

Whither the Yorubas - the Quest for Outright Nationhood or Aligning with the evolving Regionalization of Nigeria

by

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The Way We Have Been?

It is important to note that the intellectual, economic and political domination have slowly, but surely been creeping upon the Yoruba Nation since the golden era years that ended in effectively 1964. Only those with uncommon understanding are capable of seeing the dangers that have come upon us as Yorubas in the context of Unitary Government of Nigeria. Our heritage and core values have been and are still being appropriated before our very eyes while we stand akimbo: without a coherent framework of strategic responses.

Relations with Others in Nigeria

In the social media, many of our compatriots to the East for instance, don't seem to have any feelings for our sensibilities unapologetically. All the documented positive testimonies of sacrifices made in their favour by Adekunle Fajuyi, Wole Soyinka, Sam Aluko does not seem to count for anything. The tale of Subomi Balogun and Alex Ekwueme and the general handling of their property during and after the war is glossed over. Ojukwu family holdings and those of all others in our region were kept in tact.

Similarly, the positive world-view of S.G. Ikoku, MCK Ajuluchukwu, Oyibo Odinamadu and Odia Ofeimun among their own brethren in our favour is scornfully put down for no reason. **None of them has ever been molested or killed on our land on the account of who he/she is or language spoken.**

Yet, in their hearts and minds, our brethren to the East would rather engage with those who maim, kill and plunder their lives without let throughout the years of Nigerian history. **Regardless, they find comfort and flourish in our own territory.** They point to only "one event of being cheated" during the so-called election of 1952, without any mention of all acts of Yoruba accommodation of their attitudes for years subsequently. **Even the UPGA linkage of 1964 was observed more in breach.** As a result of our care free attitude, it has now become pass time for us to be taunted with the claim that Lagos, and indeed the Yoruba territory is no-man's land. Quite handily, they won elections to represent

themselves on our territorial land. Our business spaces and proud psyche are seemingly violated as we stand akimbo.

As for some of our neighbours to the north, they are adept at taking advantage of their religious affinity with some of our people. They claim and utilize the commonality of the Muslim religion to assimilate and control, despite not being amenable to worshipping under the authority of an Imam of Yoruba extraction. **Is the then Alafin of Oyo or the Awujale of Ijebu Ode not far more than eminently qualified to lead the Nigerian Council of Islamic Affairs. But permanent authority lies elsewhere without any challenge so far: food for thought.**

Our northern brethren always feel comfortable using and deploying Yoruba intellect and professionalism to manage the affairs of the government and even their personal business entities, but only in a patronising subordinate arrangement. Is this not as clear as the sky?

The Yorubas were short-changed during the Olusegun Obasanjo era through his nebulous patriotism that is ungrounded in reality. **If the Jonathan era was insolent in its quest to deliberately insult the sensibilities of the Yoruba nation, the Buhari regime became an anticlimax in the way the feelings of all Nigerians were trampled upon with impunity.**

It is quite correct to state that we have never been disposed to being part of the so-called **Power at the Centre**, since the advent of the Nigerian nation. In 1959, 1979, 1999, the mainstream segment of the Yoruba society was content with being on our own, believing in our own self determination and innate capacity to take charge of our destiny. Thanks to the epoch-making administration and the sagacity of our leaders during the period 1954 to 1962.

But on the account of the pointed demands by some tendencies amidst us, we finally succumbed and became part of the Northern-flavoured APC coalition at Abuja since 2015. After the Buhari years that many will tag as wasted, we are now in the political era, having our “own” President Ahmed Bola Tinubu; the Jagaban of Borgu in charge of the Nigerian polity.

Three Approaches to Solving our Problem with Nigeria

In view of the foregoing, and in recent years there has been 3 tendencies among the Yoruba peoples of the world, viz:

1. The call and quest for outright separation of the Yoruba Nation from the rest of Nigeria. This has been quite strident from among the preponderance of our brethren in the diaspora. This has been on for at

least 5 years. All we are able to show for this UNPO recognition. No more no less.

