

2016

Gender and the Politics of Exclusion in Pre-Colonial Ibadan: The Case of Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura

Olawale F. Idowu
Osun State University

Sunday A. Ogunode
Adekunle Ajusin University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/jtb>

 Part of the African American Studies Commons, Continental Philosophy Commons, History of Religion Commons, Oral History Commons, Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons, Other Religion Commons, Social History Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons
How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Recommended Citation

Idowu, Olawale F. and Ogunode, Sunday A. (2016) "Gender and the Politics of Exclusion in Pre-Colonial Ibadan: The Case of Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura," *The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs*: Vol. 2, Article 21. Available at: <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/jtb/vol2/iss1/21>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Michael Schwartz Library at EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs by an authorized editor of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact library.es@csuohio.edu.

Introduction

*The relationship between the uses and misuses of history is a very complex one. Misuse suggests that the past is instrumentalized and distorted for political and other purposes. It also means that there is a real past that must not be distorted.*¹

Much has been written on the role of women in nation-building. The fact that women were active change-agents in pre-colonial Nigeria is an established historic fact. What has not been well explored are the obstacles to the full manifestation of the Nigerian woman as a nation-builder.

In the researchers' eagerness to portray the Nigerian woman as a heroine, extant literature tends to over-emphasize their exploits without commensurate focus on the social and institutional challenges with which they had to contend.

This lacuna in the literature of the role of women in nation-building is most evident in specific literature on Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura.² It is the contention of this paper that this literature does little justice to the role that Efunsetan played in the development of Ibadan. The consensus seems to portray her as a very successful business magnate whose wealth got the better of her, leading to her ruin.³

It is the contention of this paper that this conclusion is unfounded. This scholar is of the view that gender and the politics of exclusion practiced in Ibadan were her albatross, rather than her wealth and wickedness.

Theoretical Framework

This present study is hinged on two theories. These are gender theory and the theory of exclusion. Gender theory refers to how socially prescribed assumptions, beliefs, and practices of males and females are used to justify inequalities between the sexes in favor of males in the appropriation of power, rights, leisure time, and property.⁴ In other words, gender theory is the study of how males facilitate the subordination of women by appealing to social norms and values. Implicit in gender theory is the fact that male-female relations are not conducted on the basis of equality; neither is a woman's position a true reflection of her personal worth and vice versa.

The theory of exclusion states that groups in a composite community can maximize their own benefits by excluding non-members.⁵ This theory best explains groups' competition for scarce resources. In the course of such competition, non-members are seen as "outsiders" or "enemies."

Iyalode Efunsetan in Ibadan History

Efunsetan Adekemi Aniwura, the second Iyalode of Ibadan, was born in the 1820s. She had an Egba ancestry as her father was a native of Ikija in the Egba forest, while her mother was Ife.⁶

¹ George G. Iggers, "The Uses and Misuses of History: The Responsibility of the Historian, Past and Present" (paper presented at International Congress of Historical Sciences, Oslo, Norway, August 9, 2000), 3.

² Awe Bolanle, ed., "Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura," in *Nigerian Women: A Historical Perspective* (Ibadan: Bookcraft, 1992), 65.

³ Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba* (Lagos: CSS Bookshop, 1921), 393; Toyin Falola, *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830-1900* (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1984), 79.

⁴ Jennifer Bothamley, *Dictionary of Theories* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2002), 225.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

She grew up in the Ikija quarters of Abeokuta. There she had a normal upbringing typical of the time. Suffice it to note that very early in life, she followed in the footsteps of her mother as a petty-trader. In this regard, she used to accompany her mother to the major markets in Abeokuta.⁷ This early acquaintance with commerce placed her in good stead later in life.

Soon, she became old enough to go into trading on her own account. Toward this end, she formed a trading partnership with two friends, Olooja and Yade.⁸ Alongside this duo, she embarked on long-distance trading to Lagos, Badagry, Porto Norvo, Ikorodu, and Ibadan.⁹ It was not long before she realized that long-distance trading was more lucrative.

