. For her, those entrusted with public funds must be accountable in the way the resources are managed. She encouraged the people in government to patronize “made in Nigeria” goods to encourage local industries—a rare sign of patriotism. In an era when corruption is a major challenge in Africa, Margaret has left a legacy of integrity for those entrusted with managing the resources of the country.

Women emancipation remained a priority for Margaret throughout her lifetime. Both in Nigeria and at several conferences she attended, including constitutional conferences in London, she never missed an opportunity to canvass for women rights. She believed that only through inclusive practices could the country develop. Her sewing institute was primarily established to empower women in domestic training and self-employment. Women who came in contact with her gained skills that enabled them to contribute to the family income and provide support to their husbands. Her “Windsor Domestic Science Institute” trained women in home economics, dressmaking, knitting, and embroidery, including English and bookkeeping, for the management of their homes and businesses.⁴⁰ She believed that marriage should not be a hindrance to self-actualization in business and in politics. Chief Margaret remains a reference point in any research on the early feminist movement in colonial Nigeria, and in Nigeria first republic. Her name has remained a buzzword in the discourse and documentation of women and political participation in modern Nigeria. She fought for the rights of workers, and ensured that their welfare was the concern of the government of the day. Her legacies as a parliamentarian, industrialist, mobilizer of women, and human rights activist makes her a reference point in any discourse on women and political participation in Africa and a motivating factor to many women and girls in Nigeria in the present and future.

Discussion of the Literature

Detailed materials on Margaret Ekpo remain relatively limited in scholarly works on women and political participation in Nigeria. This is despite the fact that research work on women participation in politics in Nigeria remains incomplete without a mention of her name. In higher education institutions, students’ research works on women and politi-

cal participation in Nigeria often make reference to her as a case study.⁴¹ Yet, only a few books have been written about her, some of which are discussed in this article. Of particular importance is the publication *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, authored by Stella A. Effah-Attoe and Solomon Odini Jaja.⁴² The book remains the most extensive work on Margaret. It covers such issues as her childhood, her role in the political and constitutional development of Nigeria, her concerns as a member of the Eastern House of Assembly, and her retirement and relocation to her home town, among other issues. Another book that deserves mention is Nina Emma Mba's *Nigerian Women Mobilised: Women's Political Participation in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965*. In the book, Mba discusses the political activities of women in southern Nigeria from 1900 to 1965. The effects of colonial administration in Nigeria generally, and women in particular, are highlighted. Mention is made of the Aba Women's Riots, and how the uprising gained momentum in the south as it launched women's activism in the region.⁴³ Of particular importance are chapters six, eight, and nine. These chapters provide useful information on the specific role Margaret played in women's emancipation in Nigeria, particularly in constitutional and socio-political development. In *Nigerian Women Pioneers and Icons*, Bolanle Awe identifies and provides brief information on select women icons in Nigeria who have contributed immensely to the development of the country. The sterling qualities that enabled them to be outstanding are highlighted. Among the women discussed are Kuti, Margaret, Esan, Grace Alele Williams, Sawaba, Chioma Ajunwa, Ngozi Okonjo-Iwela, Chiamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ladi Kwali, and Hajiya Fatima Lolo, among others.⁴⁴ On Margaret, the book points out that she was a nationalist who participated actively in ensuring Nigeria gained its independence from the British government. Chief Margaret Ekpo struggled for the political emancipation of women.⁴⁵ Also relevant is the *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in the Calabar and Owerri Provinces, December, 1929*.⁴⁶ This work provides information on the socio-political and cultural contexts that throw light on the activism, "movements," and socio-political and economic lives in indigenous societies in the old Eastern Region, and the subsequent uprising in response to the rumors about the taxation of women that led to violence in Owerri Province and Calabar Province.

