

# The Poetics of Jíbólá Abíódún: A Dissection of Nigeria's Sociopolitical Problems and Yorùbá Worldview.

Ọlágòkè Àlámú and Adekemi Taiwo

Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages

Èkiti State University, Nigeria

[gatanfeani62@gmail.com](mailto:gatanfeani62@gmail.com); [adekemi.taiwo@eksu.edu.ng](mailto:adekemi.taiwo@eksu.edu.ng)

## Abstract

The thrust of this paper is the critical analysis of *Àlọ́ Ní Lọ́*, a collection of Yorùbá poetry, written by Jíbólá Abíódún, employing poetics, as our theoretical framework. The forty-three poems in the book, divided into five parts, are our primary source of data. Using their contents as criteria, the poems have been reclassified into four groups namely: political, sociological, philosophical, and nature. We have observed in the book that Abíódún's poems are ideological, and his commitment made him dedicate his art to the advocacy of certain beliefs especially to those which are political and in aid of social reform. Apart from politics, the belief of the artist includes, moral, religious, aesthetics and their literary consequences.

**Keywords:** Poetry, Poetics, Ideology, Social Reform and Commitment

## Introduction

Yorùbá written poetry has benefitted immensely from its oral form. Before the advent of written literature in the early twentieth century, oral poetry has been the Yorùbá earliest form of artistic expression. Performed in the king's court, the marketplace or any other open space or proscenium, oral poetry, just like live drama has three composite elements which are: the performer (the poet), the stage and the audience. The poet, with his cognitive performance, displays his verbal dexterity before a live audience, who are always present to

appraise his performance and encourage him either through clapping or gifts. The orality of oral poetry is also one of its fundamental features. Writing on the difference between oral and written poetry, Akporobaro (2005:5) observes that in oral poetry:

The emotional tones, pitch changes, dramatic gestures, facial expressions, vocal expressiveness, rhythm of delivery, melody, pause-effects which the reciter can bring into play in the course of his performance are often lost completely in the written version which has no life or phonological-aesthetic possibilities.

But despite the difference in their forms, both Yorùbá oral and written poetry have benefitted from each other and enjoy a symbiotic relationship between them. Oral literature that existed in their traditional forms is now written. It is in this light that critics according to Fáshínà in Dasylyva and Jégéḡḡé (2005: 133) branded this type of poetry as “written orature”.

There are two generations of modern Yorùbá poets. The term ‘modern’ in this sense can be taken to mean the class of poets who came around shortly before Nigeria’s independence and when the University College (now University of Ibadan) established in 1948 started graduating students in Yorùbá studies. Though, Yorùbá poetry had existed between 1927 and 1945, when Dénrélé Qbasá published his three books of Yorùbá poetry through his Ìlàrẹ Printing Press, and the emergence of Josiah Šówándé a.k.a. Šóbò Aróbíodu, whose poems were written in Àrùngbè, an Egba dialect, it was first the University trained historians and linguists such as Akińjogbín, Babalólá, Fálétí, Qlátúnjí and the rest, who really popularized Yorùbá poetry with their various contributions. Thus, we have Akińjogbín, who edited the first Yorùbá anthology, *Ewì Ìwòyí* in (1969), Qlábímtán’s *Ààḡóta Àròfò* and *Ewì Oríširíši* (1969 and 1974 respectively), and Ìšòlá’s *Àfàimò àti Àwọ̀n Àròfò Mùràn* (1978) among others.

The contributions of some radio poets, to the development of Yoruba poetry, especially after Chief Qbáfẹmí Awólówò established the Western Nigeria Television and Radio services, at the eve of independence in 1959, should also not be forgotten. In this category of poets were Adébáyò Fálétí, Qlátúnbòsún Qládápò, Qlánrẹwájú Adépòjù, Yẹmí Èlẹ̀buibon and Àlábí Ògúndépò to mention a few. The oral performances of these poets are adapted for television and radio, that is, the broadcast media, for commercial purposes.

It was around the tail end of the twentieth century that the staggering volumes of Yorùbá poetry from some academic poets, who decided, to either promote or develop the genre, or use it to rise to the next level of their academic career, emerged. Some of these poets are teachers of Yorùbá literature in Nigerian Universities, who floated their own publishing outlets, after the

indigenization of publishing houses took place in the 1990s. It was during this period that we witnessed the *avanlanche* of Yorùbá poetry texts in the market such as Adéléke's *Aṣọ Ígbà* (1997) and *Wá Gbó* (2001), Adéjùmò's *Ro O Re* (2002), Adébòwálé's *Ewì Àtàtá* (2003) and Atari Àjànàkú's *Orin Ewúro* (2008). Jíbólá Abíódún also belongs to this class of Yorùbá poets. The only difference between Abíódún and these other academic poets mentioned above, is that while others specialized in Yorùbá literature and are now Professors in this field. Abíódún is a Professor of Yorùbá phonology. It is imperative that his dynamism is one of the things that motivated him to delve into Yorùbá literature. His traditional, cultural background and experience at Ìmòde, a rural settlement in the present Òkè-Èrò Local Government of Kwara State, from where he hails, must have also given him some experience for his good understanding of the Yorùbá philosophy, worldview and indigenous cultural values, which are the foci of his poems and upon which his poetics is foregrounded.

### Poetics and Commitment

The term poetics is derived from the Greek word 'poietikos' which means pertaining to poetry. Specifically, poetics is a systematic theory of literary forms and literary discourse. Jégédé (2005:133) succinctly describes poetics as a theory that "defines the nature of literature, in this case, poetry, its kind and forms, its resources of device and structure, its governing principles, the condition under which it exists and its effects on readers." The difference between poetics and hermeneutics is its focus not on the meaning of a text, but rather its understanding of how a text's different elements come together and produce certain effects on the reader. Poetics can be employed to interpret the aesthetics, stylistics, meaning and other qualities of a poem and how these are used to evoke meanings. The language of poetry or the language employed by most poets, specifically create images on the minds of their readers and expresses their emotions, experiences and ideas. The internal structure of a poem depends largely on the consciousness of the poet or the experiences of his environment.

The romantic theory of poetry observes that the poet feeds on emotions and sensations of anger, anxiety, despair, fear, hunger, and love which he shares with humanity. Aristotle has also succinctly described poetry as something "more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts" (On the Arts of Poetry: 43-44).

Writing on the effects of commitment in literature, Nwoga (1973: 39) observes that literature cannot fail to have the effect of changing men's consciousness and making them aware of what previously they had not guessed.

Nwoga views literature as a commitment conceived towards making life more meaningful and satisfying to individuals within a community and a factor of sensitivity of the poetic consciousness to the environment and life at all levels within the society of the writer.

Chinweizu, Onwuchekwu and Madubuike (1980:250) argue that the commitment of the literature an artist produces should be separated from the writer's political or social commitment which he may wish to engage in as a citizen. An artist who engages in social and political activism, according to these authors, performs this function only in his capacity as an ordinary citizen. But Goldmann (1964:8) and Àlámú (1998:34) are both convinced that it is not totally possible to separate the commitments of a writer as a citizen and what informed his writing. The combination of the personality of a literary artist and his environment, according to these authors, are always reflected in the work of the artist and his work should be seen as an integral part of his life and mode of behaviour. Literary writers whose works dwell on social causes show their commitment through the subject-matter they choose and the manner they treat such themes.

