Contents

List of Illustrations vii

Acknowledgments ix

Abbreviations xiii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 The Birth and Demise of a Nation
The Egba United Government 27

Chapter 2 Abeokuta's Centenary
Masculinity and Nationalist Politics in a Colonial Space 64

Chapter 3 Race, Nation, and Politics in the Interwar Period 98

Chapter 4 Women, Rice, and War
Economic Crisis in Wartime Abeokuta 124

Chapter 5 "Freedom from Want"
Politics, Protest, and the Postwar Interlude 149

Chapter 6 Daughters of Tinubu
Crisis and Confrontation in Abeokuta 177

Conclusion 213

Notes 227

Bibliography 285

Index 303

Introduction

To My Dear People,

After more than half a century of service to my country and people, twenty eight of which I have given in the capacity of Native Authority, conditions have arisen which completely obliterate from men's memory the efforts which I have made to advance in every way possible the interests of Egbaland.

That so fierce and unprecedented opposition should have been encountered at this hour in my career on the Stool of Egbaland is entirely beyond my capacity to understand; but as I have always placed the happiness of the people and the progress of my dear country above everything I cannot bear any longer the sight of turmoil, strife and discontent more particularly as there have been threats of damage to properties and attacks on persons which have become a reality.

I have therefore decided, after mature consideration and in order to avoid bloodshed, to leave the environs of my territory in the hope that after a time frayed tempers will subside and an atmosphere of calm prevail.

May God save Egbaland and bring it happiness prosperity and lasting peace.

Ademola II,
Alake, 29/7/48.[1]

With the release of this statement in July 1948, Ademola II, traditional king (*alake*) and sole native authority (paramount chief) of Abeokuta, abdicated. He spent the next three years in exile in Oshogbo.[2] Crafting the letter to elicit sympathy, Ademola specifically identified his disappointment in the men who had forgotten his achievements. Moreover, the letter pointedly failed to name those most responsible for this turn of events—the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU), under the leadership of

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. We should not accept at face value Ademola's claim that he did not understand the grievances that led to this moment. However, Wole Soyinka helps us appreciate that there was an element of genuine surprise. No one had imagined that this organization, composed of market women and a few elite women, could force Ademola from office. For Soyinka, Ademola's abdication was "the Great Upheaval."[3]

Ademola's abdication followed a protracted tax revolt. Starting in 1947, the AWU began a lengthy series of protests, petitions, and confrontations with colonial officials as women complained about taxation, abuse at the hands of government officials, and Ademola's corruption, especially in the harsh economic climate after World War II. The AWU united thousands of women from all sectors—elite Christian women, Muslim women, teachers, and market women from the town of Abeokuta and its rural environs. The organization put forward three main demands: the abolishment of taxes on women, women's representation on the local governing council, and the removal of the colonial state's designated sole native authority, Alake Ademola II. The organization's demands indicated that the upheaval they inspired was both political and economic, for they called into question the political and economic underpinning of the colonial state and demanded redress for women's erasure from political office.

The AWU's demands resonated with an earlier generation of women's protests in Nigeria, when women in eastern Nigeria and Lagos challenged plans to impose taxes on them. Their economic concerns also mirrored the demands of labor unions during and after the war. However, the Abeokuta protests were distinctive because they became the foundation from which the first national women's organization in Nigeria, the Nigeria Women's Union (NWU), emerged. The AWU's success set off a firestorm of organizing, and Ransome-Kuti received letters from men and women around the country who wanted her to help them form women's unions. The letters demonstrated the desire of many women in Nigeria to participate in the political process and transform the socioeconomic and political landscape in which they lived. Building on this excitement, Ransome-Kuti convened the meeting in Abeokuta out of which the NWU was born.

On May 15, 1949, the members of the AWU accepted Ransome-Kuti's proposal to incorporate the organization into the NWU, thus making the former a branch of the new group.[4] Though often overlooked, the formation of the NWU was an important moment in Abeokuta's history as well as Nigerian political history. It reflected an expanding political vision and organizational networking as women activists moved from local arenas of political engagement to a national level coterminous with the Nigerian

colonial state. This development was significant for several reasons. It emerged specifically to address the needs, demands, and aspirations of Nigerian women at the same time that the premier nationalist organization, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), had become moribund. The NWU predated the political parties that would contest regional elections in the 1950s, and its leadership pointedly resisted pressure to bring the organization under any political party. The emergence of the NWU signaled a rejection of the idea that women would be silent and symbolic spectators to dramatic political changes on the horizon. In establishing an organizational space built on local organizations around the country, the NWU revealed women's desire and capacity to shape political agendas at multiple levels and to become active agents in creating a postcolonial nation.

The creation of the NWU just two years after the tax revolt attests to the changing material conditions, technological transformations, and political visions that made mobilizing on a national level entirely reasonable and possible for this generation of women activists. These activists played a critical role in knitting together the idea and reality of Nigeria as a nation. Despite the political work carried out by these women's organizations, their vision for the postcolonial nation was only partially fulfilled. The men who brokered independence shelved universal franchise and accepted the demand by Northern Nigerian leaders that women in this populous region be denied the right to vote. Northern women did not receive voting rights until 1979.

The Great Upheaval makes three main interventions in the scholarship on nationalism in Nigeria. It challenges the teleological orientation of much of the scholarship, which presumes that all nation-making centered on a Nigerian nation. Abeokuta's openness to European missionaries and African Christian converts created a distinctive history of nation-making that predated the imposition of colonial rule and continued into the interwar period. In fact, the early colonial period strengthened Abeokuta's sense of itself as a nation so that even as late as 1930, town leaders hoped to regain their independence as a sovereign state. *The Great Upheaval* demonstrates the longevity of Abeokuta's commitment to nationhood and explores the economic and political factors that gradually produced the shift in their political commitment. By the end of the decade, the town's leaders increasingly articulated support for a Nigerian nation-state and suppressed claims for the town's independence.

Narratives were central to Abeokuta's expression of nationhood. While scholars have explored many national narratives, few have called

into question the ways in which those narratives were gendered. *The Great Upheaval* pays particular attention to the centrality of gender by exploring competing narratives of the nation as Abeokuta set aside its claim for independence and joined the movement for a Nigerian nation. This analysis is possible because I apply a multidisciplinary approach to my examination of the tax revolt. The tax revolt is much more than an expression of economic distress. It offers a rich symbolic and discursive landscape from which we can glean insights into women's political thoughts and their contribution to the cultural construction of nation. I show that the performative dimensions of the tax revolt—songs, protests, dress—as well as the thanksgiving celebrations after Ademola's departure created a counternarrative about colonialism in Abeokuta and an aspirational narrative for the newly emerging nation. The fruit of that aspirational narrative was the formation of the Nigerian Women's Union (NWU). It was to be the vehicle through which women across Nigeria would define their interests, desires, and needs while fulfilling the obligations and responsibilities of citizenship. The erasure of these events from studies of Nigerian nationalism only compounds the political marginalization women experienced at independence. *The Great Upheaval* ultimately challenges us to problematize rather than take for granted the limited franchise Nigerian women enjoyed at independence, despite the political energy and effort they invested in the nationalist era.

