

Foregrounding Politics in Yorùbá Written Poetry: A Discourse Stylistic Perspective on Party Politics, Thuggery and Electoral Reformation in Dúró Adélékè's *Aṣọ Ìgbà*

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Abstract

*This study examines the foregrounding of political themes in modern Yorùbá written poetry through a discourse-stylistic analysis of Dúró Adélékè's *Aṣọ Ìgbà* (1997). Employing an integrated framework that combines stylistics and critical discourse analysis with Yorùbá indigenous poetics, the research investigates how linguistic and rhetorical devices repetition, proverb, moral binaries (ìwà rere vs. ìwà búburú), rhetorical questioning, imperative mood, and eschatological warnings critique the pathologies of party politics, political thuggery, electoral malpractice, and leadership irresponsibility in late twentieth-century Nigeria. The analysis reveals that Adélékè discursively constructs politics as a moral domain, where corruption, thuggery, and rigged elections constitute ìwà búburú that destabilize communal harmony (àlàáfìà) and undermine democratic legitimacy. Stylistic foregrounding serves dual purposes: denunciation of systemic vices and implicit prescription of ethical reformation through vigilant citizenship, divine accountability, and restoration of just governance. Drawing on selected poetic excerpts, the study demonstrates how the poet employs culturally resonant discourse to expose the complicity of party structures in violence and deceit while advocating for electoral integrity as a pathway to societal renewal. The findings position *Aṣọ Ìgbà* as a significant socio-political text within Yorùbá literary tradition, functioning simultaneously as critique, moral instruction, and call for democratic reform in a context marked by recurring electoral crises.*

Keywords: Yorùbá poetry, discourse stylistics and political thuggery.

Introduction

Yorùbá written poetry, as a modern extension of oral traditions, plays a vital role in critiquing societal issues and advocating for ethical governance across generations. Among contemporary Yorùbá poets, Dúró Adélékè stands out for his use of linguistic creativity to address political realities. In his 1997 collection *Aṣọ Ìgbà* (literally “Clothes of the Season/Era,” drawing from the proverb *Aṣọ ìgbà là á dá fún ìgbà* clothes are tailored for the season), Adélékè employs poetic forms not merely for aesthetic pleasure but as tools for sharp social and political commentary. The collection contains 11 poems dedicated to political themes, which serve educational, ideological, and reformative purposes. These poems employ a range of linguistic and rhetorical strategies including repetition, pun, satire, foregrounding (through deviation and parallelism), proverb integration, and metaphorical imagery to make their critiques memorable, persuasive, and defamiliarizing. Key preoccupations include party politics, political thuggery (and associated violence like assassinations), godfatherism, electoral malpractices (such as rigging and vote-buying), and urgent calls for electoral reformation toward a more egalitarian society. These poetic devices function as discourse strategies: repetition intensifies the cyclical nature of political violence and corruption; puns create ironic commentary on power abuses; foregrounding deviates from everyday language to highlight normalized dysfunctions in governance; and proverbial allusions link modern issues to traditional Yorùbá moral frameworks, urging adaptation (“clothes”) fitting for the democratic “era.” Scholars have examined the structural and stylistic features of Yorùbá written poetry, often focusing on socio-stylistic aspects, but there remains a need to explore how these forms engage with specific political contexts like post-military Nigeria’s transition to civilian rule (late 1990s), where party rivalries, thuggery, and flawed elections undermined democratic ideals. For instance, analyses highlight how poets like Adélékè use language to expose corruption, bad leadership, ethnic marginalization, and the need for ethical reform. This study specifically investigates selected poems from *Aṣọ Ìgbà* to examine how they convey critiques of party politics, thuggery, and electoral malpractices, while advocating for reformation. It analyzes both textual linguistic features (e.g., foregrounding devices, pragmatic intent, ideological construction) and broader discourse contexts to



