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**Christian Missions and Economic Empowerment of  
the People of Cross River State, Nigeria, 1885-1960**

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**Abstract**

The nineteenth century Christian missionary activities in Cross River State as in other parts of Nigeria were mainly targeted at evangelisation of the people. Christianity has become the dominant religion in Cross River State and the people believe that it is a religion of civilisation and development. The resultant effect of different positions of some scholars is that colonialism has become a stigma for Christianity in contemporary times. To this extent, missionary work in Africa will continue to attract stringent and critical historical examination. It will however be intellectual dishonesty to write off the positive results of missionary work in Cross River State. This paper therefore, examines the contributions of missionary work in empowering the people of Cross River State from 1885 to 1960. The research adopted historic-structural approaches using primary and secondary sources. This includes qualitative interviews and books and journals. The findings of this research show that modern medical practise, theological education as well as education generally, skills acquisition, poverty alleviation and attention to the vulnerable such as children, orphans, widows, the sick and the elderly, through appropriate

influence on negative traditions are some of the areas where missionary work has impacted positively on the people. It concludes that the Christian Missions contributed tremendously to the economic empowerment and enlightenment of the people of Cross River State of Nigeria.

## Keywords

Christian Missions, Economic Empowerment, Cross River State.

## Introduction

The Cross River state of Nigeria was created in May 1967 from the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria with its capital in Calabar, a well-known city even during the colonial period. Some of the major towns in Cross River state include; Ikom, Calabar, Odukpani, Ogoja, Boki, Ugep, Obudu, Obubra, and Obanliku among others. The state is composed of many ethnic groups such as the Efik, Ejagham, Boki, Yakirr and Bekwarra. Cross River state epitomises the nation's linguistic and cultural plurality. In spite of the numerous dialects, the missionaries were able to pass across their message of evangelism and learnt how to speak some of these local dialects. This was because they also knew that for their evangelism to be effective, they needed to integrate properly especially in terms of language and the culture of the people.<sup>1</sup>

In Cross River state, the missionary work began after the coming of the Portuguese, who were then in search of slaves and raw materials for their plantations, factories and industries back home. The familiarity with the indigenous people began when exchange of products such as textiles, metals and agricultural produce attracted the Europeans to the people.<sup>2</sup> Some of these foreign explorers were also interested in the culture and language of the local people as well as missionary work. The missionaries became interested in exposing the ills and the vices of the evil trafficking of able-bodied women and men that were eventually taken away to Europe. This challenge of the trafficking in able-bodied men and women paved the way for active missionary work. The Christian missionaries were into the establishment of churches,

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<sup>1</sup> E.J. Alagoa, "People of the Cross Rive Valley and the Eastern Niger Delta", in Obaro Ikime (ed). *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, (Ibadan: Historical Society of Nigeria, 1980, 56-57

<sup>2</sup> James Buchan, *The Expendable Mary Slessor*, New York: Seabury Press, 1981, 25

schools, dispensaries, setting up humanitarian work and the training of people in different skills. This helped in endearing the indigenous people to the foreign Christian missionaries and in their embracing Christianity. The arrival of very notable missionaries like Mary Slessor who stopped the killing of twins in the area and others who established schools and other training institutions brought significant development in the area.<sup>3</sup> Roman Catholic missionaries were well rooted in Cross River State. Bishop Joseph Shanahan who became the first Catholic Bishop of the then Eastern Nigeria had his Christian missionary work covering Ibo land, Tiv land and Calabar among others. This Bishop was very zealous with his evangelical work and his work has remained significant in the history of the Christian missions in Cross River State.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Coming of the Christian Missionaries to Cross River State**

The Calabar area and its environs were generally known for the production of palm produce and oil, since the missionaries were to a large extent primarily pursuing their commercial and economic motives, business in this product was very lucrative. This was because these products were needed in their countries as raw materials and it thus further encouraged the Europeans to penetrate into the area.<sup>5</sup> The Christian missionaries in Cross River State and its environs made efforts to introduce various changes in every sphere of life of the society. The Europeans were particularly fascinated with the various agricultural produce they saw and the economic potentials of the area as well as the remarkable hospitality of the people.<sup>6</sup>