This study demonstrates that gender played a central, though consistently underappreciated, role in Nigeria's nationalist movement. The ignoble political deal that cemented Northern Nigerian women's disenfranchisement has not been subjected to a sustained analysis. Scholars have yet to examine the gender ideologies of political leaders and parties as well as the centers of resistance that challenged the gender inequalities codified in the constitution. Equally significant, there are no studies of the NWU during the critical period from its founding to independence. *The Great Upheaval* is a building block toward this endeavor as it brings a gendered analysis to Abeokuta's political history and affirms the town's critical role in the conceptualization of a national women's movement. It answers the question, why look at Abeokuta to understand gender and nationalism in Nigeria?

The Great Upheaval draws on many different literatures. It required revisiting texts I had read decades ago and venturing into new fields. The robust literature on gender and nationalism made it possible to reread the classics of Nigerian political history and the letters and speeches of the stalwarts of the nationalist era with new eyes. Literary theory and cultural

studies prevented me from creating a reductionist account that would have robbed the story of its nuances, textures, and vitality. Nuance and textures exist on top of, between, and around structures. The centrality of taxes to this story ensured that political economy did not disappear from view. While this study benefited from the work of numerous fields and scholars, it contributes to the study of gender and nationalism broadly and in Nigeria specifically. It draws attention to women's activism across the decades of the interwar and postwar periods and demonstrates how political history is ultimately warped by the marginalization of women and gender. The erasure of women and gender reduces the complexity of Nigeria's sociological landscape and the range of contradictions embedded in its process of nation-building. Moreover, it restricts our ability to appreciate that as nationalist leaders called for unity among the country's major ethnic groups and minority populations, they simultaneously embedded gendered inequalities in the very structure and organization of the nation.

PURVEYORS OF ABEOKUTA'S IMAGINED COMMUNITY

In his important text *The Nation and Its Fragments,* Partha Chatterjee admonishes scholars for taking "the claims of nationalism to be a political movement . . . too literally."[5] He argues instead that we must distinguish the ideological and cultural process of imagining the nation from the political movements that challenged colonial regimes for control of the state. He encourages us to write what he calls "a cultural history of nationalism" in which the process of creating the nation does not begin or end with the political movements and the contest for political power against imperial states.[6] A cultural history of nationalism requires us to historically locate the "polyphony of voices, contradictory and ambiguous, opposing, affirming and negotiating their views of the nation" rather than succumbing to the "harmonized, monologic voice of the Nation."[7]

Identifying Prasenjit Duara's polyphone of voices has taken scholars into multiple spaces beyond newspapers and political manifestos. Critical studies by Marissa Moorman, Kelly Askew, and Thomas Turino demonstrate that cultural practices, institutions, and an expressive culture provide spaces where the nation is marked, defined, and contested by people of multiple social positions.[8] Culture is central to any analysis of the nation because, as Geoff Eley and Ronald Suny argue, it is the terrain where the nation is elaborated, "and in this sense nationality is best conceived as a complex process of cultural innovation, involving hard ideological labor, careful propaganda, and a creative imagination."[9] Nonetheless, for

a nationalist consciousness to come into being, it requires political intervention. It is "creative political action [that] transforms a segmented and disunited population into a coherent nationality."[10]

Abeokuta's cultural history of nationalism and the spaces in which it unfolded are the product of a history that predates colonialism. The town's very existence is intimately connected to an earlier imperial history, that of the Oyo Empire. Oyo's collapse early in the nineteenth century transformed the political geography of western Nigeria and gave rise to new political communities such as Abeokuta, which was established in 1830. It was a city of refugees of the Yoruba Wars that housed approximately one hundred thousand people by the 1850s.[11] While the Egbas constituted the largest group, it had a sizable population from Owu, a major Yoruba town destroyed during the wars. Under the security of Olumo Rock, the refugees recreated their walled city-state. It comprised four quarters—Egba Alake, Egba Oke-Ona, Gbagura, and Owu—and each quarter recognized a king as the dominant political authority: the alake, *oshile*, *agura*, and *olowu*, respectively. Quarters had numerous townships and each township recognized a tripartite administration populated by male and female titleholders who controlled trade, security and civil government.[12] Townships had numerous compounds or residential units. They sometimes housed members of one patrilineage or multiple lineages as refugees settled together, freeborn and enslaved. Each compound recognized a head of the unit, the *bale*, who was the most senior male of the founding lineage.[13]

Abeokuta was one of the first sites of missionary enterprise in Nigeria and home to a significant number of repatriated Christianized Yoruba speakers, the Saros. Liberated from slave ships and settled in Sierra Leone, Saros lived among British, Jamaican, and African-American households where they adopted Christianity and western culture. From its inception, Abeokuta struggled to define itself culturally and politically. The town's cultural diversity and the continued military crisis during the nineteenth century created room for competing male and female power brokers to exercise considerable influence on its political organization and practice. They often challenged efforts to centralize power around the alake or tried to place their candidates in the position. Abeokuta's political and cultural struggles during the nineteenth century became more complicated as the British established their foothold in Lagos and gradually extended their influence inland. "Nation-ness" in Abeokuta evolved from a complex political and cultural landscape in which its architects sought to establish a nation that was first and foremost Egba as well as historically and contemporarily independent of both Oyo and British overlordship.

The idea of a Yoruba nation is also a product of the nineteenth century. The Yorubas occupy a region that encompasses sections of what today is Benin and southwestern Nigeria. Although the various subgroups shared a common language and culture, they lived in distinct political units. They recognized a common origin from Ile-Ife, considered the cradle of Yoruba civilization, but their cultural identity was more often contiguous with the subgroup to which they belonged—Ijebu, Ife, Ijesha, Egba, or Oyo.[14] The idea of all these subgroups composing a Yoruba nation emerged first among Yoruba exiles in Sierra Leone.[15] As J. Lorand Matory argues, the proximity of peoples—Oyos, Egbas, Egbados, Ijeshas, and so forth—that shared linguistic and cultural features helped reinforce their similarities as well as their shared differences from the local Sierra Leonean population. A pivotal development in the creation of a Yoruba nation was the publication in 1843 of Samuel Ajayi Crowther's *A Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language*. This dictionary standardized a "hybrid language predominantly Oyo in its morphology and syntax, and . . . Egba in its phonemes."[16] Furthermore, it took a term that used to be specific to those from Oyo and used it to now encompass all the communities from this cultural-linguistic region.[17]