Many contemporary Yoruba poets have shown their commitment through their writings and their ideological focus on the Marxist Theory of Social Emancipation, which abhors oppression and totally support the emancipation of the poor masses. The works of Adélékè (1997), Àtári Àjànákú (1998), Adébòwálé (1998), and Adéjùmò (2002), who are all academic or 'regenerative' poets have diverse subject-matters which are their compulsive response to the socio-political ills of their society, though the advocacy for feminism is the major focus of the last two poets. The basic ideology thrust, of these new voices, in the Yoruba poetry enterprise, "is grafted on their tenacious sense of identity with the proletariat" (Fáshínà 2005). These poets perceive poetry as a weapon of social reformation and their poetry "resonate a radical ideological castigation of vices as manifested in Nigerian leaders and the political class".

Abíódún belongs to this class of poets. In his collection, *Àlò Ñ Lọ*, which is the focus of this work, he demonstrates his Marxist and revolutionary sentiments, as we shall see later, against Nigerian leaders and their oppressive stance against the masses, the proletariat. Just as Fáshínà in Dasylyva and Jégédé (2005:157) has described the poetry of Òṣundáre, Abíódún also "conceives poetry as a philosophical, witty, and lucid mechanism of conveying ideological views, for the purpose of stirring the masses into positive social action" and as a radical attack on the bourgeoisie and the capitalists in the Nigerian society.

## The Poetics of Jíbólá Abíódún

Abíódún's *Àlọ́ Ní Lọ́* is a collection of forty-three poems of diverse themes divided into five parts. The failure of the titles given to the five parts for not having direct relationship with the thematic contents of the poems prompted our re- classification of the poems. Employing the thematic contents of the poems as criteria therefore, we have been able to classify the poems into four classes as reflected in the table below:

**Table 1. Thematic Paradigms in *Àlọ́ Ní Lọ́*.**

S/No.	Political Themes	S/No	Sociological Themes	S/No	Yoruba Philosophy and Worldview	Agriculture
1	Dèdè Ọmọ	1	Ìlú Le	1	Erùpè ni Ìwọ	1. Ọpẹ
	Dèpè	2	Agbópáá	2	Ìgbà Ara	2. Eran Ọsin
2	Ètò Ìlú	3	Ètàn Tútù	3	Àbọ̀ Ìsinmi	
3	Ayé Padà	4	Ọrun Mèsin		Oko	
4	Akọni Ọmọ	5	Asọ	4	Orí	
	Òòduà	6	Owó	5	Lára	
5	Àlọ́ O	7	Ọmọ Bẹ̀rẹ		Àyànmọ	
6	Èrú Ọba	8	Ọmọlará	6	Ọba Àwúre	
7	Àsá	9	Àlọ́ Ní Lọ́	7	Ìwúre	
	Alágbára	10	Ìtọ́jú Abirùn	8	Ọfo Lóri Ọfo	
8	Kánsẹ̀lọ́	11	Ilé Là Ní Gbá			
	Di-Kánsẹ̀lọ́	12	Wèrè Dùn Ún			
9	Asọjà		Wò			
10	Aṣeni-Báni-dárò	13	Sùúrù			
		14	Àlọ́ Àlọ́			
11	Ofọ́	15	È Yé Fenu			
12	Ìṣẹ́ Ní Sẹ́		Tẹ́mbẹ́lú			
	Dúdú	16	Alájọgbé Ló			
			Kù			
		17	Èdè Alágbe			
		18	Àjàgbé Ọkọ			
			Ejò			
		19	Ifáfiti			
		20	Nàìjá			
		21	Ìsọ́ Bábéli			

The thematic paradigms in *Àlọ́ Ní Lọ́* are: political, sociological, Yorùbá philosophy and religion and Agriculture. The political poems are those with

political themes, which promote true democratic values and practices in Nigerian history, dwelling on various emergent governments whether military and civilian. Such poems postulate policies, report political events, assess and expose bad rulers. The sociological poems deal with the various experiences from human relationships, man's behavior and interactions, while the poems under Yorùbá philosophy and religion are exposé on ethics, cosmology, ontology and existence. The poems under agriculture, deal with plants and animals. Though, this classification may not be clear-cut, as some of the poems may have their roots in other classes, but it is a fair representation of the major contents of the poems.

Right from the beginning of the text, Abíódún's dedication of the book to all human rights activists in the universe exposes the nature of his commitment and gives us an insight into the class of his polemics: "*Fún àwọn ajàfétòṣ-omònyàn nilé, lóko àti léyìn odí*" (To all human rights activists all over the world). Though, human rights encompass a wide range of rights, there are five basic human rights, according to *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. These are: right to equality, freedom from discrimination, right to life, liberty and personal security, freedom from slavery, and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. All these also form parts of the principles of the Marxist socialist theory, which condemns poverty, disease, social ills, oppression, suppression and lack of freedom, created by the ruling class and ravaging the masses. The social inequalities in the Nigerian capitalist society, bad governance and rulers are also the focal point of Abíódún's political poems. His poetics, apart from assuming a revolutionary significance, is also founded on the Yorùbá worldview and indigenous cultural values. The themes of his poems are rooted in life and human experience.

In his 'Preface', Abíódún also presents himself as a fearless reformist, who can talk the truth to people in power, without minding whose ox is gored and the repercussions:

*Bá a wí a ó ku*  
*Bá à wí a ó rọrun*  
*Èyí ó wù ká ẹ*  
*A ò ní ju sínú ayé*  
*Ká kúkú wí èyí tó jẹ òdodo*  
*Torí bírọ lọ lógún ọdún - -*

(If we say it, we would die  
 If we refused to say it, we shall still surely die  
 No matter what our preference is  
 We would not be alive forever

It is better to say the truth  
For if lies exist for years- -)

It is no exaggeration that right from the beginning; Abíódún takes a strong poetic stand against Nigeria's problems of disenchantment, bad leadership, turbulence and social ills, which have slowed down the development of our nation.

### Political Themes

In 'Dèdè ọmọ Dèpẹ', which opens the collection, the themes of oppression and social inequality are the focal point. Dèdè, the son of Dèpẹ is helpless and cannot control his emotion in the face of oppression and consequently resigned himself to fate:

*Dèdè èéşe tó o bú sékún?  
Èéşe tó o kárí sò bí ọgèdè?  
Èéşe tó o káwọ gbera?  
Èéşe tó ọ gbín?*

(Dèdè why did you burst into tears?  
Why is your head bowed like a banana tree?  
Why did you fold your arms?  
Why are you silent?)