She eventually got married to a fellow Egba in Abeokuta.¹⁰ As it turned out, marriage proved to be an unsuccessful venture for her. This was due to a number of factors. On one hand, she had a problem giving birth.¹¹ However, the point is worth noting that while some accounts have it that she never conceived, some have it that she had one daughter who died young.¹² In any case, the problem of childlessness put a great strain on her marriage. Coupled with this was the strain that her business commitments made on her time. As a result, her marriage soon collapsed.¹³

Following this development, she gave herself wholly to her business. She made the fateful decision to relocate from Abeokuta to Ibadan.¹⁴ The question is worth asking: Why would an Egba trader make Ibadan her base at a time when the Egba and Ibadan were sworn enemies? There are two answers to this question. On one hand, she was attracted to Ibadan because of the huge opportunities the town offered in terms of markets, security, accessibility, etc. On the other hand, her decision to relocate to Ibadan was further strengthened by the fact that her maternal cousin, Basorun Oluyole, was at the time the de facto ruler of the town.¹⁵

Propelled by these considerations, around 1860, she made Ibadan her home.¹⁶ It is important to note that in Ibadan, she set up with Basorun Oluyole at Oja Oba.¹⁷ With the patronage of Oluyole, as well as her own considerable business acumen, she soon established herself. A couple of years after her immigration, she became a leading trader in Ibadan with commercial interests in diverse places like Lagos, Badagry, Ilorin, Abeokuta, Porto Norvo, Ikorodu, and others. She was particularly distinguished in the tobacco trade, the slave trade, as well as trade in weapons and ammunition that enabled Ibadan to carry on its numerous wars. Particularly of note is the fact that it was thanks to her industry and patriotism that Ibadan continued to have an adequate supply of war material, despite the blockade mounted by the Egba/Ijebu coalition against Ibadan during the Ijaiye war and others.¹⁸

Of note in particular is that Efunsetan's exploits in business were not limited to trading alone. She also engaged in manufacture of finished goods, some of which were exported to

⁶ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 67.

⁷ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 68.

⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁹ Ibid., 67.

¹⁰ Ibid., 69; Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 393.

¹¹ Awe, "The Economic Role of Women in Traditional African Society: The Yoruba Example," (paper presented at La Civilisation de la Femme dans la Tradition Africaine, Abidjan, July 3-8, 1972); Saburi Biobaku, *Eminent Nigerians of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 40.

¹² Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 69; Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 393; Lorand Matory, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 19.

¹³ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 69; Matory, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More*, 19.

¹⁴ Kemi Morgan, *Akinyele's Outline of Ibadan History* (Ibadan: Bookcraft, 1992), 118.

¹⁵ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 70.

¹⁶ Matory, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More*, 19.

¹⁷ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 70.

¹⁸ J. F. Ajayi, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1971),

America.¹⁹ Notable in this regard was the manufacture of mats, *Kijipa*,* traditional cosmetics like *Laali*,** and others by her numerous slaves. Similarly, she was also involved in food crop cultivation. In this regard she had three large plantations where thousands of her slaves were engaged in the cultivation of yams, cassava, and others.²⁰ As a result of this extensive business network, she was very prominent in the import/export trade.²¹

Some salient points of her business activities are worthy of consideration at this juncture. First is the fact that her extensive business interests constituted a major contribution to the development of Ibadan. For instance, her food cultivation activities helped to ensure food security for Ibadan, whose male population was more involved in warfare than in farming. Similarly, her manufacture and sale of finished products also attracted more traders to the Oja-Oba market and other Ibadan markets. Moreover, it also translated to greater revenue to Ibadan authorities in terms of market levies and toll-fares. However, most important of all was the fact that her extensive commercial connections helped to ensure that Ibadan had an adequate supply of European-made weapons. This was more so the strategy of the Ijebu and Egba coalition to block Ibadan's route to the coast to deprive it of sorely needed war materials,²² but thanks to Efunsetan and her likes, ways were always found to break these blockades and smuggle in arms and ammunition.

