

Dear Prof. Omo Omoruyi,

Thank you for your elaborate attempts to rewrite the history of the Mid West Region and Edo history in particular. I tried very hard to read between the lines to ascertain your goal in trying to paint the picture that Dr Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia whom you said is your cousin has no locus standing in hosting members of Bendel Consultative Council (BCC). In your opinion, David Ejoor should play that role along with Chief Enahoro.

David Ejoor can only be remembered in Mid West Region for his role in hosting the National Conference at NIFOR before the breakout of the civil war in 1967. A lot of people are still suspicious of his role in the Biafran occupation of the Mid West Region whether or not there was complicity with Col C.D Nwanwo commander of the 4th Area Command of the Nigerian Army. This area of our history is murky. As far as Chief Enahoro was concerned, he did everything in his power to prevent the creation of Mid West Region whereas people like Dalton Asemota lost their lives in the process. Can Chief Enahoro or David Akpore Ejoor now lay any claim to the Mid West Region? I doubt not. This is where Edokpamahia khin will not fly. Like you, I thank God we had visionary leaders like the late Omo n' Oba Ne Edo Uku Akpolokpolo Oba Akenzua 11, late B2, Chief Omo Osagie, the Iyase of Benin and late Chief Festus Okotie Eboh. Together these men actualised the vision of 'One Nation, One People and One destiny' for all in the then Mid West Region. They are gone beyond and so occupy a good place in our history and your essay but not so for Dr Ogbemudia, Chief Odigie- Oyegun etc who are still alive and past governors of Mid West Region and Edo State respectively. The implication is that only the dead Edos are worthy of leadership, those who are alive are not. This is a wrong assumption unless of course there is someone somewhere nursing the ambition. To actualise his dreams, he must first set aside and fault the past performances of our past governors and living Edo leaders of today.

Chief Okotie - Eboh and Chief Iyase of Benin were not remembered.

You were right to stress that these illustrious sons from the old Mid West Region were not remembered by the Ogbemudia administration or by the people. You must remember that Dr Ogbemudia's administration was military and things were done by decree and efforts were being made then to stamp out corruption, nepotism and tribalism. These leaders, one of whom was killed in the January 1966 coup, would have been too soon remembered during Ogbemudia's tenure as they were thought to be the corrupt politicians that brought about instability in the country. The most important singular factor in the non-recognition of these our illustrious sons was the scorched earth policy of Chief Obafemi Awolowo in then Bendel State. Soon after his release from the Calabar prison and made Minister for Finance, he was de-facto deputy head of state of Nigeria and he remembered his old political rivals. His hand was also visible in the result of Owegbe Inquiry. So there were obvious factors that militated against the recognition of these Edos by Ogbemudia's regime.

**Edo and Delta Leadership:**

There is no single individual dead or alive that can truthfully lay claim to leadership of Edo and Delta states aside Dr Ogbemudia. He single handily took Bendel State from the ruins of the civil war to make it number one in Nigeria. In administration, infrastructure, sports, transportation, self help development projects, health, the lottery, mechanized farming etc. The list is endless. His

handwork can be seen in all nooks and corners of Edo State. (See my essay on his 70th birthday). His desire to bring about the viability of BCC is in fact actualising the late Oba Akenzua's Vision of a united people with one destiny considering our ancestral origin. You also quarrelled with his idea of hosting these people who contributed to the division of Bendel State. In fact to me that is a good quality in him of being magnanimous and forgiving. That is true leadership. Today it should be obvious to all that no one individual or single state that can make the desired impact in the Nigerian Nation hence the essence of these alignments and re-alignment. This is not peculiar to the old Mid West Region. The arrangement for voting in the coming election by Aferenifere in the old western region is what unity of purpose can provide. Everyone, seeking the best advantage point for his people. That is what is lacking in Edo State, and the old Mid West Region and it is what Dr S.O. Ogbemudia and the BCC is trying to address. This is what Edo Global Organization is trying to address. This is what Air Iyare is also trying to address in Pan Edo Congress. Will they succeed? Time will tell. There is no greater means of success like uniting all these fragmented parts into a viable whole.