The barrage of questions seeks answers to Dèdè's countenance and helplessness. His reaction is a reflection of the oppression and the hopelessness of his situation from his oppressor(s):

*Dèdè lálágbára ọ şe é báwíjọ  
Alágbára ọ se é bá sasọ  
Alágbára ọ şe é bá jagun  
Èyàn tó fẹ kú, ní í dojú kọbọn*

(Dèdè says it is senseless to argue with a powerful man (oppressor)  
It is senseless to trade words with the oppressor  
It is senseless to go to war with the oppressor  
It is only someone who wants to die that faces the gun)

The symbolism in this poem should not be lost. Dèdè represents the oppressed, the masses, who daily contend with the oppression and maltreatment

of the unrepentant, belligerent, and oppressive leaders and rulers in Nigeria. This is a harsh reality of life amongst the proletariat. Abíódún deliberately chooses Dèdè as the name of that character, who is being oppressed and his parent, Dèpè to reveal the idiotic response and the foolishness of the Nigerian masses, who rather than employ revolutionary means to fight their oppressive rulers to gain their freedom and make their lives better, resign to fate and abrogate their desires. The syllable ‘dè’ in Dèdè and the name Dèpè, which is synonymous with ‘Òdè’, a Yoruba word for a stupid person, is employed by Abíódún to describe the attitudinal response of Nigerians to the oppression meted out to them by their leaders. No wonder, the last lines of the poem is a call by the poet to stir the masses into a revolutionary social action by outspokenly and outrageously calling them out to protest against the oppression of the ruling class:

*Béyàn torí èyí tí ò gbín píní*  
*Béyàn torí èyí tí ò fò ò fò*  
*Béyàn torí èyí tí ò wí ǹnkan*  
*Àfàimò kíyà ó mó jẹ́dà olúwa rẹ pa*  
 If as a result of this someone refuses to talk  
 If as a result of this someone keeps silent  
 If as a result of this someone keeps mute  
 It is doubtful then, if suffering does not kill one)

The parallelism in the first three lines of this verse stresses and emphasizes the mood of the poet. ‘Eto Ilu’ condemns the military rule in Nigeria. It sees the military rule as oppressive, suppressive and coercive. The military regimes of Buhari, Babangida and Abacha, which were characterized by high levels of oppression, through the use of the gun to silence the opposition and to suppress criticism are pertinent examples. This poem, therefore, is a response to these misrules and preaches the return of the military to the barracks:

*Ìbọ̀n ò ẹ̀ ẹ́ tólú*  
*Ìtájẹ̀silẹ̀ ò lè múlúú tòrò*  
*Àgbá rírọ̀ kì í sònà isinmi*  
*Ìfẹ̀míşòfò kì í sònà àlàáfíà*  
*Ká panupò wí fónibọ̀n*  
*Ká panupò wí fátẹ̀jẹ̀silẹ̀*  
*Kaakí kì í şaşọ̀ ighboro*  
*Ẹ kó kaakí padà sí b́arékè*

(The gun cannot bring peace to the city



Bloodletting cannot make the city to be at peace  
 Mortar shelling is not the path to peace  
 Wasting lives does not create peace  
 Let us unite and condemn gun carriers  
 Let us unite to condemn the murderers  
 Military uniform (the army) is not befitting to the civil society  
 Return military uniform (the army) to the barracks

Abíódún takes a strong poetic stand against the inglorious rule of General Abacha in ‘Ayé Padà’ and ‘Àlò O’. The oppression, anarchy and deprivation of human rights witnessed during Abacha’s regime are condemned by the poet in the second poem. ‘Ayé Padà’, one of the shortest poems, is also a sad commentary on the visit of some Yorùbá traditional rulers, led by the Late Ọ̀ni of Ifè, Ọ̀ba Sijúwadé, to pacify Abacha and plead their allegiance, even in the face of his misrule. This episode generated a lot of controversies, as the majority of the Yorùbá saw this as a betrayal of trust and lack of the traditional rulers support for the agitation of the Yorùbá majority in seeing M.K.O. Abíólá claim his mandate. This poem lends its voice to this shameful debacle:

*Enu àşę denu èbẹ̀*  
*Idà wọn dọ̀bẹ̀ ibẹ̀şu*  
*Àbẹ̀ è ráláşę èkeji òòşà*  
*Kò lẹ̀ pàşę fẹ́rú òòşà mó*  
*Apàşę şe bẹ̀ẹ̀*  
*Ó dagbàşę*

(The mouth of authority now becomes one for begging  
 Their swords become mere instruments for yam peeling  
 Can you now see the king?  
 Who has no more authority to command the slave of the deity?  
 The man of authority has now become a slave)

Abíódún, no doubt, expresses his concern about the power obsession of General Abacha in ‘Àlò O’. Employing the popular folktale story of ‘The Tortoise and the Elephant’ as an allegory, he captures the happenings in the life of one of the most vilified Nigeria’s post-independence rulers.

When General Abacha on November 17, 1993 pushed aside the Shónẹ̀kàn-led Interim Government and took over power, he immediately declared himself as the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and

refused to accept the June 12 election result popularly believed to be won by M.K.O. Abíólá. He took some devastating steps, which make Nigeria become a pariah state in the international community. These include: the killing of Ken Saro Wiwa and the Ogoni nine, the abolishment of all existing political institutions of the Third Republic, banning all political parties and attempting to eliminate all opposition and the imprisonment of General Ọ́básanjó and Yaradua for a phantom coup. The weak economy he created and his poor human rights record, and social injustice make him very unpopular.

Abacha's regime witnessed a lot of killings, arrests and the outlawing of civil societies such as the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) and labour unions. When he later decides to succeed himself, without resorting to any election, he creates five new political parties, and through coercion, intimidation and rent-seeking, all the parties nominate him as their presidential candidate, thereby dubiously legitimizing himself as the next 'civilian' president of Nigeria. This deception and his quest for absolute power is what Abíódún tries to re-enact in 'Àlọ́ O'. The poem condemns the politics of dehumanization and alienation offered by the vicious Abacha.

The two songs in the poem, as presented in the popular folk story of "The Tortoise and the Elephant", where the Tortoise cajoles the Elephant as the new king of the animal kingdom but plans and initiates his death, represent the attitude of the hypocritical rented crowd, who hypocritically presented and supported Abacha as the only candidate suitable to rule Nigeria:

- i) *A ó mérin ọ́ba*  
*Èrèkúẹ̀wẹ̀lẹ̀*  
*A ó mérin ọ́ba*  
*Èrèkúẹ̀wẹ̀lẹ̀*

(We shall make the Elephant the king  
 Èrèkúẹ̀wẹ̀lẹ̀  
 We shall make the Elephant the king  
 Èrèkúẹ̀wẹ̀lẹ̀)

- ii) *Erin kárelé ò wá ọ́ba*  
*Èrin yéyẹ́, erín yeyẹ́*  
 (The elephant, come home and be the king  
 Èrin yéyẹ́, erín yeyẹ́)

From lines 15-24 of the poem, there are reflections of the power-drunk, Abacha, who fails to ponder, why he is the only choice to rule Nigeria, by the hypocritical few, in a country of more than two hundred million people:

*Dìndìnrin ò mojú*  
*Kò mò pé yòyò lenu aráyé*  
*Èhànnà ò mọra*  
*Kò mò pe òfìn ni wón n̄ sìn 'un lọ*  
*Agbára rú bo ẹranko lójú*  
*Ó lóun n̄ rẹ é gùnté baba òun*  
*Àwọn ẹni ibi n̄ ti Dẹ̀pẹ̀ gbòn-ón gbòn-ón*  
*Òun nàà n̄ dagbórú dònà rú*  
*Kó lè gori itẹ wàhàlà*

(The stupid man is not discernible  
 He does not know that human beings are not truthful  
 The fool has no inkling  
 He does not know he is being led to a chasm  
 The animal is power-drunk  
 He says he is going to ascend his father's throne  
 The evil people push Dẹ̀pẹ̀ like a fool  
 He too begins to be ruthless  
 So that he can be able to ascend the difficult throne)

