

**YORÙBÁ LITERATURE AND GENDER EQUALITY TOWARDS EFFECTIVE  
INTEGRATION OF WOMEN INTO LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT AS PICTURED IN ỌFÚNRÓYÈ TINÚBÚ WRITTEN BY  
AKÍNWÚMÍ ÌŞÒLÁ**

By

**BÁMGBÓSÉ ỌMÓBÓNÌKÓ BÓLÁJÍ (MRS)**

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES  
Ẹ SUN STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, ÌLÁ-Ọ̀RÀNGÚN

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**Abstract**

**T**his paper examined the view of the writer, Akínwùmí ÌŞòlá, who is sympathetic to the cause of women in leadership role. In many of his creative works, ÌŞòlá has shown comprehension and sincerity in the need to showcase female characters as active protagonists, making meaningful contributions to their societies for sustainable development. In Ẹfúnróyè Tinúbú, the author makes the society to see that there are notable Yorùbá women that have strength, prowess and political inspiration which ÌŞòlá fictionalizes Tinúbú to be in the text. Theory of sociology of literature and feminist theory were used. Synopsis of the text was done also.

**Key Words: Women, Sustainable Development, Sociology Feminist.**

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**Introduction**

**T**his is a play that can be called the adaptation of history. In other words, it is historic in what Akínwùmí ÌŞòlá adapts. A text which is described as historical play is necessarily written to have its source recorded in history.

The portrayal of Tinúbú, the protagonist in *Ọfúnróyè Tinúbú* is very similar to what we know about the historical Tinúbú. She is economically empowered, a

renowned politician and a beautiful woman. Her involvement and leadership role during the reign of Ẹba Dòsùmú of Lagos then, that led to sustainable development which did not allow the British to take over Lagos from Dòsùmú, the king, shall be examined in this paper.

**Synopsis of the Text**

The scene starts with the celebration of the third anniversary of King Dòsùmú on the throne with well wishers singing and

dancing, the natives, the immigrants and the ex-slaves from Sierra Leone are all there including Madam Tinúbú's group. Arrival of Tinúbú's servants from a business trip to the hinterland reveals their experience, the servants mention their ordeal in the hands of servants of Messrs Vikiansony and AdejumÈ's business agents of a Badagry-based Whiteman, Mr. Sandman. Tinúbú replies the servants by telling them a riddle on the issue and tells them they will know the full meaning later on. Birdlake and Dally are business Tinúbú business/associates.

The servants' report do not go well with Tinúbú. She sees it as unhealthy rivalry; she perceives the development as what can cause economic depression for her and other market women and men who are not ready to be under the control of the colonial masters. This contemplation brings about an aggressive disposition towards AdejumÈ, Sandman and Vikiansony. The battle line is drawn between Tinúbú and these three men. She looks for quickest opportunity to deal seriously with them individually or collectively. The first opportunity that comes her way is when Vikiansony defiantly ignores Mrs. AdéyÈyè's warning to stand in the way of the masqueraders at the market square. He is beaten, almost into a coma by the masqueraders' followers. The incident is reported to Mr. Ben Campbell, the British consul, who orders the arrest of the men. Unfortunately for Vikiansony, AdejumÈ and the officers sent with them to effect the arrest

of concerned individuals find the men playing with Tinúbú's servants in front of her house. They attempt to arrest them but Tinúbú orders her men to beat up AdejumÈ, Vikiansony and the two officers. This singular act started the rift between her and Ben Campbell- Madam Tinúbú, Mrs AdéyÈyè, Mr. AdéyÈyè Kama, Yésùfù and Badà Tinúbú these are the natives on one hand, the ex-slaves and the immigrants are on the other hand. The natives stand on their feet that the colonial masters will not lord over them. It gets to a certain stage that the king himself Dòsumú gets confused; seeks for counsel on what to do. Madam Tinúbú makes Lagos ungovernable for both Dòsumú and Campbell. Market women are all over the streets chanting war songs and abusing Dòsumú and Campbell in solidarity with Tinúbú.

Dòsumú and his chiefs become restless. Tinúbú's foreign business partners, Dally and Birdlake, pledge their support with their military equipped ship. Mr. Ben Campbell assures Dòsumú and his chiefs of taking some risks by making use of some naval war ships which are placed in West African Waters to defend Lagos. The condition attached to it is that Dòsumú should make a promise to completely hand over the administration of Lagos to British government. This seriously makes the king very uncomfortable. Chief Bójùláyè gives the king a peaceful solution that Dòsumú should engage in the services of the elders to

appeal to Tinúbú to leave Lagos. Dòsùmú descends from his high throne to personally go to the house of an elderly and influential woman in town to beg her to appeal to Tinúbú on his behalf. After a long argument with the elderly woman, Tinúbú has to comply with the woman's appeal.

At a meeting at the king's palace and other chiefs, Tinúbú surprises everybody by announcing to everybody to leave Lagos. Tinúbú supporters are disappointed, most especially, the market women and the thugs who have been benefiting from the looting and arson that have ensued since the struggle attained a climax.