In all these, the people did not initially know that the Europeans apart from their economic motive could also improve their other aspects of life by the establishment of churches and schools. After the assumption of legitimate trade, the negligible interaction and impact made on the social, economic and political institutions of the indigenous people gave room for the easy establishment of schools and designating Sunday a day of worship separate from the social life of the people.<sup>7</sup> Because of the

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Slessor, *Letter to Partridge*, October 3, Dundee Central Library

<sup>4</sup> <https://spiritanroma.org.shanahan>. Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2017

<sup>5</sup> W.P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916, 55-56

<sup>6</sup> F. O. 2, 1891-1900, Oil River and Niger Coast Protectorate series

<sup>7</sup> C. O.520 1907-1912 Southern Nigeria series

luxurious articles given as gifts to the indigenous people and the attitude of the Europeans, many people such as notable Chief Eyamba V of Duke town became close to the Europeans to an extent that he had a journal published in English chronicling the events in Calabar at that time. The missionary work in Cross River State brought Reverend Hope Waddell who arrived in Calabar with a group of Christian Jamaican ex-slaves in 1846 through the Presbyterian church of Scotland.<sup>8</sup>

The hospitality of King Eyamba of Duke town and King Eyo Honesty of Creek town assisted Hope Waddell to acquire land, and this gave him the opportunity to establish mission houses and schools. The reception given to the missionaries by the chiefs was as a result of the flattering of the chiefs with regular visits and patronage of luxurious gifts by the missionaries. Other notable missionaries include Mary Slessor who was a Scottish missionary that came to Calabar and her enthusiasm and dedication endeared her especially to the Calabar Chiefs and the people of the area.<sup>9</sup> It is pertinent to note that it was the coming of the missionaries that gave room for the abolition of certain barbaric practices such as human sacrifice and also the development of literacy among the people of Cross River State. During this period a missionary by the name Thomas Magttrick who became the catholic Bishop of Ogoja in the then Eastern Nigeria, established a medical mission hospital for those with leprosy which was then not even to talk of now a very highly stigmatized disease.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Impact of Christian Missions in Cross River State**

The missionaries in Cross River State made a lot of attempts to bring changes in every sphere of the life of the society. The missionaries began their work by establishing Christian centres which were called stations. They used these centres as places of worship. Later on, their focus was in establishing medical centres to take care of those who were sick. It was generally believed that the Christian centres and their teaching and doctrines were superior to the traditions and culture of the people. It was a major transformation for the indigenous people of Cross River State.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914, A political and Social Analysis*, 1966, 337-338

<sup>9</sup> Hardage Jeanette, *The Legacy of Mary Slessor*, pp 178-179

<sup>10</sup> F. O. 2, 1891-1900 (Oil River and Niger Coast Protectorate series)

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Eno Paul, aged 62+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Boki, date of interview 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

The establishment of the churches in the area contributed to the abolishment of some very undesirable culture and traditions giving way to their economic and social emancipation. The churches and worship centres preached about good moral standing and treating neighbours and others as they would like to be treated and this led to reduction in crime, criminality and some anti-social practices such as rituals. The missionaries primarily confined themselves to the building of churches, preaching the gospel and converting the indigenous people into Christianity and establishing schools such as Annunciation School in Ogoja, Holy Child College in Ogoja and St. Patrick's Technical School Ugep.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most remarkable of the Christian missionary's achievements in the area was in the field of education. This was the greatest legacy that Christian missionary work left in Cross River State. Education was seen by the Christian missionaries as an indispensable handmaid of evangelism.<sup>13</sup> The establishment of western educational institutions in Calabar by Revd Hope Wadell such as the Hope Wadell Institute Calabar which was established in 1895 from where many very notable politicians, academics and professionals from far and near were educated remains an important legacy of Christian missionary work in Cross River State. With fluency in English language also being a requirement for employment, the indigenous people seized this advantage and were employed as typists, messengers, interpreters, clerks and teachers. During the colonial period, those who spoke English were paid salaries and allowances according to the salary structure of the colonial administration in Nigeria then which laid a lot of emphasis on being fluent in English language.<sup>14</sup> In 1846 two missionaries Hope Waddel and Samuel Edgerly established printing press in Calabar and this printing outfit was used to publish several documents that still exist till date. Rev. Henry Townsend also was one of the first persons to establish a printing press in Nigeria in 1882. This encouraged the Europeans to document their activities in Nigeria.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> K. B.C. Onwubiko, *History of West Africa, 1800- Present day. Nigeria*: African Educational Publishers Nig Ltd, 211

