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# MADAME TINUBU

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and  
King-Maker

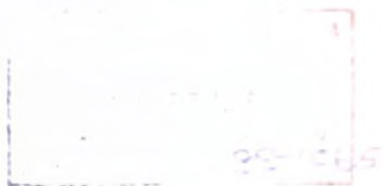


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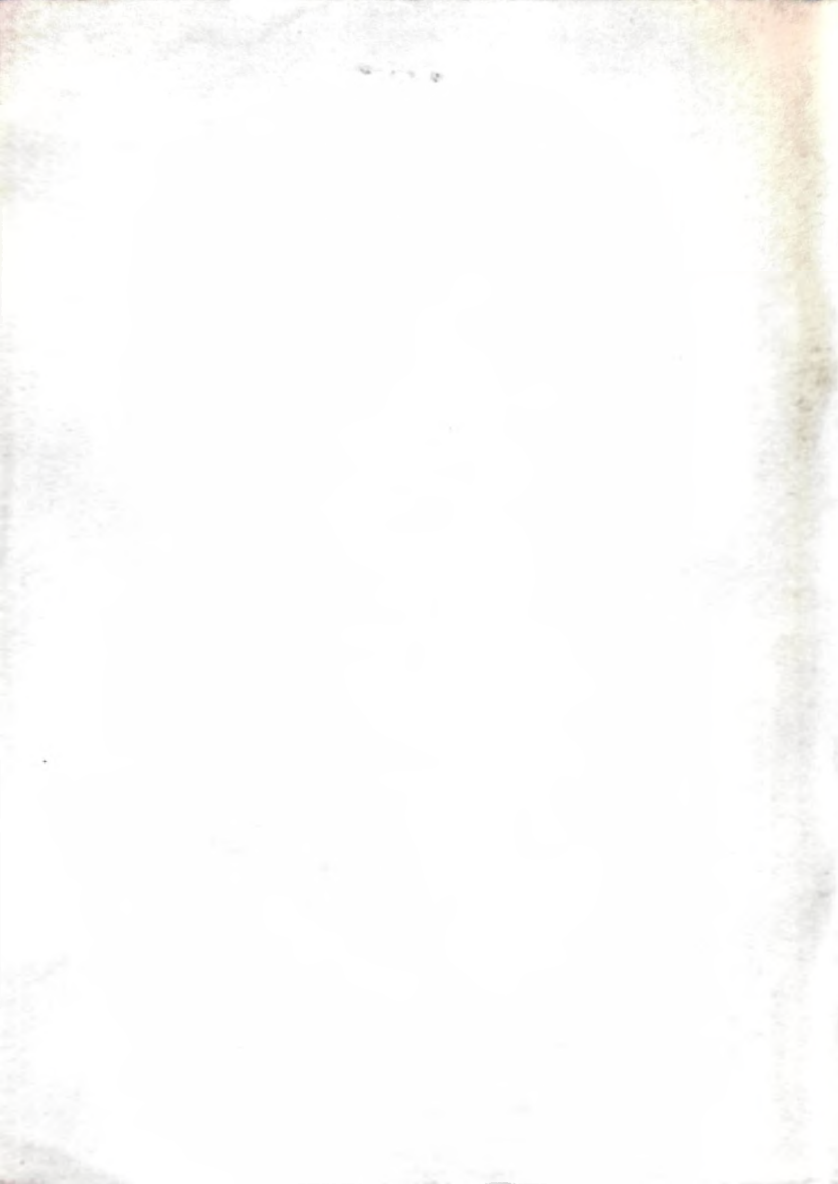
Oladipo Yemitan



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MERCHANT AND KING MAKER



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**MADAME TINUBU**  
**MERCHANT AND KING-MAKER**

Oladipo Yemitan

University Press Limited  
Ibadan  
1987

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IBADAN ABUJA AKURE BENIN CALABAR ENUGU JOS  
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This book is dedicated to all sons and daughters of Olumo Rock, all Lagosians, and all 'Badagrians' on whose soils Efunporoye Osuntinubu freely operated.

## FOREWORD

Oladipo Yemitan has made a notable contribution to our understanding of the early history of Anglo-Nigerian relations centred around Lagos in the 19th century, by this study of the life and times of Madame Tinubu, one of the foremost leaders of the period. In oral and written history she featured as a great lady nationalist, mentioned here and there to complete a given narrative. Now, however, we have a glimpse, as the author has modestly admitted of the real personality of the eminent lady, unfolded for us from her parentage, childhood, marriages, shufflings between Abeokuta, Badagry and Lagos in the pursuance of her commercial and political activities, until her death in December, 1887. In these pages Madame Tinubu has become alive, as it were, and we find her to be human as well as great.

In the episodic form which Oladipo Yemitan has adopted in his study of Madame Tinubu, repetitions are inevitable as there must be cross references in order to illuminate the different facets of her full and nascent nationalist life. Like all wise users of oral evidence, the author has cautioned that submissions vary not only with time but also according to the personal motives of the informants. Thus he has reminded us, like all good historians, that his narratives and conclusions are subject to the finding of new evidence in the light of further research. What he has, however, done and so admirably well is to show us Madame Tinubu as a child, a housewife who died childless only because her two sons predeceased her; as a merchant, a political genius of her time, a king-maker and the power behind the thrones in Lagos and Abeokuta; her religion and an estimation of the great lady as a human being. In other words, in the pages that follow, Madame Tinubu emerges not just as a legendary heroine but as a great personality with noble qualities as well as human frailties.

In the centenary of the death of Madame Tinubu whose services to the emerging Nigeria of her day have been recognized by naming after her, Tinubu Square and Street in Lagos and "Ita Iyalode" in Abeokuta, there can be no better gift to Nigeria and the cause of historiography than the appearance of Oladipo Yemitan's book. He calls it his modest contribution to the celebration of the Tinubu centenary but to those of us interested in that celebration, especially in Abeokuta where the Alake of Egbaland has empanelled a Committee to draw up a programme for the occasion, this book is a most welcome landmark. We congratulate the author on his tireless research, careful handling of contentious oral material as well as strenuous efforts to grapple with written sources on his subject and, indeed, on the admirable study which he has produced.

The authentic history of Nigeria will eventually emerge from the syntheses of the accounts of special episodes such as that of the life and times of Madame Tinubu. It is in this regard that Oladipo Yemitan's contribution transcends the justifiable pride of the Egba for celebrating the centenary of the death of their famous Iyalode; for it is the kind of study which we are eagerly waiting to make the history of Nigeria truly meaningful to all Nigerians. I, therefore, have no hesitation in recommending *Madame Tinubu: Merchant and King-Maker* to the Nigerian reading public, especially to all those who cherish our history and are desirous of making it reveal to us our true past. All Nigerians, and the Egba in particular, owe Oladipo Yemitan an enormous debt of gratitude for this illuminating study.

Saburi Biobaku.

## PREFACE

This book, the result of a humble research, is about the life and times of Efunroye Tinubu, the Iyalode of the Egba. It encompasses events in Abeokuta, Badagry, and Iko (Lagos) in her life time. It is my contribution to the celebrations marking the first centenary of Madame Tinubu's death.

I do not regard this work as comprehensive enough on the life of a woman whose image and influence were larger than life. But the study can, at least, serve as a spring-board for other more serious research.

A note of warning: my oral sources of information appear bedevilled by some selfish interests. There are still claims and counter-claims by people laying claim to rights over Madame Tinubu's estate — even a hundred years after her death. Therefore, their stories might be coloured in a way to win them points. Furthermore, in a setting where written accounts are not much extant, a hundred years is a long time to caution one not to place too much reliance on oral history which must have suffered alterations by various chroniclers. Therefore, some of the details in this book may still be subject to revision in the light of new facts which may still unfold in the course of further research.

Oladipo Yemitan.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am also grateful to Chief Ajani Olujare, Prince Oluyole Olusi and Chief Adekunle Alli for coming to my aid in different ways.

Similarly helpful to me in my work were Alhaji Adio Kassim, Mr. A.Y.S. Tinubu, Chief Emman Bamgboye and Chief Jacob Bamgboye.

Finally I wish to express my appreciation of the assistance rendered to me by the Staff of the National Archives in Ibadan, the University of Lagos Library, and those of the National Library, Yaba.

And a big 'thank you' to Idowu who typed out the manuscript.

Oladipo Yemitan

## EARLY YEARS

The history of Lagos can never be complete without mention of Madame Tinubu. And it would be futile to write the history of Abeokuta without Madame Tinubu's name being mentioned. Even the evolution of the coming of Badagry into the limelight had her name inextricably woven into the fabric of the drama that eventually resulted in the white-man's taking over control of Nigeria.

This woman, Efunroye Tinubu, was born around the year, 1805, at Ijokodo in the Egba Forests. Ijokodo<sup>1</sup> was in the Gbagura<sup>2</sup> homestead of the Egba homestead. Her father's name was Olumosa; her mother's name was Nijeede. The history of her family is as interesting as the events of her own life.

Fajinmi was the father of Degolu. Osunkoolu was Degolu's mother. Degolu, an Ijokodo man, was the husband of Nijeede, who bore him a male child, called Sobowale.

Degolu died early. After his death, Nijeede married Olumosa, another Gbagura man, who fathered Efunporoye Osuntinubu through her. Efunporoye Osuntinubu was the only child which Nijeede had for Olumosa.

The name of the father of Nijeede,<sup>3</sup> Osuntinubu's mother, was Oguntayo while that of Nijeede's mother was Osunsola. Osunsola was an Owu woman. Oguntayo was an Iwo man. Because her maternal grandmother was an Owu, the claim that Osuntinubu was an Owu is justified to some extent.

Olumosa, husband to Nijeede and father to Efunporoye Osuntinubu, was a Gbagura man from Ido homestead. He had two other wives. One of the wives was the mother of Okakan who was older than Efunporoye Osuntinubu. The other wife was the mother of Akinwunmi who was younger than her.

Thus, Efunporoye Osuntinubu had one brother, Sobowale, and two half-brothers, Okukan and Akinwunmi. She had no sister whatsoever and she was the eldest daughter of Olumosa.

Osunsola, Osuntinubu's maternal grandmother, was a big trader in her days. She sold herbs, barks and roots of trees, and skins of animals. She used to convey her wares to the coast to sell. She was moderately affluent. Nijeede, Osuntinubu's mother was, however, not an ambitious trader like her own mother.

At first, Nijeede used to follow her mother to the coast on trading trips. On one of these trips, they were in a canoe coming back from the coast when she began to labour. She was pregnant at the time. She was delivered of the child right there in the canoe. On the day of the naming ceremony, she was given the name Efunporoye by her father and Osuntinubu by her mother. The name Osuntinubu arose from the belief that it was the goddess Osun who gave her the child right from the depths of the river. The break-down of the name is Osun-ti-inu-ibu-wa, 'Osun goddess has come right from the depths of the waters' (to present this baby to us). How she got the name, Efunporoye, will be explained under the Chapter, 'Religious Life'.

The War of Dispersal<sup>4</sup> had started in 1821 and resulted in the fall of Orile Owu (Owu Homestead), as well as the sack of several Egba townships which were spread over the Egba original homeland. Among those towns which fell were the various Gbagura townships, Ojokodo and Ido being two of them. As at the time of the fall of these townships, Nijeede and her two children, Sobowale and Osuntinubu, were staying at Ojokodo.

Following the unsettled period which attended the War of Dispersal, several Egba townships, under Sodeke's leadership, migrated to re-settle in Abeokuta. About 150 of them – all moved in waves and finally found common refuge under the Olumo Rock at Abeokuta.

Naturally, Efunporoye Osuntinubu's parents joined their

township groupings in this migration which commenced in 1830. By that time, Osuntinubu had been married to an Owu man and had had two sons. The young family moved to Abeokuta as well.

Osuntinubu, who had an oval-shaped face, was now radiating extreme beauty. She was moderate in height, a bit on the plumpy side, and fashionable. It was not long after she arrived in Abeokuta that her mother died. Shortly after, her husband died as well. Her periods of trial had begun although the triumphs were to come, too.

She had learnt sufficiently the rudiments of trading from both her mother and grandmother and she proceeded to fall back on the experience of trading which she had had.

She was not alone in this predicament. The period following the settlement in Abeokuta was one which brought hardships to the migrants. Virtually everyone had to start afresh and things were not easy. The problems of procuring food and other necessities of life were compounded by the acute shortage of proper shelter.

Osuntinubu, now a widow, opted to begin with her grandmother's line of business. She started to collect leaves and barks of trees for her trade. As it turned out, Osuntinubu had Midas' touch. Everything she touched turned into instant success. She was making sufficient money, supplemented with financial help from Olumosa, her father, who was a man of comfortable means.

One day, she went out as usual to collect leaves. On her back she strapped the younger of her two sons who was still small. It was a sunny day. As she worked by a roadside bush, an Ifa priest was passing by and begged her for any available water.

Efunporoye did not offer the man only water. She ransacked her bag and brought out the corn meal which she had brought along in the event of her baby needing any. She mixed part of it with cold water and gave it to the Ifa priest. The stranger became so impressed with Efunporoye's kindness that he took her particulars and promised to pay her

back in kind. Later, the Ifa priest prepared a charm for her use and told her that she would become a wealthy person in due course.

Not long after, Efunporoye found herself the object of attraction to Prince Adele who was visiting Abeokuta on a goodwill visit in 1833. As she was a widow, Efunporoye easily accepted the prince's hand. They married virtually on the spot and Prince Adele took her along to Agbadarigi.<sup>5</sup>

When leaving Abeokuta for Badagry, Efunporoye Osuntinubu asked her father to take custody of her two sons but the father turned down this request because of the problems of nursing them likely to arise after her departure. Forcibly then, she had to take the two little kids with her. Her father gave her a parting gift, though. He presented her with two slaves to minister to her needs in Badagry. Awa, one of the slaves, was a young girl; the other one, a male, was Asibi by name.

The two sons died while in Badagry. Presumably, they died of malaria, Badagry being so mosquito-infested at the time. The charm prepared for her earlier on by the Ifa priest was revealed later as an unusual one. True it brought great riches but it was at the expense of child-bearing. The Ifa priest did not disclose that material fact to her because not many people subjected themselves to its use when told that secret.

Her marriage to Prince Adele and her arrival in Badagry marked the end of Efunporoye Osuntinubu's early life and her launching into the limelight of politics and commerce.

As was the practice in this country and other lands, her name was abbreviated to Efunroye Tinubu. And it is by these shortened form that we are going to identify her in the following chapters.

## Notes

1. Ijokodo was the name then, but it is now called Ojokodo at Abeokuta.
2. Gbagura, with the Agura at its headship, is now one of the 5 major divisions of Abeokuta. The others are Ake, Oke-Ona, Owa, and Ibara.
3. Nijeede is sometimes pronounced Lijeede in accordance with Egba dialect. The

name Njede can be correctly pronounced by substituting the letter 'j' in our father's (Oba Ipede) name with the letter 'y'.

4. What is termed 'War of Dispersal' is the *Owa* versus *Ife*, *Oyo* and *Igbu* War which began in 1821 at Apomu. It caused many communities to disperse.
5. Corrupted to the present-day 'Badagry' by the white slave dealers who found it difficult to pronounce the original name of the coastal town.

## MARITAL LIFE

In everything, Efunroye Tinubu was successful except in marital life where the story was not a totally successful one. Her marital life had many bumps, too many to make the journey smooth.

Her first Owa husband, whom she married around the age of 20, had died soon after their arrival in Abeokuta. There was love between them but the War of Dispersal never allowed them enough peace to enjoy their mutual love. War, being a rude jostler, kept them constantly moving and in fear of one thing or the other. The only redeeming feature of the marriage was that they had two sons.

After the death of her husband in Abeokuta, Efunroye Tinubu moved to her father's home at Olumosa's Compound situated at Ido Hill of Gbagura Quarters. She went with her two sons in tow. To get a picture of the next stage of her marital life, we should take a brief look into the history of Lagos. For this, the diagram in Appendix II will serve as a guide.

After Osilokun's death, Adele made another aggressive effort to ascend the throne. He now faced Idewu Ojulari, Osilokun's son. He had as his supporters the Chiefs of Badagry and those of Abeokuta. An army was raised, under Baabaani, to enable Adele fight his way into Lagos but the attempt proved abortive. The army was defeated and Adele's War Captain, Baabaani, captured and tortured to death.

Idewu Ojulari became Oba of Lagos in 1832 and Adele retreated to Badagry once again. In 1833, he paid a visit to Abeokuta to express his appreciation for the support he had received from the Chiefs of Abeokuta. During this visit, the beautiful face of Efunroye caught the attention of Adele who

became irresistibly attracted to her. He married her and returned to Badagry with her.

Idewu was not to rule for long: he died in 1835 due to what many people believed was a suicidal death. Kosoko, his brother, tried to succeed him but Adele got the support of the Eletu Odibo who saw to it that he was recalled from Badagry to become the Oba. Efunroye Tinubu thus followed her husband to Lagos that year. That was her first time of coming to Lagos.

Adele's reign was brief, too: he also died in 1837. Efunroye Tinubu had no children for him. And with Adele's death, the chapter of her second marriage came to a close.

Her appearance still radiated beauty and, therefore, it was not long before she found herself in the embrace of another man of note. This time, she became the wife of a minor chief and warrior, Yesufu Bada.

Adele's successor as the Oba of Lagos was Oluwole. Among Oba Oluwole's courtiers was Yesufu Bada, alias Obadina. And because Madame Tinubu was an ex-queen and the wife of a courtier of the new Oba, she still had free access to the palace. Therefore, though an ex-wife to a former Oba, she was still in a situation whereby she continued to hob-nob freely with the people who mattered in Lagos. Her husband became one of Oba Oluwole's war captains and bagged a minor chieftaincy title to the bargain.