Foregrounding Politics in Yorùbá Written Poetry: A Discourse Stylistic Perspective on ... Ibrahim, W. A. & Sulaiman, F. (2026) demonstrate the interplay between language, power, and social instruction in contemporary Yorùbá poetry. Furthermore, the study considers how Adélékè's work contributes to the transmission of values related to accountable leadership, communal responsibility, and political activism, underscoring the importance of preserving and engaging with such poetic traditions for future democratic discourse and governance in Yorùbá/Nigerian society.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to foreground the intersection of politics and aesthetics in contemporary Yorùbá written poetry by examining how Dúró Adélékè's 1997 collection *Aṣọ Ìgbà* employs discourse-stylistic strategies to critique party politics, political thuggery, and the urgent need for electoral reformation in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. To identify and analyse the stylistic devices (such as foregrounding, repetition, rhetorical questions, wordplay, metaphor, and historical allusion) used in selected poems from *Aṣọ Ìgbà* to foreground political themes.
2. To investigate how these devices construct a discourse of resistance against party politics, godfatherism, thuggery, and electoral malpractices, particularly in the context of military-era and post-1993 election crises.
3. To explore the poet's vision of electoral reformation as a pathway to egalitarian governance and national unity.
4. To demonstrate the relevance of discourse-stylistic analysis in revealing how Yorùbá poetry serves as a medium for socio-political commentary and reformist advocacy.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What stylistic and discursive features in Dúró Adélékè's *Aṣọ Ìgbà* foreground the themes of party politics, thuggery, and electoral reformation?
2. How do devices such as repetition, metaphor, wordplay (e.g., on names like Abacha), and historical references function to critique political violence, godfatherism, and electoral manipulation?
3. In what ways does the collection propose electoral reformation as a solution to the socio-political ills depicted?
4. To what extent does a discourse-stylistic approach illuminate the poet's role as a political activist and reformer within Yorùbá literary tradition?

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative discourse-stylistic approach, combining tools from stylistics (foregrounding, deviation, parallelism, and figurative language) with critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine power, ideology, and resistance in language. The primary data consist of eleven political poems from *Aṣọ Ìgbà* (e.g., *Èyínlààró*, *Osù Ìṣonu*, *Oníkàn Yíròra*, *Básabàsa*, *Sàágò*, *Ògo ni Àb'ófò ni*, and *Irúkirú Olópàá*). Poems were purposively selected based on their explicit engagement with party politics, thuggery (including security-agent violence and hired killers), and electoral issues (especially the 1993 June 12 annulment and its aftermath). Analysis proceeds at three levels: (1) lexical and syntactic foregrounding; (2) pragmatic and discursive strategies (direct address, rhetorical questioning, and intertextual historical references); and (3) ideological interpretation within the broader Nigerian political context of the 1990s. Secondary sources include existing literary scholarship on Yorùbá political poetry. The analysis is descriptive and interpretive, with English translations provided for clarity while preserving original Yorùbá nuances.

Presentation of Results

The analysis reveals that Adélékè masterfully foregrounds politics through deliberate stylistic choices that blend traditional Yorùbá poetic resources with modern political discourse. Repetition and rhetorical questions dominate in poems such as *Èyínlààró* and *Básabàsa*, creating a chant-like urgency that sensitises readers to the consequences of bad leadership and thuggery (e.g., warnings against treating power with levity, using Idi Amin's fall as analogy). Wordplay, especially in *Básabàsa* (playing on "Abacha" as chaos/disorder), satirises military dictatorship and exposes how party politics and godfatherism breed thuggery and assassinations. Metaphors of theft and predation (*Olè* for civilian thieves, *Olósà* for military burglars in *Sàágò*) and historical allusions in *Oníkàn Yíròra* (tracing 1960–1993 politics and warning of ethnic breakup) foreground electoral malpractices and the annulment's trauma (*Osù Ìṣonu* vividly depicts hunger and national paralysis post-June 12). Security agents are discursively constructed as "armed robbers in uniform" (*Irúkirú Olópàá*), linking state-sponsored thuggery to electoral violence. The findings show that these devices do not merely describe politics but actively perform resistance: they shift power from oppressors to the masses by calling for accountability and reform. The poet's vision of electoral reformation emerges clearly in calls for genuine power transfer, egalitarian society, and



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rejection of servile ethnic appointments. Discussion confirms that Aṣọ Ìgbà functions as “cloth of the era” — a metaphorical garment that both covers and exposes the nakedness of Nigerian politics using discourse-stylistic foregrounding to advocate systemic change rather than mere lamentation.

