

A Fibi S'ólóore- A Study of Olúşégun Ọbásanjó as a Fringe Yorùbá Elite¹

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Abstract

Yorùbá minstrels highlight varied aspects of a person's ancestral attributes. A constructed poem for a Yorùbá lineage, *A fibi sù olóore, tí ó ta àna rẹ̀ ló fà*, (an ingrate, who repays his in-laws by shooting at him) seem to fit Ọbásanjó like a glove. The aim of the study is to identify the extent to which Ọbásanjó has advanced himself by using the Yorùbá ethnic currency; and had advanced laws and policies which are detrimental to the Yorùbá national interest. The methodology adopted is qualitative and reliance is placed on Ọbásanjó's own accounts, the undisputed renditions of his superiors, colleagues and associates. The work is examined through the prism of Machiavelli and elite theories. The study revealed that the mainstream Yorùbá elites continually fall prey to Ọbásanjó's devices and concludes that the subject used the Yorùbá ethnic currency as a passport to glory in Nigerian public life at the detriment of his nation.

Keywords: Olúşégun Ọbásanjó, *A fibi s'ólóore* (ingrate), Yorùbá elites, Machiavelli, Law.

Introduction

Olúşégun Ọbásanjó is an enigma. He was the officer who accepted the surrender of the rebellious Biafran Army at the end of the deadly civil war in January 1970 (Ọbásanjó 1999: 128–135). He succeeded the assassinated General Muhammed as Nigerian Head of State in 1976. As a military head

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of state, he committed Nigeria to the anti-apartheid crusade, giving diplomatic, political and military assistance to the freedom struggle by South Africans, making Nigeria to be classified as a frontline state by the apartheid South African regime (Jemirade 2020:128–129; Sètèolú and Òkúnéyẹ 2017:59; Umezurike 2015:71; Ugwuja 2016:37, 43; Adébàjò, and Paterson 2012:8–9; Abégúnrin 2009:8–16). In 1979, he handed over power to Nigeria's first democratically elected executive President, Shehu Shagari on schedule (Okafor and Obiora 2015:47). In retirement, Qbásanjó was the co-chairman of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on South Africa and founded the African Leadership Forum (Maharaj 2008:16, 36). He is also a farmer and a writer. He was convicted of a coup plot, imprisoned and was subsequently released after the death of the erstwhile Nigerian maximum ruler, Sanni Abacha (Osayande 2020: 149–151). Qbásanjó was conscripted by certain power blocks to run for presidency, when all the nations constituting Nigeria decided that the injustice done to MKO Abíólá by the annulment of the June 12 1993 election must be redressed. Nigerian elites decided that only Nigerian of Yorùbá extraction should contest the presidential election as compensation for the annulment (Aríbidésí and Fálọlá 2019: 392–409; Yagbóyajù 2015: 171–172). Qbásanjó eventually won the presidential election over his fellow Yorùbá opponent, Olúyemí Fálàè in the February 27, 1999 presidential election. He polled nearly 63 percent of the votes in a controversial result, which was a subject of litigation (*Chief Olúyemí Fálàè v Chairman, INEC & Chief Olúşégun Qbásanjó*, 1999; see also *Chief Qbáfẹmi Awólọwọ v Alhaji Shehu Shagari*, 1979). Qbásanjó ended up serving two terms as a civilian president from 1999-2007. The subject of this study is to employ unorthodox methods to achieve his objectives and capable of approbating and reprobating at the same time depending on the circumstances. This essay examines the extent to which the subject has been fair to his compatriots who were instrumental to his success, his nation and others.

Theoretical Background

The common view among Machiavelli's predecessor-philosophers, like Aristotle, Plato and Socrates was that rulers that desired long, peaceful reign and orderly transition must have impeccable character and be strictly virtuous (Devereux 2011:1-25). In return, such virtuous rulers were entitled to the unquestionable loyalty and admiration of their subjects (Nederman 2009). This moralistic view of authority was disputed and criticized by Machiavelli in his best-known treatise, *The Prince*. Machiavelli equates power with authority and believed that it is the acquisition of power which gives the right to compel obedience. Thus, Machiavelli maintained that the only real concern of the

political ruler is the acquisition and maintenance of power, in order to sustain the state (Nederman 2009). Machiavelli asserted that winning and maintaining political office cannot be attributed to goodness and right only; and that any successful ruler must be conversant with the proper exercise of power. Thus, individuals and institutions obey the rulers who understand the proper application of power (Nederman, 2009). Machiavelli discountenanced issues of authority and legitimacy in preference to power and its exercise. He maintained that, 'there cannot be good laws without good arms, I will not consider laws but speak of arms' since, the legitimacy of law rests entirely upon the threat of coercive force (Machiavelli 1965:47). Consequently, Machiavelli concluded that fear is preferable to affection in subjects, just as violence and deception are superior to legality in effectively controlling them. Machiavelli assumes that subjects 'are ungrateful, disloyal, insincere and deceitful, timid of danger and avid of profit. ... Love is a bond of obligation which these miserable creatures break whenever it suits them to do so; but fear holds them fast by a dread of punishment' (Machiavelli 1965:62).