2. The speeches and editorializing in the mass media by various Yoruba bodies, especially the Afenifere Organization stating and restating the need to restructure the Nigerian political system. This has been on since the advent of the so-called 4th Republic in 1999. The Nigerian polity has refused to countenance this quest.
3. The motely crowd of politicians that are content to manage elections. seeking political crumbs, buy and or outrightly force their way into leadership positions in the Yoruba territorial space and by extension become part of power that be at Abuja. They are pretentious and seemingly unfeeling about the long-term potential of our people. They are just in charge of our system.

We have in effect have not made any dent of impact regarding our legitimate aspirations for an autonomous space that is suited for our socio-economic worldview. It would therefore seem quite wise to appraise our thoughts, our modalities and our expectations.

Options for Action

Time may have come for us to think anew and undertake course correction. In doing this, I posit the following two alternatives:

1. Seeking and romanticizing about the advent of a Yoruba Nation in the appropriate sense of the true meaning of the work is very unlikely to be realized, unless through unilateral action. The consequences of such a modality ought to be always kept in view, at all times.
2. Seeking and most importantly working assiduously towards asserting our rights to self determination under the ambit whatever the Nigerian nation is evolving to become is another avenue.

I find great merit in the second option

Indeed, the faults lie in ourselves, rather than our stars. This is no power holding us the Yorubas down is we are truly a society of intellectuals. If we are truly creative and innovative, we ought to thrive and prosper despite the debacle of the Nigerian State. This reasoning largely informed the initiative to promote the **Western Region of Nigeria Movement** initiative

In the event that the Unitary Constitution of Nigeria is not re-worked in favour of a truly Federal framework, and the polity remains un-restructured, there are vast avenues and opportunities to act proactively, instead of daily lamentations about the nebulous obstacles that we waste time making endless posts on social media.

Why are we Docile? Who and What is Stopping us?

Many avenues of action have to be explored to whittle down the powers of Abuja. I venture to posit that certain actions ought to be initiated, while waiting for the Federal Government itself to start wailing:

- As we love to party so much and consume so much **cow meat**, who and what is stopping us from investing in the entire value chain of livestock production. The Awolowo government of the 50's initiated several cattle ranch businesses. They lie wasted all over our region. Will it be wrong to ask for what made Aregbesola of Osun State, Fayemi of Ekiti State and now Abiodun of Ogun State invest colossal sums of public funds on the building of airports. Have we challenged them on this choice?
- What is a Federal Road, that the local residents of a community cannot commence the collection of tolls in order to effect repairs? Why suffer in silence waiting for a hapless Federal government? What is stopping the States or groups thereof from taking over all roads and their corridors, as all lands are vested in the States, vide the Land use Act that was embedded in the subsisting Constitution?
- Why not consider toll gates to collect **Transit Fees** of 5,000 to 10,000 naira each from all 14 Wheel Vehicles and Luxury Buses passing through every State in Yoruba territory. The heavy duty vehicles pollute and damage the environment of Yorubaland as they traverse Apapa ports until they exit towards other Regions of Nigeria. The revenue so realized will boost the coffers of the respective states.
- In the same manner, and after due study of its possible impact on increased revenue, it is necessary to spearhead the preparation and sponsorship of a bill to the National Assembly, proposing the abolition of the law which empowers the Federal Board of Inland Revenue to centrally collect **Value Added Tax (VAT)**, substituting it with one that will restore the responsibilities for the collection of Sales Tax to States government. Alternatively, a suit should be filed at the Supreme Court seeking the same reliefs. It is time we commence the dismantling of unitary framework of Nigeria.
- What is stopping groups of States from setting up their own equivalent of JAMB institution that will strictly uphold merit in tertiary education admissions? Why not give students the option of ignoring Nigerian JAMB in respect of admissions to State owned institutions?
- What is stopping States from issuing Drivers Licences, as States already have Motor Vehicle Departments and Vehicle Inspection officers. What is stopping the undertaking of regional Censuses and issuing of Identity

Cards? Why wait for the ineffectual National Identity Management Commission?

A very important consideration is the fact that the Yorubas have to commence strategising on how to survive economically, when eventually the South South takes control of its Petroleum resources. Sooner or later, it will come. Nigeria will never be at peace until resource control is accorded its pride of place in the Nigerian Federation.