Exile facilitated the crystallization of a Yoruba identity, but it did not operate alone. Christianity provided some of the ideological tools that hastened this process. J. D. Y. Peel argues that "at its height, 1890–1914, virtually all the key figures of cultural nationalism were clergymen or active Christian laymen."[18] However, insufficient attention has been given to the ways that Christianity shaped this development. Christianity did more than create a religious community. Political ideals and organization were embedded in the missionary project, and Christianity validated "the ideas of the ethnos, the pre-political foundation of the nation state."[19] Christian-dominated spaces were at the center of nationalist discussions. Peel notes, "It is . . . not at all surprising that two of the early venues of 'cultural nationalist' discussion were the Young Men's Christian Association of Breadfruit Church, whose pastor was then James Johnson, a Yoruba missionary, and the Abeokuta Patriotic Association, based at Ake Church and under the patronage of the English missionary J. B. Wood."[20] Even more specifically, "the missionary project envisaged an ethno-linguistic nation," thus the cultural nationalism that emerged in this period was a distinctly Yoruba nationalism.[21]

Christian-informed notions of the nation also embraced a distinctive set of ideas about gender roles and expectations. In public and in private, Christianity promoted male dominance and authority. The public work of

politics and nation-building was male work. In the home, a husband was "naturally" the head of the household. Still, as Antoinette Burton argues, women were not merely subjugated—they performed equally important care-taking functions and transmitted culture. They were considered morally superior and ultimately responsible for the uplift and improvement of the national body politic.[22] Christian converts processed from the beginning a gendered understanding of the nation. These teachings were inculcated and reinforced through church teachings, newspapers, pamphlets, social clubs, school curricula, and marriage legislation.[23]

The concept of a Yoruba nation was gendered at its inception and had to be invested with meaning and history. Samuel Crowther launched the first effort to write a history of Yorubaland while still in Sierra Leone. This history was included in his Yoruba dictionary.[24] When Crowther and other Yoruba exiles began returning to Nigeria in the 1830s and 1840s, they imported the idea of Yoruba nationality. Interest in elaborating Yoruba history lay dormant for several decades, but by the 1880s a steady stream of histories began appearing in books and in the newspapers. Robin Law notes that the motives of the authors of these histories varied considerably. Some aspired to rescue and preserve traditions that would be forgotten; others hoped to use these histories to help foster unity.[25] The most notable is Samuel Johnson's classic *History of the Yoruba*, written in the 1890s but not published until 1921. Johnson claimed "a common origin for all Yoruba and an effective political unity which . . . endured until the wars of the nineteenth century."[26] Of the histories that stress unity, Michel Doortmont notes that Johnson's was the most holistic. He produced a "more homogeneous story," though it was strongly based on the history of Oyo and Ibadan. It was informed by the idea shared by many of the Christian and educated elites that "progress and civilization only had a chance if there was at least some sense of unison among all Yoruba. . . . *The History* . . . actually drew a blue-print of a future Yoruba nation."[27]

The period between the 1880s and World War I witnessed the production of a wide range of local histories that collectively challenged the notion that Africa lacked a history. These histories became the building blocks of ethnic nationalisms that together composed the first generation of nationalist thought in Nigeria. From their inception, these histories captured the multiplicity of voices competing to massage nations into being. Some authors, like Johnson, imagined nations that corresponded to the political templates created by nineteenth-century empires such as Oyo, while others, like the inhabitants of Abeokuta, seized the opportunity to assert the nation-ness of their communities and their autonomy from former empires.

Local histories operated in the service of what Law and Doortmont, respectively, call micronationalism or ethnic provincialism, in which they asserted their autonomy from Oyo's historical dominance.[28] The production of histories of individual towns and kingdoms increased in the twentieth century. The proliferation of these histories reflected the rapid social and political changes unfolding in the region. As schools spread across the region, local leaders wanted their own histories to be reflected in these texts, so local histories formed an important component of Yoruba-language textbooks used in the schools.[29] These texts also attempted to shape the political geography of the colonial state as chiefs challenged or advocated for the boundaries of administrative divisions.[30] Equally important, local histories revealed political tensions and fractures within the towns, for they often called for unity in the face of rising British power. Thus, local histories did not speak only of the past—they used the past to help construct the colonial present. In the case of Abeokuta, its political and cultural elites asserted their independence from Oyo, their demand to be independent of British control, and their distinctive nation-ness. The spirited political debates embedded in local histories were old political arguments that shifted from the battlefields to books and classrooms and had to be adjudicated by colonial officials.

Abeokuta produced several important historians who belonged to what Michel Doormont considers the second wave of Yoruba historians. They included Ajayi Kolawole Ajisafe, *History of Abeokuta* (1916); John B. Losi, *History of Abeokuta* (1920); Adebesin Folarin, *A Short Historical Review of the Life of the Egbas from 1829 to 1930* (1931); and Ladipo Solanke, *The Egba-Yoruba Constitutional Law and Its Historical Development* (1931). Ajisafe was an especially important figure because his history became the first local classic to be reprinted several times. Moreover, he was the first Egba historian to produce an anthropological study as well, *The Laws and Customs of the Yoruba People*.[31] Adrian Deese argues that Ajisafe is also an underappreciated intellectual of this period, whose approach in many ways anticipated contemporary concerns. Ajisafe argued, for example, that Abeokuta's modernity was not based on its leaders' acceptance of European ideals or ideas. Instead, its modernity evolved from its leaders' repudiation of elements of Oyo statecraft, specifically the centralized monarchy. Abeokuta developed a state system that was federal and had a weak monarchy.[32] While Ajisafe, like Samuel Johnson, subverted British ideas about African political and religious systems, he also subverted Johnson's uncritical rendering of Oyo by suggesting that Oyo's political structure had become an anachronism unable to grapple with the international

and regional changes of the nineteenth century.[33] Thus, Ajisafe was not just following in Johnson's footsteps on a local level—he instead offered a different historical perspective through the lens of Abeokuta's history.