Also worthy of mention was the credit facility which she extended to Ibadan war chiefs. In this regard, long before she became the Iyalode, it was her custom* to sell arms and ammunition to Ibadan war chiefs on credit.²³

By then as one of the wealthiest personages in Ibadan, she deployed a portion of her considerable wealth to philanthropy. In this regard, she became a patron of the Anglican Church. Along this line, she donated to the church in Ibadan regularly.²⁴ More instructive, however, was her practice of putting up the money to secure the redemption of newly converted Christian slaves.²⁵ Through this means, she, alongside wealthy women like Madam Ogunsola, played a decisive role in the consolidation of Christianity in Ibadan.²⁶ Such was the wealth and social recognition commanded by Efunsetan at this time that when Basorun Oluyole died, she was made the Mogaji of the Oluyole compound.²⁷ This was particularly noteworthy as Basorun Oluyole was survived by children, both male and female. However, none of them could match her wealth, popularity, or contributions to the development of Ibadan.

Under her watch as the Mogaji of the Oluyole family, the family grew by leaps and bounds. Distant relatives from Ile-Ife and Abeokuta joined themselves to the family. Thus, before long, every available space in the Oluyole compound in Oja-Oba was built up until there was no more space.²⁸

¹⁹ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 71.

*Locally made fabric renowned for its hardness, like khaki.

**Locally made cosmetic.

*It was the trade custom for prosperous traders to sell war materiel to the war chiefs on credit.

²⁰ Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 392; Matory, *Sex and the Empire That Is No More*, 19.

²¹ John Illife, *Honour in African History* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 80.

²² Ajayi, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*, 102.

²³ Falola, *Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State*, 78; Bolanle Awe, "Women and Warfare in Yoruba Land in the Nineteenth Century," in *War and Peace in Yoruba Land: 1793-1893*, ed. I. A. Akinjogbin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 126.

²⁴ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura", 74.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Adeniyi Oroge, "Iwofa: An Historical Survey of the Yoruba Institution of Indenture," *African Economic History* 14 (1985), 79.

²⁷ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 75.

²⁸ Ibid., 76.

With such a pedigree, it was only a matter of time before the highest honor opened to a woman in nineteenth-century Ibadan came her way. Following the deposition of the incumbent Iyalode, Subuola, in 1866 she was offered the title of Otun-Iyalode.²⁹

Upon her emergence as Iyalode, she came into the zenith of public responsibility then available to a woman.

The Fall of Iyalode Efunsetan: The Place of Gender and the Politics of Exclusion

By 1873, after the Ado war,³⁰ the fortunes of Iyalode Efunsetan took a turn for the worse. This development followed her misunderstanding with Aare Latoosa. Citing insubordination and cruelty to her slaves, the council of chiefs had her deposed as Iyalode.³¹ Deprived of her title, she nonetheless commanded considerable influence in the polity. Moreover, the danger of having such an influential foe was not lost on Aare Latoosa. Consequently, he continued to hound her. Toward this end, she was subjected to all sorts of indignities, all in an attempt to force her into exile. For instance, she was not allowed any visitors, while traders, drummers, and others were forbidden from transacting any business with her.³²

Refusing to be hounded out of the town to which she had contributed so much, Iyalode Efunsetan stood her ground. Rather, she tried to reason with neutral chiefs, giving out expensive gifts to them in a vain attempt to reconcile herself with the Aare Latoosa faction. This, however, proved unavailing as the Aare had set his mind on her liquidation one way or the other.³³ Confronted with her determination to stay put in Ibadan come what may, Aare Latoosa had her murdered by some of her household slaves.³⁴

The allegations of insubordination and cruelty against her notwithstanding, it is the contention of this paper that Iyalode Efunsetan was merely a victim of the politics of gender and exclusion played in Ibadan in the nineteenth century. Before examining the basis for this view, there is a need to examine the basis of the view that Iyalode Efunsetan was a victim of her own arrogance, insubordination, and cruelty to her slaves.

The allegation of insubordination raised against her by Aare Latoosa was informed by the following:³⁵ (1) her refusal to accompany him on the Ado campaign of 1874; (2) her refusal to come to the town gate to welcome his army back from the campaign; and (3) her refusal to send him supplies during the campaign.

