

# Femi Olugbile's *Pelewura*

Historicity and Imagination in the Re-evaluation of  
Ordinariness

By

Patrick Oloko

Department of English

University of Lagos

# Excavated From the dungeon of history

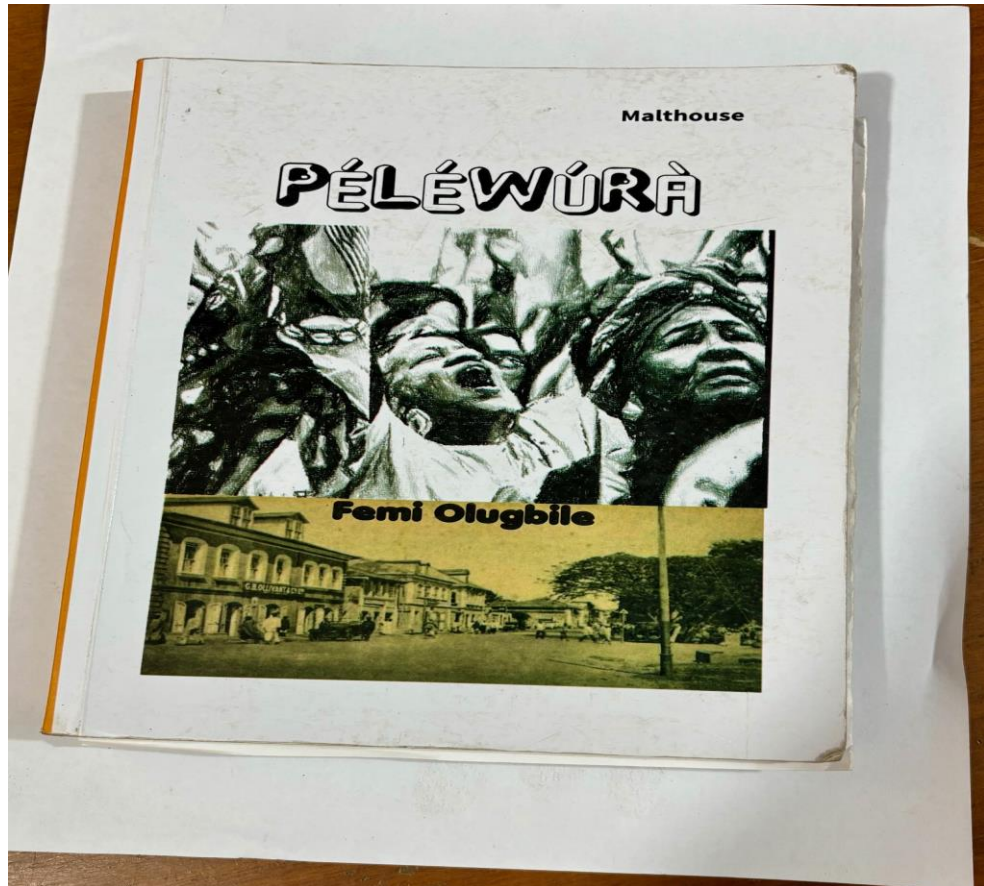
- Image 1: Artist impression?



- Image 2: Ordinariness epitomised



# *Femi Olugbile: author of Pelewura*



# RESONANCE OF ORDINARINESS:

## **Alimotu Pelewura**

- Non-descript parentage
- Ordinary family provenance
- Totally non-literate

## **Herbert Macauley**

- Grandson of Samuel Ajayi Crowther
- Affluent Family background
- British-trained Surveyor

# The modernity of Lagos colonial history: *Contemporaries of Alimotu Pelewura*

- Akinlade Caulcrick
- Dr. Orishadipe Obasa (he nominated candidates for election into the town Council, but all were defeated by Herbert Macauley's candidates.
- Chief Obanikoro (White capped Chief)
- Oba Akitoye v Eleko Esugbayi
- Prince Olusi- he was installed by the British after Akitoye
- Dr. Kitoye Ajasa (the conservative newspaper owner who was knighted by the King for his service and support of the British Colonial administration)
- Dr. J. K. Randle
- Mr. Henry Carr (first indigenous Colonial Secretary of Lagos who was perpetually at war with Herbert Macaulay)
- Chief Alli Balogun- (the Chief Imam of Lagos Central Mosque)
- Mr. Candido Da Rocha
- Dr. Adeniyi Jones
- Dr. Obadiah Johnson, (Brother of Samuel Johnson who compiled the notes of his brother to form *The History of the Yoruba*)
- The Dosunmu Ruling House
- The Shitta Bey Family
- Dr. Sapara Williams
- Oba Falolu
- Herbert Heelas Macauley
- Abibatu Mogaji, possibly the focus of the next biography.
- Is it surprising that all are men, except Mogaji who was being mentored by Pelewura?

# Ahmed Bola Tinubu

- Protegee of Abibatu Mogaji, successor of Pelewura. President of Nigeria today. Did he inherit the organisational sagacity handed to his Godmother by Pelewura?
- Occupant of a street named after Bernard Burdillion, colonial governor of Lagos and close friend of pelewura. Mere coincidence or attempt to shore up ordinariness?
- Folashade Tinubu-Ojo, daughter of President Tinubu, now Iyaloja-General of Nigeria, not Lagos! Is Lagos Market culture slowly impinging on national life?



# “The Silent encroachment of the Ordinary”

## Lagos State: Scene 1

- ***‘We cannot ban Agberos because they are our cousins, brothers, says Hamzat, Lagos Deputy Governor’***, Sahara Reporters, 29 September 2022.
- **“Agberos in Lagos are notorious for charging taxes that are not remitted to government, terrorizing neighbourhoods, robbing passengers and rigging elections for corrupt politicians”**.
- **“They might be right or wrong, but they have the right to express those opinions. And then remember these people (NURTW) are Nigerians. They are our brothers and cousins”, HAMZAT**

## Nigeria: Scene 2

- Bola Ahmed Tinubu as a protégé of Pelewura’s successor, Abibatu Mogaji sits today as the president of Nigeria and Commander-in -Chief of the nation’s Armed Forces: through the sagacity and organizational skills that Pelewura taught Tinubu’s adopted mother?
- Tinubu resides on Burdillion street and is referred to as the ‘Lion of Burdillion’. Mere coincidence? How so?
- Folashade Tinubu-Ojo, is the ‘Iyaloja General’, not of Lagos, but of Nigeria. Does this fact or arguments around it suggest that the Lagos market culture is gradually impinging on national life?
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# The market taking over Oyingbo elitist areas





# Asef Bayat: “Un-civil society: The politics of the ‘Informal People’” (1997)

- Ordinary and silent people collectively “engender significant social changes” (56).
- “...these simple and everyday practices are bound to shift into the realm of politics. The participants engage in collective action, and see their doings and themselves as 'political', only when confronted by those who threaten their gains. Hence one key attribute of these movements is that, while advances are made quietly, individually and gradually, the defence of these gains is always collective and audible” Bayat, 58.
- There should be more than one way of conceptualising ‘civil society’ since any form of “associational life constitutes an integral element of ‘civil society’”(58). (*Read the lips of Deputy Governor Hamzat*)
- In *Pelewura*, Femi Olugbile **demonstrates** how the inner force or organizing principle of individuals behind the collective hews silence and its ordinariness to be forceful enough to institute change.