Primary Sources

Archival and textual materials on Igbo and Ibibio peoples (of which Efik is a sub-group) offer critical insights for understanding the socio-cultural contexts that contributed to shaping the personality of the girl-child growing up in eastern Nigeria in the precolonial time. Primary materials relevant for studies on Margaret Ekpo may be sourced from online Nigerian newspapers and commentaries. Moreover, the *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in the Calabar and Owerri Provinces, December, 1929* provides relevant insights into the women's protests, uprisings, and the investigations carried out by the commission appointed by Sir Graeme Thomson, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.⁴⁷ In addition, A. E. Afigbo's documentation on the warrant chiefs and the indirect rule system in eastern Nigeria pro-

vides useful insights into the failure of the indirect rule system of the colonial administration.⁴⁸

Further Reading

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Notes:

(1.) See Bolanle Awe, *Nigerian Women Pioneers and Icons* (Ibadan: Childs Playbooks, 2016), 6.

(2.) Interestingly, besides halls in higher education institutions, there is a "Margaret Ekpo Hall" in Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham, Abuja Nigeria, in Nigerian Federal Capital Territory Abuja. The author was privileged to participate in a workshop sponsored by the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) Nigeria and the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES) on the theme "INEC's Role in Enhancing Women's Participation in the Electoral Process: Creating Synergy Amongst Women Politicians, Scholars and Activists," September 26-28, 2018.

(3.) See Stella A. Effah-Attoe and Solomon Odini Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics* (Abeokuta: African Leadership Forum), 1.

(4.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 15.

(5.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 17.

(6.) See for instance Kaneme Okonjo, "The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation," in *Igbo Women and Community Politics in Mid-Western Nigeria, Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, eds. Nancy J. Hafkin, A. I. Taiwo, and Edna G. Bay (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 45–58; *umuada* is a social institution of all the daughters of a lineage—married, single, or divorced. Members of the *umuada* were involved in conflict resolution and dispute settlement, and could even prevent inter-communal wars in precolonial times.

(7.) See Judith Van Allen, "'Sitting on a Man': Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, VI, ii, (1972), 165–181.

(8.) See B. Ute Ballay, "Women in Nigeria: Aspects of Social Transformation," *Africana Marburgensia* 16 (1983), 33–59.

(9.) See C. K. Meek, *Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), 178. From her research on the Igbo people Meek brought out the importance of the exogamous marriage system in the social organization of the indigenous Igbo society. For instance, she noted that not only do women take titles, they also by the marriage system are affiliated with two communities, their natal home and their husband's community. A woman belongs to different associations in each, where she actively participates in the socio-political life of her communities.

(10.) See D. Amaury Talbot, *Women's Mysteries of a Primitive People: The Ibibio of Southern Nigeria* (London: Cassel, 1951), 205.

(11.) See Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987). In Nnobi, where she carried out her fieldwork, women could take titles such as "Ekwe," and women so titled "had the rights of veto in village constitutional assemblies, and can be said to have been the mouthpiece of the villages and town," 50.

(12.) See Ndem, "Women in Constitutional and Political Development," in *Women in Development: Cross River Experience*, eds. S. O. Jaja, Eyo B. E. Ndem, and Kate Okon (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1988), 29–40.

(13.) See Judith Van Allen, "'Aba Riot' or Igbo 'Women's War': Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women," in *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, eds. Nancy J. Hafkin, A. I. Taiwo, and Edna G. Bay (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 78–102.

(14.) See Ndem, "Women in Constitutional and Political Development," 32.