The poet deliberately chooses his adjectives to describe Abacha: 'Dìndìnrin' (stupid), 'Èhànnà' (mad), and 'Dẹ̀pẹ̀' (stupid) as seen earlier in the etymology of Dẹ̀pẹ̀. Before Abacha's sham of a transition could take place, he dies suddenly and unexpectedly. There are different accounts on the nature of his death, which is still one of the greatest unsolved mysteries of the last century. While one account has the conspiratorial theory that he was poisoned and killed, another says he died of a natural cause: a heart attack. Abíódún must have supported the first account by employing the following poetic expressions:

*Èhànnà ò lè jọba*  
*Lóri ọmọlúàbí ẹ̀nìyàn*  
*Apààyàn ha lè jọba*  
*Kílúú rójú kó rááyè?*  
*Àmọ́sá, Èdumàrè á ọ̀sìşé àrà*  
*Àwọn elédè méjì á sìn apà̀nìyàn dé kòtò*  
*Ká fi şètùtù fẹ̀şẹ̀*  
*Èşẹ̀ àwọn tó sọ Nàìjá dọ̀jìyà.*

(The mad man cannot be king  
 Over good people  
 Can a murderer become the king  
 And the city will have peace?  
 But as the Lord will perform his wonders  
 The people with two languages accompany  
 the murderer to the pit of hell  
 As a sacrifice for atonement  
 For the sins of people who brought Nigeria into disrepute)

In Yorùbá cosmology, performing a sacrifice symbolizes seeking a solution to a problem. Writing on the dimensions of sacrifice, Èlèbùibòn (2014:35) observes that the advent of problems into the universe underlies the rationale behind the practice of sacrifice, especially among the Yorùbá. Sacrifice according to Èlèbùibòn, is propitiatory and this is why it is also called ‘Ètùtù’ (that which propitiates). Through the practice of sacrifice, all forms of adversaries, according to Èlèbùibòn “are rubbed off the path of man and nation and thus usher in positive fortunes of various magnitudes and complexions”. In the light of this, ‘Àlò O’ is a poetic outcry against the oppressive military regime of Abacha, who the writer uses his death as a metaphor for the propitiation of the bad fortunes his regime has brought to Nigeria.

Other political poems, which we have not been able to analyze because of space include ‘Àṣá Alágbára’, ‘Kánsélò Dì-Kánsèlòd’, ‘Asòjà’, ‘Aṣeni-Báni-dàrò’, and ‘Akòni Ọmọ Ọòduà’. In the last poem, which is also important in this political discourse, the poet urges his readers to sing the praises of some Nigerian true democrats, who have left good legacies in the history of Nigerian politics. He has catchy and interesting description of each of these politicians. For instance, Awólówò is described as:

*Bàbá èlèkòò-òfè*  
*Awo tó fòwò sawo*  
*Akòni ṣe é kó tó jagòsílè*  
 (The free education man  
 The priest who practiced priesthood with reverence  
 The hero did well before he drew the curtain)

While Wólé Ṣóyínká is described as:

*Ọmọ oṣó tó wólé*  
*Oṣowólé ó yí ọn ká*  
 (The child of Oṣó who showed up  
 Oṣó emerged and rounded them up)

Other Nigerian patriots mentioned in this poem are: Adékúnlé Ajásin, Àlání Akínrinádé, Gàní Fáwèhinmi, Anthony Enahoro and Bèèkòlóláí Kútì.

### Sociological Themes

As we have mentioned above (under classification of Abiódún's poems), sociological poems deal directly with social problems arising from interpersonal relationships, social structures like friends and family, the poet's social experience and the societal ills. These poems are devoid of any political ideology, class struggle and consciousness. Themes such as thuggery and contract killing in 'Èrú Ọba', armed robbery in 'Ìlú Le', corruption in 'Agbópàá', good character in 'Ọba Àwúre', fake prophets in 'Ọrún Mèsìn', family planning in 'Ọmọ Bẹrẹ' and 'Ọmọlará', sex perversion in 'Ilé Là Ẹ Gbá', treachery in 'Sùúrù' and drunkenness in 'Wèrè Dùn Ẹn Wò' have been identified as social poems among others.

Killing and murdering of the innocent by thugs employed by political leaders are strongly condemned in 'Èrú Ọba'. The heartlessness of these evil doers, who do not think deeply about the outcome or repercussion of the havoc they are asked to wreak is brought into limelight by the author, who feels that these evil doers would always reap the evil they sow at the end of the day. The poet also preaches repentance to these set of people:

*Bùtúlù tí ò ñiwọ́ aburú  
Inú iyà ní wọ́n ń kú sí  
Abùtátù tí ò ronúpìwàdà  
Kì í fọwọ́ rọ́rì sùn  
Sùgómù tí ń gbè fọ́ba  
Kì í lóókọ́ ire nínú ìtàn*

(The evil men that fail to stop committing evil  
Die in problems and pains  
The wicked who does not repent  
Die with regrets  
The idiot who is loyal to the government  
Has no good name in history)

In 'Ìlú Le', armed robbery and killings by contract killers, which are prevalent crimes in Nigeria, and which create social insecurity and fear among the citizenry are the central themes. The poet is of the opinion that any nation fraught with these vices, cannot witness any concrete development. The

message the poet tries to pass to his readers about these social menaces can be seen in the few lines that end the poem:

*Bóyá a ò mọ̀*  
*Pé ilú tókàn èyàn ò ti balẹ̀*  
*Pé ilú tó dádé fẹ̀rù òun ìpayà*  
*Pé ilú tí pákáleke òun hilàhílo ti joba*  
*Ìlú téyàn ò ti lẹ̀ sọ òótọ̀ inú ẹ̀*  
*Bóyá a ò mọ̀*  
*Pé ilú bẹ̀ẹ̀ ò le mókè*  
*Ìlú bẹ̀ẹ̀ ó máa rá kòrò ni*  
*Níbi ilú olóòótọ̀ ti ñ gòkè àgbà.*

(Perhaps we do not know  
 That a country where the people are not at peace  
 That a country where fear and apprehension reign  
 That a country where alarm and fright are at the peak  
 A country where truth is forbidden  
 Perhaps we do not know  
 That such country cannot witness any development  
 Such country will just be crawling  
 Where truthful countries are developing.)

The use of parallelism with the various adjectives synonymous with fear or fright denotes the serious hazard armed robbery and contract killings contribute to Nigeria's backwardness and retarded growth.

The imagery in 'Agbópàá, an imitation of the word Ọlópàá (Policeman) evokes concrete mental images, which informs our emotional response about the Nigerian police. The imagery assumes the picture of a pot-bellied Nigerian policeman, in a black apparel, clutching either a baton or a gun at a roadblock erected for collecting money or bribes from motorists. The simile in their description has a physical similarity with their outlook:

*Wọ̀n á gbé filà rù*  
*Á dàbí àtẹ̀ ọ̀rúnlá*  
*Aşọ wọ̀n á dúdú bí aşọ ọ̀fọ̀*  
*Ìbọ̀n lọ̀mọ̀ iyá a wọ̀n*  
*Wọ̀n á dì mọ̀ ọ̀n bí itàkùn dì mọ̀gi*  
 (They will carry the cap on their head  
 It will look like the tray used to dry okro  
 Their uniform is as black like a mourning dress  
 They clutch to their guns)

They clutch to it like a creeping plant clutches the tree)

The corruption in the Nigerian police is also rightly captured by Abíódún in the following poetic expressions:

*Bó o léjọ àre*  
*Wọn á sọ ó dèbi*  
*Bó o léjọ èbi*  
*Wọn á sọ ó dàre*  
*Tórọ kọbọ, àjọ àkòódá*  
*Ni wọn n fipá gbà lẹba ọ̀nà*  
*Bé ẹ mọdaràn méfà*  
*Ẹ ẹ rágbópàá méjì nbẹ*  
*Abánìgbófínró,*  
*Tí n fọ́fín wọnú ẹrọ̀fọ.*  
 (If you have a good case  
 They will turn it to a bad one  
 If you have a bad case  
 They will turn it to a good one  
 They collect thrift without contribution  
 This is what they collect with force on the road  
 If six criminals are arrested  
 Two policemen will be involved in the disgraceful act  
 The people who should enforce the law,  
 Are the people enmeshed in crime?)

