



OKUN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (ODA)

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9th September, 2020

The Chairman,
Senate Committee on Constitution Review,
Room 0.28 Senate New Wing,
National Assembly Complex,
Abuja.

Dear Sir,

SUBMISSION OF MEMORANDUM BY THE OKUN YORUBA PEOPLE OF KOGI STATE ON THE REVIEW OF 1999 CONSTITUTION

With reference to your advertorial in The Nation's newspaper of Thursday 27th August 2020, we the Okun Yoruba people of Kogi state submit the attached memorandum.

Please find attached two (2) copies of our memorandum dated Wednesday 9th September 2020. Please accept the assurances of our highest consideration

Yours faithfully,

Ambassador Babatunde Paul Fadumiyo
for National President

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A MEMORANDUM BY THE
OKUN YORUBA PEOPLE OF KOGI STATE

Seeking

Internal Restructuring of Nigeria for
Federalism; Regionalism; Parliamentary System, Power Rotation;
Boundary Adjustment of Okun Territory to the South-West Region; and
Sundry Constitutional Matters

Submitted

By

Okun Development Association (ODA)
To the Senate Committee on Constitution Review
9th September, 2020

1. INTRODUCTION OF THE SUBJECT MATTER

1.1 Okun Development Association (ODA).

Okun Development Association (ODA) is the umbrella socio-cultural and development organization that speaks and acts on behalf of the Okun Yoruba People of Kogi state, on matters affecting their governance, development and sustainable livelihood. It is registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

1.2 The Okun Yoruba People of Kogi State

We the Okun People, are a sub-national group of the Yoruba nation. While we are predominantly located in Kogi State, we are also indigenously present in Ondo, Ekiti and Kwara States. Unfortunately, our people in those States were separated from us by artificial political boundaries drawn between 1900 and 1906 by the colonial powers and the State creation exercise of 1991.

This process excised majority of the Okun people from their kith and kin, the Yoruba People, in the South-West and put them in the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. This arbitrary political relocation has translated to ingrained constitutional marginalisation of our people between the North and our indigenous home, the South West. The wrong geo-political placement subsists till date.

Thus, geo-politically since 1900, we have been wrongly situated in the Northern part of Nigeria and various attempts made to invite government's attention to the denial of self-determination and justice have not yielded fruit.

The Okun People of Kogi State were direct victims of the activities of European traders which culminated in Sir Fredrick Lugard expropriating part of our territory to the Northern Protectorate in 1900 and other parts of the territory to the colonial Governor of Southern Protectorate in 1918. This was without consideration for the common ancestral origins, economic interdependence, cosmology and cultural values shared with the people of

South Western part of the Southern Protectorate. Unfortunately, all post-colonial Nigerian governments have been unable to redress this tragic dislocation. Rather, our rate of progress or development has been further retarded even within the current North Central Geopolitical Zone.

Our persistent calls for self-determination to decide which political socio-cultural entity we desire to relate with in Nigeria's political power equation has hitherto, been unheeded.

In Kogi State, we are domiciled in Yagba West, Yagba East, MopAmuro, Ijumu, Kabba/Bunu, and Lokoja Local Government Areas. Out of these six (6) Local Government Areas, five (5) of them are 100 percent peopled by the Okun, while the Oworo-Okun own and live in more than three quarters of Lokoja Local Government Area. Out of a population of a little over three million people in Kogi State, The Okun Yoruba approximately number about 800,000

2. FACTS ON THE SUBJECT MATTER

- 2.1. The Okun People in Kogi State are convinced that a Sovereign National Conference will be a welcome platform to canvass and advocate a redress for multiple injustices that have arisen from their wrong situation since Lord Lugard's proclamation of an artificial boundary between the Northern Protectorate and the Southern Protectorate in 1900. The subsequent amalgamation of both the Southern and Northern Protectorates and the Colony of Lagos, which became Nigeria in 1914, did not acknowledge the imperative for a redressing of this anomaly.