The first argument that her refusal to accompany him on the Ado campaign constituted an act of insubordination is baseless. This is because, as Iyalode, Efunsetan belonged to the civil line of chiefs and was thus not obliged to personally take part in military campaigns.³⁶ In any case, the same allegation was not leveled against Tajo, the Otun Bale who as a civil-chief did not accompany Aare Latoosa on his campaigns.³⁷

To some extent, her refusal to welcome and congratulate the Aare on his return from the Ado campaign could be said to constitute an act of insubordination.

However, the third argument that her refusal to send him supplies during the war constituted an act of insubordination lacks merit. This is because at that time, Aare Latoosa and some of his generals, especially Ajayi Ogboriefon, were heavily indebted to her.³⁸ Credit facilities

²⁹ LaRay Denzer, "The Iyalode in Ibadan Politics and Society," in *Ibadan: A Historical, Cultural and Socio-Economic Study of an African City* (Lagos: Oluyole Club, 2000), 202.

³⁰ Johnson, *The History of Yoruba*, 393.

³¹ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 80; Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 394; Morgan, *Outline of Ibadan History*, 119.

³² Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 80.

³³ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁴ *Ibid.*; Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 393.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 391; Morgan, *Akinyele's Outline of Ibadan History*, 118.

³⁶ Falola, *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State*, 65; Denzer, "Iyalode in Ibadan Politics and Society," 202.

³⁷ Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 386.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 393.

extended to them in previous campaigns were yet to be made good. Thus, Iyalode Efunsetan, as a business magnate, could not be expected to continue to extend credit facilities to people who had no inclination to pay back what they already owed.

The other argument that Iyalode Efunsetan met her ruin on account of her cruelty to her slaves has no basis in reality. If she had been cruel to her slaves as alleged, after her death none of her slaves would have remained in her household as her “children.” Thus, many descendants of her slaves continued to live in her compound, taking up her name.³⁹ This is particularly instructive, as she died childless. Certainly, revering the memory of a “cruel” master is not the way to avenge oneself on such a master. Perhaps nothing demonstrates better Efunsetan’s humane treatment of her slaves than the fact that one of her slaves, Ataiyero, later became the Owa of Ilesa.⁴⁰ As argued by Awe, if she had been a cruel mistress, then one of her slaves would not have been well off enough to aspire to and ascend the Owa throne.⁴¹ It is important to note that Basorun Oluyole regularly offered his slaves as sacrifices in his cola nut groves.⁴² Not only this, but he offered his first wife as a sacrifice over a trifling offense.⁴³ Yet he was not accused of cruelty, nor was any move taken to depose or sanction him in any way on account of his ill-treatment of his slaves. It is important to note that this is in line with assumptions of the gender theory that the role, power, and obligations prescribed for males and females are based on different social standards.⁴⁴

Having established that the allegations against Iyalode Efunsetan were largely baseless, it is now imperative to show that she was a victim of the politics of exclusion and gender.

In this regard, it is worthy to recall that Efunsetan was of Egba and Ife origin. It appears that Ibadan power elites never forgot this, despite her long residency in the town and valuable contributions to the progress of the state. From inception, the Oyo elements in Ibadan had always displayed a tendency to exclude non-Oyo in the town. A noteworthy example in this regard was the expulsion of Maye, an Ife chief who was the head of Ibadan at its inception.⁴⁵ Similarly, LaRay notes that following a dispute between Oyo and non-Oyo elements in 1833, the non-Oyo elements were politically marginalized.⁴⁶

Apart from this, Iyalode Efunsetan fell victim to the politics of exclusion rife in Ibadan as a result of other factors. Notable among these was the fact that the Egba at this time were Ibadan’s most implacable foes. They never forgave nor forgot the destruction of their homeland by the Oyo. Thus, the Egba never tired of any opportunity to harass the Ibadan. Apart from frequent slave-raiding activities and anti-Ibadan coalitions that they entered into, the Egbas’ ultimate weapon against Ibadan was to block Ibadan’s access to the coast to procure war material.⁴⁷ As a result of these anti-Ibadan activities, the Ibadan never had cause to have love for any Egba. It was within this context that one can understand better why Efunsetan’s plight was really on account of her non-Oyo origin rather than insubordination or cruelty to her slaves. Viewed against this background, one can understand how Aare Latoosa could easily misread the refusal of Efunsetan to extend further credit facilities to him as an Egba conspiracy to sabotage Ibadan war efforts, rather than an attempt by a businesswoman to protect her business interests.