After Oluwole, who died in 1841, Akintoye I became the Oba of Lagos. Partly due to Akintoye's indiscretion in inviting Kosoko, his nephew, to return to Lagos from exile and partly due to Kosoko's doggedness in fighting his just cause to a conclusive end, Akintoye's reign was a period of unending feud between him and Kosoko. It came to a stage when there was an open confrontation in which the forces of Kosoko decisively defeated those of the incumbent Oba. Akintoye thus had to leave his throne on exile and Kosoko installed himself the Oba in his place.

Once Oba Akintoye went on exile, all his supporters stood willy-nilly banished as well. Many of such supporters went to

Badagry. Yesufu Bada and his wife, Efunroye Tinubu, were two of such people. Even if everyone else did not go, Bada and his wife were bound to leave Lagos because of Kosoko. The reason was that Yesufu Bada had carried out a military mission on behalf of Oba Oluwole during Kosoko's exile in Wydah. This was when Oluwole sent him to Irigele to go and recover the goods looted by Kosoko's men. No doubt, that was one mission Kosoko would never forgive Bada for.

Inevitably, Yesufu Bada and Efunroye Tinubu retired to Badagry only to start mustering support for Akintoye. Bada was fighting in support of the nephew of his late lord; Efunroye in support of the half-brother of her late husband. The total involvement of the two of them in first ensuring Akintoye's evacuation from Abeokuta to safety in Badagry was therefore not without solid reasons. It was not for mere fun that Bada became envoy plenipotentiary, shuttling between Badagry and Abeokuta negotiating with the Chiefs of both towns. It was not the fun of sheer generosity that led Madame Tinubu to put all her resources at the disposal of Akintoye after his arrival in Badagry in 1846.

Both Madame Tinubu and Bada, her husband, returned with Akintoye to Lagos in 1852 and the rapport with the re-instated Oba continued till Akintoye's death.

The relationship between Efunroye Tinubu and Yesufu Bada was cordial. They were temperamentally compatible, both being aggressive in posture and manner. Bada had established himself as a Muslim leader and a successful war captain. His wife also had sympathy for the Muslim religion and would have proved an equally accomplished war horse had she been a man. Both commanded a good following and both were well-off. The only snag was that there was no child of their marriage.

Because of this, Madame Tinubu had cause to try another man. An Arabic scholar of Borno origin, Momoh Abubakar by name, was retained by Madame Tinubu as a priest and charm-maker. His services to her included praying for her in the Muslim way and making Arabic charms for her protection.

Momoh was an Arabic scholar of no mean order and his fame was well established in Lagos and beyond. For instance, Yoruba elements in Brazil were known to have written to him, inviting him to come over to Brazil to make charms for them in the Arabic way. Because of his family commitments<sup>1</sup> and the ramifications of his practice in Lagos, he was never able to accept the invitations. He, however, succeeded in delegating another Muslim priest, Ali Iseyin,<sup>2</sup> to go to Brazil to represent him and minister to their needs over there. The relationship between Madame Tinubu and Momoh Bukar became so close and intimate that Madame Tinubu later became his wife. From all indications, this was at the same time as Bada still continued to be her nominal husband. It was this which must have led the Rev. Father Pierre Coquard to conclude that Madame Tinubu was polyandrous.<sup>3</sup>

The love Madame Tinubu had for Momoh Bukar was such that she granted him part of her land at Tinubu area of Lagos. The land on which the Tinubu Methodist Church presently stands was part of Momoh Bukar's land which he, in turn, granted to the Wesleyan Mission free of charge.

Again, there was no child from their union. There is an oral tradition that Momoh Bukar's family migrated to a place called Ibunu<sup>4</sup> in Kwara State before coming to Lagos and that he was widely referred to as 'Alfa Ibunu' throughout his life time.

During this association of Momoh Bukar and Efunroye Tinubu, the latter's name was so pervasive and all-embracing that all within the household perforce assumed the name, 'Tinubu'. Included in this household were the children of Momoh Bukar by his other wives and Madame Tinubu's relatives from Abeokuta who had joined her in Lagos and lived with her. Of course, a number of slaves also assumed the name.

Definitely, neither Bada Obadina nor Momoh Bukar went to Abeokuta when Madame Tinubu was sent packing from Lagos. Therefore, she must have put the relationships with them well behind her.

Details of her marital life after returning to Abeokuta in 1856 still remain rather obscure but it is unlikely that she became wife to a man any longer. She had, by now, grown beyond child-bearing age and was therefore no longer to be a subject of attraction to the men of those days who cherished child-bearing more than abstract love.

The memory of her marriage with her first-ever husband lingered, though. The family of the Owu man still maintained a link with her in Abeokuta. And when she died, they came to claim their right to ownership of her slaves, from whom they demanded and got emancipation fees.

### Notes.

1. Momoh Abubakar had a number of wives and children. His name was abbreviated to Momoh Bakar; later it was corrupted to Momodu Bugara by the people of Lagos.
2. Ali Iseyin was a Muslim who came to Lagos from Iseyin, now in Oyo State, to settle permanently in Lagos. He married a Yoruba lady in Brazil before returning to Lagos.
3. This allegation was made by the Rev. Father Coquard, a French Catholic Priest, in his Memoirs. Coquard never saw anything good in Madame Tinubu, though.
4. Ibunu is a corrupted form of Borno.

## COMMERCIAL LIFE

The easiest thing one may say of Madam Tinubu is that she possessed a unique business acumen, which shot her up into the topmost hierarchy of the wealthiest of her time. She not only possessed acumen but also aggressiveness which acted as a driving force for her ambition.

However, she started in a humble manner. She began from trading in small items which grew up into a monster chain of businesses in later years. The credit for her interest in trading goes to the upbringing received from her grandmother and mother. From a very early age, Efunroye Tinubu had proved to be a girl with a quick brain. She found it easy to pick up ideas for doing things. She liked thinking for herself. All these added up to come useful to her when she grew up into adulthood.

Her ability to think independently – and to act independently, too – acted as a sustaining influence when her first husband died and she had to work hard to take care of herself and her two sons. Thus, the hardships she suffered until another husband came were not over-powering for her.

The marriage to Prince Adele and the eventual movement to Badagry with him brought the pretty Efunroye Tinubu great relief. At that time, the journey from Abeokuta to Badagry took up to three days as it was done mainly on foot. Trade between Abeokuta and Badagry had started to gather momentum then. Traffic, mainly in slaves, moved from Abeokuta to the Badagry port while items like salt and tobacco came by the return journey.

Efunroye's arrival in Badagry coincided with these developments and she, too, went into these types of trade. Fortunately for her, she already had Asibi and Awa as her slaves and she made full use of them in her business. They

would carry trade goods on their heads for the three-day journey to and from Abeokuta. Where and when necessary, she hired carriers to supplement the efforts of these two slaves.

That period of post-settlement in Abeokuta also witnessed a series of wars involving Abeokuta and her neighbours. In some of these wars, the Egba were challenged by aggressive neighbours; in others the Egba themselves were the aggressors. All these wars necessitated the employment of arms and ammunition and the situation created a favourable climate for the trade in such items. Inevitably, Madame Tinubu found herself in the band of people trading in such harbingers of death.

But her trading activities had scarcely taken sufficient roots than the need for her to move to Lagos arose. Prince Adele, her husband, was recalled to Lagos to become the Oba, following the death of Osilokun in 1835. It wasn't, therefore, too difficult for Efunroye to uproot her commercial base for the movement to Lagos.

She managed to engage in trading on arrival in Lagos in 1835 but it was low-keyed. Royal duties engaged her attention more now and she found little or no time to devote to commercial activities. By the time things had stabilized enough for her to attend more to trade, her husband passed on in 1834.

After the death of Oba Adele I, Efunroye Tinubu became the wife of Yesufu Bada, alias Obadina, a war captain to Oba Oluwole who succeeded Adele. During the reign of Oba Oluwole, Kosoko continued his justified fight for the Oba-ship of Lagos. He was in Wydah but his major supporters were at Epe.

Now, Oba Oluwole had a trading store at Origele, a small coastal fishing town on the way to Epe. In an effort partly to recoup their dwindling resources and partly to provoke Oba Oluwole, the supporters of Kosoko at Epe raided the Oba's stores at Origele, carrying off large quantities of goods.

On receiving this bad news, Oba Oluwole despatched Yesufu Bada to Origele to go and pursue the raiders, inflict

punishment upon them and recover the goods they had stolen from his stores.

The Oba's war captain hurriedly gathered his fighting men and proceeded to Origele but they arrived a little too late. The raiders had escaped and Bada and his men could not catch up with them. They contented themselves with packing the remaining goods in the stores and bringing them to the Oba in Lagos.

Oba Oluwole was pleased with the mission and he awarded a portion of the goods to Bada, his war captain, in token of appreciation for his services. The quantity of goods so given to Bada was so substantial that he and Efunroye Tinubu, his wife, commenced trading with it.

Fortunately, trading had always been in Efunroye Tinubu's blood. With this generous capital, she called her business wizardry into play once again, selling and buying and selling again. The journey to wealth — for her and her husband — now began in earnest. Madame Tinubu became the livewire of the business. The resources from these commercial endeavours placed Madame Tinubu and her husband on a comfortable pedestal as far as wealth was concerned. This in turn, enabled them to play political roles which catapulted them, particularly Madame Tinubu, into the limelight later.

In 1845, the couple had to go into voluntary exile at Badagry as a result of Oba Akintoye's departure for Abeokuta. Madame Tinubu and her husband continued their trading activities and even took steps to expand them. The climate had become rosier for more profitable business.

Ancillary to the internecine wars of that period was slavery and trading in it. In fact, most of the wars were fought with the sole aim of capturing slaves. Those were the days when there were no prisoners-of-war, only slavess-of-war. Therefore, the slave trade was enjoying a boom on the coast and in other places. European slave buyers paid regular visits to West Africa to deal in illegal slave trading even though it had been abolished in England.

It was also the period when the Christian missionaries had started to arrive in Badagry, turning the coastal town into a humming beehive of all sorts of trading activities – legitimate and illegitimate. The place bustled with an influx of fortune seekers from far and near.

It was in this maelstrom that Madame Tinubu and her husband arrived in 1845. Soon, not being strangers in the place, Madame Tinubu and her husband acquired sufficient social standing to take advantage of the situation. Bada, her husband, now engaged in diplomatic duties, was working with the Badagry chiefs to see Akintoye transferred to Badagry where the exiled Oba would be safer and freer. As a result, the conduct of the business affairs became the responsibility of Madame Tinubu.

The realization that dealing in slaves and war items, was more lucrative enabled her to concentrate more on these two lines of trade. Slaves manacled and marched to Badagry from the hinterland were bought by her and sold to European slave buyers. She bought cheaply but sold dearly. Because of the profit, all the noise about the abolition of the slave trade was disregarded by her.

But that was not the only way in which Madame Tinubu benefited from the slave trade. Out of the many she bought, she kept for her own service the most healthy-looking and hefty ones, both male and female. With the services of many slaves at her beck and call, Madame Tinubu gained the freedom to broaden her range of trade.

While some slaves went to bring in goods to Badagry from far and near, others went to deliver palm-oil, cotton, or elephant tusks to the trading stores of the European merchants. Still others acted as her personal body-guards, while some performed domestic chores. Items she traded in now included salt, rum, gin, brandy and coconut oil. This way, profits started to roll-in in increasing measure.

The wealth from these trading activities enabled Madame Tinubu and her husband to throw their full weight into the cause of Akintoye. They had ample resources to cater for all

of the ex-Oba's needs in Badagry — both military and other needs.

This way, and with the help of Beecroft, they were able to see Oba Akintoye restored to his throne in Lagos in 1852. Madame Tinubu and her husband returned to Lagos as well. Oba Akintoye sent for them to rejoin him in his kingdom but the invitation was hardly necessary. The couple had voluntarily gone into exile because of their support for the Oba and they automatically qualified to return after the Oba's restoration to the throne.

Oba Akintoye proved to be a grateful receiver of the kindness which Madame Tinubu and her husband had shown to him in his time of tribulation. He gave the couple freedom to do many things, including the practising of slave-trade, which the Oba himself clandestinely practised and passively overlooked in other practitioners of the trade.

In effect, Madame Tinubu found that the return to Lagos offered greener pastures and the opportunity to further her business interests. At about the same time, many of the European merchants, as well as the missionaries, who had settled in Badagry also began to move to Lagos. Most of them had supported Akintoye's cause in one form or another and they presently saw hopes of profitable trade in Lagos. Among them was the ubiquitous William McCoskry who had been a successful merchant in Badagry and Porto Novo, and had become addicted to being made an unpaid Consul on and off. So also did the Reverend G.A. Gollmer and some Wesleyan missionaries move to Lagos.

J.D. Sandeman, who had been posted to Badagry in 1851 by the firm of Messrs. Forster and Smith of London, also shifted base to Lagos the same year. Apart from other factors, the reason for their shifting to Lagos was two-fold: one, the chief port in Badagry had started to suffer a decline, and two, the presence of a British Consul now in Lagos offered prospects of peaceful trade and protection by the British Government.

Most of these new arrivals in Lagos were those with whom

Madame Tinubu and her husband had traded and interacted while at Badagry. So, it began to dawn on Madame Tinubu that new opportunities beyond her expectations were following her to Lagos just as they were waiting for her there. She did not miss any of these opportunities and she exploited them to the fullest. Largely due to her collaboration with these European merchants, a system of trade known as the credit system, which had started since the heydays of trans-Atlantic slave trading, now enjoyed a fresh lease of life.

The credit system of trade was a way whereby middlemen used the capital of other people. It operated this way: foreign slave buyers didn't need to bring hard currencies of their countries to do business with people on the West Coast of Africa. For one thing, such foreign currencies were meaningless to the local people who could not use such monies as a medium of exchange when doing business with their own people. Rather, what they preferred, and which the foreign merchants themselves gladly brought, were foreign manufactured goods like cloth, gin, and tobacco; and sometimes guns and ammunition. These items proved far more acceptable to people on the coast who used them as barter for slaves. People bringing slaves down to the coast for sale accepted such goods in exchange for the slaves they had for sale. Thus foreign slave traders, upon arrival, deposited their goods with trusted people on the coast and allowed them time to use the goods to barter for slaves. Later, they returned on the next trip or so to buy such slaves. In effect, the coastal people were middlemen using the capital of the foreign slave buyers.

With time, the credit system was introduced into other forms of trade. People bought goods without paying immediately; rather they bought on credit and paid later after selling what they had purchased on credit, thus doing business with other people's capital except their own. The *African Times* of 23rd April 1862 commented that the Trust (credit) System 'only served to enable the unprincipled native traders, the old slave-dealers, to obtain large quantities of

goods than they ever meant to pay for in oil. They took goods wherever they could get them...."

Madame Tinubu, too, had practised this system while living in Badagry. Now that she was in Lagos, she did so on a much larger scale. Her fame and influence had become established and foreign merchants saw the wisdom of entrusting their monies and goods with a person of that calibre. There was the guarantee that such a well-established businesswoman would never run away with their capital.

Then, the shrewd Madame Tinubu proceeded to introduce the mechanics of monopoly into the business environment of Lagos. She stood firmly between the European merchants and the local traders in order to broaden her own wealth base. By not giving the local traders access to the European merchants, nor the European merchants free access to the local traders, she benefited and made gains both ways.

It should be noted, though, that the foreign merchants themselves enjoyed doing business with, and through, her. The deposits they lodged with her were usually heavy, having been satisfied that she had the necessary organizing ability. For instance, Madame Tinubu turned her compound into a sort of free guest-house for traders bringing in goods to Lagos from Abeokuta. The set-up was such that her entire household was virtually turned into a mini hotel complex in which her slaves and maid-servants saw to the welfare of the large number of traders coming in fairly regularly. Such traders were housed and fed; their goods were carefully stored and later handed over to Madame Tinubu who 'bought' them. Thus, all the traders coming from Abeokuta sold all their goods to her alone.

The advantages of making handsome profits from these trades overwhelmed Efunroye that she did everything in her power to maintain this monopoly. But this started to bring her into conflict with some of the foreign merchants, some emigrants, and the 'Caboceers'<sup>1</sup> represented by Posu, Ajeniya and some others.

In mid-1853, after Ajeniya and Posu, Kosoko's supporters,

had returned to Lagos, following permission granted them to return, they openly reacted to Madame Tinubu's monopoly of trade. They gave signal of their intention to fight if nothing was done to stop her and this was to later cause the first expulsion of Madame Tinubu from Lagos.

The hostilities from the repatriates stemmed from their fear of being edged out of profitable trade which Madame Tinubu was bringing about. Besides, having passed through the experience of being slaves before, they now hated anything likely to impose another one – this time, economic slavery – on their heads.

The European merchants, apart from other reasons, were now becoming resentful of Madame Tinubu's treatment of them on credit matters. Their own standpoint was beautifully summarized by Benjamin Campbell in one of his despatches to his overlords in London. He wrote:

There is another mischievous person in Lagos whose removal is very desirable but I fear difficult to effect, the woman Tinaboo (Tinubu), the late Akintoye's niece. She is heavily indebted to some merchants here and she will not pay them. Application by the King (Akintoye) on behalf of the merchants she treats with contempt, setting his authority at defiance; yet this woman is a protege of Mr. Gollmer because she is an Egba woman.