Literary works, broadly defined, augmented historical texts and played a critical role in the elaboration of national identities.[34] Nigeria's early cultural nationalists emerged from its ethnically, politically, and religiously diversified educated community. A disproportionate number were Saro, but it also included Blacks from the diaspora, particularly from Brazil and the Caribbean. They were spread unevenly across the southern region of what became Nigeria. As Philip Zachernuk notes, they were concentrated among the Yorubas and Niger Delta trading centers, especially Lagos and Calabar.[35] This educated community was mobile, circulating throughout West Africa, Brazil, and England.[36] The community was linked as well by a distinctive set of ideas. They shared a belief in the civilizing mission. They saw themselves as the natural leaders of Nigerian society and appreciated their membership in a broader intellectual community that included other parts of West Africa and the diaspora.[37]

The new imperialism of the late nineteenth century and the increasing acceptance of racist pseudoscientific literature that opined on Black inferiority altered the social and cultural landscape in which the intelligentsia lived. Like their counterparts in the United States and the Caribbean, the Nigerian intelligentsia had to assert their humanity, their ability to build a great civilization, and their modernity.[38] The onslaught of the new imperialism's racism sparked a cultural flowering among these "Victorian-mannered" elites. Zachernuk shows that "they began by asserting that Africa's culture was too substantial to be simply displaced by Europe's and that in any case their pride in being African would not allow it."[39] They demonstrated their pride in African culture by adopting African dress and African names and promoting African culture and histories.[40] They defended indigenous customs and institutions such as polygyny and the use of Yoruba language in education. The intelligentsia also played a central role in the creation of the separatist African churches, which began in the 1880s.[41]

Karin Barber argues that our understanding of the literary works that challenged the cultural pronouncements of imperialism should be an expansive category that includes much more than local histories, novels, and plays. Genres such as memoirs, diaries, and letters helped create new kinds of self and self-consciousness. While these texts recorded individual experiences and aspirations, the authors narrated moments of their lives in dialogue with and "under the shadow of colonial officialdom." Reading

clubs and literary and debate societies became important spaces where young men practiced techniques of government, such as electing officers, taking minutes, and drafting reports, and demonstrated their eligibility for political participation. While only a small percentage of the population in Africa was literate, Barber argues that print helped make the constitution of an African civil society possible. Newspapers played an especially important role in shaping civil society.[42] By the 1920s, Lagos had nine English-language newspapers, five of which were dailies, and five Yoruba-language weeklies. The Yoruba-language newspapers were especially innovative as they included forms of Yoruba oral literature, individual travel narratives, open letters to prominent members of society, and serial novels. These papers often reproduced stories carried in the English-language papers; however, Barber notes that they utilized a range of textual forms to appeal to different audiences. The English-language papers primarily addressed the government and African elites, while the Yoruba-language papers specifically aligned themselves to the larger population they characterized as the poor or lower classes.[43] In the process of shaping civil society, the expanding category of literary works showcased the competing narratives of distinct political communities and evolving social classes.

Literary forms of nation-making did not replace other forms of elaborating the nation. Communities continued the symbolic work of representing and reinforcing existing political communities through ritual observances, even as new political ideas and associations emerged. Royal installations, for example, "validate the right of a king to rule and emphasize the unique identity and corporate unity of his kingdom." Andrew Apter argues that these ceremonies often reenacted the details that established the kingdom's founding and the authority of its political charter.[44] Such foundational exercises existed in dynamic tension with rituals that challenged these constituted authorities. For example, the Shango cult and Beere festival reflected Oyo's political centralization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, rituals that commemorated kingdoms with ties to Ife in fact challenged Oyo's hegemony.[45]

Many different rituals participate in these contests of power and authority, and *The Great Upheaval* focuses on two critical events: the hundredth anniversary of Abeokuta's founding and the AWU celebrations after the alake went into exile. These events were staging grounds for competing narratives about Abeokuta's history. Wale Adebanwi argues that commemorations are rituals of ethnonational validation.[46] Abeokuta's centenary in 1930 is a powerful example of the political work performed by such activities, as it served multiple political agendas. It reinforced the dominance

of Egba identity in Abeokuta as well as the dominance of the alake. The planning committee used the events to ultimately underscore Abeokuta's modernity and the reasons why its sovereignty should be restored. Colonial officials, though supportive of the centenary celebrations, imagined an entirely different set of meanings, for in it they saw confirmation of the colonial enterprise. Like other events crafted to reinforce collective identities, such as the centenary of the Great Trek in South Africa, Abeokuta's centenary was gendered.[47] The celebrations turned a spotlight on male leaders while ignoring female leaders, including the nineteenth-century merchant and kingmaker Madam Efunroye Tinubu.

The erasure of Tinubu during the centenary celebrations forms a stark contrast to her veneration during the tax revolt. *The Great Upheaval* juxtaposes these two events to demonstrate the ways in which questions of gender and agency shaped the tax revolt as well as Tinubu's iconic role in the process. Women often prayed at Tinubu's grave before protests, and they celebrated their victory by holding a picnic at her grave site, thus indicating that it held symbolic significance. Their use of Tinubu's grave site supports Adebanwi's contention that rituals around death and the ways in which the dead are memorialized can contribute "to the collective integrity and solidarity of the groups that use them."[48] By invoking Madam Tinubu in their struggle against the alake, the AWU attempted to reanimate the town's history of women power brokers and validate their demands. Moreover, history was on their side. Tinubu's funeral in 1887 attested to her significance. A biographer noted that the chiefs orchestrated "a fitting burial to the great woman who had been one of their own number." Her body lay in state for several hours, then a mile-long procession accompanied the corpse to the burial site, and celebrations continued for a weekend.[49] Her contemporaries understood that the scale of the celebrations following her death was an indicator of her importance to the Egba nation. The AWU edited the narrative of the nation that was created by the 1930 centenary celebrations, but its context was created by indirect rule as well as the material and economic conditions of the interwar depression and World War II.

The nineteenth-century architects of a Yoruba nation envisioned a landscape in which Yoruba-ness would come to dominate the other political identities that vied for significance. They could not have anticipated the ways in which the early decades of colonial rule animated sub-Yoruba identities as communities attempted to protect their hard-won independence from Oyo or its potential successor state, Ibadan, and claim access to resources from the colonial state. Thus, Yorubaland's complex

political history in the nineteenth century was a critical component of the twentieth-century efforts to define Abeokuta as an Egba nation.

WOMEN, NARRATIVE, AND NATION

Building on the work of Benedict Anderson, an increasing number of scholars are exploring the centrality of narratives to the ideological and cultural construction of nations. Lloyd Kramer has characterized Homi Bhabha's edited volume, *Nation and Narration*, as one of the most forceful examples of scholars using a literary approach to nationalism. Its contributors argue that the nation "is constructed through narrative processes that resemble and include the narrative constructions of novels, film and history books." In fact, the nation is a text. Kramer suggests that the contributors expand on Anderson's work by stressing that the narrators of the text must contend with a range of contradictions, such as repressing issues, ideas, or people, while claiming unity and coherence.[50] Bhabha characterizes these contradictions as an ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation. This ambivalence is created by a disjuncture inherent in "the language of those who write of it (the nation) and those who live it." As a result, the origins of national traditions are both "acts of affiliation and establishment as they are moments of disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural contestation"[51]—in short, unity, which at the heart of all nations' narratives requires a nations' narrators to elide the people, races, classes, or ideas that do not fit easily or contradict the text they have created.