- 2.2 The government of post-independence Northern Nigeria where the Okun People constituted the bedrock of the intelligentsia and bureaucracy collapsed in 1966. Ever since, Okun People have been victims of serial political nomadism in various geo-political entities. This has negatively impacted on the cultural, political and economic fortunes of the Okun People, a situation accentuated by the creation of Kogi State in 1991. From 1991 till date, Okun people have experienced considerable decline in every index for measuring development. In the current configuration of Kogi State,

there is very little, if any, hope that Okun People would fare better in the foreseeable future.

- 2.3 The experiences from cultural, economic, administrative and geo-political miniaturization of power and politics, which worsened the marginal status of Okun People, particularly in Kogi State in the North Central Zone, after the collapse of the Northern Nigerian government, have shown glaringly the irreconcilable contradictions and barriers to Okun People's security and development aspirations.
- 2.4 The various protests, appeals and advocacy for fairness, equity and justice at several Constitutional Conferences in London and Nigeria, the Willinks Commission of Enquiry on Minority Rights, several Panels on Creation of States and Boundary Adjustment hitherto, have not attracted the desired attention, as the people have never been allowed to determine where they should belong and who should govern them and guarantee their self - actualization, security, development and overall well-being.

3. ISSUES FROM THE STATEMENT OF FACTS FOR DETERMINATION

- 3.1. We reaffirm that the Okun People share the same characteristics with the Yoruba of South Western Nigeria in culture, values and cosmology. The territory where Okun People dwell is also contiguous with the South West of Nigeria without any natural or ecological barrier. From time immemorial till TODAY, the in and out flow of trade by Okun People has only been with the Yoruba of the South West. It has never been with our non-Yoruba neighbours.
- 3.2 There has always been a loud, popular and persistent clamour for the readjustment or re-location of Okun People politically and administratively from the North Central Zone to the South West Zone of Nigeria.
- 3.3 There has been persistent exclusion of Okun People from governance, particularly at the highest levels of decision-making. Without a deliberate policy that favours power rotation, political power will perpetually elude the Okun People and thus perpetuate their ongoing marginalisation in Kogi State.

- 3.4 Okun People observe that too much of the nation's resources and governmental responsibilities are concentrated in the Central (Federal) government, so much so, that the federating units cannot meaningfully exploit the physical, economic and human resources in their environment for the development of their territory and for the wellbeing of their people. Indeed, from 1966 to date Nigeria has been a Federal Republic in name only.
- 3.5 Security of lives and property has become highly compromised because the apparatus of institutional control resides with the central government- thus making crime detection, prevention and justice ineffective. The inability of the federal Government to guarantee the security of life and property of every segment in the country has become glaring as some groups kill and pillage at will while the Federal Government is unable or unwilling to stop them.
- 3.6 The official cost of running government is too high in the current presidential system, breeding endemic corruption which has in turn inhibited the ability to run government effectively and efficiently.

4. ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF ISSUES FOR DETERMINATION

- 4.1. The Okun Development Association (ODA) advocates that a Sovereign National Conference be convened to address the critical issues that concern Okunland and other nationalities in Nigeria as presently constituted. Preparatory to this, the Association has canvassed the views and position of all Okun stakeholders, which was finalised by a one-day General Assembly at which all the issues detailed in this memorandum were arrived at by consensus.
- 4.2. By the time the Northern Protectorate was proclaimed in 1900, Kabba Province, as an administrative unit, spread as far as Owo and Ikare Divisions in present day Ondo state and Ikole in present day Ekiti State. However, while the three other Divisions were adjusted back to the Southern Protectorate, Okunland, which has the same characteristics as Owo, Ikare and Ikole was curiously retained in the Northern Protectorate. It was this process which severed the Okun people from their kith and kin, the Yoruba of the South West.