Here again, we begin to have a glimpse of the role of the C.M.S. missionary, Gollmer, in the trade and politics of Madame Tinubu's period. He was actively in support of certain trade practices, irrespective of whether it pleased the European merchants or not. Sometimes, he was privy to some plots designed to cause disaffection to the authorities. Also, he was in love with Abeokuta and its people. He saw eye to eye with Madame Tinubu.

Be that as it may, Madame Tinubu herself had reasons to be unhappy with the European merchants who were disrupting the monopoly she was enjoying. Under the credit system,

she held complete sway since only goods changed hands, money was not much in use. The local suppliers got paid mainly in foreign goods and in cowries on occasions. This suited Madame Tinubu so well as she was the chief agent between suppliers and buyers. But after some time, the foreign merchants started to wise up themselves. They devised ways and means whereby they could buy directly from local suppliers through the use of cowries for much of their purchases. It was cheaper and faster than bringing in goods for exchange and it eliminated the sharp practices of middlemen.

Because cowries were not easy to come by, Messrs. O. Swaid of Hamburg initiated moves to import cowries direct from Zanzibar in East Africa. This firm was at the time represented in Lagos by a German, Hermann Grote. This direct importation of cowries reversed the erstwhile scarcity of cowries and European merchants now got the wherewithal to transact business direct with suppliers. Automatically, this displaced middlemen of whom Madame Tinubu was the kingpin. This caused her displeasure as she became resentful. Increasingly, she started to be in conflict with these European merchants.

Mr. Sandeman, an English merchant, had benefited from Madame Tinubu's generous nature when his wife had a baby and they needed a housemaid to assist her. Madame Tinubu graciously sent a girl to them to serve Mrs. Sandeman. The girl she loaned to them was Awa, the slave-girl presented to her by Olumosa. When Mrs. Sandeman suddenly died later, Madame Tinubu requested for the return of the girl but Mr. Sandeman refused, giving as his reason the explanation that the girl's services were still needed. Madame Tinubu grew annoyed and forcibly withdrew the girl from Mr. Sandeman's house.<sup>2</sup> This was done because of the ill-feelings which had grown out of trade rivalries. For this, Mr. Sandeman reported that Madame Tinubu had kidnapped a girl from his house; he did not tell the truth that the girl was a loan from her.

On February 20, 1853, Vice-Consul Louis Frazer<sup>3</sup> wrote to the Earl of Malmesbury reporting that Madame Tinubu had kidnapped a girl hired by Mr. Sandeman. He stated that the cause of the kidnapping was that Madame Tinubu was deep in debt to Mr. Sandeman and had merely resorted to this trick as a means of forcing Mr. Sandeman to open a new credit account with her. Frazer also added: 'This woman is the terror of the place: king and chiefs are afraid of her!'

A spill-over of this conflict and jealousies was also reflected in a matter generally referred to as the Amadie-Ojo Affair. It occurred in the middle of 1853. Amadie, a Hungarian national, was a slave merchant in the Lagos-Badagry-Porto Novo sector. He had a Brazilian emigrant, Ojo Martins, as his agent.

Amadie, Ojo and a third man had bought about twenty slaves which they were transporting to Lagos to sell. As the boat bringing them was coming, it was intercepted at Agove.<sup>4</sup> Domingo Martinez, himself a notorious slave dealer and a rival of Madame Tinubu's, sent the intercepted slaves to Oba Akintoye. Martinez did this out of mischief, occasioned by jealousy. Oba Akintoye, not knowing what to do with the slaves, consulted Commander C.G. Philips of the *H.M.S. Polyphemus* which was then at anchor in Lagos. Philips advised the Oba to expel Amadie since he was a foreigner, as prescribed in the treaty with the Oba.

Oba Akintoye therefore released Ojo Martins, being a national but fined him in the sum of \$2000. For Amadie, the Oba ordered him arrested at once. After Amadie had been arrested, he was marched into one of Akintoye's canoes, to be paddled to Badagry.

The canoe departed at night and, as it was going, Amadie started to shout for help. A European colleague, Canto by name, heard the alarm call from Amadie and passed the message on. At once, all the other European merchants rose courageously to protest this rather crude treatment of one of their number. Swift moves followed as Canto contacted Vice-Consul Frazer for help. Frazer hurriedly ordered a canoe to

chase the canoe carrying Amadio but the rescue mission failed.

As for the third culprit, Oba Akintoye was informed that he was under the protection of Ajeniya. When the Oba ordered the arrest of the man, Ajeniya refused to surrender him. As a result, Oba Akintoye asked that Ajeniya himself should be arrested. And, as the opportunity of punishing the two Epe returned war captives now presented itself, Oba Akintoye ordered the arrest of Posu, too. That was the 'official' version of the story.

However, as it was always the fate of Madame Tinubu to be made scapegoat on sensitive issues and to be painted as the sole slave dealer, the buck was again passed to Madame Tinubu. Giambattista Scala, the Sardinian, recorded the episode in a different light in his *Memoirs*. According to him, Madame Tinubu was the one who sent the slaves to Porto Novo. The consignee was Domingo Martinez. When the slaves arrived in Porto Novo, they were in poor health and Martinez did not want to pay the full price. Madame Tinubu, on her part, refused to reduce the price she and Martinez had agreed upon, and threatened that she would rather drown the slaves than sell them at a discount. Becoming infuriated, Martinez detained Madame Tinubu's agent, as well as the slaves in question. Afterwards, he sent all of them to Vice-Consul Frazer in Lagos. As a face-saving device, Madame Tinubu then prevailed upon Akintoye to shift the blame on Ope-Olu, the Posu, and Ajeniya, alleging that they, too, were slave dealers.

In this and other ways, people made Madame Tinubu the target of all sorts of accusations, many of them false. In like manner, she was alleged to be collecting her own customs dues in Lagos and Abeokuta in defiance of constituted authority. While it is likely that she did, at a time, collect some customs dues at the Aro Gate near her home in Abeokuta, the facts about the situation in Lagos do not justify the accusation. At the time of her stay in Lagos from 1853 to 1856 – and until 1861 when the Treaty of Cession was signed – there was no British 'Government' as such in Lagos

or anywhere around. There was the presence of the British Crown but certainly not a government per se. Therefore, customs duties were then collected by the Oba of Lagos, or the Chiefs in certain cases.

And, during the period when Madame Tinubu's commercial activities were at their peak in Lagos, Oba Dosunmu was the sole collector of customs dues. Therefore, to imagine that she would have engaged in collecting customs dues in competition with the Oba is inconceivable as that would have brought them into open conflict sooner than it happened. As a matter of fact, in her characteristic nationalist zeal, Madame Tinubu it was who openly remonstrated with Oba Dosunmu for acceding to Consul Campbell's recommendation that Signor R. Scala should assist the Oba in collecting customs duties. Why should a foreigner be employed to do the job, she had questioned, when it was the Oba's lawful duty to organize the collection himself?

Madame Tinubu's business and commercial interests also manifested themselves in her land holdings. While the missionaries occupied the best land on the water-front in Lagos, Madame Tinubu occupied the best land inside the town itself. She used her influence with Oba Akintoye to obtain from the Oba the grant of a prime piece of land in the commercial heart of Lagos. That large parcel of land, later christened Tinubu Square, and extending to the areas now occupied by Iga Kakawa (Kakawa Compound), the Federal Ministry of Finance, Customs Department, Tinubu Street, Tinubu Methodist Church, and all the adjoining areas, was originally granted to Efunroye Tinubu by Oba Akintoye. She had her extensive stores and home at the location now occupied by the Central Bank of Nigeria and Tinubu Fountain.

Her interests in land holdings were, by no means, limited to Lagos Island alone. She had larger land holdings on the mainland of Lagos as well.

Traditionally, all that large stretch of land from Oto on the mainland of Lagos to as far away as the present Mary-

land once belonged to the Oloto Chieftaincy family and it was the privilege of the Oloto to grant any part of it to people. Madame Tinubu's shrewd investment persuasiveness again came into play when she approached the then Oloto<sup>5</sup> for a grant of land. The Oloto was willing and Madame Tinubu satisfied her greed. A large chunk of land bounded by Alakara and Asimowu Stream on the South side and Idi-Oro on the North side, stretching into the present Papa Ajao, was granted to Madame Tinubu by the then Oloto. For it, she paid to the Oloto a grant fee of 7 bags of cowries,<sup>6</sup> 7 slaves, 7 pieces of cloth, 7 pigeons, 7 portions of kola-nuts,<sup>7</sup> 7 portions of bitter kola, and 7 portions of alligator pepper. This was a handsome payment in those olden days and the land in question included the present Igbobi, Idi-Araba, Idi-Oro, Alakara and part of Itire Road areas of the mainland of Lagos.

At Igbobi, Madame Tinubu had her kola-nut farm. The land on which the present Lagos University Teaching Hospital was built was bought from Madame Tinubu's family later at a cost of £11,700 (₦23,400). That the Lagos University Teaching Hospital site is a tiny portion of Madame Tinubu's land is proof of the extensiveness of her investment and land holdings on the Lagos mainland.

At Abeokuta, she similarly owned a large track of land in the area now known as Ita-Iyalode (Iyalode Plaza). Her land there stretched from a point opposite the new Ogun River Bridge to the area now known as 'Quarry', about a mile away. She was never contented with land that was not in consonance with her love for wide, expansive land. She always wanted land as big as her heart and circumstance.

The vast increase in the number of her slaves when she settled in Lagos after 1853 singularly helped her commercial life in a significant way. Monsieur Antonio Martins, a repatriate from Brazil and a successful businessman, had organized his 150 slaves into a fighting force for the defence of his household and business. So strong, and perhaps reliable, was this force that recourse had to be made to it when the

incident of January, 1855 occurred in which Vice-Consul Campbell and others nearly got expelled from Lagos.

Antonio Martins' example helped Madame Tinubu in organizing her own male slaves into a similar force for the protection of her business interests. These slaves were always at hand to scare off competitors and to secure for their boss a near-monopoly.

So wide had Efunroye Tinubu's commercial empire become by the year 1855 that she had few rivals among the traders in Lagos. She had vast properties and power, although it could not be said that she had enough liquid funds at that time. Most of the money she used for running her business belonged to other people. By the time she was expelled from Lagos the following year, she was owing her creditors to the tune of £5,000 (₦10,000) – a colossal amount in those days!

One of her big creditors was Captain James Pinson Labulo Davies.<sup>9</sup> While many of the foreign merchants had to forgo the debts Madame Tinubu owed them through writing such debts off, Captain Labulo Davies was one who extracted his pound of flesh. As Madame Tinubu could not meet her indebtedness to Labulo Davies, she mortgaged part of her landed property at Tinubu Square to the Captain. Thus, the land came into the possession of Labulo Davies who, in turn, forfeited the land to the government when he was declared bankrupt in 1875.

However, every cloud has a silver lining. The expulsion of Madame Tinubu from Lagos in 1856 resulted in greater and higher commercial opportunities for her in her home town. At Abeokuta, she no longer relied solely on slaves for her domestic and economic activities. Now, she started to take advantage of the pawn system, called Iwofa System, which was then practised freely. Under the system, a debtor would offer his or her services free to the creditor as interest payable on his or her debt. One could even offer his or her son or daughter as a pawn to serve a creditor. Taking full advantage of this system, Madame Tinubu accepted as pawns the services of those who owed her due to borrowing or other reasons. This system served to increase the number of people

serving Madame Tinubu and added to her material wealth.

It should also be pointed out that, on return to Abeokuta, Madame Tinubu's interest in the slave trade lessened. She now concentrated more on legitimate trade. Some European traders were now shifting base to Abeokuta, too. The reason for this is not clear enough. What is known is that most of them found Abeokuta to be more suitable for living in than Lagos. They found that the humidity in Lagos was '... trying as compared with that at Abeokuta. One perspired even at night in Lagos'. But whether that was their motive for moving to Abeokuta or whether it was an effort at following Madame Tinubu in order to be able to recover the debts she owed them, is still uncertain. Suffice it to say that it worked out to her commercial advantage all the same.

These European traders set up warehouses at the Aro Gate and Madame Tinubu followed suit. Her own warehouses were bursting at the seams with large stocks of cotton, palm-oil, tobacco, beads, gunpowder, hot drinks, cloth, and other articles of trade. So large were the warehouses that, when a fire broke out on Sunday, January 22, 1865, even her many slaves and other domestic hands were powerless to save them. The fire started this way: there had been a social party marking the naming ceremony of a newly-born baby. As was the practice then, gun-firing into the empty sky, drumming and dancing had marked the ceremony. Somehow, some gunpowder had been left carelessly in the open after the night party and this caught fire in the morning to set the city of Abeokuta in flames.

This fire swept through Kemta, Oba Quarters, Igbone, and through Ika and Owu hills, finally engulfing Owu Quarters, up to Aro Gate.<sup>10</sup> It destroyed many buildings, including the Church Missionary Station at Owu Quarters, the luxurious premises of Mr. Ribeiro and those of Madame Tinubu, Mr. Savage, H.O. Robbins, and so on. The West Africa Company, for instance, had a total of 2,132 pounds of clean cotton in their stores at the time. All these and all of Madame Tinubu's stores were destroyed in the fire. Other sufferers of loss of goods included Messrs. George, Savage, as well as the C.M.S.

and Wesleyan missions whose chapels were destroyed by the fire. Captain J.P. Labulo Davies lost all his properties at Abeokuta in this fire and a total of 5 people also died in the incident. That Madame Tinubu's many house-helps and slaves could not protect their madame's warehouses testified to their (the warehouses) extensiveness.

All the big-time traders mentioned above, and some others, had preceded Madame Tinubu at Abeokuta. Thomas Clegg, Henry Robbins, Ribeiro, Savage, Josiah Crowther, N.G. Munday, J.G. Hughes, (an Englishman), C.M. Young, Mr. During, C.W. Faulkner, even Scala the Sardinian – most of who were emigrants from Sierra-Leone – had set up trading stores in Abeokuta before the return of Madame Tinubu in 1856. They were wealthy by the standards of that time and had become dissatisfied with merely buying and selling. Their adventurous spirit had led them into conquering new fields like owning machinery to process cotton.

Madame Tinubu readily followed them, too, by investing in a cotton press. The machinery would separate the cotton from the seeds, clean the cotton and compress them into ready bales for shipment overseas. In this way, she was one of the pioneers of export trade for foreign exchange earnings. The site of her ginnery was just recently defaced by a caterpillar which carted away the scrap of the cotton press.

Two points stand out as highlights of Madame Tinubu's shrewdness in business. Firstly, by turning her compound in Lagos into a free lodging place for the traders coming to Lagos from Abeokuta, she was surreptitiously monitoring the types and volume of articles which the traders were bringing into Lagos. At the same time, she was able to know what they bought, and preferred to buy, to take with them to Abeokuta. These monitorings guided her in conducting her trading activities. Secondly, Madame Tinubu knew how to use good opportunities when they presented themselves. An incident illustrates this.

In 1860, Martin Robinson Delany, a blackman, visited Abeokuta as a representative of The Niger Valley Exploring Party of Chatham, Canada. During this visit, Mr. Delany

made the acquaintance of Madame Tinubu who entertained the visitor and quickly struck a business friendship with him. Madame Tinubu played host to Mr. Delany on a number of times and business discussions occurred between them on several occasions, during which she sought business advice from the visitor. According to Mr. Delany, 'She (Madame Tinubu) had promised to place the entire management of her extensive business in my hands, as much advantage was taken of her by foreigners'.<sup>11</sup>

On the eve of Mr. Delany's departure from Abeokuta, Madame Tinubu paid a farewell visit to him with a 'retinue of six or seven persons, her Secretary - a man - and several maid-servants to counsel and give me a written statement of what she desired me to do'.

But the astute lady did not stop with a verbal statement of her requests. She promised to and followed it up with a written letter,<sup>12</sup> the gist of which is quoted hereunder:

*'Dr. Martin R. Delany:*

*Abeokuta, April 3rd, 1860.*

*Sir,*

*This is to certify you, that it is with a willing mind I come to you for help: and I trust you will do according to your promise . . . I beg to say, you must not forget to find the Clerk who will stop at Lagos to ship my cargo . . . and make agreement with him before you send him here . . . I need not say much more about the affairs, as you yourself have known my statements.*

*With hopes that you are well.*

*I am,*

*Dear Sir,*

*Your Humble Servant,*

*TINUBA (Tinubu).*

P.S.

*You must not forget to send the two gauge-rods. I beg you . . .*

*Yours, & Co.*

*TINUBA*

*Per Charles B. Jones<sup>12</sup>*

So wide and varied were Madame Tinubu's commercial interests. Such was the extent of her business acumen and capacity for commercial wizardry that it could now be said that she was a capable leader and financial giant. Of her slave-trading activities, there is no doubt. And she seldom shied away from admitting the fact that she was doing it in the ordinary course of business. On one occasion, during her final sojourn in Abeokuta, she was alleged to have sold a young boy into slavery and was accused of it. When arraigned before Ogun-dipe Alatisè over the matter, she reportedly explained: 'I have a large house-hold and I must feed them well. I need money to do that, that's why'. She went scot-free.

One final word about her commercial activities: she made money from them but she spent the money on people — never on herself alone.