For Machiavelli, the successful ruler needs special training devoid of extraneous moralizing influences but based on the effective exercise of power (Machiavelli 1965). Machiavelli's vision of the requirements of power politics is *virtù* 'virtue,' of the prince, which refer to the range of personal qualities that the prince must acquire in order to maintain the state and attain outstanding achievements. Thus, the prince is permitted to be duplicitous by employing conventional virtues and evil behavior, as the occasion demand, thus, he must be of 'flexible disposition' and capable of varying his conduct from good to evil and back again 'as fortune and circumstances dictate' (Machiavelli 1965:66). Machiavelli then recommended that the Prince could be duplicitous, as politics is a sort of battlefield where the prince just like any general needs to employ appropriate strategies and techniques to perpetrate his will (Machiavelli 1965). Machiavelli was criticized as a 'teacher of evil,' in the words of Leo Strauss, on the grounds that Machiavelli counsel leaders to avoid the common values of justice, mercy, temperance, wisdom, and love for their people in preference to the use of cruelty, violence, fear, and deception (Strauss 1958:9-10). Other scholars such as Ernst Cassirer and Quentin Skinner however viewed Machiavelli simply as a realist or a pragmatist advocating that moral values have no place in the decisions that political leaders must make, and it is an error of the gravest sort to think otherwise (Cassirer 1946; Skinner 2002). Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Garrett Mattingly, also eulogized Machiavelli's position (Mattingly 1958: 482-91).

The word *élite*, originally adopted by English from the French language, means 'the elect' or 'the chosen' and thus accommodates the notion that people of outstanding ability hold their power and privileges by divine sanction

(Maloy 2016). The Italian theorists, Mosca and Pareto stipulate the inevitable existence of elites, its reproduction and transformation. Italian sociologist and economist, Robert Michels postulated the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ (Drochon 2020: 185–188). Elites owe its peculiar position of privilege to the recognition and esteem accorded to it by the mass of the people in society. Elite theory, thus, seeks to describe and explain the power relationships in modern societies and posits that society is stratified into two, the more numerous masses and the few ruling elite. The elite are the rich, well-educated, economically and politically influential groups, who use their influence to dictate public policies (Okeke and Idike 2016: 55).

The proponents of elite theory emphasized different aspects. Vilfredo Pareto emphasized the intellectual superiority of elites and categorized them into two types: the governing non-governing elites. He also posited that a whole elite could be replaced by an entirely new one like in a coup d’état and discussed how the elites could be reformed or recycled (Pareto 1935: 686–87, 1526–1527). Gaetano Mosca emphasized the sociological and personal characteristics of elites; and asserts that elites are intellectually, morally, and materially superior in comparison to the mass of the people (Mosca 1939:50). The ruling class is composed of the ruling elite and the sub-elites. Robert Michels developed the iron law of oligarchy where, he asserts that social and political organizations are run by few individuals and that all organizations were elitist (Drochon 2020: 185–188). Similarly, Greene (1998) in his book-‘The 48 Laws of Power’ proposed certain laws of power, but Laws 3, 7 and 14 are particularly relevant to this study. Greene proposed that any person or ruler that is interested in holding and maintaining itself in power must observe the laws of power enumerated therein (Greene 1998: 16–30). Law 3 advocates that the ruler should conceal his intention (Greene 1998: 16–30). Law 7 advocates that the ruler or the person courting power, should use the wisdom, knowledge and legwork of others to further his cause. In the end the helpers would be forgotten and the ruler alone will be remembered (Greene: 56–61). Law 14 maintained that it is critical to know your rival and use informants to gather information on your opponents’ intentions and vulnerabilities (Greene: 107–114).

Ọ́básanjó - A Fringe Yorùbá Elite as a Master of Duplicity?

Adébanwí posited that unlike the Balewa and Shagari, who are core Hausa-Fulani northern elites, Ọ́básanjó is not a core Yorùbá political elite (Adébanwí 2003). The core Yorùbá political elites consist of those who are concerned about the welfare of the Yorùbá people; Ọ́báfẹ́mi Awólówò and

his followers typify the dominant Yorùbá elites. The mainstream or dominant Yoruba elites are those who could appeal to the Yorùbá electorate and obtain majority of their votes in an election. Awólówò dominated the Yorùbá political space for over five decades. Ọ́básanjó abhors Awólówò and his politics and did his best to fractionize the Awólówò's political family (Ọ́básanjó 1990:56,172–174,185–191). Ọ́básanjó claimed that he voted for Shehu Shagari in the presidential election of 1979 (Ọ́básanjó 1990:171). Ọ́básanjó called himself a President who incidentally is Yorùbá and not a Yorùbá who was the President (Ọ́básanjó 2014). He does not and has never represented the interests of the Yorùbá nation (Adébanwí 2003). Ọ́básanjó was believed to be a more pliant and conservative candidate raised to 'subvert' the agitations of the increasingly vociferous, radical and progressive Yorùbá elite who, from the 1980s, had been insisting on a Sovereign National Conference (Ukeje and Adébanwí 2008:575). According to the Awùjalè, Ọ́básanjó is 'a Judas' among the Yorùbá, whom the Hausa-Fulani elements in the PDP (People Democratic Party) imposed on the Yorùbá and others (Adétònà 2010: 174). To Adébanwí, "Generals Ibrahim Babangida, Abdusalami Abubakar, Mohammed Aliyu Gusau and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar) 'shamed' the Yorùbá people - and by extension the mass of Nigerians - by imposing Ọ́básanjó on a bruised people, are now at loggerheads with him - whether in a latent or manifest manner"; and Ọ́básanjó was labelled 'Hausa-Fulani's Yorùbá' (Adebanwi 2003). However, Ọ́básanjó claimed to be more Yorùbá than the Ìjẹ́bús (Ọ́básanjó 2014). Moreover, Ọ́básanjó bore the Òwu tribal marks on his face. He was even alleged to be the son of an Igbo police officer who served in Abẹ̀òkúta around the time of his birth. Rẹ̀mí Oyẹ̀yẹ̀mí, the author of one of the said article which questioned his paternity placed the picture of the said Igbo officer against Ọ́básanjó's and claimed that there were uncanny resemblance (Oyeyemi 2016). Some commentators such as Anthony Adefuye and Orji Uzor Kalu asserted that there must be something amiss since the only relatives vouching for Ọ́básanjó's paternity were his first wife and his maternal as against his paternal relatives (Ọ́básanjó 2009; Oyeyemi 2016). Some individuals such as Oyeyemi and Siollun also commented on his newfound interest in the Igbo causes to confirm the above assertion. Ọ́básanjó was much kinder to the Igbos than other post-civil war administrations. For instance, he virtually left Igbos in control of Nigeria's economy and monetary policy during his administration (Siollun n.d.). Ọ́básanjó appointed Igbos to head the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Nigeria, Director-General of the Budget Office; and the Director-General of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Charles Chukwuma Soludo, Bright Okogu and Ndidì Okereke-Onyuike respectively) (Siollun n.d.). In addition, he broke a taboo by appointing an Igbo-Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi as the Defence Minister. Ọ́básanjó made history by