Nigerian scholar Wale Adebanwi uses Bhabha's insights productively as he combines literary theory and social science analysis of colonial and postcolonial political culture in Nigeria. Nigeria, he notes, "had the arduous task of forging a nation out of an amalgam of competing nations . . . [and] the Nigerian press has been at the center of the struggle for common nationhood." The press is also the site where hegemonic and counter-hegemonic battles of Nigeria's competing ethnic nationalities play out. Since the Nigerian press began before the colonies of Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria were amalgamated in 1914, newspapers expressed the African educated elites' strident criticism of this new direction in colonial policy. The press was also the battlefield on which the leaders of the country's three dominant political parties in the 1950s questioned each other's commitment to decolonization and unity. Through his analysis of the Nigerian press across the colonial and postcolonial divide, Adebanwi "interrogates meaning[s] in the press and how meanings[s] are mobilized in the service of the construction, deconstruction, or reconstruction of the idea of 'nationhood.'" His findings lead him to conclude that "narrative

[is] not just a process of bringing a nation into being through telling stories, but also as the nation itself. . . . The nation exists in and through its narratives; thus the nation is a grand narrative."[52]

Whether the nation is text or a grand narrative, it still contains the ambivalences Bhabha identifies. In Nigeria, this was apparent in a series of editorials in which leaders of the Western and Eastern Regions simultaneously chastised and cajoled the leaders of the Northern Region to support the call for independence in 1956:

> Now that the whole nation of "brothers" shared a "common destiny" and was separated from its foreign other, the "British imperialists," the *Pilot* argued: "Let us therefore make it plain to our brothers in the North that times have changed. The old form of propaganda which put a barrier between the Northerners and Southerners must now be exposed. Europeans may go and come, but Northerners and Southerners will continue to live together, work together and face the same destiny now or in the future.[53]

This quote is instructive as it reveals these politicians' efforts to create unity as well as the ways in which Nigeria's grand narrative naturalized male political dominance and elided women.

The idea of a "nation of brothers" dramatically supports Chatterjee's argument that the hegemonic discourse of nationalism "was in its core a male discourse."[54] Unfortunately, as Anne McClintock has charged, many male theorists of nationalism "have been indifferent to the gendering of nations," and "feminist analyses of nationalism have been . . . few and far between."[55] Since the groundbreaking work of Chatterjee and McClintock in the 1990s, studies on women, gender, and nationalism have grown exponentially as authors consider how women were represented in narratives of the nation, the privileging of distinct forms of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality, and the roles women played in nationalist movements.

Women were written into the nation in ways that were symbolic and silencing. They were "typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but . . . denied any direct relation to national agency."[56] Scholars have interrogated and looked beyond the symbolic representations that offered a caricature of women's participation in nationalist movements in Africa. The breadth of studies allows us to develop comparative analyses of the multiple pathways that brought women into anticolonial and nationalist movements. Increasingly they are identifying the numerous ways in which African women contributed to and shaped anticolonialist and

nationalist movements as well as the commonalities and divergences in what men and women hoped to be the outcome of these campaigns. This scholarship also calls our attention to specific ways in which local and national contexts shaped when, where, and how women contributed to these movements. Beth Baron, for example, vividly captures the paradox of women's marginalization while still a symbol of the nation, in her monograph *Egypt as a Woman.*[57] Preexisting women's organizations established the base from which women participated in the protests that undermined the legitimacy of the British. Despite the organizational infrastructure they brought to the protests, Egyptian women were denied any voice in the unfolding deliberations that led to self-government. In contrast to Egypt, Algerian women did not have a strong foundation of women's organizations at the beginning of the nationalist movement. In Algeria, the Algerian Communist Party helped create the first women's union in 1943, the Union of Algerian Women (UFA). It was the only party that championed equality of the sexes, though following the repression of popular demonstrations in May 1945, other political parties articulated greater interest in improving women's lives. By 1947, Muslim women had created the Association of Muslim Algerian Women (AFMA). Though their program focused on social issues—tending the sick, distributing clothes and food to the poor, and encouraging the education of both boys and girls—the leaders of both the UFA and AFMA joined the armed struggle.[58]

Even where women were part of male-dominated nationalist organizations, they held distinctive aspirations and goals. The late Susan Geiger's work on Tanzania demonstrated that women brought shared but not identical concerns to that country's nationalist discourse. Women were central to the expansion of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), Tanzania's main nationalist organization, but they saw TANU as a vehicle for transforming gender relations as well as one for moving the country toward independence. Women also shaped the ideological orientation of nationalist organizations. Elizabeth Schmidt's *Mobilizing the Masses* illuminates how women helped radicalize the nationalist movement in Guinea and forced Sékou Touré to turn down France's offer to remain in the French commonwealth.[59] In the former French Cameroon where the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) led a guerrilla struggle against French rule, Meredith Terretta argues that women were the intermediaries that made decolonization imaginable. Women of the Democratic Union of Cameroonian Women "occupied strategic positions in reshaping social ideology until the UPC message became something 'thinkable' even in the humblest village home."[60]

Women were not an amorphous group, therefore their social status, religion, and competing notions of femininity also shaped women's political engagement. Abosede George and Saheed Aderinto, for example, consider the contributions of elite women in Lagos to the discourse on development, modernity, and nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s. Their studies document the ways in which Victorian class and gender ideals informed the issues these women engaged. Elite women played central roles in the debates around prostitution and street hawking by children and worked to shape colonial policies around these issues. However, their advocacy often put them in contention with poor women who relied on sex work, given the limited employment opportunities for women in Lagos, and on child labor for their trading enterprises.[61] Similar tensions also unfolded in Southern Rhodesia. There the dominant political organization from the 1930s to 1950s, the Reformed Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, enjoyed a brief alliance between elite men and self-employed single women as they resisted the state's efforts to evict men and women who did not have proper papers. This cross-class alliance failed as the state met elites' demands for married housing that also separated them from migrant laborers and married women strongly opposed the presence self-employed single women in the townships. These studies underscore Timothy Scarnecchia's suggestion that it is "more productive to examine the historical evidence to show how groups of women attempted to apply their own specific struggles within a political framework." This will help us make sense of the wide range of outcomes—from women who pushed nationalist struggles to be more radical, to those movements that failed to attract women's active support.[62]

Excavating women's role in nation-building is only one dimension of a gender analysis of the nation. It is equally critical, as Joane Nagel argues, "to explore the fact of men's domination of the nation-state in order to see what insights . . . masculinity provides."[63] Lisa Lindsay's *Working with Gender: Wage Labor and Social Change in Southwestern Nigeria* does just that as it demonstrates how masculinity informed the labor movement that played such a central role in Nigerian nationalism. Lindsay's study of the 1945 general strike in Lagos contributes significantly to a more gendered analysis of the nationalist era in Nigeria, for it demonstrates the ways that gender ideals and notions such as the "male breadwinner" were woven into the constitutive elements of the nationalist agenda. Although the male breadwinner ideal was not adopted wholesale by Nigerian men and women, it heavily informed nationalist politics and sanctioned male monopolization of political space. Insa Nolte noted that "the division of labor

between Obafemi and Hannah Awolowo reflected a gendered approach to politics, in which Awolowo himself acted officially in the public sphere while his wife provided access to and mobilized non-public political resources."[64] Their gendered approach to politics differed significantly with that of Rev. I. O. Ransome-Kuti and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, where both husband and wife played large public roles. The different approaches to political work between the Awolowos and the Ransome-Kutis remind us that gender ideals were dynamic and not rigid.