## Notes

1. Caboceers were headmen
2. Madame Tinubu was bent on withdrawing the girl because of the sentimental attachment to her as a parting gift from her father.
3. Louis Frazer was first appointed Vice-Consul for Wydah. The British Foreign Office later posted him to Lagos for a brief period pending the arrival of Benjamin Campbell, the substantive Consul, in July, 1853. The Wydah Consulate had been closed down early that year.
4. A coastal town in the now Republic of Benin.
5. The name of the then Oloto was Balo.
6. Cowrie shells constituted the currency in use at the time.
7. Each portion contained 42 pieces of each item.
8. Jean Kopytoff: *A Preface to Modern Nigeria*, p. 100.
9. Captain J.P.L. Davies was a West Indian who found success in shipping and

trading. Sarah Forbes Bonetta, a rescued slave girl, became his wife. Lt. Forbes captained the ship 'the Bonetta' which rescued Sarah. After being rescued, she was taken to Freetown where she received education and later had Queen Victoria acting as her god-mother. Davies Street in Lagos was named after Labulo Davies.

10. Aro Gate was the city wall gate in the area now known as Ita Iyalode (Iyalode Plaza) at Owo Quarters in Abeokuta.

11. Quoted in Delany's 'Report of The Niger Valley Exploring Party' p. 79.

12. Quoted unedited on pp. 79 and 80 by Delany in his 'Report'.

13. Charles Jones was Madame Tinubu's private secretary and it was he who delivered the letter by hand. He was a 'native'.

## POLITICAL LIFE

The position of wealthy men and women in the political arena of Madame Tinubu's time was important and, therefore, the fact that Efunroye influenced the political scenes in Badagry, Lagos and Abeokuta should not surprise anyone. Well-to-do citizens of the time achieved fame more easily through war or politics. Powerful and influential they invariably were.

Oba Akintoye became the Oba of Lagos in 1841, in succession to Oba Oluwole. While on the throne, Oba Oluwole had been a sworn enemy of Prince Kosoko who felt cheated in the race for Obaship after the death of Oba Adele I. The story has it that the devious and unethical tactics of the Ifa Priests consulted as to the choice of a new Oba led to the rejection of Kosoko in preference to Oluwole.

As a result, the aggrieved Prince threw down the gauntlet and refused to allow Oba Oluwole any peace throughout his reign, first cousins though they were. Kosoko challenged Oba Oluwole to war at every turn, to the extent that they remained bitter enemies to the very end.

Oba Oluwole died unceremoniously in a gunpowder explosion incident in 1844. After him reigned Akintoye who was a junior brother to Oba Adele I. At the time, Kosoko was in exile in Wydah, so he missed the chance of becoming Oba for the second time. As soon as Akintoye ascended the throne, he sent for Kosoko to be brought back to Lagos as a good uncle would naturally do to a nephew. Enquiries were made which revealed that Kosoko was in Wydah and Akintoye arranged for his return to Lagos.

Many of Akintoye's supporters and some chiefs, notably the Eletu Odibo, became offended by this magnanimity of

his but he weathered it all successfully. However, Kosoko had scarcely settled down than a cat-and-dog scenario commenced between him and Akintoye, his benefactor. Kosoko negated the axiom of two kings not ruling a realm by proclaiming himself another Oba and this further worsened the relationship between them. So protracted did the struggle between them become that Akintoye had to go on exile after Kosoko had gained an upper hand and displaced him on the throne of Lagos.

Akintoye decided on going to Abeokuta, his maternal home. Because the displacement of Akintoye from Lagos involved a bloody encounter between the followers of both aspirants, many of Akintoye's followers and supporters had to flee from Lagos as well. Madame Tinubu and her husband were two of them. They opted to go to Badagry where she had established a flourishing business before she followed Adele, her second husband, to Lagos in 1834. There, Madame Tinubu revived her trading activities, slave buying and selling being one of them.

On arrival in Abeokuta on exile, Akintoye entered into a situation just a little less dramatic. Again, the dramatis personae included Kosoko and some Egba Chiefs, among them Chiefs Somoye, Apati and Okukenu. Akintoye's maternal relatives were, of course, happy to see him come 'home' and only conceded to Chief Okukenu the right of playing chief host to the exiled Akintoye.

But Kosoko would not allow Akintoye to have peace – even in Abeokuta. He again plotted to have him killed through the agency of Apati, a war-chief. Kosoko sent gifts to Apati with a request that he should send Akintoye's head to him in Lagos.

However, Chiefs Somoye and Okukenu would not have any of that. According to them, Akintoye was their guest, and he must be protected at all costs. Both chiefs initiated diplomatic moves to ensure Akintoye's safety.

Contact was made with the Badagry chiefs with a view to handing over Akintoye to them for more secure protection.

Emissaries from Abeokuta and from Badagry travelled both ways, carrying messages from the chiefs, all in a bid to have Akintoye transferred to Badagry. Even the Christian missionaries became involved in these negotiations. On April 6, 1846, Rev. (later Bishop) Ajayi Crowther entered in his diary:-

Hearing that Bada, a respectable-looking man, belonging to Mewu's party, who was sent on a former occasion to fetch Akintoye from Abeokuta, was to be sent there again, about this peace-making business, Mr. (Later Rev.) Townsend and myself went on a visit to him in order to ascertain the time he would leave, that our messenger might accompany him with a message from us to Sagbua.<sup>2</sup> This man is an intelligent but a shrewd person and is a great advocate<sup>3</sup> for the slave trade.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of this and other missions, Akintoye was escorted to a point near Badagry and there handed over to representatives of the Badagry Chiefs. From then on, Akintoye came into safe hands. He was well cared for by the Badagry Chiefs. Madame Tinubu had by then become a person of note and a fledging politician at Badagry, and she threw in her lot naturally on the side of Akintoye who was both a distant cousin and brother-in-law to her former Oba-husband.

While Akintoye was still in Abeokuta, Madame Tinubu had had a hand in the moves to get him transferred to Badagry. Apart from the fact that Badagry was a sort of vassal town to Abeokuta and apart from the favourable disposition of Mewu and some other Chiefs to Akintoye's cause, Madame Tinubu had been a strong force mobilizing support for Akintoye in Badagry. Each time an emissary left Badagry for Abeokuta, a gift of gin and tobacco from Madame Tinubu to the Abeokuta Chiefs went in the diplomatic bag.

Not long after Akintoye got to Badagry, the strength of his supporters increased considerably. The number of those who had awaited him in Badagry and those who followed him

from Abeokuta got a boost from a fresh batch from Lagos. At the same time, Kosoko was relentless in seeking support from his friends in Wydah and other places in the Badagry sector. With time, the supporters of each of them grouped in and around Badagry, and a renewed clash between them looked imminent.

This threat further galvanized Madame Tinubu into action. Apart from rallying round a number of fighting men to reinforce Akintoye's followers, she ensured that the war-chiefs at Abeokuta were kept informed of developments. Of course, not without sending gifts in her usual manner. And the Abeokuta Chiefs were equally responsive to her diplomatic moves. A strong force, under Chief Sorin, was sent by them from Abeokuta to fight on the side of Akintoye in Badagry.

Inevitably, a fierce battle broke out between the followers of Kosoko and Akintoye at Iworo, a town a few kilometres to Badagry. This was undecided but other encounters following in a series of sporadic fightings ended one day in June, 1851 when Kosoko's forces were routed. These open skirmishes exerted hardships of food procurement on Kosoko's men whereas the same could not be said of Akintoye's forces who were supplied regular rations and ammunition by Madame Tinubu.

Consul John Beecroft's<sup>5</sup> intervention in the Akintoye-Kosoko struggle for the throne of Lagos was the decider of the final outcome at the end of 1851. He and Akintoye had met in Badagry in early 1851 and had had useful discussions. Akintoye addressed a lengthy petition to Beecroft, seeking help in his fight with Kosoko and the petition had invoked Beecroft's sympathy. Beecroft promised to assist him in every way possible. Of course, Beecroft and the Foreign Office in London had other reasons for wanting to help Akintoye fight his battle. Kosoko was anti-British and pro-Portuguese. The Portuguese were his collaborators in the trade in slaves and he had been corresponding with them freely in the Portuguese language which was then the 'lingua

franca' in parts of Lagos and the Epe area. So, Akintoye's call for help provided the British an opportunity to show Kosoko their displeasure.

Eventually, Beecroft sent a cruiser to Lagos from Fernando Po, his headquarters. When the crew of the cruiser attacked Lagos, Kosoko's forces put up a stiff resistance but were overwhelmed by the superior firing power of the cruiser. Kosoko fled to Origele, near Epe, and Akintoye regained his throne on Thursday, January 1, 1852. Thus ended the Lagos War of Succession. And with it, the completion of the first leg of Madame Tinubu's adventure into the political maelstrom of her days

The experience Madame Tinubu had gained in the Akintoye-Kosoko struggle in Badagry was to prove invaluable to her in the adventure which awaited her in Lagos after Akintoye's return. When she and her husband joined Akintoye in Lagos early in 1852, she met a free political arena in which to try out the strategies she had successfully experimented with at Badagry. As the adage goes, one good turn deserves another. Oba Akintoye allowed her a free hand as a gesture of appreciation of her support for him while in exile in Badagry. He granted her an expansive piece of land in a strategic location in Lagos.

But, more importantly, Madame Tinubu arrived to find a situation in which to exercise her penchant for fishing in troubled waters. The interplay of political intrigues between the indigenous citizens of Lagos on the one hand and the European merchants and missionaries and emigrants on the other was still unsettled. The various communities that had come to stay in Lagos had not yet learnt to live together in harmony. Besides, the hide-and-seek game between Kosoko and Akintoye still continued even after 1852 and Madame Tinubu was not the type of person to feel disinterested in the bitterness engendered by it.

Moreover, the decade of 1840-1850 was a period when the women of Lagos had no opportunity to play an appreciable role in the political and civic life of the town. Opo-Olu, the Erelu,<sup>6</sup> had been forced out of Lagos in 1836 through

intrigues hatched against her by the local powers-that-be and no one had yet replaced her by the time Efunroye appeared on the scene. She saw early that the women in Lagos virtually had no political or civil head at the time and she believed that the vacuum needed to be filled. If she could fill that niche, she felt, she would be giving the women a place in the scheme of things again.

She threw in every ounce of power in her into supporting Oba Akintoye on the throne. At the time, Kosoko continued to send raiding missions to Lagos with the hope of dislodging Akintoye once again. In March, 1853, when one of such attacks from Kosoko threatened, Madame Tinubu had to send word to the Chiefs of Abeokuta, urging them to send a force to Lagos to defend Oba Akintoye. The Chiefs at Abeokuta were agreeable and despatched a fighting force of 800 men, under Chief Somoye, to Lagos.<sup>7</sup> Of course, Madame Tinubu sent a handsome present to induce Egba chiefs to accede to her request. And great was the quantity of ammunition she had got ready for the Egba soldiers. The Egba forces were even lodged at her farm at Igbobi.

Apparently, this Egba force never found a war to fight in Lagos and therefore diverted their attention in another direction where they found Olomowewe as an alternative place to attack and pillage, probably at the suggestion of Akintoye whom they had come to help. Of this Olomowewe episode, Losi wrote as follows:

Among the booty taken was a tin box containing gold coins, belonging to a wealthy merchant (Mr. Coate) who was then trading at Orimedu.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately the gold coins taken as booty were of advantage only to the many householders in Lagos in whose houses the Egba soldiers were lodged. As gold coins were not much in use at that period, in the interior the Egba soldiers did not know the worth of them, and so exchanged them for pieces of cloths and cowries. The Egba soldiers commonly called gold coins 'Tanganran' — tin-pieces.

However, Madame Tinubu had successfully obtained military assistance from her home town for Akintoye and had thus, once again, demonstrated her political power to influence the cause of Akintoye positively. By the same token, after this diplomatic stroke, she became restive and was overconscious of her role as a power broker. She began to manipulate the running of the throne for her brother-in-law, Akintoye. The Oba had had so much problem in the past and now appeared weary, a condition which somewhat forced pliancy upon him. Whether Madame Tinubu sensed Akintoye's present state of mind or whether she was merely exhibiting her true nature is still not clear. But the stormy petrel of a woman began to teleguide the Oba, cautiously at first but with recklessness later.

These, no doubt, caused some ripples in the political hierarchy in Lagos. The chiefs became resentful. In the 'wars' between Akintoye and Kosoko – and even between Oluwole and Kosoko – some of the chiefs, notably the Eletu Odibo, Osodi, Posu and Ajeniya, had taken sides. This had caused a lot of dissension. Now, the disaffected ones started to capitalize on the new situation created by the Akintoye-Tinubu relationship.

Perhaps the first major crisis Campbell faced was the rebellion of the caboceers, Posu and Ajeniya. They took up arms and wanted to cause trouble in Lagos. Campbell invited them to a meeting. At the meeting Campbell asked them to state their grievances against Akintoye. The two caboceers stated that they had no grievance against Oba Akintoye as such. What they resented, they pointed out, was the influence Madame Tinubu was exerting on him. The caboceers insisted that the only condition under which they would cease fire was for Akintoye to expel Madame Tinubu from Lagos.

It should be understood that the two parties – Madame Tinubu on the one hand and the caboceers on the other – were traders, so their interests clashed.

Campbell passed the terms of the caboceers to Akintoye and asked him to react to it. After Akintoye had considered

the matter for a few hours, he agreed that Madame Tinubu should go.

Madame Tinubu packed all her belongings into boats and left Lagos for Badagry in mid-1853. But after her departure, the caboceros refused to surrender arms. While Fosu and Ajeniya were raising dust within the town, Kosoko and his forces showed up through the lagoon. However, Akintoye was saved by the appearance of the British gunboats.

Three months later, Akintoye died. And, after his death, Madame Tinubu crept back into Lagos without any fanfare. Howbeit, she had now had a foretaste of expulsion from Lagos. However, it did not affect her morale, nor did it bring about a change in her attitude to political issues.

Campbell, the innovative British Consul in Lagos, hurriedly installed Dosunmu as Oba in place of the departed monarch. This he did on September 2, 1853, even before most people in Lagos became aware of Akintoye's death. His motive was to pre-empt any other aspirant from coming to contest the stool with Dosunmu who was Akintoye's eldest son. Besides, he knew that Kosoko might seize upon the occasion to spring back to Lagos to lay claim to the throne as Kosoko was still determined as ever to fight his cause to the end.

As soon as Madame Tinubu returned to join Dosunmu's Lagos, she stood up to be counted once again as the Oba's supporter. By words and action, she made it plain to Dosunmu that she remained a pillar on which the new Oba could safely lean.

But while she treated Oba Akintoye with a measure of respect, regarding him as an elder, her attitude to Dosunmu was different. Realizing that Dosunmu was a junior 'cousin', she began to behave to him as an elder 'sister'. She began by riding rough-shod over the Oba, later becoming totally domineering.

Oba Dosunmu thus found himself in an uncomfortable situation. On the one hand was Consul Campbell who dictated instructions to him as if the Oba did not know how to rule his domain. On the other hand was Madame Tinubu who, apart from making her own impositions upon the Oba,

was relentlessly cautioning the Oba against obeying Campbell's orders. In effect, Oba Dosunmu found himself between the devil and the deep blue sea. One point needs to be realized, though. Her pre-emptory orders to Dosunmu had a nationalistic undertone: she did not want the Oba to be dominated by foreigners.

The economy of Lagos was on the downward turn in the first year of Dosunmu's reign, though not due to any fault of the Oba nor of his stars. Consul Campbell's policies had begun to have effect, that was why. At that time, the wealth of many people in Lagos had its roots in slave trading or the exploitation of slave labour. So, the success of the abolition of the slave trade was bound to be felt in the economy of the town. Both the rich and the poor started to feel the pinch and therefore became disaffected towards Campbell and other European merchants as well as the missionaries who were opposed to the slave trade.

Madame Tinubu took advantage of this situation in which she, herself, was a joint sufferer. She actively encouraged the smouldering embers of ill-feelings against the Europeans and some of the emigrants who were regarded as being responsible for economic hardships. Several meetings were held in her house by the dissidents. So efficient was her organizing machinery that this uprising nearly succeeded but for Sandeman and some others. And this attempt was to lead later to the demand for Madame Tinubu's expulsion from Lagos for the second time.

But this attempt to get rid of Campbell and others opposed to the slave trade was repeated once or twice over again although none could be carried out. The last one was in 1856. Still, it was Madame Tinubu who was the prime mover behind all these schemings. And she would have succeeded but for ill-luck and the British gunboat show of power.

As her wealth and influence increased, Madame Tinubu became power-drunk. She organized a mini-force of her own, although she was not alone in this. Sandeman, the English merchant, did the same thing. So did the key chiefs in Lagos.

all of whom had their own private defence corps and even prison cells. But Madame Tinubu fell into the temptation of issuing orders as the Oba himself would do. Her domineering control of the organs of state had encouraged puppetry in the Oba. And what was to follow was that Consul Campbell's insistence on her expulsion from Lagos gained the ears of Oba Dosunmu who ordered her out in the end.

Even in her last days in Lagos, Madame Tinubu demonstrated once again her political clout. Dosunmu demanded that she should leave Lagos the same day but she stayed for another five days during which she tried out her diplomatic charisma and found time to organize her domestic affairs.

Her command of the situation was reflected in the fact that she departed Lagos with virtually all her slaves and personal belongings intact. Even her convoy travelled under government escort provided by Consul Campbell, her sworn enemy. There was never a doubt that all her slaves remained loyal to her to the end. If they were not, they would have run to obtain documents of emancipation<sup>9</sup> from Campbell who was ever quick at issuing one to slaves prepared to take advantage of it and who would have been doubly happy to issue them to Madame Tinubu's slaves.

Madame Tinubu's shadow never grew less after her return to Abeokuta, her home town. She soon re-established herself as a force to be reckoned with in the political and civil spheres of the town.