This poem alludes to the menace of corruption in the Nigerian police, which has reached a crescendo, and requires urgent attention by the government. The Nigerian police are always in the news for negative reasons like extra-judicial killing, extortion, unlawful arrest, robbery and all forms of evil. The relationship between them and the people they are paid to guide is sour based on their high index of corruption. There have been no Inspector General of Police, for instance, appointed by the President, over the years, who have been able to positively reform the police, because they also benefit from the corruption perpetrated within the force. Perhaps, the grave consequence this is having on the entire nation must have prompted the poet to reiterate the endemic situation and call the attention of the masses and those in authority to this social menace.

The thematic preoccupation of ‘Ọmọ Bẹẹẹ’ and ‘Ọmọ́lára’ is the advantages and disadvantages of family planning respectively. Family planning is an activity that enables a family to freely determine the number of children they

want to have and be able to cater for based on its resources. There are advantages of planning a family. These include spacing of children for the woman to regain health after delivery, and to help the family economically for advancement. Since parents are responsible for providing education, shelter, clothing and food for their children, family planning has an important role to play in the long-term impact on the financial situation of any family. The children that evolved through family planning are usually well trained and pride of the parents. This is the message of the poet in *Ọmọlará*:

*Bó o lówó bó ò bí*  
*Owó á dowó olówó*  
*Bó o kólé bó ò bí*  
*Ilé á dilé ọmọ ọlọmọ*  
*Ámó, ọmọ tá a kó là ń pè lómọ*  
*Ọmọ tá a tó ní ń daşọ àsírí bọ̀yàn.*  
 (If you have money but has no child  
 Your money will be inherited by someone else  
 If you build a house but has no child  
 The house will become another child's home  
 But, a child that is well trained will be a reliable child  
 It is a child that we train that covers one's secret.)

The reverse to this situation above, is the analogy in '*Ọmọ Bẹ̀rẹ̀*'. This title is derived from a Yoruba proverb: "*Ọmọ bẹ̀rẹ̀, ọ̀şì bẹ̀rẹ̀*" (Having too many children brings a lot of poverty). The tendency of not having enough resources to train too many children, due to lack of family planning, is very high. Such untrained children live no quality life and the parents may be unable to give them the best education. Such children are always a burden to the parents and the society:

*Ọmọ ti kúnlé ọ̀şọ́ bí ẹ̀mọ*  
*Kò sáşọ lórùn ẹ̀gbón*  
*Ìhòhò làbúrò ń rìn*  
*Oúnjẹ ò şe déédé*  
*Gbogbo ọmọ gbẹ gógó bí i panla*  
*Méjì nínú méjọ ló ń yuń sùkúù tẹ̀lẹ̀*  
*Méjì òhún ti dari sílẹ̀ kò sówó àmútómọ mọ*  
 (Children are many in the house like rats  
 The eldest child is naked  
 The junior moves around nakedly  
 Food is not constant)



All the children are malnourished)  
 Only two out of eight were attending school  
 The two are back at home with no money to train them again)

Lack of family planning leads to lack of dignity in a family and can cast a shadow over the future of the family and children. Developing countries like Nigeria are facing a lot of problems because of the rise in population and the challenge of poor quality of life. Illiteracy and religious belief have led to population explosion. Proper education and awareness created by this poet can be used to change the attitude of people who fail to plan their families towards living a better quality of life. In these poems, analyzed above, and the other poems classified as sociological, Abíódún dealt with the major causes of social problems which include poverty, rapid population growth, lack of education, superstitious beliefs, alcohol abuse and prostitution.

### **Yoruba Philosophy and Worldview**

Yoruba philosophy centers on the beliefs or conceptions of the Yorùbá about the universe at large, and the world of human affairs. Abíódún's philosophical poems and the areas of philosophy they dwell on include 'Erùpè ni Ìwọ' (You are sand), 'Orí' (Head), 'Lára Àyànmọ' (A Part of Destiny) and 'Ófo Lóri Ófo' (Funeral Dirge on Untimely Death), 'Ọba Àwúre' (Good Character), 'Ìwúre' (Prayer and Religion), and 'Ìgbà Ara' (Make Hey While the Sun Shines), 'Àbọ̀ Ìsinmi Oko' (Retirement). All these poems dwell on phenomenology, existentialism, and religion.

The Yorùbá, according to Àlà mú (2004: 116), believe that "most events in the life of man are decreed or destined to occur by some inevitable or inexorable necessity." Since destiny involves man's life events and the totality of his experience on earth and after-life, then it shares some characteristics with phenomenology, existentialism, religion and is therefore amenable to these philosophical approaches. The Yorùbá have 'a trimorphous conception of destiny' (Ìdòwú 1962:173). In this trimorphous conception, a person obtains his destiny in one of three ways- kneeling down and choosing one's destiny (*àkún-lẹ̀yàn*), kneeling and receiving one's destiny (*àkúnlẹ̀gbà*) and a destiny that is affixed to one (*àyànmọ*). In all these cases, and according to the Yorùbá myth, it is the soul of man that chooses his '*orí*'. And it is this '*orí*' (not the physical *orí* (head) but the inner one also referred to as the personality essence) that directs the affairs of man on earth. The excerpts from 'Orí' and 'Lára Àyànmọ' respectively have referential meanings to this Yorùbá belief:

- (i) *Ta ló rán ni wáyé*

*Bí ìì sàpéré;*  
*Ta ló sìn 'nìyàn wáyé*  
*Bí ìì sàpésìn*  
*Ta lèdá tí i ṣadánìwáyé?*  
*Orí lèdá, orí l'Èlédàà ẹni.*  
 (Who sent us to this world  
 If not 'ori'  
 Who accompanied us to the world  
 If not 'ori'  
 Who is the being that brings one to earth?  
 'Ori' is the being, 'ori' is one's creator.)

ii) *Àyànmọ lèdá n pè níkú*  
*Gbogbo wa la yan ikú*  
*Àkúnlẹyàn là n pè níkú*  
*Gbogbo wa la jẹ gbèse ẹ*  
*Ojọ a yàn la à mọ*  
*Ojọ a dá làdìitú*  
*Àmẹ̀nìkan ò ní mọ̀jọ olọ̀jọ lọ.*  
*Ojọ a bá sùn tá à jí*  
*Ohun a yàn ló dé báwa.*

(Destiny is what we call death  
 We all chose death  
 Destiny is what we refer to as death  
 We are all indebted to death  
 The day we chose to die is what is unknown  
 The day we chose is what is knotty  
 But no one will die on any other person's day  
 The day we sleep but refused to wake up  
 It is the day we chose)

'Erùpẹ̀ ni Ìwọ' and 'Òfọ̀ Lóri Òfọ̀' are lessons on the vanity of life. The first poem talks about man's quest for materialism, especially the madness for land acquisition, which has made many people forget that no matter the portions of land they own, they shall surely leave them effortlessly when they die. The poem challenges us to limit our love for materialism as it will surpass us eventually. The second poem relates with the first but has a direct link and originated from a popular bible passage in Ecclesiastes chapter one especially verse two: "Vanity upon vanity, all is vanity". The word 'vanity' originated

from the Latin word ‘Vaness’, which means ‘empty vain’ and can be described as an “excessive pride in or admiration of one’s own abilities, appearance or achievements”. This is a folly of men. The vanity in the activities of our politicians and our military cabals, who have always misdirected and lied to the ruled, is the focus of this poem.