The play ends with a warning song by Tinúbú supporters that Dòsùmú should always remember to protect the cultural values and integrity of people of Lagos.

### **Sociology Theory**

It is not difficult to do a critique of African Literature within the context of different literary approaches. The approaches could be psychological, anthropological, moralist, archetypal, sociological and so on. The sociological approach to literature which is referred to as the sociology of literature is the most acceptable because it embraces other approaches. The reference to any work of art is always social. No society can survive without art.

Wellek and Warren (1982:94) say "Literature is an expression of society, literature represents life". This shows that the society can not stand alone because literature and society depend on each other

to survive. Sociology teaches about the events in the society or even science of the society.

Literary artists are from a society and their work of arts will portray what is going on in the society. The objective, therefore, is to edify society. The plot, the setting and the language use in the literary works will reflect the society where the literary artist comes from. This is unlike the formalism theory, "art for art sake", which says that literary works have nothing to do with the society or the writer.

This is also buttressed by Balogun (2002:508) when he avers that:

Literary sociology is a post-war development. It upholds that literature is subject to social change since it is a product of social researchers. All literary works are reflections of societies they are set. This implies that literature is a depiction of social dynamics in art form.

Ìṣòlá, in *?fúnróyè Tinúbú*, spearheads a cultural revolution which adopts an active language of cultural liberation. &]-12 has the disposition of projecting African women of repute in his plays. In *?fúnróyè Tinúbú*, based on historical facts about Tinúbú's life in Lagos, Ìṣòlá realizes early enough in his career as a writer, that dramatic literature is a potent medium to move a society forward.

### **Feminist Theory**

From time immemorial, many scholars have said many things about women. They viewed women from different

angles.

Oyesakin (1984) describes women in oral poetry in a satiric way as:

Obìnrin tori ọ̀rọ̀ rodò  
È má finú hàn fóbìnrin  
abÈnu mú bí abÈ  
Obìnrin ko ni gògò ngò tí  
o le fọ̀rọ̀ pamọ̀ sí

Women specifically take to the brook to have the chance to talk; don't reveal your secret to women, women are talkatives. A woman has no protruding larynx to conceal secret.

Also, there is a song in Yorq̄b2 land that relegates women to the position of children.

Kéégún parapÈ mÈ  
éégún  
Koosa parapÈmÈòòŞà  
Ka wÈn ÈmÈde  
parapÈmÈ  
Obìnrin a fÈsawo

The masquerades should go together  
The idols go together  
Let the children go together with women  
we want to perform rituals.

In ọ̀yòkú Mejì, AbímbÈlá (1989:30) contends that:

Obìnrin lẹ̀kọ̀  
Obìnrin lẹ̀dàlọ̀  
Kéèyàn ma finú han  
obìnrin

Women are trickers  
Women are hypocritical  
Secret things should not be exposed to women.

This is the situation before feminist theory was introduced to Africa and from there to Nigeria.

The Encyclopedia (1996:50) affirms the fact that:

Feminist beliefs have existed throughout history but feminism did not become widespread in Europe and United States until the mid 1800 A.D.

Sequel to the above, the Encyclopedia (1996:49) says:

Feminism is the belief that women should have economic, political and social equality with men. The term feminism also refers to a political movement that works to gain such equality.

Bell Hooks (1985) in AyÈÈ pÈfeyitimi (1997:44) sees feminism as:

The struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men. It has power to transform in a meaningful way to all our lives.

From the text, the writer of the play presents Tinúbú as a female in the play to be at the centre of action not as mere passive object. She is powerful and politically empowered. She has a say in the affairs of the ruling councils of Lagos then. Her involvement in politics brought a sustainable development that did not allow the British

consul to take over the collection of taxes in Lagos by replacing signor scala to Dele Dawodu, an indigene. Tinúbú herself also makes an emotional speech to condemn Mr. Ben. Campbell's suggestion says that Mr. Turner too makes a speech rejecting the suggestion in its totality. He draws an analogy between Lagos and a very beautiful garden full of vegetables and fine fruits which the pig should not be allowed to get into, lest the treasure be soiled and turned into a mess. Adéjùmò tries to make his own contribution but Tinúbú shouts him down. *?fúnróyè Tinúbú* (Pg. 24).

Dáké Ẹnu rEni bẸ Adéjùmò  
Gbe Ẹu rerun yẸn sòhùn-ún  
Nibo lo ro pe o wa nàẸ(o kẸjú sí Ẹba)  
Ara ohun tí a n wi niyi o,  
Kàbíyèsí.

Èmi ti mò tólò pe béléwù o ba tètè sòrò,  
aláàárù yòò so sẸerù di tí ara rẸ

AwẸn àgbàro dé Èkó ti fọ̀ sẸara wẸn  
degbẸẸba! Ò ti n sẸlò.