For a start, the immediate problem she tackled was that of accommodation. Her mother's compound at Ojokodo, where she had stayed before her journey to Badagry, was no longer convenient for her and the retinue of slaves and housemaids who returned to Abeokuta with her. She needed far more spacious accommodation. Besides, she could no longer hob-nob with women in the compound she returned to. Her father's compound, Olumosa's Compound, at Ido Hill in Gbagura Quarters, did not appeal to her as it lacked adequate elbow room. And, of course, that compound brought back sad memories of the loss of her only two sons many

years before.

Her Uncle, Akinlawon Abese, now came to her rescue. Immediately following the settlement at Abeokuta in the 1830s, fires were very frequent and a lot of properties were destroyed in each fire incident. A desire to escape such fires had led a man called Adebukola to approach Chief Sodeke for a grant of new land where incidents of fire outbreaks would be less frequent. Sodeke did not object and he told Adebukola to go and search for a suitable location, after which he should come back to report where he had found such a site.

Adebukola consulted the ifa oracle and was given the description of a suitable parcel of land not far from Sokori Stream. According to the Ifa consultant, he would see an old Odan tree and a white stream.<sup>10</sup> Following this advice, Adebukola set out on a search. Not far from the Sokori Stream, he located an old Odan tree and he tethered his horse to the tree. He then walked around to search closely for the white spring. He did not search for long before finding it and he went back to report to Chief Sodeke who gave him permission to go and settle there.

After settling there, Adebukola felt lonely in an area which was, up till then, inhabited by wild animals. He therefore went back to Sodeke to ask for permission to look for volunteers who would be prepared to go and settle there as well. For this permission, Sodeke received a gift of 2000 cowries and 2 kegs of palmwine. Following this permission, Adebukola began to look for volunteers. One of those he invited and who volunteered to go to the Sokori area to settle with him was Akinlawon, a junior relative of Madame Tinubu's mother.

It was Uncle Akinlawon Abese who now offered Efunroye Tinubu land near his own house in the Sokori area of Owu Quarters. Madame Tinubu undertook a tour of the area and found it met her needs. She proceeded to build a house there for her own needs and for those of her household.

Her position and fame surpassed those of the settlers who preceded her in the area and the area was to be known later

as Lyalode Quarters after 1864. Her influence and the operations of her business dominated the area.

With her accommodation problem solved, Madame Tinibu now had time to devote attention to her pre-occupations — trade and politics. Before her arrival — in fact, since her Badagry days — Abeokuta had nearly won the honour of becoming the capital of the Bight of Benin. If that had happened, Lord Lugard would have probably set up his headquarters at Abeokuta. The near-event started with the arrival of the missionaries in Nigeria-to-be, following which they stayed briefly at Badagry only to move inland to settle permanently in Abeokuta. At Abeokuta, the missionaries met a large community and found a more hospitable climate, less humid and less mosquito-infested.

Dr. Vancouver, one of the missionary/doctors working with Townsend once recommended in one of his letters to London: 'You must put more and more Abbeokutans in Lagos so as to make Lagos the Abbeokutan port'.

Townsend and Gollmer, both missionaries, also never hid their fondness for Abeokuta and the Egba people. So also was Consul Beecroft from whom Campbell received the staff of office. In fact, the way Akintoye and Dosunmu showed an interest in Abeokuta and the manner in which Madame Tinibu was diverting trade towards her hometown did not please Campbell who took every opportunity to play down the importance of Abeokuta as a suitable place for the seat of government.

The cumulative effect of these frequent calls of attention to Abeokuta was that every European visitor to the Bight of Benin expressed an eagerness to visit Abeokuta. And when such visitors arrived, they usually sought private audience with the key personalities of the town. Friendly discussions were held and gifts exchanged. Madame Tinibu's name entered this protocol list as soon as she returned to Abeokuta in 1856. No one dared come without paying a visit to her home. She had an arrangement for holding dinners for such august visitors.

The first visitor of note to enter Abeokuta after her

arrival was Benjamin Campbell, the British Consul in Lagos. He came ostensibly to make friends with the Egba people but in reality to judge for himself all he had heard about the town and its people, and to spy on Madame Tinubu. The Egba people believed that he had come to strike an accord with them because they did not know the extent to which he had, in despatches to London, tried to paint them black while painting Lagos in lurid colours. He was well received and stayed for a total of eleven days. There is no record of his having met Madame Tinubu on this visit for a private talk. Evidently, Madame Tinubu would have shunned him, having just been expelled from Lagos only two years earlier by this same man.

The following year, Benjamin Campbell died in England. On his death, the Commander of the *S. S. Brune*, Lieutenant Lodder, acted as Consul. The substantive holder of the post, George Brand, came in November of 1859. This was an opportunity Madame Tinubu had been waiting for. In 1860, as soon as Consul Brand had settled sufficiently, Madame Tinubu wrote to him, asking for permission to return to Lagos. It was unlikely that her intention was to uproot herself from Abeokuta once again. Most probably, she needed the visit to renew acquaintances and to open a branch in Lagos for her export operations.<sup>12</sup> Whatever the motive was, her application was flatly rejected by Brand and that closed the chapter of her attempting to visit Lagos again until the end of her life.

That year — 1860 — the Ibadan-Ijaye War had just broken out. The Ibadan forces had laid siege on the Ijaye who were Gbagura people. In answer to the call for help by Kurunmi, head of Ijaye forces, the Egba people sent a strong force to assist the Ijaye people. The various merchants in Abeokuta contributed funds to provide comfort for the captives of this war but Madame Tinubu proved a lone-ranger on this occasion. She was supplying arms and ammunition to the Ijaye forces and making money in the transactions. Kurunmi relied mainly on her for supplies from Abeokuta, while the

Ibadan forces got their own supplies from the Ijebu people.

Of this incident, Martin Delany in 'Search For A Place', p.78 wrote as follows:-

On our return (to Abeokuta) from the interior, having previously made the acquaintance of, and had several interviews with, and visits to and from the Princess Tinuba (Tinubu), being called upon by her, I informed her that during our tour (Martin Delany and Robert Campbell's) I learned that she had supplied the chief of Ijaye with the means and implements for carrying on the war, which that chief was then waging against Oyo and Ibadan.

Madame Tinubu, however, refused to confess that she was, in truth, supplying arms to Aare Kurunmi. In her letter of April 3, 1860 to Delany, she denied: '... I return you my sincere gratitude for kind information gave me while at your house, and can assure you that all what you heard is false respecting my sending guns and powder to Arie (Aare), the Chief of Ijaye . . .' (unedited). This was Madame Tinubu's debut at unwittingly fueling wars through arms supply on arrival in Abeokuta. Many more opportunities were to offer themselves later.

Other visitors who called at Abeokuta in 1860 and interacted with Madame Tinubu included Martin Robinson Delany and Robert Campbell<sup>13</sup>, black Americans, who were sent to Africa by an Association of black Americans with a view to finding a place to which they could come to settle in.<sup>14</sup> These two visitors exchanged several visits with Madame Tinubu and discussed trade and political matters.

But this was not the first time Delany and Campbell had visited Abeokuta. In 1857, they had called at Abeokuta and recommended to their sponsors in America the suitability of Abeokuta for settlement by black Americans. They had held private meetings with missionaries and public meetings with the Chiefs and people of Abeokuta discussing various issues,

among which was the privilege for black Americans to come and settle in Abeokuta. The text of a Treaty which was signed in Abeokuta on December 26, 1857 is in Appendix IV.

There is no evidence that they were able to make contact with Madame Tinubu on this first occasion but evidently the story of her exploits which they must have heard prepared the grounds for the social contact later in 1860.

Then in 1861, it was no less a personality than Consul Brand's successor that was to visit Abeokuta. Henry Grant Foote, who was a former Commander of the *Prometheus*, took over in Lagos from Consul Brand who had died on June 15, 1860.

Foote was a well-wisher of the Egba people and had useful discussions with the Alake and the Chiefs. He wished Abeokuta peace, working to see an end to the Egba-Dahomey tussle and the Ijaye-Ibadan conflict. But for the fact that Henry Foote died later that year, he would have succeeded in getting a detachment of West Indian troops stationed in Abeokuta to put an end to incessant invasions by the hostile and warlike Dahomeans. As would have been expected, Foote, who was a former Commander of the *Prometheus*, pleasantries. Before Foote's departure, Madame Tinubu paid a visit to him at the residence of Mr. Andrew Williams where he lodged. She was accompanied by thirty market women. If a meeting between Foote and Tinubu had not taken place, the success of Foote's visit would have been one point less!

That same year, Consul Foote died and William McCoskry, Madame Tinubu's old friend in Lagos, became Consul in Lagos. Within the first six months of McCoskry's assumption of office, Oba Dosunmu and four of his Chiefs were lured into the *H.M.S. Prometheus*, Foote's former ship, and forced to sign on the dotted lines. And with that, Lagos came under the British flag until a hundred years later! There is no knowing now what role Madame Tinubu would have played had she been in Lagos, still 'guiding' Dosunmu at that point in the history of Lagos. Obviously, hearing of the signing of

the Treaty of the Cession of Lagos, Madame Tinubu must have nodded her head nostalgically and said, 'I said so, I saw it coming!'

It is rather strange that Madame Tinubu did not use her influence with McCoskry to improve the Consul's relationship with Abeokuta in 1861. McCoskry's interaction with the Egba was virtually the opposite of Foote's. He seemed to have come to the Consular office to overturn the stage set in place by Foote for Abeokuta's advantage. Could she have been so busy finding arms and ammunition to supply Kuruṣi that she had no time to spare for McCoskry at this time! The probable answer to Madame Tinubu's indifference is that she never liked the way McCoskry, once an ally of hers, even on the eve of her expulsion, had suddenly turned around to accept to be in a chair in which the 'detestable' Cambell once sat.

Be that as it may, developments elsewhere served as a magnet for her interests. The Egba declared war on Ijebu Makun in 1862, in retaliation for the support the Makun people gave to Ibadan during the Ijaye War. Madame Tinubu showed more than a passing interest in this war, through supplying gunpowder to Egba forces. Anything that affected the Egba people inevitably had now become of supreme concern to her. At the same time, the Dahomey forces were threatening Abeokuta with an invasion and the great woman continued to monitor events in that sector.

The Dahomeans attacked Isaga, a neighbouring town to Abeokuta, on May 15 and 16, 1862. They approached the town through forests to avoid detection and commenced strategies for sacking the town. Divisions were placed at strategic points outside the town walls and a strong detachment posted at intervals between Isaga and Abeokuta in order to prevent help coming from the Abeokuta people. In this, they did not want their experience of 1851, when Gezo led them, to repeat itself. At 8 a.m. on the 15th, the assault on Isaga commenced and, because little resistance was met, Isaga was laid flat within a matter of hours. More than 300

prisoners were harvested by the Dahomeans from this attack by Gilele, son of Gezo, and the prisoners-of-war were bound securely and taken back home. The C.M.S. House at Isaga was razed down and the Catechist, Mr. William Simeon Doherty, a Sierra-Leonian emigrant, and seventeen other people working with him were captured and carried off as slaves. Doherty and these assistants were eventually massacred at Kanna, near Abomey, around June.

All these happenings did not please Madame Tinubu. King Gilele of Dahomey had planned to attack Abeokuta as well but the spoils of war obtained at Isaga seemed to have assuaged his thirst and he took his troops and prisoners back home. But only to try again in 1863.

This time, Gilele camped his men on Ata Hill, a place near Old Ibara, in preparation for an attack on Abeokuta. There, they carried out spirited drills and tried out various formations as part of their preparations to score a decisive victory over the Egba people. Before Gilele marched out of Abomey, his home base, several entreaties had been made to dissuade him from making any further war with Abeokuta but he would not have any of it. He told Commodore Wilmot who was sent to him from Lagos: No, I must go there; they burned my father's behind, and I will burn their mouth.<sup>15</sup> And he indeed marched out with thousands of his forces, intent on avenging the defeat of his father twelve years earlier.

Madame Tinubu rose to the occasion, making her many slaves available for war and getting ready large quantities of ammunition for use by the Egba forces. Then the unexpected happened. While still getting ready to fall on Abeokuta, the Dahomean forces branched out to attack the little towns of Ibara and Keeson, capturing slaves and material possessions. But before actually launching the attack on Abeokuta proper, Gilele ordered his forces to pack bag and baggage and march back to Abomey!

Various reasons have been advanced for Gilele's sudden decamping and returning home. Fear was one of such reasons

given by some people, while another one was the effectiveness of the prayers said at the several prayer meetings held by the missionaries both in England and locally. The former seems unlikely. Gilele could not have suddenly developed cold feet after marching his forces for several days to the gates of Abeokuta. The latter could be correct, in that the prayers provided a means which disheartened him and his large army.

Madame Tinubu then kept his slaves back and rolled her gunpowder back into her stores on this occasion, only to be rolled out again, however, the following year when the third Dahomean attack on Abeokuta took place. The Dahomean amazons, having left Abomey since February 24, swarmed upon Abeokuta at daybreak on March 15, 1864 and attacked with all ferociousness. However, the Egba forces were not unprepared for the attack and so were able to repel them with disastrous consequences to the invading forces. This war provided Madame Tinubu with the golden opportunity to demonstrate her patriotism and readiness to throw in her entire resources at the disposal of the Egba forces.

Before the battle, she had organized the Egba women into a rallying force for emboldening the men-folk in readiness for the Dahomeans. Dancing round the town, the Egba women, headed by her, sang songs urging every man to take up arms and fight the Dahomeans. The women's war-cry - "Elelemele", meaning, let everyone reach for his own machete - was a slogan coined by Madame Tinubu on that occasion. She went from quarter to quarter in Abeokuta rousing up women for concerted action.

In addition, Madame Tinubu supplied guns and ammunition for the use of the Egba fighting forces. From her own resources, she procured rations for the fighting men. Besides, she set up first-aid bays where the wounded were treated. Whenever any chicken-hearted man tried to run back from battle, Madame Tinubu would drive such a coward back; if anyone feigned injury, she would have such a man quickly treated and send him back to join the forces. She

herself dressed like a warrior and took up a post near the Owu gate ready to fight if it became necessary.

This way, the Egba forces routed the invaders, pursuing them as far as Isaga and beyond. Thousands of Gilele's forces were either killed, wounded or captured. They had never suffered such a defeat before and they became so disgraced that they did not invade Abeokuta again until about ten years later. The Egba forces, suffered only a few dead and about a hundred men wounded.

After this war, the Egba people conferred the title of Iyalode, First Lady, on Madame Tinubu in appreciation of her bold deeds during the war. She thus became the second woman to be honoured with that title by the Egba people since the settlement in Abeokuta in 1830. There was now no one in doubt about Madame Tinubu's leadership qualities. More than ever before, she had now come into her own and felt ready to assert herself in the politics of the town.

The Ikorodu War came soon after – in 1865. The theatre of war being far from Abeokuta, the role Madame Tinubu was able to play was less prominent. She assisted the forces with money and material as much as she could afford. She would have done far more but she had just suffered great losses through the Abeokuta fires of the previous January when her home and stores were destroyed.

At this time, the paths of Oba Dosunmu and Madame Tinubu crossed again. Even in Abeokuta, Dosunmu had still not totally forsaken his 'aunt'. A sense of gratitude for her support for Akintoye and for Dosunmu himself had persisted. So it was no surprise that Oba Dosunmu despatched messengers, with his staff of office, to Abeokuta after this Egba-Ikorodu War. The delegation brought Madame Tinubu a message of cordial greetings and an expression of sympathy with the Egba for the reverses suffered by them in the war. As it happened, the Lagos Government had intervened in that war and thereby helped the Ikorodu people to dislodge the Egba forces from Ikorodu. While Dosunmu's messengers were on this trip, Dosunmu's staff was seized on the way! This staff was later sold at a public auction for

£2.10/- (N5) and purchased by a citizen who later returned it to the Oba.

In October, 1867, as a result of a misconception as to the role of the Christians in Egba affairs, the Christians were expelled from Abeokuta. The following year, three ordained priests of Sierra Leonian extraction attempted rallying their congregations for resuscitation of services. They had been ordained in Abeokuta before the expulsion of the Christians and had been serving in the town.

After the dust of the expulsion rumpus had settled down, the three ordained men were assisted by the European missionaries in Lagos through the recruitment of people to go to Abeokuta to reinforce them. One of these recruits, Mr. John F. King, arrived in Abeokuta in 1868. The first thing Mr. King did on arrival was to visit Madame Tinubu and Ogundipe, the Basorun, so as to monitor the current situation and know his own fate. Madame Tinubu and Ogundipe were favourably disposed and they both allowed Mr. King to commence services at Reverend Townsend's Church at Ake. And so, with Ogundipe and Madame Tinubu's support, Christian missionary activities were resumed once again in Abeokuta.

This incident bears out the relationship which, some claimed, existed between Madame Tinubu and Ogundipe. According to observers, they constituted a sort of law unto themselves. Between them, they ran court houses where cases were heard and settled. They imposed fines and encouraged the payment of corrupting money by both sides to every litigation. Whatever atrocities they committed, were committed with impunity.

Rev. Father Pierre Coquard believed that the only key actors on the political scene of Abeokuta at that time were Madame Tinubu and Chief Ogundipe and that both of them extorted money from litigants whether guilty or innocent. According to the Catholic priest, Madame Tinubu '... does not end ordinarily an interminable discussion until the two parties (to a dispute) have been wrecked (financially)'. Pierre Coquard's summing up of Madame Tinubu's character was

that it was 'less convenient and again less recommendable.'<sup>16</sup> A digest of the Rev. Father's assessment was that she was one in whose presence one felt less comfortable and of whom one formed a poor opinion.