‘Ọba Àwúre’ is the short form of the Yorùbá proverb “Ìwà ọba àwúre”(- Good character transcends goodluck charm). This can also mean character and not charm is the hallmark to a successful life. The Yorùbá place premium on good character as embedded in their concept of *omolúàbí* - a concept that connotes virtue, good character or behaviour. Some of the virtues such person, who imbibes this concept must exude include love, patriotism, respect, humility, truthfulness among others. In the Yorùbá ontology of personality, the Yorùbá in traditional thoughts, according to Yòlòyè in Ògúndèjì and Àkàngbé (2009:31), “consider personality as having four components namely: orí (the inner head/ destiny), ogbón (wisdom), iwà (character) and iṣẹ́ (handiwork). The high premium the Yoruba attach to iwà, (good character) as the greatest component of personality, which they believe supersedes all other things in life, is the message Abíódún tries to pass across in this poem:

*Ká má a rántí pe  
Ìwà lowó, Ìwà ọlọ̀,  
Ìwà ọba àwúre*

(Let us remember that  
Good character is money, good character is wealth  
Good character transcends good luck charm.)

The reason Abíódún employs ‘Ìwúre’, his last poem in this collection, and a traditional Yorùbá form of prayer, is perhaps his belief according to the Yorùbá religious philosophy that prayer can answer or solve all problems. In this poem, therefore, the poet emotively offers prayers to God and other deities for prosperity, good health, wisdom, and long life for his audience or readers. And he uses this to round-up his poetic endeavor.

‘Ìgbà Ara’ and ‘Àbò Ìsinmi Oko’ are short forms of two Yoruba proverbs: ‘Ìgbà ara là á búra’ (Make hay while the sun shines) and ‘Ilé làbò ìsinmi oko’ (It is one’s house that provides rest after labour) respectively. These two proverbs are embedded in Yorùbá philosophy and are universal truths. While the lesson in the first proverb is the needs to work hard while one is still young and have the ability, as strength must have waned at old age to do any strenuous job:

*Ká rìn nígbà ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ ẹ̀ṣe é rìn*  
*Ká sánpá nígbà apá ẹ̀ṣe é sán*  
*Ká rẹ̀rù nígbà orí gbòṣùkà*  
*Ká pòṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀ nígbà ará sánangun*  
*Ewú orí ò ẹ̀ṣe é sáré ká*  
*Ara káńgẹ̀káńgẹ̀ ò ẹ̀ṣe é pòṣẹ̀ṣẹ̀*  
*Seélé ní ñ jẹ̀ ẹ̀eébá*  
*Àiṣeélé ní ñ firun funfun gbàárù*

(Let us walk when our legs are still strong  
 Let us use our hands when we can still use them  
 Let us carry loads when we can still use our head  
 Let us work hard when our body is still strong  
 White hair cannot be used to run around  
 A weak body cannot do hardwork  
 Let us plan for old age  
 Lack of planning makes one struggle at old age.)

The second poem preaches that home is sweet after labor. Put in another way, it is good to prepare for retirement in one's home after service and after sojourning in any other city or country:

*Èní b́aràjò*  
*Kó rántí pélé làbò isinmi oko*  
*Bá a bá ñ ríṣe lájò*  
*Ká rántí pèsè isinmi sílé ẹ̀ṣe pàtàkì*

(Anyone who is on a journey  
 Should remember that retirement is at home after labor  
 If we are successful abroad  
 Let us remember that retiring at home is important)

## Agriculture

The benefits of agriculture to man and the nation is the focus of Abiodun in the two poems: 'Òpẹ' and 'Eran Ọ̀sin' under agriculture. According to him, agriculture has played and is still playing its roles in the provision of food and resources to individuals and the nation at large. Humans still use plants and animals for food, labor, tools and to enhance their income.

## Analysis of the Stylistic Devices in the Poems

The stylistic devices employed in Jíbólá Abíódún's *Àlọ́ N' Lọ́* are discussed in this section. The poet makes use of different stylistic devices to add flavor to the poetry and even pass his message across to the readers. It is crucial to recognize and to affirm the enduring importance of poetry, this anthology of poems is very much about how to deepen and to articulate our appreciation of his poetry. Matterson and Jones (2011:3) opine that appreciation of poetry involves observation of the poet's craft, the poet as a shaper of words, and the skill of putting words together in memorable and significant ways. Abiodun's poems are full of different stylistic devices that add aesthetic values to the poems. The devices shall be divided into two parts:

- i. The General Features
- ii. The Characteristic Features

The general features of oral poetry found in Abíódún's poems are repetition, parallelism, wordplay, metaphor, simile, personification, and allusion while the characteristic features of Yorùbá oral poetry are *oriki* (praise/panegyric poetry), *ẹ̀sẹ̀ Ifá* (Ifá divination poetry), *òwẹ* (proverbs) and *àlọ́* (folktales).

### Repetition

According to Olatunji (1984:17), repetition is the basis of parallelism and tonal counterpoint. Repetition as a literary term is the using of the same word or phrase two or more times in a poem or prose. Repetition can be lexico-structural, lexical or semantic. Lexico-structural repetition is either full or partial. Full repetition is the repetition of the whole sentence structure alongside all the lexical items occurring in it. In *Naija (Nigeria)*, the poet while complaining about the deploring state of the nation reiterates the below sentence at the end of each stanza of the poem:

*Eégún n' forí jọ,*  
*Onílù n' fẹ̀sẹ̀ lùlù,*  
*Mùtùmùwà n' fẹ̀yìn wòran*  
*À n' ọ̀yẹ̀ lọ náà nù-un*  
*Erú n' di baálé,*  
*Ìwọ̀fà n' jogún lọ̀dẹ̀,*  
*Ọ̀mọ̀ àlẹ̀ n' gbàse ọ̀mọ̀ ọ̀kọ̀ se*  
*À n' ọ̀yẹ̀ lọ náà nù-un*

The masquerade dances with his head  
 The drummer eats drum with his leg  
 All and sundry are watching through the back  
 We are enjoying the world just like that  
 Slave is becoming the family head  
 Servant is taking inheritance in the home  
 An illegitimate is taking over the duties of a legitimate child  
 We are enjoying the world just like that

Full repetition is used here to re-emphasize the theme of the repeated sentences, in order to draw the attention of the reader or audience to the main point or idea the poet is re-iterating.

Partial repetition, like full repetition, is used to lay emphasis, but the emphasis assumes a somewhat different dimension. The ideas contained in the repeated parts of the sentences are intensified. For instance, in the example below, the idea of rebuking the military to desist from using force to govern the citizen in the right way is reemphasized.