Increasingly scholars of gender are also calling our attention to competing masculinities at any particular historical moment. Thembisa Waetjens pushes our analysis further by arguing that "nationalisms are often forced to incorporate more than one vision of patriarchal social organization into their narrative of the collective whole."[65] Focusing on the Zulu organization Inkatha, Waetjens shows how its leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, "employed a sophisticated and well-crafted masculinist discourse that referenced 'traditional' gender systems and identities to bolster its credibility as a nationalist politics based on deep-seated cultural traditions."[66] In their bid for regional power in postapartheid South Africa, Buthelezi hoped to use the appeal of Zulu masculinity and the history of the duty and valor of Zulu warriors to garner support among Zulu men who belonged to trade unions and the African National Congress. This strategy, while effective in the rural areas, was less successful in the urban areas, especially among workers whose identity as workers supported a competing framework of masculinity.

These theoretical insights are invaluable to an effort to understand women's agency in constructing the nation. Few historians, however, have drawn our attention to the ways in which women's political engagement tried to contribute to the narration of the nation or succeeded in doing so. Analyses of women's narration of the nation have been explored most thoroughly by literary scholars. Susan Z. Andrade, for example, challenges the assumptions that locked African literature in a public/private binary in which male novelists produced works that performed national narratives while women's novels focused on the family and the domestic realm in apolitical ways. Andrade convincingly argues that men and women both used the trope of the family, but whereas men used the family as an allegory of colonial resistance or national consolidation, women writers, especially after the 1960s, used it to expose other fictions. For women novelists, "the family [became] the nation writ small." Andrade's insightful rereading of women's novels against each other and against the works of male novelists allowed her to illuminate women's counternarratives of the

nation.[67] Elucidating women's narratives is a critical exercise because, as *Nation and Narration* reminds us, "the survival of nations depends on a narrative construction of reality, and the power for control of that narrative becomes a struggle over power, meaning and knowledge in every nation-state."[68] A struggle over power and meaning is at the heart of *The Great Upheaval* as it focuses our attention on the narrative the AWU attempted to craft in which its members' voices were not repressed but full-throated.

Although this power struggle extended to the national stage, much of the important political work conducted by the activists of the AWU and the NWU has been erased in the histories of postwar Nigeria and nationalism. James S. Coleman, for example, produced one of the earliest studies on nationalism in Nigeria that in many ways exemplifies the overarching narrative. The roots of nationalism, according to Coleman, are to be found in the different patterns of urbanization: increased mobility, physical detachment from traditional authority, and the concentration of economic power in the hands of the European trading companies, especially the United Africa Company (UAC).[69] Economic grievances contributed significantly to the rise of nationalist sentiment across Nigeria's social spectrum, especially during the interwar period and World War II. However, as he noted, "nationalism is not merely the sum of accumulated grievances; it is equally an awareness of greater possibilities and opportunities."[70] Those with a Western education were better positioned to articulate those possibilities and opportunities since they were endowed with "the knowledge and skills, the ambitions and aspirations, that enabled them to challenge the Nigerian colonial government."[71]

World War II brought forward new forces and a new militancy in the trade union and nationalist movements. Critical moments that identify this new militancy include the formation of the NCNC in 1944, the spirited demand for political participation and voting rights in 1945, the general strike in Lagos in 1945, and the coal miners' strike of 1949 that led to the shooting of miners at the government colliery in Enugu. These events inspired many of the individuals who were at the forefront of nationalist politics, in particular Obafemi Awolowo, a key figure in the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) and founder of the Action Group (AG), the Yoruba-dominated political party; Nnamdi Azikiwe, a newspaper publisher and one of the founders as well as the leader of the NCNC; and Michael Imoudu, who was considered to be "Nigeria's Labor Leader No. 1."[72] This narrative is heavily weighted toward the male actors who helped give voice to people's grievances and helped individuals and communities across the length and breadth of Nigeria imagine themselves as part

of a unified, sovereign nation. The narrative normalizes male political dominance and glosses over the charged debate about gender and the appropriate roles for women both in the nationalist movement and the imagined nation-state.

Most scholars of this era did not consider the ways that masculinity shaped the evolving nationalist discourse or movement. Nor did they question the marginalization of women's voices among Nigerian nationalists. Nonetheless, women were not completely absent from the analysis. Coleman, in a brief discussion of Lagos market women, notes that "they were the mass base of Nigeria's oldest political organization, the Nigerian National Democratic Party," and that "market-women were constituents whom any urban politician or nationalist leader would ignore at his peril."[73] Richard Sklar's discussion focused on the formation of political parties and thus accurately reflects the way that the parties conceived of women members—as ancillary elements.[74] Thomas Hodgkin gave the most attention to women, especially highlighting women's associations in a number of different countries and the various ways they moved into nationalist politics.[75] He identified the Egba Women's Union and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti as one of the most interesting cases.[76]

These scholars, Coleman, Sklar, and Hodgkin, acknowledged the important support women brought to nationalist organizations and the political momentum of the period. Although they did not consider how women, through their actions and organizations, contributed specifically to the intellectual ferment that typified the nationalist era, Hodgkin articulated a useful framework for such an analysis. He argued that associations were democratic "in the older sense, that they have been constructed by a *demos* which is slowly discovering, by trial and error, the institutions which it required in order to live humanly and sociably."[77] He challenged scholars to study associations because they were an outcome of the "discontent excited by the philosophy of life" of which, in this case, the nation was the symbol and expression.[78] Hodgkin moved women beyond the role of supporters and into the realm of contributors to a philosophy of life. Building on this insight, this study foregrounds the political work of Nigerian women activists instead of folding it into the history of the Nigerian nation-state and the nationalist movement.