The period after 1862 was one in which there was an interregnum in the position of the Alake. Okukenu had died on August 31, 1863. Chief Somoye, who had acted as Regent ever since Okukenu departed, also left for the beyond on August 8, 1868. The relative peace and sense of achievement since the Dahomey invasion of 1864 allowed the Egba people to turn their attention now to the question of appointing a new Alake. This became another occasion for Madame Tinubu to prove her mettle as a king-maker.

Prince Ademola and Prince Oyekan, both of them from the Jibodu family, contested the crown. Madame Tinubu was one of the personalities supporting the candidature of Oyekan. Others teaming-up with her to support Oyekan were Akoadu, the Seriki, and Solanke, the Balogun.

Prince Ademola had heavy-weights on his side, too. Leading his team of supporters were the all-powerful Ogboni Chiefs. Others were Ogundipe Alatise,<sup>17</sup> Osundare, the Nlado and many others. The tussle ended in favour of Ademola who was crowned the Alake in November, 1869.

But Madame Tinubu refused to accept defeat. J.B. Olujimi Losi, the Abeokuta historian, summarized<sup>18</sup> Madame Tinubu's stance on this issue beautifully thus:

After his (Ademola's) ascension to the throne, all his subjects were willing to recognise him as their king. However, Madame Tinubu, who was the bitterest enemy of Ademola, stirred up the people not to pay due homage to him as their king. As the Egba were not accustomed to pay allegiance to their kings before, they quickly yielded to the remonstrances of Madame Tinubu, who had formed all sorts of plots and intrigues; she even sent private message with present to the powerful elements in the country<sup>19</sup> to enable her to win their favours against the King.

This was true to Madame Tinubu's nature. But in spite of her, Ademola ruled as Alake from 1869 to 1877 when he joined his fathers on 9th September.

However, as soon as Ademola was gone, Madame Tinubu renewed the battle to install her own candidate at the Ake Palace. This time, victory was assured. With her usual generosity with gifts in cash and in kind, her own candidate won the contest. She presented Oyekan, her old candidate, for the throne, and he won hands down and was installed on January 18, 1879.

The year following Oyekan's ascension to the throne of Alake witnessed a significant step forward in the administration of Egbaland. Mr. G.W. Johnson, alias Reversible Johnson,<sup>20</sup> who had been expelled from Abeokuta in 1874 was to re-emerge on the political scene of Abeokuta. A Sierra-Leonian whose parentage was of mixed Owu and Ijesa blood, Mr. Johnson had introduced into Abeokuta in 1865 an innovative form of government with the high-sounding title of Egba United Board of Management (EUBM). Asalu, the Basorun, had appointed him Secretary of EUBM and Collector of Customs way back in 1865.

In this position, Reversible Johnson served the Egba government faithfully and honestly. Then he became disenchanted with the Egba Chiefs who were misled by Johnson's detractors. He was expelled in 1874 and went to Lagos where he settled down to the job of book-binding. After he had left Abeokuta, the job of collecting Customs Dues passed through many hands until the job was no longer being handled effectively.

In 1880, Oba Oyekan and the Egba, having acknowledged Reversible Johnson's usefulness and talent, invited him back to reorganize the shattered EUBM and to re-establish the Duty System. He accordingly returned to Abeokuta on June 24, 1880, after much persuasion. On his return, he continued to face opposition from some elements, notably the educated Creoles, who had contributed to his expulsion six years before.

However, on December 16, Chief Olasubu, the Jagunna of Kemta, was made the Seriki of the Egba. As soon as he attained this position, Olasubu spearheaded a rallying-support forum for G.W. Johnson. He and Sorunke, the Balogun, Ogundeyi, the Mogaji, Madame Efunroye Tinubu, the Iyalode, as well as the other subordinate Baloguns of the various quarters, resolved to come to the support of G.W. Johnson on the Duty System.

There is little surprise that Johnson won Madame Tinubu's support very easily. His restoration to his former post in the Egba United Board of Management was at the instance of Alake Oyekan, her candidate.

Oyekan, the Alake, died in 1881. Another interregnum followed his passing on. As the next Alake was not chosen until 1884, Madame Tinubu was no longer in the struggle to present or support a candidate. Old age had started to manifest itself in her political activities. She now contented herself with being an ex-politician and a respectable old lady.

Madame Tinubu's political life was, to say the least, stormy but worthwhile. It provided a platform on which later generations could, and did, build.

## Notes

1. Mewu was one of the chiefs in Badagry.
2. Chief Somoye was the Sagbua at the time.
3. Mewu and Madame Tinubu were joint collaborators in the slave trade.
4. This entry is in Bishop Crowther's diary, now available at the C.M.S. House, London.
5. Beecroft was the Consul for the Bight of Benin from about 1849 to 1852.
6. Erelu is the civil title for the head of all the women in a city. Opo-Olu occupied this post at the time. She was a wealthy woman and was falsely accused of being a witch. Opo-Olu fought strenuously to establish her innocence but her accusers, who were hell-bent on convicting her of the offence, saw to it that she was banished from Lagos.
7. At the time, Somoye was the Basorun of the Egba. J.B. Olujinmi Losi on page 69 of 'History of Abeokuta' says that Chief Somoye was assisted on the campaign by other war Chiefs, namely, the Seriki, Chief Akoodu, Sobogun of Kemta, Ogundipe of Ikija, Odunbaku of Ijaye, and Sowande, also of Kemta. A.K. Ajisafe in his own 'History of Abeokuta' believes Akoodu led the force. This could not have been so since Akoodu was the Seriki while Somoye was the Basorun - a higher rank.
8. Orimedu was on the way to the coastal town of Olomowewe.

9. Document attesting to the freedom given to a slave who had become emancipated.
10. Stream where the water passes through white clay, turning the water whitish in colour.
11. Madame Tinubu was installed Iyalode, Civil headship of all Egba women, after the Dahomey Invasion of 1864.
12. Some people believed that she wanted to return to Lagos because she had fallen in debt at Abeokuta. That was not so. Her business interests had expanded since reaching Abeokuta – it included a ginney and some exporting operations. Her intention was to pay a brief visit to Lagos and look after her real properties which some people had started to appropriate to themselves since her expulsion.
13. Not a relation of Benjamin Campbell, the Lagos Consul.
14. The account of their visit to Abeokuta and interaction with Madame Tinubu is contained in their book, *Search For A Place, Black Separatism and Africa*, 1860.
15. This reference was to the defeat the Abeokuta forces inflicted on Gezo, his father, in the war of 1851, when his father turned tail and was hotly pursued by the Egba troops who narrowly missed capturing him but nevertheless seized his royal stool and umbrella.
16. This opinion was expressed by Father Coquard in his *Memoirs* written in French in 1880.
17. It is rather surprising that Madame Tinubu and Chief Ogunripe Alatishe preached tents on opposite sides this time.
18. Page 92 of Losi, 'History of Abeokuta'.
19. Egbaland was then referred to as a 'country'. Nigeria was yet to be then.
20. Reversible Johnson changed his name to Osokele Tejumade Johnson in 1885. The appellation 'Reversible' derived either from his early days as a tailor who later turned administrator or from 'inconsistencies in his politics'. c.f. Jean Kopytoff.

## EXPULSION FROM LAGOS

IN THE Chapter chronicling Madame Tinubu's political activities, we have seen how she was first expelled from Lagos by Egbet Akitoye in mid-1853 and how she had returned after Akitoye's death. That was a temporary expulsion since it lasted only a few months.

On returning to Lagos later in 1853, the petrel of a woman had resumed her commercial and political activities. All these had stabilized sufficiently by the end of 1854. The years 1851 to 1854 were indeed her consolidating years in the town. Her trading activities had become lucrative and dynamic, and were known to be successful.

The missionaries, with perhaps the exception of Gollmer, were against her, particularly her slave-trading practices. She was also facing a barrage of hostilities from the emigrants and some of the European merchants. Then the meddlesome Benjamin Campbell came to throw more spanners into the works.

As the British Consul in Lagos, Campbell was supposed to represent the interests of Queen Victoria, which included the consummation of the ever-raging war to exterminate the trade in human beings. This latter aspect, Mr. Campbell pursued with utmost vigour. He relentlessly carried out every measure designed to make legitimate trade replace the trade in human beings. Even the white missionaries and European merchants who maintained slaves for domestic help in their homes were roundly condemned and openly castigated by the redoubtable Benjamin Campbell. His despatches to the Foreign Office in London were replete with reports of clandestine slave-trading activities by the local inhabitants and foreigners in Lagos, Madame Tinubu included. The most

famous and often-quoted was the one in which he wrote to report that ' . . . This hostile feeling increased to the extent of heading a conspiracy by some of King Docemo's domestic slaves, the Woman Tinnaboo (Madame (Tinubu), and some others, to get rid of myself by assassination and of the English Merchants and the leading men among the Sierra-Leone and Brazilian Emigrants, known to be favourable to the English either by association or forcible expulsion'.<sup>1</sup>

Just before the middle of 1854, Madame Tinubu had become aware that Consul Campbell never favoured her and her activities – political and commercial. And she knew that this hostility spelt doom for her. But she was equal to any opposition; she was not a lily-livered person who would allow Campbell's hampering tactics to erode her position and influence.

Besides her slave-trading activities, Madame Tinubu's overbearing attitude also constituted a sore point between her and the Consul. In her attempt to protect Oba Dosunmu from the wiles of his enemies and the weaknesses of his pliant nature, Madame Tinubu had constituted herself a hard driver. She dictated orders to the Oba and teleguided him in running the affairs of state. Madame Tinubu knew too well that she was the power behind the throne and she exhibited it too openly and more often than necessary. In doing all these, she stood between the Oba and Campbell who envied her influence and wanted to override the Oba in the way he liked.

Also, Madame Tinubu was a traditionalist who very much resented the incursion of the whiteman and his ways. She questioned the rationale of foreigners dictating the norms for sons of the soil. For instance, it was Madame Tinubu's belief that, if anyone should frown,<sup>1</sup> at slave-trading, it should be the local authorities represented by the Lagos Chiefs, and not foreigners. Another of her contentions was that it was wrong of the whitemen and the repatriates to look down on the local inhabitants as if only foreigners had decent manners and an acceptable culture and tradition. In the open court,

she had brazenly upbraided Oba Dosunmu for stooping to accept the opinions and judgments of foreigners as unchallengeable and overriding above that of any local adviser. And, on occasions, she and Benjamin Campbell had exchanged hot words in the presence of Oba Dosunmu and his courtiers.

In opposing the incursion of foreign influence and culture, Efunroye Tinubu was not alone. Her fears and suspicion of things foreign were shared by the majority of the people of Lagos of her day. But her tempestuous temperament, business circumstances and political stance made her be the champion to give vociferous expression to the feelings and aspirations of the people of Lagos of that time. The advent of foreign religions, trade practices and influences had come in a flood and was almost becoming suffocating to the Lagosians. Many felt — and quite rightly — that the influx of 'interlopers' was harmful to the interests of the people of Lagos. Spencer H. Brown in 'A history of the people of Lagos' commented (p. 34) that the people of Lagos 'meant the natives of Old Town. This terminology persisted into the sixties and later, all others being considered immigrants, foreigners, visitors, and unwanted interlopers. This latter attitude was especially common immediately after the restoration of Akintoye, for the influx of Europeans, Sierra-Leonians, Brazilians, Cubans, and Africans from other areas posed a serious threat to the vested native interests, the suppression of the slave trade bringing the most immediate loss and the most stubborn opposition. The opposition of 'outsiders' solidified because of continued economic competition and also because of differences in language and customs'.

Therefore, as a conscience of the people of Lagos, Madame Tinubu set about organizing an underground movement to retain the independence of the people of Lagos and beyond. There was no doubt as to the availability of the support she needed for this insurrection. Yesufu Bada, her husband, who was a minor war chief in Lagos, was solidly behind her, and so were many other individuals and groups. Her able-bodied slaves numbered hundreds and were ever

ready to take up arms at her behest. Dosunmu, the Oba, was similarly a passive supporter of any steps taken by Madame Tinubu to retain the status quo. The Portuguese merchants, who deposited money with her regularly for the supply of slaves under the credit system then in operation, also stood eagle-eyed behind anyone who was bold enough to bell the cat; they therefore surreptitiously aided and abetted Madame Tinubu's moves. If she succeeded, the better for them: they would have shouted 'hallelujah'!

Besides, all the Chiefs in Lagos, including those who<sup>2</sup> were in exile with Kosoko at Epe and elsewhere shared the aspiration of seeing the slave trade thrive. In effect, the condition was just right for a concerted plan to get rid of the 'interlopers'.

Not unconnected with this grand design of Efunroye Tinubu's was a violent eruption in Lagos on August 5, 1853. That day supporters of Oba Akintoye and those of the exiled Kosoko took up arms against one another. As a result of this disturbance in which firearms were freely used by both sides, many people fled their homes and sought refuge at the C.M.S. Mission Home. Here, they were provided necessary safety as Consul Campbell and the Reverend Gollmer were themselves resident at the C.M.S. Compound at the time.

It is not certain who started the fight as the accounts are conflicting. Some accounts accused Posu and Ajeniya, supporters of Kosoko, of provoking Akintoye's supporters to fight. Others alleged that it was Akintoye's supporters who attacked the residences of the supporters of Kosoko like Posu and Ajeniya, and thus forced those attacked to retaliate. However, the *H.M.S. Waterwitch* was in the Lagos bay at the time and Gardener, her Commander, sent his crew ashore to put the situation under control.

Even though peace was restored thereby, Benjamin Campbell attributed this disturbance to the formenting of trouble by Madame Tinubu. In the alternative, he believed, the rumpus was a result of the reaction of the people of Lagos to Madame Tinubu's dominance over Oba Akintoye.

And it is not surprising that Campbell easily found a scape-goat in a lady who was his sworn enemy and initiated moves to have her expelled from Lagos. He however, did not succeed on this occasion.

After this turbulence had subsided, both Campbell and Madame Tinubu buried the hatchet, or more accurately, swept the dust of their hatred of each other under the carpet. But only for a while, for in August 1854 an event, the sort which Madame Tinubu hated and had often fought against occurred in Lagos. At the time, Oba Dosunmu was completely under the suzerainty of Madame Tinubu. The *Constitution*, a frigate of the United States Navy, made a call in Lagos. The commander-in-chief of the American Navy, Commodore Mayo, was on board her. During a visit to the ship by Campbell and Dosunmu, Commodore Mayo produced a document which requested that all citizens of the United States should enjoy automatic protection in Lagos, similar to the privileges enjoyed by other foreign nationals. Without as much as raising a finger of protest, Oba Dosunmu and the six chiefs who accompanied him agreed on the spot and applied their thumb impressions to the document. Of course, Madame Tinubu upbraided Oba Dosunmu for this exhibition of weakness. And this did not escape reaching the attention of Benjamin Campbell, further worsening the tension between him and the iron lady.

At the same time, Campbell constituted himself the emancipator of slaves fleeing from their owners. As soon as a slave could reach Lagos and seek his protection, Consul Campbell would issue him with documents certifying him free and forbidding the owner from re-capturing him. This practice was found to be detestable not only by Madame Tinubu but also by many Lagos merchants and traditional chiefs. While many of the chiefs could not openly condemn Campbell for this, Madame Tinubu, by virtue of her wealth and position with the Oba, proved to be their blunt spokesman. She had always fought against the imposition of anything foreign or the predilection of the foreigners to downgrade the culture and traditions of the people of Lagos,

again on this occasion.

Madame Tinubu however, couldn't play hide and seek indefinitely. By the end of 1854, she was in the vanguard of a plot to put paid to Campbell's obstructionist tactics. He was to be got rid of. And Campbell was not to be the only person to go: some European merchants who were her trading rivals, as well as the Maros<sup>3</sup> were to be wiped off along with him. Secret meetings were held at night to discuss this matter and devise ways of carrying out the plot. These meetings were held in Madame Tinubu's house.

The carrying-out of the first of the series of plots was fixed for January, 1855. At the time, Campbell was a creature of habit who visited Grote,<sup>4</sup> his friend, every evening and returned after dark. He used to go on foot, as was the custom and circumstance of that time. Some of the slaves of Madame Tinubu were detailed to decapitate him as he walked past in the dark. But, somehow, the secret leaked out to Campbell. As a result, Campbell escaped the snare by moving house temporarily. Besides, he stopped going out at night as before.

However, a Brazilian repatriate, Antonio Martins, offered to defend the Consul, the English merchants and the other emigrants from Bahia, Cuba, Brazil and Sierra-Leone. A successful businessman, Antonio Martins had the financial and material resources to undertake such a defence. He had had his slaves numbering about 150 – well-trained in the use of weapons which he had in abundance. In the course of this para-military exercise, Martins was shot at but narrowly escaped being hit.

Consul Campbell found in this another opportunity to issue one of his pre-emptory orders to Oba Dosunmu. He ordered that the Oba should execute the person who shot at Antonio Martins<sup>5</sup> and give him a report that that had been done. In addition, he asked that Oba Dosunmu should expel from Lagos Madame Tinubu, who was the brain behind the whole plot, as well as one Mr. Khama and other known plotters.

A report was given to Campbell later that the person who shot at Antonio Martins had been executed but that was not

really done. Oba Dosunmu could also not find it in his heart to expel Madame Tinubu who was his strong supporter on the throne. However, Mr. Khama, one of the leaders of the coup plot, was executed and some of the followers were allowed to flee from Lagos to safety.