The Life History of Duro Adeleke

Duro Adeleke was born on 4th October 1954 in the historic town of Odo-Otin, Osun State, Nigeria. He was born into the family of Chief Adeyemi Adeleke and Mrs. Titilayo Abiyemi Adeleke. Raised in a devout Christian home, his early upbringing was shaped by strong Methodist values, which significantly influenced his moral and intellectual development. He commenced his formal education at St. Andrew’s Demonstration Primary School in 1968. Despite the early loss of his father, he remained steadfast in his academic pursuits and successfully completed his primary education in 1970. He proceeded to Anglican Methodist Modern School, where he continued his foundational studies between 1970 and 1972. In 1973, Adeleke gained admission into Wesley College, Ibadan, for his secondary education. He completed his studies there in 1976 with distinction. Motivated by a passion for teaching, he enrolled in teacher training and qualified as a Grade II teacher. His early professional formation included training at Ebenezer African Primary School, Ilesa, and further professional development at the Local Authority Teacher Training College, Oyo, in 1976. His teaching career began at St. Paul Anglican Primary School, Iyeku, Oyo. Demonstrating exceptional commitment to educational advancement, he later gained admission to the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), where he studied Yoruba Education between 1978 and 1981. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Education (B.A. Ed.) in Yoruba, thereby solidifying his academic and professional orientation toward the promotion of Yoruba language and culture. In 1984, he served as a teacher at St. Luke’s College, Molete, Ibadan, before moving to Okebadan High School in 1985. His dedication and competence in teaching earned him further professional recognition, leading to his appointment at Apomu High School in Osun State. In 1992, he was elevated to the rank of Chief Lecturer at the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, where he contributed significantly to teacher education and curriculum development. Committed to continuous academic growth, Adeleke pursued higher degrees at the University of Ibadan, where he further distinguished himself in Yoruba studies. Over the years, he has gained recognition for his scholarly contributions to Yoruba language, literature, and pedagogy. His publications include textbooks, research articles, and academic works released from 1997 onward, all of which have contributed meaningfully to the advancement of Yoruba scholarship. Through decades of teaching, research, and academic leadership, Duro Adeleke has established himself as a respected scholar and educator whose work continues to influence the study and teaching of Yoruba language and culture in Nigeria and beyond.

Politics

In Yorùbá written poetry, politics emerges not merely as a theme but as a foregrounded discourse linguistically emphasized through deviation, repetition, pun, satire, and proverbial adaptation to critique modern governance. Dúró Adélékè’s *Aṣọ Ìgbà* (1997), with its 11 politically themed poems, exemplifies this by contrasting modern political dysfunctions (such as party politics, godfatherism, thuggery, assassinations, electoral malpractices, and calls for reformation) with idealized traditional Yorùbá political structures. Politics, broadly, is the system through which society organizes, governs, and administers itself, involving authority, decision-making, laws, and policies aimed at stability, order, and collective well-being. In traditional Yorùbá societies, this was rooted in communal responsibility and checks on power. Leadership centered on the *Ọba* (king), who ruled not autocratically but with the council of chiefs, elders (*Agba*), and titleholders such as the *Jagun* (war general), *Lópòn* (chief priest), and *Ìgbìmò* (council members). The palace (*Ilé Ọba*) served as the deliberative hub (*Ilé Ìpàdẹ̀*), incorporating diverse roles: drummers, singers, messengers, and even high-status women. Groups like the *Olórìṣà* (religious leaders) and *Ogboni* society provided spiritual and moral oversight, acting as balances to prevent abuse. Advisers handled economic matters (akin to modern trade associations), ensuring decisions promoted communal harmony rather than individual dominance. This pre-colonial model emphasized collective accountability no one was above the community and legitimacy derived from cultural, moral, and divine sources. Governance integrated security, justice, and welfare without the individualism or violence often seen today. Modern Yorùbá/Nigerian politics, influenced by Western colonialism and post-independence democracy, diverges sharply. It features party-based systems, electoral contests, and power struggles marred by corruption, bad leadership, ethnic tensions, and violence. Adélékè’s *Aṣọ Ìgbà* foregrounds these through stylistic devices that defamiliarize and satirize them: the titular metaphor (“clothes of the era”) proverbially critiques how contemporary politicians “dress” power inappropriately superficially, violently, or selfishly unlike the era-suited attire of traditional leaders. In the collection, party politics is portrayed as riddled with