Iyalode Efunsetan’s case was further complicated by the fact that she continued to associate with her Egba compatriots regardless of official relations between Ibadan and Abeokuta. In this regard, it is worthy to note that her cousin Ogundipe was the Balogun of

³⁹ Awe, “Iyalode Efunsetan,” 80.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Falola, *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State*, 27.

⁴³ Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 345.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 239.

⁴⁶ Ogunremi, 2000:207

⁴⁷ Ajayi, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century*, 93; Morgan, *Akinyele’s Outline of Ibadan History*, 22.

Abeokuta at this time. She was also on friendly terms with the Reverend Olubi of the Anglican Church who was also an Egba.⁴⁸ Thus, her Egba ancestry, coupled with her continued association with leading Egba chiefs at a time when Ibadan and Abeokuta were sworn enemies, cast considerable doubt on her allegiance. This was further aggravated by her tendency to celebrate and flaunt her Egba ancestry. For instance, on becoming the Iyalode, she revived the annual Alakija festival, the national deity of Ikija, one of the Egba towns destroyed by the Oyo.⁴⁹ It is important to note that the pomp and pageantry with which she celebrated the Alakija festival rivaled that of the Oke-Ibadan festival dedicated to the national deity of Ibadan.⁵⁰ This naturally galled the people of Ibadan and raised doubt concerning her loyalty.

As a result of these, there were legitimate security concerns that she could be a fifth columnist serving the interest of Abeokuta, her state of birth, rather than Ibadan, her state of residence. Thus, it was felt imperative to err on the side of caution. Conservative elements led by Aare Latoosa therefore resolved that Ibadan security was incompatible with her continued residence in the town. Her inability to take the cue and go into exile sealed her fate.

The politics of exclusion practiced in Ibadan at this time were not the only factor that worked against her. In addition to this, she was also a victim of the politics of gender discrimination. Evidence abounds in this regard.

Notable among these was the refusal of the Ibadan state to place tributary towns under her control. In this regard, it is worthy to note that it was customary for all the towns and villages in Ibadan to be divided among all the chiefs in Ibadan.⁵¹ Such chiefs were regarded as Baba Isale of the tributary towns under them. Apart from overseeing the affairs of these towns in the name of Ibadan, each chief was expected to maintain himself by tributes and levies collected from his tributary towns. However, this privilege was only enjoyed by three of the four classes of chiefs in Ibadan.⁵² Interestingly, the Iyalode line was excluded.⁵³ Thus, only male chiefs enjoyed the privilege of becoming Baba Isale.

For a woman whose contributions to the rise of Ibadan imperialism surpassed that of many male chiefs and rivaled the rest, this arrangement was unacceptable to Iyalode Efunsetan. Known for her independent thinking and outspokenness, she must have registered her reservations in clear terms. For a patriarchal military republic like Ibadan, such independent thinking could not have been taken lightly. Hence, it was found expedient to cut her down to size to preserve the gender status quo that placed men above women as of right. This was more so as Efunsetan at this time was the master of her household, as she was divorced. Thus, such a powerful, prosperous, and independent woman was a threat to the orthodox beliefs about the place of women in this society.

Other evidence that shows that her ruin had its roots in the gender politics of Ibadan lies in the fact that Efunsetan's private army did not enjoy the same privilege accorded to the private armies of male chiefs. In this regard, it is important to note that the Ibadan imperial army was a composite union of private armies recruited and equipped by individual chiefs and well-to-do individuals. In the course of war, they were placed under a unified command. At the end of the war, the booty of war belonged to the chief who owned the troops. However, only a token of the booty was given out as a present to the Baale and the Balogun as the all-reigning commanders. In the case of the hundred-man army owned by Iyalode Efunsetan, the reverse was true. Rather than let Iyalode Efunsetan dispense with the war booty captured by her army, Aare Latoosa appropriated everything and gave whatever he pleased to Efunsetan as her share

⁴⁸ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 81.

⁴⁹ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 78.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 384.