Madame Tinubu however, remained undaunted. Nor was Benjamin Campbell's opinion about her ever changed. In March, 1855, Campbell travelled out of Lagos to the Benin River. In his absence, William McCoskry, an English merchant, popularly known as Apongbon<sup>6</sup> (one whose beard is orange in colour), was made to act as Consul. Madame Tinubu took advantage of the temporary absence of her enemy to execute another plot to get rid of Campbell and people of like thinking with him. Even Oba Dosunmu himself got wind of this attempt and quickly took steps to safeguard his own life and property. The major items of his personal property were hurriedly evacuated from the palace and sent to the Consulate which had become famous as the only citadel in Lagos in times of trouble. The grand plan was that all the European merchants were to be expelled from Lagos or killed in the alternative. And, of course, the properties left behind by such merchants were to become booty for the plotters. Oba Dosunmu's property was also marked for looting!

However, this plot was not consummated – thanks to the fortuitous arrival of two British warships, the *Black Lydia* and the *Bright Hope*. It had, by then, become routine for British boats to patrol the stretch of the Bight of Benin as an exhibition of the readiness of Her majesty's government to keep trouble-makers in check in the area. And, as the trouble formers were not prepared to face gunfire, they quickly shelved their plot on that occasion. In a letter dated March 17, 1855, McCoskry reported the incident to Campbell thus:

Tinaboo (i.e. Madame Tinubu) and the caboceers were no sooner aware that you had gone to some distance . . . than they commenced their intrigues to get up a

disturbance; their grievance, is that Sierra-Leone and other immigrants are becoming masters of the town; that the king and natives are thrown altogether aside,<sup>7</sup> and that they would prefer being driven into the bush as they knew they would be on the arrival of a man-of-war, but, that in the meantime there was a good opportunity to attack and plunder the emigrants and merchants.<sup>8</sup>

From then on, ill-feelings between the Oba and Madame Tinubu began to heighten and, with time, festered progressively. In May of 1856 – two months after the coup attempt – the followers of Oba Dosunmu and those of Madame Tinubu took the sides of their master/mistress respectively and therefore clashed openly, killing one another in the affray.

Somehow, it became no longer hidden to Oba Dosunmu that Yesufu Bada, nicknamed Obadina, who was Madame Tinubu's husband at that time, played a key role in fanning the embers of hostilities between both sides and in the resultant disturbance. Oba Dosunmu, deciding to deal decisively with the situation, ordered the arrest of Bada Obadina. If the Oba could not confront Madame Tinubu, the tigress, he could at least cage her cub.

The servants of Oba Dosunmu arrested Bada<sup>9</sup> as ordered and locked him up in the palace cell. When this news was broken to Madame Tinubu, she felt terribly offended, if not insulted. Hurriedly, she organized an escort of the heftiest of her slaves and sped into the palace. The party arrived at a time when the Oba was holding a meeting with his Chiefs and Madame Tinubu violated all protocol by storming into the Council and engaging Oba Dosunmu in an exchange of harsh words. In the end, Oba Dosunmu ordered the release of Madame Tinubu's husband in obedience to her mandatory demand. This incident no doubt, resulted in a loss of face to his royal highness.

Consul Campbell seized the advantage of this stalemate to achieve his erstwhile objective of banishing Madame

Tinubu from Lagos once and for all. He approached Oba Dosunmu and renewed his order that the Oba should expel her from Lagos and to apply force if need be. And, of course, Oba Dosunmu could not disregard Campbell's order on this occasion because it was upon him he relied for support in this trying period. It was he who could easily beckon to the British Navy boats to come in to save the grave situation.

Oba Dosunmu therefore summoned courage and sent an order to Madame Tinubu to leave Lagos. As would be expected, Madame Tinubu at first resisted. In the course of negotiations, she pleaded for more time, arguing that it was too late for her to set out on a long journey to her home in Abeokuta. But Dosunmu was unyielding and thundered out that Madame Tinubu should not pass the night on Lagos Island: if the day had been too far spent for her to travel out, she should leave Lagos soil and pass the night at her kola-nut farm situated at Igbobi!

The first people to rise up in protest against this hostile treatment of Madame Tinubu were her household members. Her many slaves, whose motto had ever been 'be battle ready', took up arms and offered to fight in her defence. But Madame Tinubu forbade them so to do. Her political sense told her that this was not a situation requiring armed resistance; rather it was one which merited a diplomatic solution.

Surprisingly enough, William McCoskry, who had acted as Consul at the time Madame Tinubu and her cohorts plotted to expel Campbell and the European merchants, now took a stand against the expulsion and in support of Madame Tinubu. Also supporting Madame Tinubu actively were Mr. Hermann Grote, the German trader, and Mr. Sandeman, the Englishman. But they had their own reasons for standing by Madame Tinubu over the controversy of her impending expulsion. They were traders and Madame Tinubu was the most influential middleman between European traders and traders bringing trade items from Abeokuta and the hinter-

land. In this position, Madame Tinubu had taken vast sums of money as credit with which to supply them with goods later. To allow Madame Tinubu to be expelled like that would place their business interests in jeopardy.

Somehow, William McCoskry advised Madame Tinubu to hide in the home of a Sierra-Leonian, Mr. J.M. Turner,<sup>10</sup> while they negotiated with Oba Dosunmu for a rescission of his order. A bribe of money would be given to the Oba as grease to smoothen their pleading. Presumably, the money was to come from Madame Tinubu's personal resources.

Encouraged by the arrival of a cruiser, commanded by Kickley, to assist Oba Dosunmu, the Oba further announced that he would impose a heavy penalty on anyone harbouring Madame Tinubu in Lagos. As a result, Mr. Turner hurriedly produced the lady and delivered her to Messrs. Herman Grote and Sandeman to plead her case as they had offered to do.

But in the confusion in which Madame Tinubu's household was engulfed, the money proposed as a bribe could not be produced and so the negotiations failed. Sandeman and Grote's pleas were in vain as they fell on deaf ears. Inevitably, Madame Tinubu left Lagos on April 7, 1856, escorted by armed men provided, ironically, by Benjamin Campbell. Her destination: Abeokuta, her native homeland.

## Notes

1. Reported by Campbell in a letter dated December 7, 1854, written to Lord Clarendon.
2. The Chiefs who went with Kosoko to Epe were Ajeniya, Oshodi Tapa, and Ope-olu who then held the title of Posu.
3. Maro was a word used to describe all the emigrants in Lagos who returned from Sierra-Leone, Brazil, Cuba, and Bahia.
4. Grote, a German from Hamburg, was a merchant in Lagos at the time.
5. Antonio Martins was a repatriate from Brazil. He was a successful merchant in Lagos and he associated with, and dressed like, the Europeans.
6. McCoskry had first established trading business in Badagry, giving out goods like cotton, salt, manillas, rods and gunpowder out on credit. He later moved the seat of his business to Lagos. Eventually, he set up a branch of his business at Lokoja and, in fact, lived at Lokoja for a while. Apongbon Street in Lagos was named after him. He would have been better known had the Street been named 'McCoskry Street'.
7. This had always been Madame Tinubu's contention. The nationalist spirit in

her was forever fighting the cause of the sons of the soil and would never allow her to subscribe to the idea of foreigners dominating the social, political and economic life of Lagosians.

8. This letter was quoted on page 103 of Jean H. Kopytoff: *A Preface to Modern Nigeria*.
9. Yesufu Bada got this appellation through his often-repeated saying: 'Oba dina mo keferi, o silkun fun imale', meaning, 'God has blocked the way of the unbelievers and created a wide opening for Muslim believers'. Obadina Street in Lagos was named after him. It is said that the present Mosque at Obadina Street — reputed to be the first in Lagos was built by him as a mark of his devotion to the Muslim faith.
10. J.M. Turner was an Egba man. He had been captured a slave but got liberated at Sierra-Leone. He returned to Lagos in 1853 — just around the time Madame Tinubu returned from Badagry. He once served on the Egba United Board of Management.

## RELIGIOUS LIFE

The 'iron Lady's religious life was not as complex as her commercial and political life but was equally of great significance. Her life was not wrapped up in her religion as commerce and politics were.

At the time Madame Tinubu was born, no one knew any religion other than the traditional ones. The Christian and Muslim religions were then unknown in the Egba Homeland. In her father's family at that time, the religion embraced was that of the worship of Orisa-nla, the god of creation. This is evidenced in the name 'Efun-' (White Chalk) given to her at birth by her father. White chalk is a symbol of Orisa-nla, and the name of children from such a family are preceded with 'Efun'.

Her departure from Abeokuta for Badagry through her marriage to Adele, however, weakened the influence of Orisa-nla on Efunroye's life. The god was not known in Badagry and, for the time being, her interest in the religion faded out.

On her return to Badagry in 1845, Christianity was in its incipient stages in the coastal town. But the new-fangled religion did not catch Efunroye's fancy. Her interest in trade was deeper than in anything else. Aspirants for the embrace of Christianity were struggling to learn to read and write but Madame Tinubu couldn't be bothered by all that. She was enjoying a lucrative trading atmosphere as well as the favourable political climate. Those were enough to occupy her full attention for then.

But, perhaps, what put her off from pallying with Christianity was the holier-than-thou attitude of those early missionaries. They resented, and played down, the traditional religions and never saw anything good in things 'native'.

Besides, they preached against the trade which she profitted in.

Her disinterestedness in Christianity continued when she moved to Lagos. She avoided the Church severely and no effort was made by the missionaries to sweep her into the Christian net. A cordial relationship with her plus gentle persuasion could have led to her regeneration which, in turn, would have made her embrace Christianity.

By the same token, Madame Tinubu kept the missionaries at sufficient distance. They stood against slave-trading, Madame Tinubu's major 'article' of trade while at Badagry and her side-line on arrival in Lagos. Thus, she knew that her activities were never looked upon with favour by the missionaries. That aside, there was the tendency in those early times to thrust the burden of learning to read and write on those converted to Christianity. Efunroye Tinubu had neither the time nor inclination to sit down to do that. And that stood permanently in the way of her embracing the Christian religion.

Again, the fear and distrust on both sides were mutual. Madame Tinubu distanced herself from the Christian missionaries who, in turn, gave her a wide berth. Efunroye Tinubu hated their undue influence in her trading activities and the missionaries were also afraid of such a personality who could easily organize hostility against them.

In the interest of self-preservation, each side felt that it was better to avoid the other.<sup>1</sup> On Madame Tinubu's part, she did not trust those of the missionaries who were genuinely anti-slavery as they constituted a potential danger to an important line in her chain of businesses. They were capable of inciting hostilities against her as Benjamin Campbell was doing. The missionaries, on the other hand, were not unaware of Efunroye Tinubu's powers and influence and what she could do should she decide to rake up hostilities against them. She could successfully engineer their expulsion. If she could hatch a plot to get rid of the British representative, what else was she not capable of doing to others less important! The result was that Efunroye Tinubu never con-

ceived the idea of becoming a Christian.

On the other hand, the Muslim converts<sup>2</sup> in Lagos at that time were not too demanding and the Muslim religion held out a promise of easy acceptance to Madame Tinubu. But, at the same time, her honeymoon with the Muslim religion was not all that firmly-based. She did not learn Arabic, even its rudiments; and so she could not, and did not, say the five daily prayers required of a faithful.

Her contact with the Muslim religion came about mainly through marriage. Alfa Bada, her husband, was a devoted Muslim who built a mosque known as Obadina Mosque.<sup>3</sup> The Mosque, still located at Obadina Street near Faji Market on Lagos Island, is reputed to be the first mosque built in Lagos. So, being the wife a Muslim faithful, it was natural for Madame Tinubu to claim to share in the Muslim faith. Particularly worthy of note is the fact that, at the height of her fame and influence in Lagos, Yesufu Bada was the leader of the Muslims in Lagos. Bada took over leadership of the Muslims when Ajeniya voluntarily went into self-exile by following Kosoko to Epe.

Another dimension which added to Madame Tinubu's interest in the Muslim religion was the development of an interest in Arabic Charms just around the time she moved to Lagos with Akintoye. Until that time, people in Lagos in particular and Yorubaland in general, knew and trusted nothing but the local charms and incantations. When the Alfas<sup>4</sup> came to Lagos, they brought with them knowledge of charms of the Arabs. As it was an innovation, people considered these Arabic charms to be more effectual than the traditional ones and so the people embraced them with both hands. Madame Tinubu was one of these people.

In effect, while Efunroye Tinubu considered Christianity to be synonymous with the abolition of slave trade and with undue challenge of native authority represented by Chiefs and Kings, she could not say the same thing of the Muslim religion. Instead, she found the Muslim religion more acceptable and helpful to her.

Still, Madame Tinubu's embrace of the Muslim religion was only peripheral. It was customary for a Muslim convert to take an Arabic name upon assuming the faith. Madame Tinubu did not take any name like that. Her deep faith lay elsewhere. While she professed the Muslim faith during her Lagos days, she appeared to renege after her return to Abeokuta.

However, there is a deep-rooted reason for this. While Orisa-*nlá* was the religion of her father's family, that of her mother's was Osun. This goddess was what her mother worshipped and practised in her own day. And as Efunroye had leaned more to her maternal family's side, the worship of Osun had become deeply ingrained in her since her early life. Then, of course, the worship of Osun offered her a tantalizing attraction: Osun, being the goddess of fertility, offered her the promise of having another child.

Upon her return to Abeokuta, therefore, Madame Tinubu dusted up her mother's Osun image, made a new one of her own, and started to bow down to the two. Madame Tinubu became now, at heart, a worshipper of the Osun goddess but an outward adherent of the Muslim religion. But, in those early times, it was common to see adherents of either the Muslim or Christian religion keeping double allegiance like Efunroye's.

That she remained faithful to the Osun goddess throughout the rest of her life is borne out by the fact that the image of her goddess is still retained till today in the hut housing Madame Tinubu's resting place at Iberekodo in Abeokuta. The symbol of this goddess, a water pot around which a spotless white cloth is tied, is very prominent in the said shrine. The pot belonging to Madame Tinubu's mother lies alongside her own although her own pot is bigger and more prominent than her mother's. There is no better testimony that Madame Tinubu's religion was that of the worship of Osun.

However, Madame Tinubu's partial faith in the Muslim religion persisted throughout her life in Abeokuta after

returning from Lagos. As she had done in the case of Momoh Abubakar in Lagos, Madame Tinubu hired another Mallam to act as her personal priest and charm-maker. This time, she went to Fulani 'country' to recruit one. His name was Abdullahi. Abdullahi remained with Madame Tinubu in Abeokuta and did not bother to go back. Madame Tinubu put up a separate building for this Alfa within her premises and he settled there for the rest of his life. Abdullahi felt so much at home – thanks to Madame Tinubu's generosity – that he married locally and raised a family of his own. Throughout her life, particularly in her later years, Madame Tinubu used to single Abdullahi out as a free citizen who should never be regarded as, or counted among, her slaves.

### Notes

1. J.F.A. Ajayi points this out in his book, *Christian Missions in Nigeria*. Her non-fraternity with the European missionaries probably explains why her photographs are hardly available. The missionaries monopolized the possession of cameras.
2. Muslim converts at that time were called 'Mohammedan's, a name since repudiated by the present-day adherents.
3. Mosalasi Alalukurani is a Yoruba expression meaning 'Mosque of the Koran people'.
4. The Alfas were the Muslim scholars deep in Arabic language and culture.

### 'LAST OF PRINCIPAL ACTORS'

The year 1887 was a year of the deaths of the 'greats' for Abeokuta. Henry Robbins, the Ake nobleman, was in the vanguard: he died on March 5 of that year. Chief Oguncipe Alatise, Madame Tinubu's comrade, followed: he died on August 18. Madame Tinubu was destined to bring up the rear at the end of that year.

She had enjoyed good health throughout her years in Badagry, Lagos and Abeokuta. There is no trace that she had any health problems. Her short, stocky build was every inch an epitome of sound health. In the last quarter of 1887, she stopped attending meetings of the Alake and Chiefs of which she was a member by virtue of her being the Iyalode of the Egba. On or about December 1, she was said to have fallen ill and in the afternoon of the following day, she breathed her last. Outside of her immediate family and household members, not many heard of her illness.

Auspiciously enough, her death fell on a Friday. The news of her passing on was received with shock by the high and the low in Abeokuta. As there were no mortuary facilities, preparations for her burial were commenced as soon as the Alake and the chiefs had been informed according to custom. Drums started to sound to further spread the news of her death. Guns and crackers were fired endlessly to herald the beginning of the burial rites.

The Chiefs of Abeokuta paid official visits to her home to see and confirm for themselves and to express their condolences. Crowds of people teemed into her Owu premises, more out of sheer curiosity than anything else. There were even some whose motive was to lift anything they could lay hands on. They felt that, because she had no surviving children,

many of her belongings could be inherited by anyone.

In her last days, she had indicated to family members where she wanted to be buried. In spite of her own extensive residential and business premises at Owu Quarters, she asked that she should be buried in her maternal compound at Ojokodo Area in Abeokuta. Her mother had been buried in a house there and Madame Tinubu would rather have her own resting place in the area where her mother had rested. As a result, a strong detachment of her slaves was quickly drafted to the family compound at Ojokodo to commence preparing her grave in preparation for the burial.

Saturday, December 3, promised to be a great day in Abeokuta. Echoes of a cacophony of sounds marking Iyalode Tinubu's burial day reverberated in every corner of the town. Markets in the town were closed as women set the day aside as a mark of honour to their revered leader. As early as 8 o'clock in the morning, Abeokuta Women had assembled, some at Owu Quarters, some at Ojokodo Quarters, chanting Ege praise poems. But later in the afternoon, the quiet chanting performances had transformed into a mass rally in which they moved briskly around the town, singing and dancing wildly to the accompaniment of talking drums.