appointing Air Marshal Paul Dike as Nigeria's first post-civil war Igbo service chief (Chief of Air Staff) in 2006 (Siollun n.d.). Ōbásanjó's agitation for the dropping of Túndé Bákàrè (Yorùbá) from Buhari's presidential ticket in favour of an Igbo-Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was another case cited by his detractors that he dislikes Nigerians of Yorùbá extraction (Ōbásanjó 2014: 111; El-Rufai 2013: 459; Ōbásanjó 2009: 57). In Ōbásanjó's terms as the civilian head of state, his confidants were mostly Igbo, which made Nasir El-Rufai to ask Oby Ezekwesili to facilitate Nuhu Ribadu's access to Ōbásanjó, which led to Ribadu's appointment as the prime anti-corruption czar (El-Rufai 2013: 167). It is not all roller-skaters for the Igbos though, as some were at the receiving end as well. Series of Igbo senate presidents such as Wabara, Ewerem and Okadigbo were removed in quick succession during Ōbásanjó's civilian administration. Chuba Okadigbo died in 2014 from the tear gas ingested during a rally to protest Ōbásanjó's 'reelection' (Soyinka 2006: 217). Ngige, the Anambra state governor was abducted and removed from office illegally, among other things.

Ōbásanjó is duplicitous. He presents two faces- representing the reformist, even quasi-radical, and maintaining the status quo; the liberal and the conservative; seeking to destroy and instituting rot and fraud at the same time (Adebanwi 2003). He was the preserver and denier of unearned privileges; the preserver and violator of human rights, the *born again* Christian and the *CAN my foot* exponent. He presents any side to his audience based on the issues at stake and his interest thereof. Ōbásanjó is 'a complex man and a master of deceptions' (Ōbásanjó 2009: 125; Soyinka 2006: 148). Ōbásanjó camouflaged as a born again Christian by cultivating the Christians which made the Pentecostals to adopt him as one of their own and vote en-masse for him but when the Pentecostals were of no value to him, he excoriated the Chairman of the Plateau State chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) by calling him an idiot and saying *CAN, my foot!* (BBC News 2004). The author seriously doubt if Ōbásanjó could say JNl my foot! To the Muslim equivalent of CAN, the *Jama'atu Nasril Islam* (JNl).

According to Şóyínká, Ōbásanjó's duplicity and capacity for lying is legendary (Soyinka 2006: 145). Ōbásanjó vowed that there was nothing like a third time agenda (Ōbásanjó 2014: 98). Ōbásanjó's assertion on the third term bid was against the existing evidence and the position of key persons in his personal life and administration, even in the international arena-such as his daughter Ìyábò Ōbásanjó, Condoleezza Rice, Nasir El Rufai, former Senate Presidents Nnamani and Wabara, Danjuma, and others (Rice 2011: 638; Adetona 2010:184-187; Odumakin 2014: 99-195; Danjuma 2008: 71-74). Wabara claimed that he was offered 250 Million naira to support the third term (Odumakin 2014: 195). Danjuma specifically stated that Ōbásanjó enlisted his

support for the third term bid (Danjuma 2008: 72). It is on record that Oby Ezekwesili chastised Ọ́básanjó on the third term agenda (El-Rufai 2013: 185). The third term bill was tabled and defeated in the senate (El-Rufai 2013:185, 341-346; Rice 2011: 638).

The Awólówò-led Action Group (AG) administration between 1950-1966 was *non-pareil* in Africa and Awolowo's contribution in the government of Gowon during the civil war emergency period was exemplary. This gave rise to the myth of Yoruba administrative competence - about which Dillebe Onyeama commented (Adebanwi 2003). Ọ́básanjó is believed to have blown up this myth; and his characteristic duplicity, which is not known to be part of the Yoruba mainstream power elite attribute, further placed him at the fringe of the Yoruba mainstream.

Ọ́básanjó: An Ingrate?

Political associates, professional colleagues, associates, friends and family members have always maintained that Ọ́básanjó is an ingrate who repays evil for any good done. This act has no tribal boundary, as all Nigerians have experienced and document their misgivings on his ingratitude. They unfortunately continually fall prey to his duplicity and deception as shown later in this article. However, the Yoruba nation bore the blunt of his duplicity. Ọ́básanjó's first wife alluding to Ọ́básanjó's poor background claimed that he was a very poor student who saw himself through school by doing odd jobs; he could not even afford a cheap shoe, while she (the first wife) was from a middle class family with an educated father (Ọ́básanjó 2009:15). Ọ́básanjó's first wife claimed that Ọ́básanjó has no friend except CK Nzeogwu, who was probably the only friend he ever had (Ọ́básanjó 2009: 22). Ọ́básanjó's first wife got her first job at Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) through the help of MKO Abiólá, who also stood surety for her in respect of a loan application at United Bank for Africa (UBA) to the Ọ́básanjó's chagrin (Ọ́básanjó 2009: 46, 94). Abiola's first son Kólá, sent money to Ọ́básanjó in prison, which the latter acknowledged, despite being prevented by security operatives to see Ọ́básanjó in prison (Ọ́básanjó 2014: 4). Ọ́básanjó became the civilian president 'over the corpse of Abiola,' or 'in atonement for the sin of the annulment of June 12 election' (Soyinka 2006: 219; Osaghae 2007: 99). Thus, he became a civilian president by virtue of being a Yoruba as a compensation for Abiola's travails. Despite this, Ọ́básanjó refused to give any credit to Abiola or mention his contributions to the democratic struggle in Nigeria or name a national monument after him, in contradistinction to his erstwhile Hausa-Fulani boss, Murtala Muhammed. Many monuments including the most modern airport in Nigeria in 1976 was named after Murtala Muhammed; likewise,