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXTS OF REVOLT

This analysis of narration is grounded in material realities of the period and does not champion narrative or cultural productions at the expense of socioeconomic processes. Instead, it establishes the social and economic

conditions upon which this struggle over nation and narration unfolded. *The Great Upheaval* excavates the circumstances that shaped the AWU demands. Thus, it traces the women's political position with each transformation of the Egba state. It demonstrates that male monopolization of the organs of power was not a natural process; rather, it was engineered with each failure to incorporate women into the council, which in theory shared power with the alake or to ensure that women's titles were filled as titleholders passed. This political engineering, however, did not erase the political transcript crafted by women such as Madam Tinubu in the nineteenth century.

Tinubu's historical role helped sustain the tax protests, but the AWU's deployment of this iconic figure should not be read as a harking back to a traditional past. She was being used to wage a contemporary struggle. Abeokuta's ideological landscape remained dynamic during the twentieth century. The colonial government could not dampen enthusiasm for new political ideals that challenged colonial thought and its attendant racism. *The Great Upheaval* makes note of the political ideas that took root in Abeokuta, especially in the interwar period, and also explores how women used the new political organizations that emerged. Many in Abeokuta followed events in Lagos, other parts of Nigeria, and Britain, and as a result they offered support or commentary to a variety of causes, including Ethiopian resistance to the Italian invasion of 1935 and the general strike in Lagos.

Equally important, *The Great Upheaval* explores the economic impact of the Great Depression and World War II on women in Abeokuta and Nigeria more broadly. The war is especially important because of the complicated ways in which it shaped the experiences of market women. Britain demanded resources from its colonies for the war effort. The list of resources included foodstuffs for civilians and the military as well as revenue either through voluntary donations, such as support for the Red Cross, or involuntary contributions, such as taxes. The war proved to be an especially challenging period for market women and farmers in Abeokuta, especially since the government forced traders and farmers to sell their goods at the low control prices. As their profit margins shrank, they confronted an increasingly coercive and efficient tax-collection regime. *The Great Upheaval* demonstrates how wartime conditions and policies in conjunction with a more strident nationalism set the stage for the tax revolt and the rising crescendo of women's voices in Abeokuta.

Since taxes lie at the center of this study, it is important to consider the larger historical and philosophical dimensions of taxes. Taxation in

Britain, as Jane Guyer notes, was ideologically naturalized by the late eighteenth century.[79] Benjamin Franklin's famous saying "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes" reflected the ubiquitous nature of taxes in Euro-American economic and political culture.[80] Taxes came in multiple forms, and while all systems of taxation raised revenue, taxes simultaneously satisfied economic as well as symbolic functions. The items taxed, who collected the taxes, and how taxes were used engaged political, social, economic, and philosophical questions since the collection and distribution of taxes helped construct relations of power within the state as well as between state and society, rich and poor, and men and women.

Control over tax collection facilitated centralization of the British state. By the late sixteenth century, the Treasury Board had extended oversight over state revenues and distribution. It brought uniformity to revenue collection and perfected fiscal measures that enabled it to establish "its authority over the monarch, the Privy Council and the spending departments" and defend itself against the expanding authority of the secretaries of state.[81] Taxes also bore direct links to political participation. For more than a thousand years, taxation and property profoundly shaped who had the right to exercise governmental authority in the political landscape. However, political reformers also used taxation to undercut propertied classes by linking it to ideas of a universal franchise. In British history, taxation and democracy became tightly interwoven.[82]

Colonial officials, however, did not export the linked discourse between taxation and democracy to Britain's African colonies. As Guyer argues, Britain's African subjects experienced taxation without representation for much of the colonial period. This historical experience had profound implications for democratic practice in postcolonial Africa because the "present African leadership has to seek consent first and enforce taxation afterwards."[83] The political role of taxes went beyond limiting democracy: they were central to controlling African political elites as well. While the state insisted that taxation would provide emirs and chiefs a regular source of income, thereby enabling them to maintain their estates and carry out their administrative duties, taxation also allowed them to control African political authorities more efficiently and directly. In Northern Nigeria, part of that control rested on the fact that chiefs no longer had the power to levy taxes; that power was given to the district officer.[84] While scholars explore the political implications of taxation, a significant literature already exists on the imposition of taxes, their importance to the fiscal self-sufficiency of the colonial state, and their role in the creation of

a wage labor force.[85] In the settler colonies of East and Southern Africa, taxes proved critical to the development of migrant labor. Taxation also impacted African family structures and gender relations. In the Belgian Congo, officials used taxation to discourage polygynous marriage, while in South Africa women became legal minors because they were not legally liable for tax payment.[86]

Anthony Hopkins argued that research on taxation had become unfashionable.[87] However, new studies on taxation are appearing, and they are distinguished by their attention to culture as they explore the political, social, and economic consequences of tax policies at different historical junctures. Moses Ochonu uses an analysis of the methods colonial officials resorted to in collecting taxes in Northern Nigeria during the 1930s to explore the contradictions between the self-perceptions of these officials and the realities of their actions.[88] Taxation and fiscal policy more broadly also tell us much about the state and its governance. In a provocative article, Barbara Bush and Josephine Maltby draw our attention to the role of accounting and taxation in colonial/imperial contexts. Taxation was "a moralizing force, transforming the primitive and barbaric into good, industrious and governable colonial subjects." In short, it was a method for controlling and disciplining the colonized.[89] Lord Frederick Lugard, commissioner of Northern Nigeria and later the first governor general of amalgamated Nigeria, oversaw the extension of taxes across most of Nigeria. His insistence on direct taxation drew heavily on his belief that taxes were morally justified as "contributions towards the cost of Administration" as well as a moral benefit to the taxpayer because it "stimulated industry and production."[90] For Lugard, taxation was also a symbol of British suzerainty, and, as Janet Roitman argues, it "exemplified the materialization of colonial power in its fiscal form."[91] Drawing on her research in Cameroon and the Chad Basin, she shows that it turned the peoples in this region into consumers of French currency, "an incontrovertible sign of colonial power."[92] The methods of accounting and financial relations linked to taxation, according to Dean Neu and Monica Heincke, also made a domain of behavior visible and amenable to intervention based on the information gathered. They provided technologies of governance that allowed force to remain in the shadows, though readily accessible.[93] These new technologies of governance produced different consequences for different societies and social groups and therefore created different forms of resistance.