It would also be wise to commence contingency planning towards:

- Legal Suit against the Federal Government seeking Self Determination Referendum for Autonomy and Integration of Yorubas in Kogi, Kwara and Edo States
- An order seeking to expunge all references to Local Government administration in the Federal Constitution
- Abrogation of Land Use Act suit as embodied in the constitution.

In ending this section, one is left to wonder in recent years, why there has not been any instance of the Federal Government instituting legal action at the Supreme Court to challenge any State or groups thereof for infractions of the Constitution. It is a mystery also why there were no myriad of attempts at curtailing the so called overbearing powers of the Unitary Government of Nigeria to a level that will lead to a formal challenge at the courts? All we have had are mere grumblings and lazy posturing on the pages of newspapers.

Conclusion and Take Aways

1. From the foregoing, it is quite clear that the approach of legislation and political re-engineering through the political process is the preferred pathway for bringing about the necessary changes in the constitutional framework for governance. It may be supplemented with litigation.
2. There has been **2 epochs in Yoruba relationships within Nigeria in her modern history.** The first, is the period between 1954 and 1966, during which time we experienced a steady climb of progress based on every indices of human achievements. We had self government that afforded our leaders to make choices and fashion out programmes and projects that suited our way of life and world view without hindrance by other ethnic nationalities. **The system then was clearly a flavour of Federalism as classically defined.**

- 3 The **second epoch** is from 1966, lasting till date. Steadily, but surely, we lost grip on our affairs. Our prized assets were appropriated: University of Ife, Liberty Stadium, WNTV/WNBS, government run and managed primary and secondary Schools, Lagos City Council, Ibadan City Council, Farm Settlements, System of Competitive Examinations for recruitment into our Public Service, abandonment of Lagos as capital city. Much later, Lagos Metroline internally conceived by the government of Lateef Jakande was insolently cancelled. Our taxation ability was appropriated and VAT resources taken out of our territory. JAMB system of quota damaged the psyche of our youths. Federal Character system damaged our world view of merit and honour to the very best and brightest. **This is classically a flavour of Unitary System in plain sight.**
- 4 We now have a clear choice to make. Shall we continue with the current trajectory, or make a bid for the past? From all indications and based on strident calls by all and sundry for years in the past, it would seem that we fared better during the first epoch of 1954 to 1966. The logical question to ask therefore is how do we proceed to reverse our misfortunes? What is stopping us in the quest for self government? To whom is our continuous calls and appeals for "True" or "Fiscal" Federalism, or Restructuring directed? Are we praying to God? Or we are praying to mere mortals like ourselves? If our calls and appeals are to mere mortals that are identifiable, then is it not time we pointedly face our traducers? Should we not put aside timidity or the fear of fear and begin the quest to take back our lives. Should we not begin in earnest to organise for internal understanding and cohesion of thoughts among ourselves?
- 5 Are we alone in the context of Nigeria in the understanding that the past was far better than now. Are there no others like us in the other 5 geopolitical zones? Should we not begin to organise and mobilise ourselves and all others? The draft of a new Constitution effortlessly produced by the Voice of Reason is a ready instrument to negotiate with other like minded nationalities across Nigeria.
- 6 This presentation has ample content with which to act towards the emancipation of the **YORUBA NATION.**

There are ideas and proposals on

(i) The institutionalisation of a body of Speakers of Houses of Assembly and the Chair-men/women of LGA's for programme development and coordination across State boundaries

(ii) Setting up of contacts and outreach committee to mobilize other like-

minded persons and bodies beyond Yorubaland towards mid-wifing change in the Nigerian polity

(iii) Programmes and ideas input into possible legislations for reforms and the imperatives of working out actionable steps, deliverables and timelines.

7. Let it be stated this day, that the source of our decent into decadence lies within us and our choices. Lets us not blame any other: Fulani, Hausa or Igbo for our seeming misfortune since 1966. **There is no so-called “power that be” anywhere that can defeat a united and purposeful people. Let no political affiliation or naked self interest be in our way.** Whether we depart from this hall today with the conviction to act or not, this year shall be a defining moment that will be recorded in the annals of history for the future generations.

The Western Region of Nigeria Movement Initiative

The modalities for this are set out in separate documents in the form of memoranda in 2 parts

Abuja

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