his impression was on the highest Nigerian currency (20 naira) then, amongst other honors bestowed on Muhammed. Ọ́básánjọ́ at different time, depending on his current interest, was one of the advocate of June 12 annulment, worked hard to legitimize Ernest Shonekan Interim National Government. However, he eventually became an advocate of the convocation of a ‘National Conference to discuss and resolve the lingering political problems afflicting the country arising out of the events of June 12’ after his release from Abacha’s prison (Omoruyi 2014: 216-217). He abandoned all these earlier convictions on ascending the presidency.

Ọ́básánjọ́’s first wife maintained that Ọ́básánjọ́ is in that habit of using people as disposables. She cited many instances, including the case of one Yínká Johnson (Ọ́básánjọ́ 2009: 53). Olùrẹ̀mí Ọ́básánjọ́ (Ọ́básánjọ́’s first wife) asserted that Ọ́básánjọ́ insulted her stepmother who was instrumental to their marriage when the latter tried to mediate in their troubled marriage (Ọ́básánjọ́ 2009: 73). Ọ́básánjọ́ troubled relationship with Awolowo and his opposition to Abiola’s victory did not endear him to the south westerners (Odumakin 2014: 108). He had very little respect for Awolowo, who was venerated in south western Nigeria and poured a lot of venom on him in one of his books (Ọ́básánjọ́ 1990: 171–202).

Bakare was a major financier and backer of Ọ́básánjọ́ in his first term, which the latter also alluded to in his memoirs, but the former and others such as Ọ́ba Adetona claimed that despite the assistance rendered by Bakare, Ọ́básánjọ́ ruined Bakare’s business as a compensation for his good deed (Ọ́básánjọ́ 2014: 31; Adetona 2010:192; Babafemi and Bamidele 2008). Ọ́básánjọ́ claimed that Faṣawẹ̀ ‘was close to me due to the loyalty that he exhibited when I was in prison’; they became estranged later due to undisclosed reasons, which may not be unconnected to the latter’s closeness to Atiku (Ọ́básánjọ́ 2014: 23). Awùjalẹ̀ also stated that despite the huge donations and support for Ọ́básánjọ́’s causes by his cousin Mike Adénúgà, the latter was hounded by Ọ́básánjọ́’s EFCC on flimsy grounds. When the problem became unbearable, Adenuga, reputed to be one of the richest Nigerian of Yorùbá stock had to go to exile (Adetona 2010: 187–195). Mike Adénúgà has not been bothered by the EFCC’s operatives since the expiration of Ọ́básánjọ́’s tenure.

Olufemi Olutoye, a senior General intimidated Ọ́básánjọ́, a fellow Yoruba of the need for him to be fair to Yoruba officers, during his tenure as a military head of state, who were by-passed for promotion despite the fact that those officers were overdue and had no disciplinary issue (Omotoso 1988: 32–33). He reiterated that officers from other tribes didn’t suffer such misfortune. Ọ́básánjọ́ reportedly went out to call Yar’Adua, a very junior officer to Olútóyẹ̀, and Olutoye was asked to repeat his assertion in Yar’Adua’s presence, which he did. He was retired almost immediately thereafter (Omotoso 1988: 32–33;

Osuntokun 2018). Alabi-Isama and Akinrinade convinced Ọ́básanjó to take up Adekunle's 3rd Marine Commando command and he got the position only because he was Yoruba (Alabi-Isama 2013: 404–406). Ọ́básanjó first campaign was a fiasco because he failed to listen to the field officers (Alabi-Isama 2013: 409–410). Ọ́básanjó was invited by Akínrinádé to come and take the instrument of surrender from Phillip Effiong as the commanding officer of the 3rd Marine Commando. In the handover of surrender instrument ceremony in Lagos, he failed to include the former commanding officer, Benjamin Adékúnlé, who did the bulk of the work or his field officers (Alabi-Isama 2013: 409–410). Ọ́básanjó exhibits Greene's Law 7 here, which advocates the use of others to do the work, but always take the credit. Alabi-Isama believed that his support for Ọ́básanjó created an intractable enemy for him in other quarters and Ọ́básanjó became part of the conspiracy bent on nailing him for his (Ọ́básanjó's) own interest (Alabi-Isama 2013: 440–441). Alabi-Isama retired voluntarily due to envisioned persecution, but out of spite, it was published in FRN Official Gazette No. 59 of 1977 that he was dismissed from the army due to being found guilty of fraud by a nonexistent court martial (Alabi-Isama 2013: 440–441). It was alleged by Adamu Ciroma and others that Ọ́básanjó prevented Sunday Awoniyi, from the Yoruba frontier and the former Chairman of Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) from becoming PDP chairman, despite Awoniyi's support for Ọ́básanjó's in his bid for presidency, and adoption by the northern oligarchy (Haruna, 2018). Ọ́básanjó was said to have preferred Barnabas Gemade, whom he actively supported against Awóniyi (Haruna, 2018). Cases abound – most of his friends from the southwest geo-political zone became victim of one mishap or the other occasioned by their relationship with him- Bola Ige; late Sunday Afolabi; Chief Fasawe; Chief Bode George and others.