These recent studies on taxation bring new insights to our understanding of moments of tax resistance. Since colonial rule and governance varied considerably, it is necessary to examine the local context into which

taxes were introduced as well as the local landscape of governance. The attempt to extend direct taxation during the interwar depression led to antitax protests in many parts of West Africa. However, in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, women were especially active because taxes threatened to undermine their already precarious marketing activities.[94] Moments of antitax protests also provide insights into African conceptualizations of taxation. Bush and Maltby note that during the interwar era, the African intelligentsia increasingly and more forcefully raised the question of taxation without representation. This demand highlighted one of the contradictions of colonial policy, but, more importantly, it illustrates that different segments of African society examined the political relationships established through taxation. Some accepted the idea that taxes were a civic virtue. They marked one's membership in a community as well as one's contribution to its upkeep and modernization. In Abeokuta, the administration that replaced the alake's government experimented with linking tax payment to political participation by requiring a tax receipt in order to vote. In other communities, people asked searing questions about the relationship between taxation and social reproduction. Roitman identifies tax resisters who took exception to French calculations that did not take food and other basic items of consumption into consideration. Her informants accepted that profits should be taxed, but they defined profits as what remained after the consumption of food and clothing for themselves and their families.[95] In many ways, tax policies mirrored the ambivalences of the nation. Although taxes were presented as an equally shared sacrifice, distinct social groups and individuals paid more than others and benefited much more substantially than others. Thus, arguments and disputes around taxes reveal the tensions and differences that challenge the nation's narrative of unity and coherence.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into six chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 1, "The Birth and Demise of a Nation: The Egba United Government," examines the nineteenth-century promoters of nationhood in Abeokuta. It also reconsiders the creation of the Egba United Government (EUG) in 1898. In many ways, the EUG represented the sort of sovereign national government that European and African missionaries had envisioned. This chapter examines how women were represented in the national government and how they helped shape this important experiment. The end of the EUG came in 1914 when the Lagos government abrogated the Egba Treaty of Independence. The chapter considers the ideological and economic

tensions as Abeokuta adjusted to life under the full mantle of British rule. Governor Lugard moved quickly to impose taxes, so the chapter examines the implications of the tax structure on Egba national identity and women's consciousness as well as the tensions that led to the Adubi War, a rural tax revolt in 1918.

Chapter 2, "Abeokuta's Centenary: Masculinity and Nationalist Politics in a Colonial Space," also analyzes the structure of the colonial state in Abeokuta, especially after the tax revolt and the ascension of Alake Gbadebo's successor, Ademola II. It demonstrates the tightrope colonial officials trod as they tried to undermine Abeokuta's sense of independence while relying on the political symbol of that independence, the alake, to reinforce their suzerainty. This challenge became most acute as Abeokuta looked to its centenary in 1930. The chapter highlights the plans and discussion around the celebration of the town's first hundred years, which focused attention on its sense of its history and national identity. This chapter draws attention to the local histories about Abeokuta, some of which were written for the centenary. It examines how the town's leaders selected the heroes to be memorialized and celebrated, in the process demonstrating how they attempted to construct and legitimize male political dominance. The centenary also encapsulated a political debate about colonial rule between colonial officials and Abeokuta's political elites. The very performance of the celebrations signified competing political goals. For colonial officials the centenary illustrated the efficacy of British colonial rule, while for the alake it demonstrated Abeokuta's progress and worthiness of independence.

While the centenary flamboyantly presented a case for Abeokuta's independence, other notions of independence and nationhood took root. Chapter 3, "Race, Nation, and Politics in the Interwar Period," examines the other political frames through which people constructed political and cultural identities and activism. It examines the evolving construction of Nigerian nationalism as new political parties emerged. Herbert Macauley's Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) emerged in the 1920s, although Lagos was the center of its political activity. This chapter suggests that the emergence of the NYM in the 1930s represented an important political and organizational shift as it sought to mobilize people beyond Lagos. It also argues that the invasion of Ethiopia contributed to the expanding spatial dimension of nationalist thought during the interwar period. As NYM chapters established in other towns and communities organized to support the Ethiopians, these spaces facilitated discussions that deepened national and racial identity formation. This chapter argues

that the 1930s was an important transitional period in Abeokuta as political identification and activism shifted from the search for independence within a British colonial framework to independence as part of Nigeria.

World War II deserves special consideration. Therefore, chapter 4, "Women, Rice, and War: Economic Crisis in Wartime Abeokuta," examines the broad impact of the war as well as the colonial government's efforts to regulate consumer prices and to obtain sufficient food to feed the enlarged population in Lagos. These actions had a direct bearing on the tax revolt because they exacerbated the economic crisis women traders faced. Chapter 5, "'Freedom from Want': Politics, Protest, and the Postwar Interlude," considers the impact of the postwar economic austerity on Nigeria more broadly and Abeokuta specifically. The discussion primarily focuses on a very narrow window of time, 1945–47, for it seeks to understand the multiple strands that came together to ignite the mass women's protests that unfolded in Abeokuta by the end of 1947.

The women often invoked the historical personality Madam Tinubu to give symbolic validation to their actions. Therefore, chapter 6, "Daughters of Tinubu: Crisis and Confrontation in Abeokuta," pays special attention to the deeper meaning and symbolic value that the women attributed to this complex icon and what she represented in women's cultural construction of the nation. It uses crisis as a lens to explore the competing ways in which the AWU, the alake, and his council, and colonial officials both saw and narrated the tax revolt. It relies on a wealth of documents crafted by the AWU and their supporters, the alake, and the top colonial official in the province, the British resident, especially John Blair. These sources provide a deep appreciation of the magnitude of the women's actions. The outcome could have mirrored that of the 1929 Women's War, in which sixty-nine women were killed, because on several occasions troops were brought to the outskirts of Abeokuta. Those in the moment understood the situation as a powder keg, and many faulted the AWU. The AWU's narration of the events is equally compelling, for it faulted the alake's authoritarian practice and articulated a challenge to the erasure of women in both colonial and nationalist renderings. In the process, the AWU's narrative revealed the kind of nation-state the women envisioned and their explicit or indirect ideas about the role of chieftaincy.

Finally, the conclusion considers events after the alake's departure and subsequent return in 1951. That year is equally impactful on the national stage because a new constitution, the Macpherson Constitution, moved the country along the path of self-government and opened the door for the formation of political parties. The creation of political parties catapulted

women into a new political landscape that lacked the gender and ethnic idealism of the immediate postwar years. Ransome-Kuti became increasingly marginalized as she resisted ethnic mobilization and women's subservience to a political agenda established without recognition of women's needs. In many ways, developments in Abeokuta after the new constitution exemplified the reconfiguration of political space in broader Nigeria. The panethnic coalition under the broad umbrella of the NCNC in the years before 1951 quickly lost ground to the regional and ethnic parties that competed for elections. The conclusion also brings us back full circle to the pivotal emergence of the NWU and highlights the increasing tension between the organization and the political parties. It illustrates how women's political independence was increasingly undermined by nationalist success as the country moved toward self-government. As a result, the women's political organizations that survived the rise of the political parties were largely transformed into women's wings of the parties, a far cry from the aspirations of the NWU.