Thus between 1900 and 1967, Okunland was politically and administratively merged with people with whom they had no cultural affinity and controlled by the Northern Regional Government, with its administrative headquarters in Kaduna. This created a MINORITY STATUS for Okunland from which they have suffered political and developmental setback till today.

On May 27, 1967, the military government created twelve (12) states, including West Central (later Kwara) State, which included Okunland.

On August 27, 1991, what remained of the former Kabba Province was excised from Kwara State and merged with the Igala Division (which had gone to Benue State in 1975) to form the new Kogi State. In short, Okun Yoruba People have never been allowed to have a say about their preferred geo-political location.

- 4.3 From the days of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, through the amalgamation of the two Protectorates and the Colony of Lagos in 1914, to the creation of regions by the Richards Constitution in 1946 through the creation of states, first in 1967 and subsequently the creation of Kogi State in 1991, the Okun People were never asked where they wanted to be. They found themselves where others placed them by fiat. In short, our right to self-determination, as enshrined in the United Nation's Atlantic Charter on Human and People's Rights, has never been respected.

Arising from the foregoing, we, the Okun Yoruba of Kogi State invoke the relevant Charters of the United Nations, the African Union and the West African Economic Community, to demand that we be allowed to determine how we want to be governed, who we want to associate with and where we want to be. We invoke our God given rights to choose whether we want to be in the North Central Zone or any other Zone. The historical alienation that Okun People have suffered, which we have enunciated in this Memorandum makes our choice very clear. A slave that never agitates to go back to his father's house is a slave indeed and will remain so for ever. Though we have lived on our father's land, this land has been expropriated by strangers since 1900. We demand, that the ancestral land where Okun Yoruba live, be returned to rejoin its rightful owner, THE YORUBA OF SOUTH WEST NIGERIA.

- 4.4. We, the Okun Yoruba people of Kogi State (Spreading across six contiguous Local Government Areas) insist that the political boundary drawn in 1900 to

separate us from our kith and kin in Ondo, Ekiti and Kwara States is an infringement abridgement of our right to self-determination, more so that it has inhibited our growth and development for a tortuous century thus far. THEREFORE, WE DEMAND THAT THE BOUNDARY BE READJUSTED TO RELOCATE OUR PEOPLE AND TERRITORY BACK TO WHERE WE BELONG IN SOUTH WEST NIGERIA.

5. RELIEFS/ PRAYERS SOUGHT

5.1. WE THE ENTIRE OKUN PEOPLE EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR THE LOUD AND NECESSARY CALL FOR THE RESTRUCTURING OF NIGERIA TO BRING ABOUT A TRULY FEDERAL REPUBLIC WITH THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

5.1.1. THAT THE NIGERIA NATION BE STRUCTURED TO HAVE A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WITH THE CURRENT SIX (6), OR MORE, GEO-POLITICAL ZONES FORMING THE FEDERATING UNITS AS REGIONS, OPERATING AS CO-ORDINATE RATHER THAT SUBORDINATE STRUCTURES

5.1.2. THAT EACH REGION SHALL CONTROL THE ECONOMY AND GOVERNMENT OF ITS AREA AND CONTRIBUTE TO RUNNING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE RESPONSIBILITIES ALLOCATED TO IT. WHIST THERE WILL BE A FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, REGIONS SHALL ALSO HAVE THEIR OWN CONSTITUTIONS TO ADDRESS THEIR PECULIAR ENVIRONMENTS. CLEARLY DEFINED EXCLUSIVE AND CONCURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES SHALL BE AGREED BETWEEN THE REGIONS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

5.1.3. EACH REGION SHOULD CONSIST OF INTERNALLY AGREED NUMBER OF STATES OR PROVINCES BASED ON POLITICAL PECULIARITIES. STATES OR PROVINCES SHALL THEREFORE BE THE FEDERATING UNITS OF EACH REGION IN WHICH THERE WILL ALSO BE EXCLUSIVE AND CONCURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN THEM.