- (15.) Sylvia Leith-Ross, *African Women* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1939), 22. Interestingly, the author, although she acknowledged that Igbo women were “genius,” betrayed the ethnocentric character of the documentations of the indigenous peoples at the time as she described them as “nearly untutored savage, not yet enough developed.” See page 44 of the same text.
- (16.) See Victor C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 87.
- (17.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 21.
- (18.) Nina Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilised* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1982), 238.
- (19.) Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilised*, 238.
- (20.) See Allen, “‘Sitting on a Man.’”
- (21.) See Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilised*, 269–271.
- (22.) Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilised*, 272.
- (23.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 45.
- (24.) On many occasions she had tried to dissuade the agitators from advocating for the disintegration of the country. Little wonder, then, that she was arrested immediately after the Biafran declared their freedom.
- (25.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 49
- (26.) See Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 122.
- (27.) See also Bolanle Awe, “Women and Politics in Historical Perspective,” in *Women and Politics in Nigeria*, eds. John A. A. Ayode and Elone J. Nwabuzor (Ikeja: Malthouse Press, 1992), 25–36.
- (28.) See Ndem, “Women in Constitutional and Political Development,” 35.
- (29.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 23–24.
- (30.) Kuti’s visit lasted for one month. Chief Margaret also acknowledged Kuti’s influence on her political acumen and her inspirational role. See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 27. Indeed, Kuti influenced many women of colonial Nigeria including Margaret. See Johnson-Odim and Mba, *For Women and the Nation*, 100, 174.
- (31.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 27.
- (32.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 35.
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(33.) The Aba Women's War of 1929, erroneously reported in colonial literature as the Aba Women's Riot, was fought for both economic and political reasons. Economically the women of eastern Nigeria rejected the taxation introduced by the colonial administration, which meant that women were to pay tax. The political dimension of the war concerned the women's rejection of the whole colonial order that sidelined women's former power bases, making them second-class citizens. About fifty women lost their lives in the war. See also Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 135–136. Attention should be paid to the section titled "The Decline of the Women's World," especially the subsection titled "The Igbo Women's War."|

(34.) Paul Mamza, Nigeria's Unsung Heroes (10). Feminism as a Prowess: The Profile of Chief Margaret Ekpo and Hajiya Gambo Sawaba. Accessed from July, 2019.

(35.) Paul Mamza, Nigeria's Unsung Heroes (10). Feminism As a Prowess: The Profile of Chief Margaret Ekpo and Hajiya Gambo Sawaba. Accessed from July, 2019.

(36.) Paul Mamza, Nigeria's Unsung Heroes.

(37.) See Bolade Omonijo, Nigeria: Tribute—Margaret Ekpo - And the Woman Died, Vanguard Newspapers, (Lagos), October 2, 2006.

(38.) Ndem, "Women in Constitutional and Political Development," 35.

(39.) Ndem, "Women in Constitutional and Political Development," 37.

(40.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*, 158.

(41.) Oloyede Oluyemi, monitoring participation of women in politics in Nigeria, Paper presented, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, Abuja, Nigeria, 2015), 5–6.

(42.) See Effah-Attoe and Jaja, *Margaret Ekpo: Lioness in Nigerian Politics*.

(43.) Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilised*.

(44.) These women were pioneers in different fields. For instance, Hajiya Fatima Lola (1898–1997) was a Nupe woman who, though she did not have the opportunity of acquiring a Western education, made a name in the music industry which made her popular beyond her ethnic group throughout the whole of Nigeria. Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti was a women's rights activist, educationalist, nationalist, and a teacher. She championed women's rights during the colonial administration and in the early days of independence. Wuraola Esan was an educationalist and a politician; she became the first Nigerian female senator. Hajiya Gambo Sawaba was a women's rights activist and politician from northern Nigeria; she was the leader of the women's wing of the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) led by Aminu Kano, a first-generation politician from northern Nigeria. Grace Alele Williams was a distinguished academic and a trail blazer; she was the first woman to be appointed a Vice Chancellor in a Nigerian university, at the Univer-

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sity of Benin, Benin-City, Nigeria. Bolanle Awe was a distinguished historian, scholar, and feminist.

(45.) See “Margaret John Ekpo (1914–2006) Foremost Politician and Pioneer Parliamentarian,” in Awe, *Nigerian Women Pioneers and Icons*, 25–26.

(46.) See Ce/k5, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances in the Calabar and Owerri Provinces, December, 1929* (National Archives, Ibadan, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria).

(47.) See Ce/k5, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances in the Calabar and Owerri Provinces, December, 1929*.

(48.) Adiele Eberechukwu Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891–1929* (London: Longmans, 1972).

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