*Ká panupò wí fónibon,  
 Ká panupò wí fátàjèsilè*

(Let us unite and condemn gun carriers  
 Let us unite to condemn the murderers)

*Òmùgò ò mò páyè là n dé lówó  
 Òmùgò ò mò páyè là n dé lólá*

A stupid does know that one gets into the before becoming rich  
 A stupid does know that one gets into the before becoming wealthy

The example above the varied items “*fónibon*” and “*fátàjèsilè*” (gun carrier and blood shedder) are figuratively used to refer to military men respectively as antonyms. In the second example, the varied items “*lówó* and *lólá*” are figuratively used to refer to riches and wealth respectively as antonyms.

Another form of repetition is when only a lexical item is repeated. The poet may repeat words as often as he desires within a sentence and in sentences that are not structurally identical. The repeat may occur in different clause, as in:

*Nàìjá n forí rìn kò bááyé yóókù mu mò,  
 Nàìjá kèyìn sáyé, ó dojú kọ ‘parun,*

Nigeria walk on her head and become different from other people of the world

Nigeria lag behind, she faces destruction.

‘Naija’ which occur in the first line is repeated in the second line. Lexical repetition is used for emphasis in the above example because what is being emphasized is the fact that happenings in Nigeria is totally exceptional.

### Parallelism

Parallelism occurs mostly when proverbs are used in poetry and it is a general feature of Yorùbá poetry. Bamgbose (1969) as cited in Olatunji (1984:26) defines parallelism as:

A juxtaposition of sentences having a similar structure, a matching of at least two lexical items in each structure, a comparison between the juxtaposed sentences, and a central idea expressed through complementary statements in the sentences.

This is evident in the poem below:

*Béèyàn torí èyí tí ò gbin pínín,*

*Béèyàn torí èyí tí ò fò ọ́ fò.*

*Béèyàn torí èyí tí ò wí nkan,*

*Àfàimò kíyà ó mó jẹ́dà olúwarè pa*

(If as a result of this someone refuses to talk

If as a result of this someone keeps silent

If as a result of this someone keeps mute

It is doubtful then, if suffering does not kill one)

The three sentences are structurally similar, while the items ‘gbin pintín’, (*must not talk at all*) ‘fò ọ́ fò’, (*must not speak*) ò wí nkan’ (*not say anything*) matches each other semantically. The relation of the three lexical items is to bring out the implication of synonyms, which means no one dares speak or talk to the government. It is the same idea that is repeated in each sentence.

### Wordplay

Wordplay is the juxtaposition of lexical items which are somehow similar in shape, to produce an effect of verbal dexterity. The commonest form of word play in Abíódún’s poem for example is in:

*Àrìyá tán, ó wá kùiyà*  
*Ilè ilérí dilè èérí*

(The party has ended, it now remains suffering  
 The promised land has turned to dirty land)

The play is on the contrast between ‘yá’ and ‘yà’, which are also tonal contrast. They differ by tone while ‘èérí’ and ‘ilérí’ also have wordplay on the meaning of the two words.

### Allusion

Allusions are made to myths, legend, historical events and the Yoruba belief system in Abíódún’s poem. For instance, in:

*Bàbá èlèkòó-òfè*  
 -----  
*Bèèni-Bèèkò, omọ Kùtì*  
 (The free education man  
 -----  
 Yes-No, Kuti’s child

Allusion is being made to some Yorùbá heroes. He alludes to the chronicle of free education in Nigeria by Chief Ọbáfẹmi Awólówò, who gave opportunity to people during his reign to be freely educated. He praises all the good deeds of these great activists of that time which includes Anthony Enahoro, Wọlé Sọyínká, and Bèèkò Kùtì, who were the patriots at a time that fought for democracy in Nigeria.

Allusions are made to the Yoruba folktale on ‘The Tortoise and the Elephant’. The poet begins the poem by singing the refrain of the song used in the folktale. He also makes reference to the story by comparing the way, the animals deceived the elephant as the same way Nigeria’s politicians deceive the masses when canvassing for their votes and how they plot the killing of their opponents to retain their positions.

*A ó mèrin jọba*  
 -----  
*Gòngòsú ò mètàn*  
*Kò mò pé òfìn ni wón n sìn ‘ún lọ*  
 (We shall make the Elephant the king  
 -----



The idiot does not know deception  
 He does not know they are accompanying him to the dungeon)

### Personification

Personification is a literary device where non-human things are endowed with human attributes and feelings. Olatunji (1984:49) describes it as “a kind of anthropomorphism”, and instances of this device abound in Abíódún’s poetry. For example:

*Aṣo wọn á dúdú bí aṣò òfò*  
*Ìbọn lòmọ iyá a wọn*  
*Wón dì mó ọn bí itàkùn dì mọgi*  
*Ọmọ ire dà nínú ibọn*  
*Ọmọ ire dà lára ọmọ iyá*

Their clothes are as dark as mourning clothes  
 Gun is their siblings  
 They round about it like the way is attached to the tree

In these lines, an inanimate object, *ibon* (gun) is personified. The poet refers to gun as the siblings of the policemen. Town is being described as a crawling town; it is only a child who used to crawl. While condemning the deplorable state of the economy of Nigeria, the poet says; such a town will be crawling where a loyal country develops and thrives.

*Pé ilú bẹ̀ẹ̀ ó máa rákò ni,*  
*Níbi ilú olóòtọ́ ti n gòkè*

(That such town will be crawling  
 Where a truthful town will witness development)

### Metaphor

Metaphor means the description of an object, action or situation in a terminology proper to another. A metaphor at times consists of the substitution of one noun for another. For example, in:

*Eni a ní kó bá ni sọlé,*  
*Tó wá dàgbà òfọ̀n-ò̀n síni lọ̀dè*

(A security personnel employed to secure the house

Has now become a big rat inside the house)

Here, a security personnel is being compared to òfón-òn (house-rat). These types of rat are always difficult to kill and they are destroyers which simply mean that the security personnel have turned to thieves.

### Simile

Simile is an overt comparison which describes one object as being similar to another. In Yoruba language, a simile is always marked by ‘bí’ (like). In:

*Ó n pàṣá bí otí.  
Agbára n gun àṣá,  
Ó n gun àṣá bí Ṣàngó gùnniyàn*

It intoxicates the hawk like an alcohol  
Power is intoxicating the hawk  
It is intoxicating the hawk just as when Sango takes over a human being.

Here, power is said to be intoxicating the hawk like an alcoholic wine, while it is also said to intoxicate hawk like the carrier of Sango deity. The poet also compares the police uniform to mourning cloth because a bereaved person normally wears a black dress while mourning, in:

*Aṣo wọn a dúdú bí aṣo òfò*

(Their clothes are as dark as mourning clothes)

### Oríkì (Praise/Panegyric Poetry)

One of the deciding factors in assessing the competence of a poet is ability to use *oríkì*. It is a poetic phrase used to describe or praise. It can be used to define its subject and this is usually done by maximizing the attributes which the Yoruba society considered to be good qualities of the subject. The physical description of the subject may be described as in:

*Òwóruru fà ruru,  
Ajagajigì wọ rúrú.  
Égún tí abàwọn gbègèdè  
Àkùkọ gàgàrà,  
Tí ì jẹ kẹkeré ó kọ.  
Alájàgbé abikà nínú bí òbọ,*

-----  
*Jágilégbò, apàniyàn bí ẹni pewúrẹ*  
 Ọwóruru pulls harshly  
 Ajagajigì pulls harshly  
 (The masquerade with widespread net  
 The big cock  
 That does not allow the small one to crow  
 The truck owner who is wicked like a monkey  
 The herbalist who kills people like killing goat)

The physical appearance of a trailer is being described above while the oríkì also described the atrocities the vehicle brand commits on the highway. The economical usefulness of the palm tree is described in its oríkì below:

*Ọpẹ igi ajé*  
*Ọpẹ igi orọ*  
 (The palm tree a wealthy tree  
 The palm tree that creates wealth)

The poet uses the description to encourage farmer to plant palm tree because of its economic benefits.