Foregrounding Politics in Yorùbá Written Poetry: A Discourse Stylistic Perspective on ... Ibrahim, W. A. & Sulaiman, F. (2026) godfatherism (patronage and control), thuggery (hired violence and intimidation), and assassinations (targeted eliminations of rivals). Electoral malpractices rigging, vote-buying, and manipulation undermine democratic ideals, prompting calls for reformation toward egalitarian, accountable systems. Adélékè uses repetition for cyclical emphasis (mimicking endless violence in thuggery), pun for ironic wordplay (e.g., linking “party” to excess amid poverty), and satirical portraits to construct ideological resistance. These foreground political failures as a mismatch to Yorùbá values of communal order (omolúàbí ethos) and moral adaptation. Thus, Aṣọ Ìgbà employs discourse-stylistic foregrounding to critique how modern politics deviates from traditional communal governance where authority was checked and balanced toward individualized, violent, and unstable forms. The poetry urges ethical reformation, echoing the proverb Aṣọ ìgbà là á dá fún ìgbà (clothes must fit the era), to realign politics with cultural and moral integrity for societal stability and development.

The Actions of Modern Political Leaders in Party Politics, Thuggery, and Electoral Processes

Those who occupy positions of authority in modern political administration, commonly referred to as politicians, play very significant roles in shaping the development of society. Their influence extends to governance, policy making, and the overall well-being of the people. In Yoruba literary discourse of the late twentieth century, particularly in Dúró Adélékè's Aṣọ Ìgbà (1997), it is observed that when an individual attains power through party politics, caution often diminishes. When someone rises to a leadership position among the people as a party politician or elected official he may begin to act in ways that do not benefit the masses, including engaging in or enabling thuggery during elections and obstructing genuine electoral reformation. This reality explains why Yoruba poets employ songs and poetic expressions to criticize oppression, corruption, selfishness, and the misuse of political power in party contexts. Writers serve as social critics, exposing injustice and calling attention to misconduct within governance, such as electoral violence, thuggery, and manipulative party practices, as foregrounded in Adélékè's work. If we carefully observe contemporary society, we see that party leaders, executive office holders, governors, ministers, and other public officials occupy positions of authority. They are expected to formulate sound policies and implement developmental programs that will promote peace and social progress. Ideally, governance and electoral processes should be transparent, just, and people-centered. However, in many cases, party politics appears to serve personal interests rather than public good, with thuggery used to intimidate opponents and rig outcomes, hindering true electoral reformation. In times of political crisis especially during elections conflict often emerges within communities. Party competition can lead to tension, division, and violence, including thuggery by hired supporters. Both supporters and opponents of political leaders may engage in hostility. This is why writers and intellectuals raise their voices against injustice and political recklessness, because such instability, fueled by party-driven thuggery and flawed elections, harms ordinary citizens. This aligns with Duncan (1961:112), who states: “A sociologist must do more than stress the persuasive quality of symbolic appeals to audience... must point out specific sociological contact in the process of identification as these arise when the self and the other are addressed.”