Taa lájá to n jẸAdéjùmò l'ÈkòóẸ

Shut up yor diryouh  
AdéjùmòẸhere exactly do  
you thin you areẸ  
This is what I hav bee fearing,

You Highness. I kno ther  
would come a tim whe the  
porter will clai ownership of  
the load whe men whose  
fathers wer made farm lands  
will claim equality with the  
king.

It is happening. Who is  
Adéjùmò in LagosẸ

At the end of the meeting, the king rules in favour of Tin[b] and her followers that Dele Dawodu should continue as chief custom officer. In the play, we could see *?fúnróyè Tinúbú* as a political leader who is popular, rich and a successful trader, a position that helps her to bring a sustainable development to weaken the power of the consul in Lagos then. She too begins to mobilize her own people, she begins to plan her own strategy of resisting any attempt by the consul to intimidate her or her people. At a meeting in her house, with her husband, Bada and with Adéyeyè and Turner, Tinúbú lays bare her mind on the outrageous meddling in the affairs of Lagos by aliens. Turner then makes the following suggestions:

*?fúnróyè Tinúbú* (Pg. 40).

Eni àbí kí gbogbo ẸmẸibílò  
Èkó Ẹ ipade kan-ìpade  
ìpinnu níbò pe kí ajólò àti  
gbogbo àlejò yéé tojú bẸ  
orò ilú Èkó o. Bí wẸn ba  
fọ̀ràn ara wẸn, bí wẸn o ba  
tẸwọ ẸmẸ wẸn bẸsẸ, gbórò  
á gbe wẸn o, àẸni to ba fọ̀  
forí Èká hẸmu o.

Well, why cannot all  
citizens of Lagos hold a  
meeting where a resolution  
shall be passed asking the  
consul and all aliens to stop  
meddling in the affairs of  
Lagos, if they love  
themselves if they don't  
stop meddling with our  
affairs they will face the  
consequence.

But Tinúbú will not have any of these suggestions as they are rather too weak and time consuming. According to her, *?fúnróyè Tinúbú* (Pg. 40-41).

Owó líle nikan lo ran wEn o, gbogbo wEn ni a maa lé kúrò l'Eko o. A maa lófi ara ní wEn gbáà! Se EmEpe ejo kágbára, Fran líle ni wEn si lóró abiEAmE wEn o ma le ba eerun ja...

With them only force is effective. We shall force them out of Lagos... we will annihilate them seriously! Do you know that snakes are wild animals and poisonous but they cannot fight black ants...

The battle line that was drawn between Tinúbú and her supporters with the consul and the aliens get to the climax that the King Dòsùmú has to engage the services of the elders to appeal to Tinúbú to leave Lagos in peace rather than being confrontational. Tinúbú surprises everybody by announcing her decision to leave Lagos after a long and emotional speech. By her pronouncement, King Dòsùmú too is particularly surprised because he has made up his mind to withdraw from the struggle by tactfully rescinding his eviction order. But Tin[b] prevents him from making the pronouncement. *?fúnróyè Tinúbú* (Pg. 123-124).

Tinúbú: (Ó sáré dide)  
Kabiyesi.  
E dákun (idakE róró fún ìgbà dí). (Gbogbo èniyàn tE oju mE

Tinúbú) ErE ti mo ro pe E fE sE yen... ko yE ki o waye mọ. Nítorí ifé ti èmi ni nínú itan àti àsà ibílò, n o fE kí àrò nàà jade lénu yin-Esin kì í sin Enu... ohun tí o jEki èmi nàà takú ni pé mo fọ fi yé àwEn èniyàn mi pé a kò gbEgbọ fi ààye sílọ fún ìrẹjE lónàkEnà. A ko gbEdọ máa tEwọ bọ ọ má fi oko mi dana Eje kan naa kilerE. Aile sErE si ni ipilEoriburuku oo..

Kabiyesi! Please! (Long silence, all eyes are fixed on Tinúbú) The statement you are about to make will not be necessary and because of my interest in history and tradition, I don't want it made... (silence) I resisted the expulsion order in order to make a point and to impress on it on my people that one has to struggle against victimization in any shape or form...

They are now battle ready to fight against any attempt to deprive them of their right.

After this speech by Tinúbú, she waves them good bye and walks out followed by all her supporters. With the role she plays in the play, she is able to protect the cultural values and integrity of people of Lagos and this leads to a sustainable development.

### Conclusion

The portrayal of Tinúbú in *?fúnróyè Tinúbú* is Ìṣọlá best portrayal of an African woman. She is highly respected and given prominence and pride of place in the community. She is a traditional

superwoman, bold and fearless but loving, mature, wise and confident. She is an epitome of the Yorùbá tradition and a self-actualizing woman. This portrayal has helped her to stand shoulder high with her male counterparts in governance then which makes her to be a leader for sustainable development. A leaf can be borrowed from this play that our women that are in position of power now, may be in the House of representatives, Senate, ministers, wives of the governors, the wives of the presidents and vice president should use their position of leadership to make a positive impact to sustain the development of our nation politically, economically, culturally and socially.

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