The menfolk were also not to be left out. They came out in their best dresses, intent on honouring their great heroine. Every drumming group of importance in Abeokuta came out with their instruments, each struggling for a prominent position. As crowds cheered and danced, acrobatic dancers competed to steal the show — all in an effort to honour Madame Tinubu. Food was prepared in abundance and freely served to all and sundry. Drinks flowed like the Ogun River.

The chiefs in Abeokuta, realizing that she had left no children, rose up to the task of giving a fitting burial to the great woman who had been one of their own number.

Her body lay in state for many hours before it was conveyed from Owu Quarters in the afternoon. The coffin was carried by hand in the midst of a large funeral procession

stretching for about a mile. As the procession found its way to Ojokodo Quarters, able-bodied men cheered. Women chanted Ege praise-words, extolling her fame and wealth. Chiefs rode on horseback. Wealthy merchants dressed gaily and displayed their broad, multi-coloured umbrellas. Hunters preceded the funeral procession, firing countless salvos into the air.

After her body had been committed to mother earth, the rest of the weekend was devoted to merriment and feasting. No honour more grand could have been done her had she been survived by a dozen children. Throughout the night, and spilling into Sunday morning, women chanted Igbalá dirges.<sup>1</sup>

Because of distance and limitations of communication facilities, the news of her death did not reach Lagos and other places until days later. And when it finally did, it created the same sensation as it did in Abeokuta – for those who knew her life's triumphs and tragedies.

The *Lagos Observer*, reporting her death, editorialized as follows:

(Madame Tinubu) played no mean part in the circumstances which necessitated British interference in the death struggle between Akintoye and Kosoko for the Lagos throne, and led to her expulsion in 1853!<sup>2</sup> She was, by the way, the last of the principal actors in this historical drama. She left many an indelible mark, too, in Egba history. Requiescat in pace!

And, indeed, the last of the actors she was. Oba Dosunmu had died two years before. Benjamin Campbell had joined the beyond much earlier – in 1859. Kosoko, too, had died in 1872. The Reverend Gollmer and the ubiquitous William McCoskry had also died before her.

Because she did not have any child to survive her, Madame Tinubu's properties became the subject of scrambling and unusual jostling after her death. The whereabouts of many of her properties are, therefore, now difficult to trace. No one can now point to the very house where she lived at Owu

quarters because a cloister of houses has since replaced it.

Her papers – which were many by the standards of that time – are now lost to historians and researchers. In the course of her political and business life, she entered into correspondence with many key people, far and near. She kept business records of her trading transactions. Her Secretary, Charles B. Jones, apart from attending to her correspondence, also kept strict accounting of all monies owed to her boss and those owed by her. All these are now lost to posterity.

Many as her slaves and other household hands were, Madame Tinubu could identify all of them. Of course, she had an adequately-remunerated staff assisting her to look after her vast properties. Some of the older slaves were also entrusted with some supervisory powers; some were given duties which properly belonged to one's own children. This accounted for the misappropriation of valuable belongings which they alone knew about after Madame Tinubu was gone. Land holdings, for instance, were some of such properties grabbed by slaves after her death.

Her clothes – those that could be gathered intact – were shared by her close relations. Her trinkets – vast to the count – went to relatives as well.

The case of her many slaves created a unique situation. Members of the family of her first husband rose to claim a right to her slaves. According to tradition, they were Madame Tinubu's 'husbands' and 'fathers to her children' even though not living. They started to demand redemption payments from the slaves. Many of these slaves found money to buy their freedom. But many of them could not and did not pay; such won themselves gratuitous emancipation. Those of them who could no longer trace their homes or family connections stayed around and gradually became absorbed by the non-slaves.

Her landed properties in Lagos became the subject of protracted court litigation in Lagos in the first half of this century. Her slaves, who knew the whereabouts of such properties, had started to sell them.

The post of Iyalode of the Egba, which she filled for twenty-three years, remained vacant for many years after. No woman of equal, or even near-equal, stature emerged in the Egba firmament throughout the rest of that century. Her successor, Madame Miniya Jojolola, was appointed only in the next century.

Photographs of Madame Tinubu are rather rare as she did not pose for many. This tragedy is attributable to her attitude towards the missionaries and European government functionaries. Those were the people who possessed cameras at the time. Madame Tinubu resolutely refused to come under the influence of any of these two classes of people. No one therefore could have felt inclined to request her to pose for a portrait.<sup>3</sup>

But memorials of the great woman are, nevertheless, not hard to find. Tinubu Square in Lagos which was named after her, is the centre of Lagos and now the cynosure of all eyes. No one can claim to know Lagos until he has visited the Square. Tinubu Street, which links the Square with the Anglican Church Cathedral in Lagos, is another constant reminder of the mark the noblewoman made in the political and commercial life of Lagos. The face-lift given to Tinubu Square in 1987 by the Lagos State Government is a befitting memorial to Madame Tinubu in this year marking the centenary of her death.

In Abeokuta, Ita Iyalode — Iyalode Quarters — situated in the Owu area, is an eternal memorial to Madame Tinubu's name. Even her maternal family compound at Ojokodo Quarters in Abeokuta has metamorphosed into Iyalode Compound — after her Chieftaincy title. Her modest tomb in a humble building in that Compound has become, of late, a tourist attraction in Abeokuta.

Madame Tinubu not only traded in arms and ammunition. She also had a stockpile in her home for the use of her private defence corps should the need arise, even though such occasions were rare. The remnants of her amourey were two cannons which were recovered after her death and were

eventually placed in public places in Abeokuta.

One of these cannons was picked up by Commissioner P.V. Young<sup>4</sup> who got it mounted up at the gate to the Residency<sup>5</sup> on Igbein Hill in Abeokuta. This was recently wantonly bulldozed by workers using caterpillars which were working on additions to the premises. The other cannon was removed to Ago Owu Hill where it is still very much in place in front of the palace of the Olowu of Owu. And with these two reminders of Iyalode Tinubu's life and times, the Egba community cannot now boast of not being part heirs to her inheritance.

### Notes

1. Igba is a genre of traditional chants for funeral occasions.
2. The newspaper did not realize that she was actually expelled from Lagos in 1856, and not 1853.
3. Enquiries have revealed that she sat for a group photograph with Lagos market women. In the photograph, she sat in the middle. The photograph was found in the possession of the late Oged Macaulay, son of the late Herbert Macaulay. Mr. A.Y.S. Tinubu, a journalist and member of the Tinubu family, who had seen the photograph, described her in the photograph as a bit plump and with a face oval in shape.
4. Commissioner Young was the British Commissioner in Abeokuta from 1909. He was reputed to have introduced the new ideas of a steam carriage and corn-mill to Abeokuta.
5. The Residency is now Governor's House in Abeokuta.

## HER LIFE RE-VISITED

A hundred years is long enough for posterity to take stock of Madame Tinubu's life. And it is against the background of her days and generation that her life should be weighed if any justice is to be done her.

Firstly, the sense of morality of that time – of doing right or wrong – is markedly different from the perception we have today. Her days were days when people regarded slavery as a legitimate way of making money; days when disapprobation did not attend the practice of human sacrifice; a period when a monarch would be buried with live human beings; a period when might was right.

Trading in slaves and employing slave labour for the furtherance of her commercial pursuits could not and did not, hurt Madame Tinubu's sensitivity as it would have done to anyone today. The level of understanding and ethics in her time was that low. Cruelty to one's fellow human being meant little to the average citizen of that period. That should determine the yardstick by which we now measure Madame Tinubu's life and activities.

Then, of course, it should be remembered that, even on the issue of possessing slaves, Madame Tinubu was not as greedy as other wealthy personages of her time. Opo-Olu, the Erelu of Lagos, reportedly had over a thousand slaves, as opposed to Efunroye's recorded number of 360. Efunsetan Aniwura, the *Iyalode* of Ibadan, was reputed to have owned about 2000 slaves at the time.

Besides, Madame Tinubu's approach to treating slaves was different from those of her contemporaries. Hers was humane. She did not treat her slaves cruelly as Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan was in the habit of doing. She fed them well. She was tender and generous to her slaves and, in turn,

her slaves reciprocated her tenderness by standing firmly by her in times of trouble.

But this is not to totally absolve her of the very act of slave trading. The British Consuls and missionaries did their best to warn her but she was adamant. And the very suggestion to Domingo Martinez, (if it was true) that she would rather drown her twenty slaves<sup>1</sup> than sell them at a discount makes her stand condemned.

She brooked no rivalry in trade matters and she was an aggressive money-maker. But then she had no other thing in life to console her other than riches. The pain of childlessness was enough to make anyone of her period become money-crazy.

The way she championed the cause of the oppressed was a credit-earner for her. She supported Akintoye until he was restored to the throne of Lagos and even supported him to the end. She fought relentlessly to rescue Dosunmu from the impositions of the foreigners. If she believed in a cause, she strove to see it triumph: as in the case of her support for Oyekan.<sup>2</sup>

She was a woman very capable at mobilizing the masses for a cause just as she did in Lagos and when the Dahomean hordes invaded Abeokuta in 1864. Her platform included, largely, the run of the populace of her time. Swept into her net was a huge crop of slaves and the common men and women — and even the elite — in Lagos, Badagry, and Abeokuta. Most of them simply rose up at her command.

Much as she was accused and maligned, it is to her credit that she was equally a motivator for the growth of legitimate trade. She was a leavening influence for the production of cash crops among the people of Abeokuta and other areas. By housing traders who came to Lagos to sell their cotton and palm produce, as well as providing warehousing facilities for their goods, she served the useful purposes of promoting the development of trade. She helped the European traders who needed produce and blessed the local traders who needed outlets for their cash crops.

To further appreciate her beneficial role, it should be realized that the people both on the coast and in the hinterland were, before her period, simple farmers, hunters, petty traders and craftsmen who eked out mere existence from their poor earnings. The expansion in the production of cash crops like palm-kernel and cotton, and which meant more money for the people, came around Madame Tinubu's time and she was a major actor in this development.

Another accusing finger being pointed at her was on the question of her several marriages. One predisposing reason for her trying several husbands was that she badly wanted to have children to replace the two sons she had lost earlier on. It was usual for women in those days to try another husband if their existing husband could not give them a child; similarly, men tried other women for the same reason. It was not that she was lewd.

Madame Tinubu was a great entertainer. She lavishly entertained important personalities each time the need arose. In Lagos, she had the appropriate setting for entertaining guests. In Abeokuta, she adopted a different method. She would go and receive her guests at a prestigious home less crowded than her own. As a good hostess, she would engage her guests in long discussions to make them feel at home. And, of course, she exchanged gifts with them.

Yes, Madame Tinubu was a slave dealer. But what wealthy person of her time — Oba, chief, or commoner — could boast of having acquired his or her wealth without trading in slaves or employing slave labour? The wealth of most people in the nineteenth century derived from slavery and it should not now surprise anyone that Efunroye Tinubu also benefited from slave trading. She exploited slaves to amass her great wealth, to fight her battles, and to do her domestic chores.

In summary, Madame Efunroye Tinubu was an able politician, tactician, business-woman, king-maker, philanthropist, a good manager of men and material, arms and ammunition supplier, a slave dealer, war leader, and a nation-

nalist. Within the fabric of her life and society she wove a dynamic albeit ruthless trade with nationalistic undertones. She was a noble pre-Nigerian woman.

It is a sad pity that she was not literate. If she had been, the nationalistic spirit in her would have bloomed the more!

The monument presently being contemplated to be erected in Lagos in honour of this dynamo of a woman is bound to be a fitting memorial to Madame Tinubu. The interest currently being aroused in Madame Tinubu's memory in Abeokuta is also quite welcome. But the greatest honour Abeokuta should give to her is a befitting monument.

### Notes

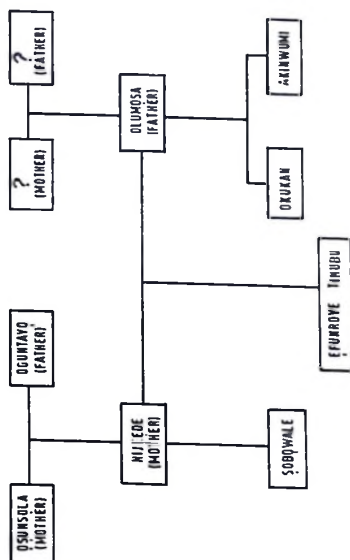
1. Refer to the Chapter on her Commercial Life for the story of the Amadio-Ojo Affair where the incident of these 20 slaves was narrated.
2. See the Chapter on her Political Life.

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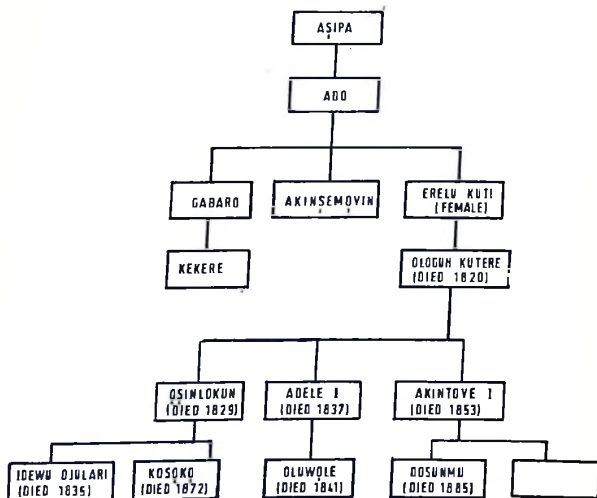
# APPENDIX I

Efunroye Tinubu's Family Tree.



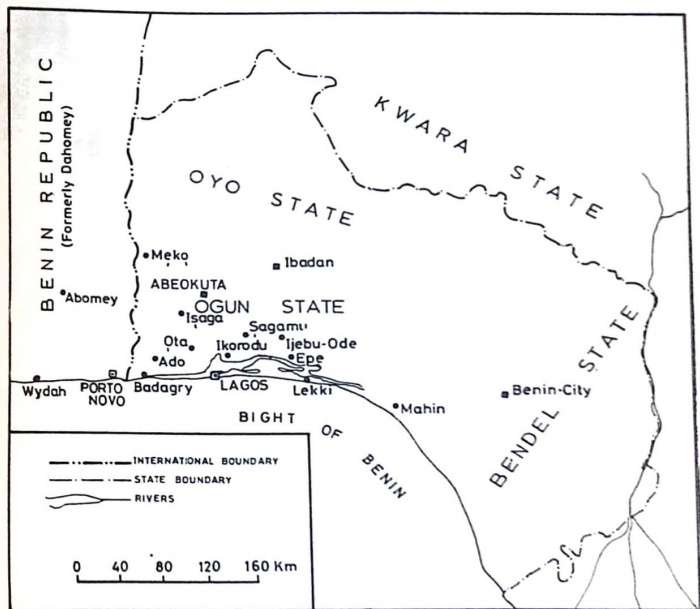
## APPENDIX II

### Lagos Obaship Tree (18th and 19th Centuries)



### APPENDIX III

#### South-Western Nigeria



## APPENDIX IV

### TREATY

This Treaty, made between His Majesty. Okukenu, Alake: Somoye, Ibashorun; Sokenu, Ogunbona, and Atambala, Chiefs and Baloguns, of Abeokuta, on the first part: and Martin Robinson Delany, and Robert Campbell, of the Niger Valley Exploring Party, Commissioners from the African race, of the United States and the Canadas in America, on the second part, covenants:

- ART. 1.** That the King and Chiefs of their part, agree to grant and sign unto the said Commissioners, on behalf of the African race in America, the right and privilege of settling in common with the Egba people, on any part of the territory belonging to Abeokuta, not otherwise occupied.
- ART. 2.** That all matters, requiring legal investigation among the settlers, be left to themselves, to be disposed of according to their own custom.
- ART. 3.** That the Commissioners, on their part, also agree that the settlers shall bring with them, as an equivalent for the privileges above accorded, Intelligence, Education, a Knowledge of the Arts and Sciences, Agriculture, and other Mechanical and Industrial Occupations, which they shall put into immediate operation, by improving the lands, and in other useful vocations.
- ART. 4.** That the laws of the Egba people shall be strictly respected by the settlers; and, in all matters in which both parties are concerned, an equal number of commissioners, mutually agreed upon, shall be appointed, who shall have power to settle such matters.

As a pledge of our faith, and the sincerity of our hearts,  
we each of us hereunto affix our hand and seal this  
Twenty-seventh day of December, Anno Domini, One  
Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty-nine.

His Mark, + Okukenu, Alake  
His Mark, + Somoye, Ibashorun  
His Mark, + Sokenu, Balagun  
His Mark, + Ogunbona, Balagun  
His Mark, + Atambala, Balagun  
His Mark, + Ogunseye, Anaba  
His Mark, + Ngtabo, Balagun, O.S.O.  
His Mark, + Ogudemu, Ageoko  
M.R. Delany  
Robert Campbell

Witness – Samuel Crowther, Junior  
Attest – Samuel Crowther, Senior.





*Madame Tinubu: Merchant and King-Maker* deals with the life history of a foremost Nigerian nationalist of the nineteenth century. It reveals her political, commercial, and social activities which to date have not been found in a single volume. The information contained is also the most current on the heroine. Thus the book will be of immense value to the scholar of history as well as the general reader.

Oladipo Yemitan is an accomplished writer who has written extensively in English and in Yoruba.

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