<sup>13</sup> Andrew .F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Maryknoll, NV, Orbis Books, 1996, 172

<sup>14</sup> Abdul-Rasheed Afolabi, *A Brief History of Printing in Nigeria*, 2015, <https://m.thenigerianvoice.com>. Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2017

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Ejim Basil, aged 40+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Ikom, date of interview 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

The crop of Nigerians who learnt to speak the English language constituted the bulk of those in the nationalist movement in Nigeria and this was the group of people that eventually fought for Nigeria's independence. Other places such as Ogoja had the Mount Carmel College, Mary Noll College and Holy Child Ikom, St. Patrick's Technical College Ugep, all of which were established by the Catholic Missions. Another missionary who contributed immensely to the development of education in Cross River State was the Scottish missionary Mary Slessor.<sup>16</sup>

Mary Slessor was deeply involved in education and gospel preaching as her primary occupation. Ogbu Kalu, a historian and scholar in church history and a Professor of World Christianity and Missions at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago referred to her as having "a broader view of the style and the vision of the missionary enterprise".<sup>17</sup> He stated that Mary Slessor's vision and aim was much broader than that of an activist. Mary Slessor was a great missionary in Calabar who was not only into education, but also contributed in the area of saving lives and changing harmful local traditions, practices and culture. She was the one who stopped the killing of twins in the area.<sup>18</sup>

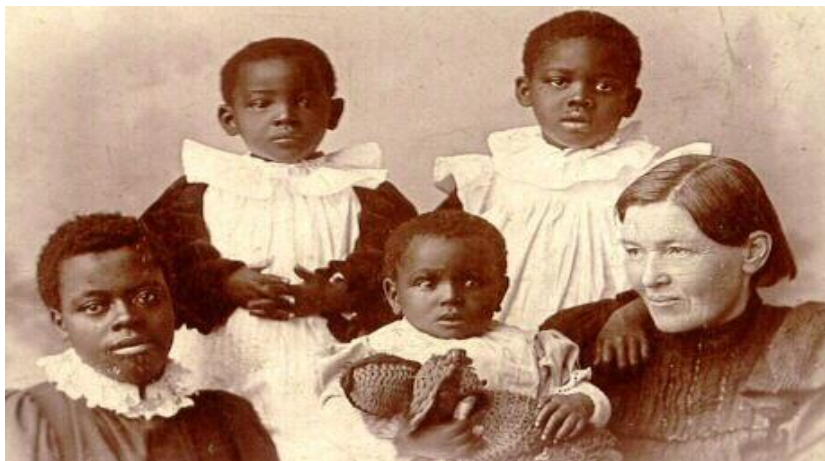


Fig 1: Mary Slessor and adopted children,  
<http://en.wikipedia> Accessed August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017

Mary Slessor ensured a better livelihood for the orphans and also made sure that women were free from harmful rituals after the death of their husbands. The birth of twins then was in particular

<sup>16</sup> W. P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, London: Holder and Stoughton, 1916, 55-56

<sup>17</sup> W. P. Livingstone, *Mary Slessor of Calabar*, London: Holder and Stoughton, 1916, 55-56

<sup>18</sup> <https://eruditesunny.wordpress.com/.../ho>. How Mary Slessor Stopped the Killing of the Twins in Calabar, Nigeria. Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2017

considered an evil omen. Natives then feared and believed that the father of one of the infants was an evil spirit, and that the mother had been guilty of a great sin. Unable to determine which twin was fathered by the evil spirit, the natives often abandoned both babies in the bush. Mary Slessor adopted every child she found abandoned.<sup>19</sup>

She also established vocational training schools for the women. Mary Slessor worked hard to an extent that in 1913, she was given an award from the British Government and was also selected as an Honorary Associate of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem.<sup>20</sup> Mary Slessor and other missionaries in conjunction with the female slaves went on a protest that defied the authority of the colonial masters in Calabar over the wearing of slave gowns and the success of that action eventually paved the way for their freedom.<sup>21</sup>