5.1.4 EACH STATE OR PROVINCE SHALL BE DIVIDED INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION SHALL BE ON THE EXCLUSIVE LIST OF EACH STATE, WHICH SHALL DETERMINE THE NUMBER THEY WANT AND FUND THEM.

5.1.5. THAT THERE SHALL BE A REVENUE SHARING FORMULA IN WHICH THE STATES AND REGIONS MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUND RESPONSIBILITIES ALLOCATED TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. TO THIS END, AT LEAST FIFTY

PERCENTAGE (50%) OF RESOURCES SHALL BE RETAINED IN THE STATES WHERE THEY ARE DERIVED AND USED FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

- 5.1.6. TO REDUCE THE COST OF GOVERNANCE, TO SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS AND TO MAKE GOVERNANCE CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE, A PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IS ADVOCATED AS THE BEST FOR NIGERIA.
- 5.1.7. THERE SHALL BE ONLY ONE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (UNICAMERA) AT NATIONAL LEVEL, ONE AT THE REGION, AND THE CURRENT STATE HOUSES OF ASSEMBLY, ALL OPERATING ON PART TIME BASIS.
- 5.1.8. TO ENSURE FAIRNESS AND UPHOLD HUMAN RIGHTS FOR MINORITY NATIONALITIES WHO HAVE BEEN SEPARATED BY ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES FROM THEIR KITH AND KIN, A REFERENDUM SHALL BE CONDUCTED TO ENABLE SUCH NATIONALITIES TO CHOOSE WHICH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, STATE AND REGION TO JOIN AS LONG AS THEIR PRESENT LOCATION IS CONTIGUOUS TO THE LGA, STATE OR REGION THEY WANT TO JOIN.
- 5.2. THE OKUN PEOPLE OF KOGI STATE REAFFIRM THEIR YORUBA ORIGIN. IT IS INCONTROVERTIBLE THAT THEIR CULTURE AND VALUES ARE THE SAME WITH THOSE OF THE YORUBA IN THE SOUTHWEST OF NIGERIA WITH WHOM WE SHARE TERRITORIAL CONTIGUITY AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS.
 - 5.2.1 WE, THEREFORE, PUT FORWARD AS OUR CORE DEMAND, THE READJUSTMENT OR RELOCATION OF OKUN PEOPLE'S POLITICAL AND LAND BOUNDARY FROM THE NORTH-CENTRAL ZONE (REGION) TO THE SOUTHWEST ZONE (REGION) OF NIGERIA.
 - 5.2.2. IN JOINING THE SOUTH WEST ZONE (REGION), WE DEMAND THAT OKUNLAND BE INCORPORATED AS A STATE (OKUN STATE) SINCE WE HAVE ALL IT TAKES TO BE A VIABLE ONE.
 - 5.2.3. IN CASE OF LIMITATION PLACED ON THE NUMBER OF STATES PER ZONE (REGION), OR SOME OTHER CONSIDERATIONS, AND WE CANNOT BE A STATE OF OUR OWN, WE SHALL PREFER TO COME INTO THE SOUTH WEST IN A UNION AS ONE STATE, WITH THE CORE YORUBA OF KWARA STATE WITH WHOM WE WERE IN THE SAME STATE FROM 1967 TO 1991.

- 5.3. IT IS THE POSITION OF THE OKUN YORUBA THAT IN ANY ARRANGEMENT, SPECIFIC AND CLEAR CONSTITUTIONAL CLAUSE(S) SHOULD BE MADE TO ENFORCE ROTATION OF EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS AMONG THE COMPONENT PARTS OF THE FEDERAL, REGIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS, TO FORESTALL OBJECTIONABLE DOMINATION BY ANY GROUP OVER THE OTHERS.
- 5.4. CLEAR CLAUSE(S) SHOULD BE INSERTED IN THE CONSTITUTION TO PROTECT MINORITY RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES IN THE FORM OF A BILL OF RIGHTS.



Ambassador Babatunde Paul Fadumiyo
for National President