However, his ingratitude and Machiavellian tendency has no ethnic or national boundary. Danjuma, his longtime professional colleague who quelled the 1976 coup d'état when Ọ́básanjó went into hiding, after the assassination of Murtala. Danjuma, who virtually installed him as the head of state against his will was a target later during the second term as a civilian president (Ọ́básanjó 1990:27–30; Danjuma 2008b: 72; Odumakin 2014:20). Danjuma also financed Ọ́básanjó's daughter's education while he was in prison (Ọ́básanjó 2014: 336). Danjuma mobilized elites' support and substantially financed the first term of Ọ́básanjó but became his enemy partly due to the seizure of the oil block allocated to him by General Sanni Abacha, his duplicity and Ọ́básanjó's third term bid, among other things. It is noteworthy that Danjuma was the Minister of Defence during Ọ́básanjó's first term and the Chairman of the Policy Advisory Committee which drew up the agenda

for the incoming administration (Danjuma 2008: 51). Danjuma specifically called Ọ́básanjó an ingrate (Danjuma 2008b: 74).

Atiku Abubakar, his former deputy whose political structure, (the Peoples' Democratic Movement (PDM)), Ọ́básanjó used to win the election on his first term, against the popular rejection by his Yoruba people in 1999, tackled him, eventually to his detriment. Atiku was rather politically unsophisticated to support Ọ́básanjó for the second term despite the fact that the former was in control of the party delegates and that his refusal to support him could have led to the loss of PDP's ticket by the latter. Ọ́básanjó prostrated for Atiku in order to get nominated for the second term and thereafter decapitate and demystified the latter (Rufai 2013: 151–153; Danjuma 2008a:74). However, Atiku was damaged politically by Ọ́básanjó probably beyond reformation during their second term (Ọ́básanjó 2014). El-Rufai used the Yoruba proverb *kí a dọ̀bálẹ̀ fún aràrá kò ní kí a mà ga jù ú lọ*, (prostrating before a dwarf does not make one shorter than him when one gets up) stating that Ọ́básanjó would rather stoop to do anything in order to achieve his objective (Rufai 2013: 151–153). Ọ́básanjó confirmed that he had moles in Atiku's camp thus abreast of their plan, an attribute showing that he is a disciple of Greene and an aficionado of his Law 14 (Ọ́básanjó 2014: 203). Atiku, as a sitting vice president was forced to contest the presidential election under the platform of another party. He sued the federal government when Ọ́básanjó declared his seat vacant on this account. However, in *Atiku Abubakar v. AG of the Federation* (2007), the Court of Appeal held that the Vice-President Atiku Abubakar did not lose his office by abandoning the political party that sponsored him into office for another party and could not be removed by the President like an employee. Ọ́básanjó claimed in his recent memoirs that an amendment to the PDP constitution spearheaded by James Ibori, Markarfi and Tony Annenih, made the former President the party's Chairman of the Board of Trustees. He further stated that it was the cause of his forceful wrestling of the post from his erstwhile close comrade, Tony Annenih. (Ọ́básanjó 2014:18). This was apparently a lever to control President Goodluck Jonathan, a ploy which back-fired leading to Ọ́básanjó's sudden resignation in frustration (Clark 2014:147). Ọ́básanjó was also part of the negotiation team that convinced Taylor, a democratically elected President in Liberia to give up power, before the expiration of his term, in order to allow peace to return to Liberia. Taylor was granted asylum in Nigeria but given up by Ọ́básanjó against assurances earlier given to Taylor (Ọ́básanjó 2014a:316–317). The list of his duplicitous acts is endless.

Obásanjó: (Di)service to the Yorùbá Nation

The starting point here is Adebani's crucial question: Who does Obásanjó represent and can the Yoruba claim Obásanjó as theirs? (Adebani 2003) Adebani answered in another part of his treatise that Obásanjó has shot the Northern cabal who put him in power in his first term in the leg. What of the Yoruba elites who were instrumental to his victory at the polls in his second term? Has he not used the Machiavellian stance to decimate the core Yoruba elites? Apart from Bólá Ìgè, no other minister and appointee had a constituency in Yorùbá land. Who did Dupe Adelaja, Olusegun Agagu, Sunday Afolabi, Olu Agunloye, Bode George, Otunba Fasawe, Femi Fani-Kayode et al represent in the Yoruba nation Adebani queried (Adebani 2003)? Even, all appointees from the south west were appointed to achieve some unwholesome purpose, to decimate their ranks, probably unbeknownst to appointees themselves then. Obásanjó infiltrated the rank and file of the Yorùbá mainstream elites by offering juicy government positions to Adesanya, Soyinka and Awolowo's daughters. He also appointed Awolowo's grandson as the Director of a large parastatal. He was able to win the Awolowo's nuclear and political party to his side. Children of other Yoruba notables were equally wooed. Bola Ige, the deputy leader of the mainstream Yorùbá political elite *Afèniḡere* was recruited into his government. He followed the overtures by wooing all the AD (Alliance for Democracy) Governors and cajoling them to allow their supporters vote him as President in order to flaunt his new acceptance among his people at his principal, the Northern oligarchy. The AD Party was controlling the government of the whole of south western part of Nigeria as against Obásanjó's party- Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in government at the national level. Obásanjó's *quid pro quo* carrot to the *Afèniḡere*, was that he would make sure they all win their second term as Governors of their states, and he would cooperate with them as President. Thus, the "avowed nationalist, Obásanjó," stoop low to play the ethnicity card when it suited him. The mainstream Yoruba elite adopted him on the basis of the age long Yoruba proverb *omọ eni kò ní burú ká lé e fẹkùn pa*, (irrespective of how bad one's child could be one must still rescue him from mishap), since he claimed that his northern principal were dealing with him unfairly for his bad showing at home (Odumakin 2014: 20). The AD governors let down their guard, refused to field a presidential candidate. They believed that Obásanjó had returned home – *pé òde ti lé omọ wa sí ilé* (that the vagaries of homelessness had made him to seek the luxury of his cozy home). The AD governors and *Afèniḡere* discovered their folly too late after which they had all been consumed and their rank decimated. The master strategist has outfoxed them again by his adoption of the Machiavellian principle and the operation of the Greene's