⁵² Bolanle Awe, "The Iyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political System," in *Sexual Stratification: A Cross Cultural View*, ed. A. Schelegel (New York: 1977), 210.

⁵³ Awe, "Iyalode Efunsetan," 77.

of the war booty captured by her troops.⁵⁴ This double standard is yet more evidence of the gender politics to which she was subjected.

In the light of such acts of gender discrimination, Iyalode Efunsetan soon had cause to review her involvement in affairs of the state. She naturally came to the conclusion that on account of her gender and ethnic origin, her benefit from the Ibadan state was not commensurate with her contributions. Hence, she decided to give only qualified support to state projects, especially as they concerned wars of conquest.

The result of this resolution soon began to manifest. First, she decided to be more stringent in her credit policy. Thus, she insisted that chiefs still indebted to her would not enjoy further credit facilities until they settled their outstanding debts. Unfortunately, the weapons and ammunition with which Ibadan chiefs prosecuted their wars were usually bought on credit. While some of them paid on time, some had bad debt culture. One such perennial debtor was Aare Latoosa, the de facto ruler of Ibadan by 1874.⁵⁵ Thus, this stringent, new debt policy adopted by Iyalode Efunsetan earned her enemies in powerful places. Rather than see it for what it was—i.e., an innocent attempt by a business woman to collect her debt—they conveniently read meaning into it. It was not long before they accused her of treason, claiming that by withholding credit facilities from them, she meant to sabotage their war efforts. This allegation had some element of plausibility because the Egbas, her compatriots, were some of the arch-enemies of Ibadan.

Her later decision not to send her slave-soldiers to accompany the Ibadan army on the Ado campaign lent further credence to this misleading view, although she made this decision mainly to protest her unfair treatment in the distribution of war booty. It was on account of this that Aare Latoosa's hands were strengthened against her on his return from the Ado war. The steps taken by Aare Latoosa to cut her down to size eventually culminated in her death in 1874 at the hands of two of her slaves, at the behest of Latoosa.⁵⁶

Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing discourse, the several conclusions can be drawn. Arrogance, cruelty to her slaves, and insubordination did not ruin Iyalode Efunsetan as popularly believed. Rather, she was ruined by the politics of gender and exclusion practiced by the Oyo power elites in Ibadan in the nineteenth century. Her plight was typical of the fate of many well-to-do women in pre-colonial Yorubaland. Hence, Law and Illife note that well-to-do women experienced difficulty in converting their wealth into public status and male respect.⁵⁷ It is instructive to note that this conclusion is borne out by the observation of Bolanle Awe that the prominence of the Iyalode in nineteenth-century Yorubaland was “in defiance of what was customary and traditional among the Oyo-Yoruba.”⁵⁸

To what, then, can one attribute the enduring image of Iyalode Efunsetan as a blood thirsty tyrant that met her nemesis at the hands of Aare Latoosa? The answer to this question is that one needs not to seek far. It is an established fact of history that history, to a large extent, is the account of the victors of wars. Within the context of this discourse, this means that most of what is known of Iyalode Efunsetan came down from her nemesis, i.e., the Oyo elements in Ibadan. It is instructive to note that an examination of the historiography on Iyalode Efunsetan reveals that of the six scholars who have written about her, only one is non-Oyo in origin.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Awe, “Iyalode Efunsetan,” 77.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁵⁶ Ogunremi, 2000, 204; Funso Afolayan, “Military Alliances in Yoruba Land,” in *War and Peace in Yoruba Land: 1793-1893*, ed. I. A. Akinjogbin (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1998), 410.

⁵⁷ Illife, *Honour in African History*, 80; Robin Law, “Legitimate Trade and Gender Relations in Nigeria and Dahomey,” in *From Slave Trade to Legitimate Commerce* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 208.

⁵⁸ Awe, “Traditional Yoruba Political System,” 150.

⁵⁹ Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, 384..

Interestingly, only the Ijesha-born Awe drew conclusions that contradict popular assumptions about Iyalode Efunsetan.

Acknowledgments

This work benefited from the research assistance of Dr. Kemi Adeshina, a senior colleague in the department. This work is also indebted to Dr. Koya Ogen, my Head of Department for his incisive comments in particular and mentorship in general.