Another very vital achievement in the coming of the missionaries to the area was in the health sector. The missionaries introduced medical missionary work by treating those who were sick and had serious medical conditions. As a result, dispensaries hospitals and medical centres were established. The hospitals were built by the missionaries and were equipped by them. People who became sick and needed medical care were treated by the doctors and drugs were properly administered to them. Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Pharmacy Technicians, Laboratory Technologists, Laboratory Assistants and other health workers were employed and paid by these missionaries. Some of these hospitals were the Roman Catholic Missions (RCM) Hospital Moniaya Ogoja, Sacred Heart Hospital Ogoja, and Holy Family Hospital Ikom. These formed the foundation for the establishment of several other tertiary hospitals by various other governments in Cross River State.<sup>22</sup>

Another great and spectacular achievement in the area was the study of linguistics and the introduction of writing. It was the missionaries that introduced the translation of the Bible into many other Nigerian languages. In connection with this, the missionaries were able to teach and develop converts who could interpret from

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<sup>19</sup> Hardage Jeanette, *The Legacy of Mary Slessor*, 179

<sup>20</sup> Weddle Hope, Journal Entries for 16-17 April and May, in the national library Edinburgh, 1846, 67-68

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Cyril Bayim, aged 65+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Ogoja, date of interview 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Obi Mike, aged 48+, occupation Clergy, place of interview Ugep Osokom, date of interview 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

the indigenous languages to English and vice versa and this led to wide-spread literacy in the area. The coming of the missionaries in a way brought modern civilisation. In Cross River state the first person to translate the Boki language into English was a white missionary who lived in Boki for several years.<sup>23</sup>

Another major contribution of the missionaries was on the economy of the area. The missionary work was not limited to religious activities alone, but encompassed other areas such as agriculture and trade. Some of the missionaries paid some attention to the development of agriculture and legitimate trade. It was also through the activities of the missionaries that domestic slavery and the Trans- Atlantic slave trade were stopped. Their interest in trade then translated from slave trade to legitimate trade and also the transformation of agricultural produce from indigenous produce such as plantain, yams and coco-yam to produce such as cocoa and timber. The emphasis on these new products was for their own selfish interest and for the development of their industries and factories back home in Europe.<sup>24</sup>

The missionaries especially because of their hospitality towards the people, the indigenous people therefore became encouraged to go into plantation farming and agriculture in preparation for export products which were then taken to the European countries. Some of the missionary bodies had trading companies to supply imported goods at cheap prices to the people.<sup>25</sup> It was the missionaries that formed the trading company called United Trading Company (UTC) in 1889.<sup>26</sup>

The issue of economic development has been of national concern in Cross River State. The missionaries contributed in the economic growth and development of the area in spite of their initial motives. Historically, since the inception of the Christian missions the people of Cross River State had benefited in the various economic activities enunciated by the missionaries. It is pertinent to note that some scholars have seen economic development as a process in which there is a long period of sustained growth in per capital real income of a nation and there are always fundamental changes in the setup of the economy and

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Obi Mike, aged 48+, occupation Clergy, place of interview Ugep Osokom, date of interview 29<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

<sup>24</sup> M. J. Walsh, *The Catholic Contribution to Education in Western Nigeria*, London: 1962

<sup>25</sup> Buchan James, *The Expendable Mary Slessor*, New York: Seabury Press, 1981, 25-26

<sup>26</sup> Talodun and Nnadi, 2007, 32



also in improvement the lives of the people.<sup>27</sup> This shows that economic development occurs, if the rate of growth of per capital income in a nation is higher than the rate of the population growth. This means that economic development has to be measured by the standard of living of the people. Oguji and Kene also saw economic development as a process of growth and a foundational change in the economy.<sup>28</sup>

The impact of the work of the missionaries in the economic sphere also helped the society as adjudged by the increase in the quality of life of the people. The missionaries were able to teach the people various crafts and skills such as weaving, woodcraft and tailoring among others and these therefore economically empowered the people. The missionaries also transformed the old values of the indigenous people such as the killing of twins and worship of idols to the worship of God, as well as created adjustments in their social and economic circumstances and values. The introduction of new crops also encouraged the cultivation of these export crops mainly for export trade by the indigenous people of Cross River State. Opportunity was also given for employment especially among those who spoke English, as evangelists, catechists, school teachers and interpreters among others. This improved their productivity and relevance to the area as well as improving their quality of life.<sup>29</sup>