Law 3. The lone survivor was Bólá Tinúbú of Lagos State who refused to be hoodwinked. In order to weaken Lagos State under Tinubu, Ọbásanjó denied Lagos State under Tinubu a large chunk of its allocation from the federal government by Ọbásanjó despite the existing law laid down in *AG Bendel v AG Federation*, 1980. It was held in the case above that both the federal and state governments are creations of the constitution, thus the federal has no power to withhold the allocation due to the state as it only holds such in trust for the states. Ọbásanjó withheld the allocation of Lagos State for creating new local governments, refused to obey the court decision in *AG Lagos v AG Federation*, 2004, but failed to sanction the Northern states that committed graver violation of the constitution by instituting full blown sharia. He also sponsored a break in the mainstream Yoruba leadership with the creation of Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE) from Afenifere (Ukeje and Adebani, 2008: 576).

Ọbásanjó stated that “the idea of moving the federal capital outside Lagos was entirely mine and I make sure that it was taken beyond the point of no return before I left government in 1979” which was done vide Decree No. 6 of 1976 (Ọbásanjó 2014: 86). The Federal Military Government set up Federal Capital Location Committee under the leadership of Late Justice Akinolá Àgùdà to, among others, examine the role of Lagos as the Nation’s capital and also recommend suitable alternative location. Consequently, Ọbásanjó was deliberately or unwittingly fulfilling the long-held dream of the Northern oligarchy to build their own capital since the time of Ahmadu Bello (Adebani 2011: 89-90; Paden 1986). Thus, the northern oligarchy made no pretense at snapping it up as its own (Adebani 2011: 96). The fact that all ministers of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja with the exception of the pioneer minister, have all been Northerners seem to lend credence to this assertion. The reason of congestion given by Ọbásanjó is untenable, as Abuja, not unlike the abandoned Lagos is congested as well and has traffic issues (Adebani 2011, 89–91). Also, there are capital cities that are larger in size and more populated than Lagos, such as Tokyo, Jakarta, Manila, Buenos Aires, Tehran, Cairo and Bangkok, to name a few, which still serve as the respective capitals of their country. The lack of planning, especially the failure to introduce facilities for mass transit and lack of opportunities in rural areas is to blame for Lagos congestion. The transfer of capital outside Lagos was an unmitigated loss to the Yoruba nation but some of them were oblivious of it at that time, as it was foisted on them by one of their own.

Similarly, the great purge of 1975 had a greater impact on the Yoruba nation than others, particularly with regards to the judiciary; and Ọbásanjó was the supervisor of the whole exercise (Adeniyi 1985: 4; Oluwafemi 1989: 8–9). The appointment of Elias, “an accomplished lawyer, jurist, prolific author, academic and administrator per excellence, probably the greatest legal mind

ever to come out of Africa was prematurely terminated for no just cause” (Tobi 2005: 154–174). Another legal pundit, Akinola Aguda, stated that “his (Elias) removal shocked and shook the judiciary of the country to its foundation...” (Aguda 1989: 43–44). Distinguished jurist Kayode Eso (JSC)² also stated thus: “in 1975, there was a great purge which affected the judiciary in the worst way possible. And so, sans trial, sans stated reason, sans subsequent atonement, those judges especially the Chief Justice of Nigeria, a most eminent jurist Dr. Taslim Elias..... were removed” (Eso 1996: 265). Other justices such as Justice Adegboyega Ademola “... is a prodigy, and easily one of the greatest brains ever to be on the bench... He never recovered from the shock of his untimely retirement until he died” (Eso 1996: 255–256). In one of his memoirs, Q̄básanjó gave puerile reasons for Elias’ dismissal, as follows: “in consideration of Justice Elias distinguished status as a jurist if not an administrator and good manager of judicial establishment³... we recommended him for appointment into the International Court of Justice at the Hague” (Q̄básanjó 1990: 99). Q̄básanjó’s observation was at variance with that of colleagues of Elias at the Supreme Court, such as Justice Fatayi-Williams (JSC) who observed that “in addition to being a brilliant academic lawyer of international repute, Dr. Elias is also a first class administrator” (Fatayi-Williams 1983: 134). Justice Fatayi-Williams also eventually became the Chief Justice of Nigeria. Few months after his removal from the Supreme Court of Nigeria, the same Elias was elected to the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Elias joined the court in February 1976, elected Vice President in 1979 and eventually became the Chief Justice of that Court in 1982. So much for Q̄básanjó’s bad administrator! Dr. Elias was also one of the first recipients of the Nigerian National Merit Award created vide Decree No. 53 of 1979 during the military administration of the same Q̄básanjó. The Nigerian National Merit Award is an academic award conferred on distinguished academicians and intellectuals who have made outstanding contribution to the academic growth and development in Nigeria. Another senior judge, also of Yoruba extraction at the Supreme Court, GBA Coker,⁴ an erudite judge, who was described by his peers as one whose “knowledge of the emerging Nigerian common law was unsurpassed, and whose style of writing judgements – good command of English language, clarity of thought and expression.....can hardly be surpassed by any judge in this country” (Aguda 1989: 44). Justice

2 Justice of the Supreme Court.

3 Justice Elias had two doctorate degrees in law- a PhD and LLD and he was a Professor of Law. He was a Queen Counsel (QC) and the first Attorney General of the Federation (1960-66) (1966-1972); Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) (1972-75) and Former Dean of Law, University of Lagos.