The repeated unsavoury comments on Dr S.O. Ogbemudia.

Every time I read your essay, I always wonder why you write in your style and paint the way you do Dr Ogbemudia's achievements. Will this be connected to your failed attempt of a position in Ogbemudia's second coming as civilian governor of Edo State. I recalled your name was repeatedly mentioned for a post. When the executive was formally announced, your name was not there and even the coveted post of secretary to government went to someone else. All Edos can see the work of Dr Ogbemudia. The growth of Edo State stopped when he left office after the military coup of 1975. I will quickly remember the achievement of my former teacher Prof. Ambrose Alli in Bendel state. The Ambrose Alli University is a living testimony to the man. The last time I saw him, was at the University College Hospital Ibadan in 1987 during his detention. 'Five Medical Doctors went to pay homage to a teacher and a mentor' may his soul rest in peace. Ambrose Alli can also lay claim to Edo State leadership. His legacy is there for all to see. I recall my comment after one of your essay last year that 'a chief must create a chief to replace itself for perpetuation otherwise the lineage is dead. My question was then and it is still pertinent now. How many Edo son's and daughter got elevated when you were formulating Ibrahim Babaginda's policies? What was your role in the creation of Edo State. Why is Edo state without a sea outlet today? The map was visible to all. You were in a position to do a lot and influence a lot and you did nothing. Mrs Marian Babaginda (Asaba born), used her position to make Asaba the headquarters of Delta state. Why ! Why! Why was Edo state made to take the reminder portion after everyone was satisfied? Why is Edo state evbareke?

These issues are very dear to Edo sons and daughters. Today using the principle of derivation, Edo State gets 0.3% of the allocation to oil producing areas. It could have been better. The present non-payment of salaries and Edo State indebtedness can be successfully traced to errors made by Edo sons in corridors of powers who did nothing to elevate the earnings of Edo State.

I wish to appeal that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones, those who did not perform when they had the opportunity should not blame others for not doing enough. The problems of Edo State belong to us all, so also are the solutions. With collective responsibility, we shall build Edo State of our dreams and make it viable and competitive amongst Nigerian States. Lets us stop criticising destructively. Let us give praise to those who deserve it. Let us be fair and truthful

in our dealings and writings. That is where the honour lies.

Is BCC anti -Obasanjo?

The answer is no. BCC is not anti -Obasanjo. BCC is doing its best to improve the earning of Edo State by causing the government to accept a more favourable method of disbursing the earnings that accrue from oil. The majority of members are bona fide members of the ruling party and so are positioning themselves to get more for Edo and Delta States. No Edo son or daughter should fault that.

These are my observations.

Regards,

Stephen E.O. Ogbonmwan

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your reply, which reassured me that I'm not the only one perturbed by Professor Omoruyi's current stance and certainly not trying to "pull Professor Omoruyi down" as has been suggested by a pedestrian political observer and commentator on the forum. Firstly, I have read your contribution, understood the content and in particular, articulated the rationale behind the write-up. I can see that you are ahead of me in your ability to identify what may be Professor Omoruyi's motivation. If he wants to float Edo Okpa Makhin as a political party, let him go a head; if he is using Edo Okpa Makhin as a think-tank to move the people forward, let it be made clear; if Edo Okpa Makhin is a charitable organisation, let this also be made clear. What ever the strategy is, let the people see and feel the substance of this organisation. I may be wrong, our people are not foolish - if they can measure and link changes in their lives directly or indirectly to Edo Okpa Makhin - they would move with organisation and reject what ever emerges later. This is the best way to stifle competition without resorting to the kind of war of attrition that Professor Omoruyi is currently engaged with the so-called Bendel Consultative Body. He is yet to come out categorically why this body should not exist and why it is bad for the people other than the people involved lack the credibility necessary to lay claim to the aspirations the body currently holds and intends to pursue.

My regards,

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