On the role of economic advancement of the area, virtually all the churches had hospitals and schools built along them. All these went a long way in improving the economic status and quality of life of the people. Indigenous people were employed to work in these facilities and salaries were paid to them. Rehabilitation centres such as Catholic Maternity hospital and Saint Benedict's Tuberculosis and Leprosy rehabilitation hospitals among others were built to help those with disability and medical challenges. Some of the mission schools such as Hope Waddell Training Institution Calabar and Boki Boys Secondary School had practical training for boys in blacksmithing, carpentry work and brick making among others. The girls also were into tailoring and other vocational training. All these vocational skills contributed to the growth and development of the economy of the area.

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<sup>27</sup> C. O. Oguji, and G. I. Kene, *Foundation of Development Studies, Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishes, 2009*

<sup>28</sup> H. Goldie, *Calabar and its Mission, London and Edinburgh, 1901*

<sup>29</sup> P.E.M, Inyang, *The Provision of Education in Nigeria with reference to the work of the Church Missionary Society, Catholic Mission and the Methodist Missionary Society, London, 1958, 90*

In Africa and Nigeria, polygamy was a product of political, economic and social circumstances of the society, because there was a lot of land to farm, most people used it to improve their lives by marrying many wives and therefore having more people to work on the farms.<sup>30</sup> Since there was no birth control and infant mortality was high, people saw the need to marry many wives and have many children.<sup>31</sup> During this period, monogamy was encouraged and enforced by the church and that was why the divorce law was introduced by the administrators in the Native Courts established all over southern Nigeria to settle cases and to grant divorce on the basis enunciated by the British colonial government.<sup>32</sup>

The missionaries also abolished human sacrifice and seclusion of widows for many years after the death of their husbands.<sup>33</sup> The abolition of human sacrifice involved a combination of missionary efforts, cultural exchange and colonial intervention. Missionaries engaged the local communities promoting Christian values and emphasizing the sanctity of human life. The process was complex and it involved religious, cultural and legal interventions. The abolition of human sacrifice and the stoppage of widows' seclusion had social and humanitarian impacts. It reduced violence, improved human rights and promoted more inclusive and compassionate practices. It also played a vital role in enhancing cultural norms in the society.

### Challenges Faced by the Missionaries

It is important to note that the Christian missionaries achieved a lot of successes in their missionary work even though they experienced many difficulties and hardship in the course of their work. The impact of the Christian missionary work in Cross River State, to a large extent, - had an everlasting impression on the people, but this does not mean that there were no challenges. There were also a lot of shortcomings and limitations suffered by the missionaries. In spite of the establishment of schools in the different communities in Cross River State, education was a secondary consideration to evangelisation, which was why their curriculum was not appropriate.<sup>34</sup> For example, Nigerian history was not

<sup>30</sup> Leith-Ross Sylvia, *African Women-A Study of Ibo of Nigeria*, London: 1938, 23-34

<sup>31</sup> Leith-Ross Sylvia, *African Women-A Study of Ibo of Nigeria*, 23

<sup>32</sup> E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914*, A political and Social Analysis, 1966, 337

<sup>33</sup> Agnes Waddel, *Memorials of Mrs Sutherland of Old Calabar*, Paisley 1883.

<sup>34</sup> Leith-Ross Sylvia, *African Women-A Study of Ibo of Nigeria*, 1938, 24

considered or taught in the schools, because of some Eurocentric views such as that of Hugh Trevor Roper a professor of European history at Oxford University who asserted "Africa has no history and history took to its heels when the Europeans discovered Africa".<sup>35</sup> That was why Europeans teaching were based on the proper documentation of European activities in Nigeria.<sup>36</sup> Another challenge faced by the Christian missionaries was the language barrier. This was a very difficult problem, the Christian missionaries found it difficult to contend with. This problem made the Christian missionaries to train some indigenous people to become interpreters. These interpreters were involved to interpret the gospel to the people.<sup>37</sup>

One other challenge of the Christian missionaries was in the area of their health. Most of them suffered from sicknesses arising from harsh climate and because of the unfavourable weather, some suffered from Yellow Fever, Malaria and Pneumonia among other infectious diseases. The use of Quinine for treating Malaria from 1954 could not really help the situation and antibiotics for treating Pneumonia and other infections were just coming on the scene then.<sup>38</sup>