4 Justice GBA Coker also had a PhD in law and wrote textbooks on law.

Adewale Thompson, commented thus on Justice Coker, “GBA became a legend as a judge of the Supreme Court, for the excellence of his legal reasoning and the beauty of the language in which it was framed” (Thompson 1991: 62). Coker was subsequently appointed as the Chairman of the Law Review Commission by the same Obásanjó’s military administration. Also retired was another erudite Justice of Yoruba extraction, Sigismund Olanrewaju Lambo, and the pioneer President of the Federal Revenue Court (now known as Federal High Court), among others. The author suggests, based on the evidence adduced above, that the premature retirement of these erudite judges was due to extraneous reasons, probably to give room for favorites of the administration.

The injustice perpetrated on Obásanjó’s townsman, musician and long-time adversary, Fela Anikulápó-Kúti during the former’s military regime has probably never been visited on any targeted individual before Obásanjó’s era or thereafter. Fela’s house was set ablaze; the occupants were beaten, raped and tortured by members of Nigerian Armed Forces. Despite evidence led to the afore-stated, the Supreme Court in upturning his monetary claim of 25 Million naira demanded by the plaintiff/appellant in the suit, stated that under the principle of *Rex non protest precare* (the King can do no wrong). The Supreme Court of Nigeria held that the state enjoys immunity from legal action and could not be tried in its own court for the tortious acts of its servants. Thus, the court reasoned if the state did wrong, it could not be sued, it was the agent or servant who committed that wrong on behalf of the state that could be liable. The story of the afore-stated litigation is recorded in *Ransome Kuti v AG, Federation*, 1985. The Justice Kalu Anya’s Judicial Commission of Inquiry instituted to investigate the invasion and destruction of Fela’s property also declared that “unknown soldiers” perpetrated the destruction. Fela thus concluded in his album “unknown soldier” following the reasoning of Justice Anya’s panel that Unknown Soldier and unknown civilian is equal to unknown government (Kuti 1981). The land on which Fela’s destroyed property was built was forcefully acquired by the government; hence, Fela and his commune had to relocate. The decision in *Ransome Kuti v AG, Federation*, 1985 is at variance with the decision in a similar case, *Military Governor of Lagos State v Ojukwu*, 1986. Though the injustice in the latter case was of a milder dimension, one wonders the reason for the decision of the Supreme Court in the former case.

The federal character concept was a creation of Obásanjó administration and it became part of the 1979 Constitution vide section 210(1) 1979 Constitution. It is now enshrined in section 14 of the 1999 Constitution and concretised by the Federal Character Commission pursuant to the Federal Character Commission Decree, 1996. The application of the concept has been shown to entrench corruption, nepotism, bigotry, ethnic chauvinism and incompetence

and places the Yoruba nation at a disadvantage. The case of *Adeyinka Badejo v Minister of Education*, 1996, is instructive. The Supreme Court held that an applicant (from Ogun state) to a Federal Government College who scored 293 marks (73.25 percent) but was denied admission had no maintainable action despite the fact that those who scored less than 37 percent from other states in the country were admitted. According to the court, there was no discrimination against the plaintiff/ appellant. In the Badejo's case cited above, three justices of the Supreme Court- Kutigi, Mohammed and Onu held that there was no discrimination against the plaintiff/appellant, with two justices- Ogwuegbu and Ogundare dissenting. The federal character or quota system as it is better known among the citizens has even been carried to a ridiculous level. It has even reached the Church. The schism in the Ahiara Catholic Diocese which used to be part of the Archdiocese of Owerri, Imo state is better imagined. The priests and the laity of this newly created diocese refused to allow the consecrated Bishop, though a fellow Igbo, to assume office since 2010, because he is not an indigene (Winfield 2018; Ilo, n.d.)

Another piece of legislation viewed as unfair to the Yorùbá nation was the Land Use Act, 1978 introduced by Ọbásanjó military administration. This Act is just an extension of the land use tenure applicable to the northern Nigeria to the southern Nigeria. It is seen as a tool to dispossess the peasants of their land by the retired military officers. The case of the *Administrators/ Executors of the Estate of Abacha v Eke Spiff*, 2003, is instructive. In this case the certificate of occupancy of the plaintiff/respondent was unjustly revoked and allocated to the Chief of Defence Staff/ later Head of State. The plaintiff/respondent dare not institute a case until the demise of General Abacha. It was held by the court that although his case was ordinarily statute barred but the extraordinary circumstances of the period must be taken into consideration. The provision for payment for only the improvement on the land under the Land Use Act was seen as offensive, among other things.