### **Ọfọ (Incantation)**

Yoruba believe in the power of the spoken word. There are many incantations which are not accompanied by herbal preparation but operate by sheer power of being spoken. In this situation, the spoken names, the origins and incidents alluded to, the symbolic correspondence between the name of an agent and some external activity and the forces of incantatory agents are believed to work the desired effect once the wishes of the enchanter are spoken. An example is in:

*Ebi kii pagún wálé*  
*K'Édùmàrè bá wa lébi sígbó.*  
*Ojọ kii ẹ̀àìsàn bósù*  
*Ká máa fara gbàrùnwẹ̀ àìsàn.*  
*Àbòtán nìgbá ń bo ahun,*  
*Káàbò Olúwa máa bá wa gbé.*  
*Ojú àsá kii ríbi,*  
*Ká máse ríbi nílẹ̀.*

(The vulture is never hungry while returning home  
 May God drives away evil from us  
 The day does not fall ill to meet the month  
 May we not suffer illness?  
 The tortoise is fully covered with shells  
 May God continue to guard and protect us  
 The face of the kite does not witness any evil  
 May we not witness evil in our dwelling place?)

## Summary and Conclusion

In this work, we have shown that there is a close relationship between arts, the artist and his society as the concept of commitment in literature postulates. Abíódún has demonstrated this in *Àlọ́ Ní Lọ́*. As a committed writer, his poems are conceived as an effort towards improving lives of his readers and masses and making their lives more meaningful. Abíódún's work is a factor of his poetic consciousness to his environment, which is founded on politics, social issues and on Yorùbá worldview and philosophy. One of the merits of this work is its submission that literature, poetry in this instance, by its nature is a social art committed to human values and a genuine devotion of a writer to a cause and his convictions through advocacy of certain beliefs which may be political or ideological.

Within his poetic consciousness, Abíódún has shown us that the main causes of social problems in Nigeria are: poverty, rapid population growth and inadequate parental care, alcohol abuse and political corruption. The effect of these problems if not curbed, according to this poet, include general disorder, moral decadence and lack of development.

## References

- Abíódún, J. *Àlọ́ Ní Lọ́*. Ìlọ́rin: Majab Publishers (1997).  
 Adébòwálé, O. *Ewì Àtátà* Lagos: Abimas Nigeria Ltd (2003).  
 Adéjùmò, G. *Rò Óo Re*. Lagos: The Capstone Publications (2002).  
 Adélékè, D. *Aṣọ̀ Ígbà*. Abẹ̀òkúta: Visual Resources (1997).  
 Adélékè, D. *Wá Gbọ́*. Ìbàdàn: Hope Publications (2001).  
 Àjànàkú, A. *Orin Ewúro*. Ìbàdàn: Ìbàdàn Cultural Group (2008).  
 Akínjógbin, A. *Ewì Íwòyí*, Glasgow: Collins (1969).  
 Akporobaro, F. *Introduction to African Oral Literature*. Lagos: Princeton Publishing Company (2005).  
 Àlà mú, O. 'Commitment and Drama: A Critical Study of the Plays of Akínwùmí Íṣòlá' *Journal of Nigerian Languages and Literatures* (6) Lincorn

- International, Department of African Linguistics Unterschleissheim/ Munchen, Germany (1998). Pp. 34-40.
- Àlà mú, O. 'The Concept of Destiny in the Yorùbá Cosmology: A Study in Yorùbá Phenomenology of Existence and Existentialism' *Journal of Association of Nigerian Languages Teachers I* (2004) pp. 116-133.
- Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa, J and I. Madubuike (1980) *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Èlẹ̀ buiḃon, Y. *The Healing Power of Sacrifice*. Oyo: Lahoo Production (2014).
- Fáshínà, N. 'Polemics, Ideology and Society: Níyì Ọ̀súndáre, Odia Ofeimum and Aig-Imoukuede' Dasylyva, A. and O. Jẹ́gẹ́ dẹ́ (eds.) *Studies in Poetry* (2005). Ibadan: Sterling-Horden Publishers.
- Finnegan, R. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Kenya: Oxford University Press (1970).
- Fọ́lórúnṣọ́, A. *The Written Yorùbá Poetry (1949-1989) –A Study in the Sociology of Literature* (1998). Unpublished Ph.D Thesis Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Ibadan.
- George, I and E. Ukpong 'Contemporary Social Problems in Nigeria and Its Impact on National Development: Implication for Guidance and Counseling Services' *Journal of Education and Social Research* 3(2) (2013) 'pp. 167-173
- Goldmann, L. *The Hidden God*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1964).
- Ìdòwú, E. *Olódumàrè: God in Yorùbá Belief*. London: Longman Group (1962).
- Ìṣọ̀lá, A. *Àfàimò`ati Àwọ̀n Àrọ̀fọ̀ Mìràn* . (1978). Ìbàdàn: University Press Ltd.
- Jẹ́gẹ́ dẹ́, O. 'Poetics in Contemporary Nigerian Poetry' Dsylyva, A. and O. Jẹ́gẹ́ dẹ́ (eds) *Studies in Poetry* (2005). Ibadan: Sterling Holden Publishers (Nig) Ltd. pp.133-151.
- Nwoga, D. 'Obscurity and Commitment in Modern African Poetry' Jones, E (ed) *African Literature Today* (1973). Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. Pp.26-45.
- Ọ̀basá, D. *Ìwé Kìínì Àwọ̀n Akéwì*. Ìbàdàn: Ìlàrẹ́ Press (1927).
- Ọ̀basá, D. *Ìwé Kejì Àwọ̀n Akéwì*. Ìbàdàn: Ìlàrẹ́ Press (1934).
- Ọ̀basá, D. *Ìwé Kẹ̀ta Àwọ̀n Akéwì*. Ìbàdàn: Ìlàrẹ́ Press (1945).
- Ọ̀lábímtán, A. (1969) *Áádọ́ ta Àrọ̀fọ̀*. Ìbàdàn: Macmillan Publishers.
- Ọ̀lábímtán, A. (1974) *Ewì Oṣìṣírìsì*. Lagos: Longman.
- Ọ̀lábímtán, A. (1974) *A Critical Study of Yorùbá Written Poetry (1848-!948)* Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of African and Asian Studies, University of Lagos.
- Ọ̀látúnjì, O. (1984) *Features of Yoruba Oral Poetry*. Ibadan: University Press Ltd.
- The United Nations Organization. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Yòlòyè, A. (2009) 'The Philosophy of the Nigerian Education System and Relevance to the Concept of the Yorùbá Ọmọlúàbí' Ọgúndèjì, A and A. Àkàngbè (eds.) *Ìgbimọ̀ Àgbà Proceedings of the Seminar on Ọmọlúàbí Its Concept and Education in Yorùbá Land*. Ìbàdàn: Ìbàdàn Cultural Group. pp.29-55.