There were other herbs and orthodox preparations administered to people who were suffering from Malaria which helped to combat the Malaria parasite. Some of the missionaries died due to some of these illnesses and were eventually buried in those communities. An example was Thomas Peter who suffered from Malaria in 1942 and eventually died. Some of the missionaries paid the supreme price by dying of infectious diseases such as Malaria and Pneumonia because of the risks they were exposed to in Cross River State.<sup>39</sup> Another obvious challenge that the Christian missionaries faced was in the area of finance. Financial resources were limited and that constraint led some of the Christian missionaries into trading activities.<sup>40</sup>

Communication and transportation were another limitation faced by the missionaries. Some places such as Ikom, Boki, Ogoja, Obudu and Ugep among others, lacked communication facilities.

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<sup>35</sup> T. A. Kwame, *Africa: the Hidden History*, 1998, <https://www.nybook.com>.

<sup>36</sup> J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missionary in Nigeria, 1841-1891*, London: 1965, 56

<sup>37</sup> J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missionary in Nigeria, 1841-1891*, 52-53

<sup>38</sup> Interview with peter Orom, 2017, aged 81+, occupation trader, place of interview Ogoja, date of interview 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2022

<sup>39</sup> Anozie Eric Emeka, *Christian Church: A Catalyst for Economic Development in Nigeria*, *An International Multi-disciplinary Journal*, Ethiopia, Vol. 7. (4), serial No. 31, 2013, 275-286

<sup>40</sup> Slessor Mary, (1884), *Notebook*, Dundee Museum, 258-259

Communication between the Christian missionaries with their home countries was difficult and some of them sent messages through vessels travelling to their home countries that took months to arrive. Modern communication system was introduced in Calabar in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> Transportation was also a big challenge that confronted the missionaries. Most of them travelled along bush paths on foot from Ogoja to Ugep and other places. Few of the missionaries had motor bikes or bicycles, Rev Father John Long rode on bicycle to Boki, Ikom and to other communities for evangelism.<sup>42</sup>

The coming of the missionaries created some conflicts and also an impression that the tradition and culture of the people was inferior. Some of the indigenous traditions and practices were seen as evil and diabolical and the people were discouraged from worshipping their indigenous gods/deities. The missionaries also faced hostility from the people especially in the aspect of their culture. Most of the traditional Chiefs and the people were not happy that their traditions were being eroded and degraded.<sup>43</sup>

Lastly, the missionaries also faced opposition from both the indigenous and the colonial masters, among the indigenous people, the white men were seen as slave dealers, this brought negative attitude towards the early missionaries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it became real that the Europeans were opting for legitimate trade, the chiefs refused to give land to the Christian missionaries to build stations, because the benefits associated with slave trade were no longer given to some of the chiefs.<sup>44</sup>

This resulted to the Christian missionaries building their churches or stations in burial grounds or in areas that were known as the evil forests. The indigenous people suffered discrimination from missionaries, because during Christian baptism, the indigenous people were not allowed to give their children native names, because baptismal names were restricted to only English names.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Onah Augustine Odey, *Mitchell Slessor (1848-1915) and her Impact on the Missionary Enterprise in Cross River Region, Nigeria*, Journal Home, Vol.7, No1, 2016, <https://www.ajol.info/article/view>. Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2017

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Peter Offong, aged 65+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Calabar, date of interview 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2022

<sup>43</sup> Andrew F Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: studies in the Transmission of Faith*, 1996, 172-173

<sup>44</sup> Waddell Hope, *Journal, Hope Waddell and others*, Hutchinson, 16h. 1856, 8-9

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Peter Offong, aged 65+ years, occupation Clergy, place of interview Calabar, date of interview 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

## **Conclusion**

Despite the stigma of colonialism associated with early missionary work in Africa, it is pertinent to note that missionary work in Cross River State of Nigeria brought about an improvement in the economy, livelihood and in the quality of life of the indigenous people of the area. Apart from the economic development and empowerment of the indigenous people of the area, the coming of the missionaries also gave room for the abolition of unacceptable cultural practices and traditions. However, the zeal of the Christian missionaries to convert the indigenous people made them undermine the rules and regulations of the indigenous people because of the protection they got from their home government.