Some scholars like Babs Fáfúnwá believed that most of Ọbásanjó's ideas were not well thought out, it eventually impoverished the people. The followings are examples- Ojetunji Aboyade, the former Vice Chancellor of the then University of Ifẹ (now Obafemi Awolowo University) informed Fafunwa, a professor in the University that the Ọbásanjó administration had decided that Nigerian academics should henceforth desist from receiving financial aids from foreign foundations such a Rockefeller, Ford and Carnegie (Fafunwa 1998: 4–5). Professor Babs Fafunwa thereafter presents his project proposal with the financial implication to the Vice Chancellor for onward transmission to the federal government. Alas, the federal government was not in a position to fund these academic research projects (Fafunwa 1998: 4–5). The Military government of Ọbásanjó encouraged the indigenes to buy up foreign business

under the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decrees (colloquially known as Indigenization Decree) of 1972, 1973, 1974 and 1977. However, most of these businesses failed because the new managers did not have the acumen and know-how to manage the newly acquired businesses. One of his flawed ideas was that Ọ́básanjó ordered that soldier be paid full salary on the war front and they were paid in old currency (Alabi-Isama 2013: 467–468; Ọ́básanjó 1990: 87–88. What use is a full salary to soldiers in the trenches, if not a bad policy, Alabi Isama queried (Alabi-Isama 2013: 467-468)? The majority of Ọ́básanjó's staff during the civil war were Hausa and Yoruba, as the Igbo were on the Biafran side then (Alabi-Isama 2013: 467–468). Similarly, Ọ́básanjó led military administration forcefully merged four central labor organizations, against their will and decreed into existence the one central Trade Union in 1978 vide Trade Union Decree, 1978. Ironically, it was the same Ọ́básanjó that sent a bill to the National Assembly in 2007 to “decentralize and democratize” the central labor organization, by providing for an additional three more central labor union and to outlaw strikes. This is exactly like reverting back to the pre- Trade Union Act, 1978 days. Furthermore, the toll gates at specific expressways built by the federal government were first introduced on Lagos-Ibadan expressway by the Ọ́básanjó Military administration was dismantled at his second coming. There are proposals to rebuild these dismantled toll gates again!

Ọ́básanjó is not all lies, deceit and deviousness; sometimes he is capable of executing laudable deeds, even within his Yorùba nation. Awùjalẹ̀ Adétọ̀nà recalled that it was Ọ́básanjó who settled the rift between him and former Governor Bísí Ọ̀nàbánjọ, the man who despised and dethroned him in the second republic (Adetona 2010: 116). He was said to be fair to some friends such as Ọ̀nàòlápò Sóléyẹ, and Dr. Àjùwọ̀n, the doctor who treated him in the prison. The latter was the chief physician at Aso Rock for the duration of his tenure (Ọ́básanjó, 2014b: 454). He also made effort to reconcile the Aláàfin and Ọ̀ni, along with other paramount traditional rulers in Yorùbáland- Aláke and Awùjalẹ̀. Similarly, Dangote, the businessman who substantially financed the 2003 elections was adequately compensated, and the undue concessions granted him was part of the issue Danjuma had with him (El-Rufai 2013: 153). One must also have it on record that the Yorubas, including his nuclear family are his foremost critic. This include his first wife, his older children, Wọ̀lé Sọ́yínká, Fẹ́mi Fálàná, Awólówọ̀'s disciples, Fẹ́lá Kùtì, Fẹ́mi Kùtì and many others. His critics were unanimous in their opposition against his candidature as the Secretary General of the United Nations and the President of Nigeria between 1999 and 2003.

Conclusion

Scholars such as Soyinka and Fáfúnwá posited that Ọbásanjó's appearance was "uninspiring" and "remotely unsoldierly" but he is intelligent (Soyinka 2006: 141; Fáfúnwá 1998: 41). Ọbásanjó himself stated that though he is not charismatic or extroverted, but his intelligence is benign (Ọbásanjó 2014b: 106). He seem to use his unsoldierly bearing and benign intelligence to his advantage as his friends and adversaries alike are lulled into a false repartee until it is too late. He confounded his friend and adversaries alike, using each as appropriate to reach his goals. He, unlike the politically unsophisticated, has no permanent friend or enemy. He uses and disposes everyone whenever he perceived him or her as a liability. Ọbásanjó is a skilled strategist who uses all within his arsenals to win his 'wars'. He appeals to the self-interest of his constituents, in this case the Yorùbá elites. The subject got all his national assignments by virtue of being a member of the Yoruba nation. However, as an adroit and skilled Machiavellian, adopted the stance of an antagonist to the Yorùbá causes because the power equation in Nigeria did and still do not favor the Yorùbá nation. It was therefore easy for the northern oligarchy to adopt him for their own cause, with the Yoruba bemoaning their fate because they believed that the subject despite using their quota, has no special benefit accruable to them, albeit Ọbásanjó placed the Yoruba nation at a disadvantage.

Ọbásanjó, the avowed enemy of the Yoruba mainstream elites warmed himself to their heart by appealing to their self-interest. He accorded them respect, entice them with sweet words and fake promises, and appoint their children and protégées to high government posts. In the process he was able to disarm, dethrone and annihilate the mainstream Yoruba elite led by Adesanya and in the process temporarily empowering the PDP imitators with himself at the helm. This temporary arrangement however gave way, paving the path for the emergence of new mainstream Yorùbá elite with Bólá Tinúbú as the anchor man. Ọbásanjó in the bid to settle the score that he had with the PDP's big wigs realigned with the Tinubu-led Yoruba elites. Tinubu-led elites must be wary of the master strategist if they do not want to go the way of Adésànyà-led elite. Whichever way one looks at it, the Machiavellian Ọbásanjó had outwitted all his contemporaries by getting the Biafra surrender, and becoming the Head of State for three terms (as a military officer and a civilian) by employing varied permutations. Some attribute it to luck, which may true to a certain extent, but it must be beyond luck. The postulation of Adeniyi, seems apt here 'By dint of hard work, sharp intellect, luck and an uncommon capacity for long memory (sometimes deployed for mischief), Ọbásanjó has become in Nigeria almost like the old sorcerer in Paul

Dukas' 1897 symphonic poem, *L'apprenti sorcier*, (The Sorcerer's Apprentice) which ends with the timeless invocation that powerful spirits should only be called by the master himself" (Adeniyi, 2017:2).

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