This means that political analysis must go beyond persuasive rhetoric in party campaigns. It must examine the real relationship between leaders and citizens, particularly how identity, responsibility, and accountability operate within society amid thuggery and calls for electoral reformation. Yoruba poets consistently address political misconduct because whatever affects the community affects everyone. Adélékè, for example, in Aṣọ Ìgbà, discusses political disorder including party politics, thuggery, and the need for electoral reformation as part of broader social degeneration. He writes:

Òrò aláìlòótó ni wón n ẹ
Àwọn aláìṣòótó n ẹ iṣẹ àìtò
Nígbà tí aláìṣòótó bá lágbára
Kò rọ̀rùn kó dá òtítító dúró
Agbára kékeré kì í ẹ̀gun irò
Bí a ti n ẹ òtítító kò yẹ ká bèrù
Ta ni kò mò pé iwà burúkú máa n yorí sí ìbànújẹ?
Gbogbo irò máa n hàn ní ojò kan
Bí a tilẹ̀ fi pamò fún ìgbà díẹ̀
Òfin kò fi ẹni kankan sílẹ̀
Ní ojò kan ni wón máa fi dá ẹjọ̀
Ilé ayé kò fara rọ̀ ẹni tó ẹ búburú
Ìbáṣepò àìtò kì í pé lórí ìtẹ̀
Ta ni ó mò?

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Bó bá jẹ pé ó dára

Bí ẹni nàà bá ní ilé àti ọkọ

Ohun gbogbo lè yí padà

Ó lè mọ ara ilé

Ó lè mọ ara oko

Kò dára kí a fi ìwà búburú ẹ àṣà

È jẹ ká bẹ̀rù Ọlórùn àti ilà̀nà rere

The poet condemns leaders who make promises during party campaigns but fail to fulfill them once elected. The country suffers because of deception, selfish governance, and the use of thuggery to maintain power, with little genuine electoral reformation. Another example states:

Bí gbogbo oníṣòwò bá fi ìbẹ̀rù Ọlórùn sí ọkàn

Tí gbogbo ọkàn bá ọ̀sọ̀rà nínú ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ wọn lójú ọ̀nà ìgbésí ayé

Kò sí ẹni tí yóò tan ẹ̀lòmíràn jẹ

Kò sí ẹnikan tí yóò fi owó tàbí ipa ẹ̀ ikà

Ọgbón aláítọ̀ àti ìtan kí í pé

Ká bá a ẹ̀ ohun tí ó tọ̀ sí ojú Ọlórùn

Ọkàn kan ọ̀sọ̀rò ní ẹ̀niyàn ní lójú ayé

Kò rọ̀rùn kí a jọba lóri ara ẹ̀ni pátápátá

Ó yẹ ká bẹ̀rù láti ẹ̀ ohun tí kò tọ̀

Ó n jẹ ká a rántí pé gbogbo ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ wa ló ní ìdáhùn

Ní ìpèyà tàbí nínú àlàáfíà ní a fi hàn ìwà wa

Bí ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ kò bá dára, ilé kí í dúró.

These verses highlight corruption, favoritism within party structures, and the enrichment of political elites while citizens suffer poverty. Election seasons become periods of intense propaganda and thuggery. Politicians promise development for four or eight years, yet meaningful change and electoral reformation rarely materializes due to manipulative party politics.

Another poem illustrates this:

Balódè agbékèlé, olóótó ẹ̀niyàn

Ọyẹ kékeré kí í bàjẹ

Ojọ ọ̀dún máa n fi hàn bí irọ̀ ẹ̀ rí

Ní ojọ kan, irọ̀ yóò tan káàkiri ilé

Ojoojúmọ̀ ní òtítító n dáábò bo gbogbo ẹ̀niyàn

Tí a bá kú, gírí kí í jẹ ká tún padà

Ayé yìí kí í pé títí

Èni tí ó bá ẹ̀ rere yóò rí ìbùkún.

The general conclusion is that when leadership becomes self-serving through party politics and thuggery, society deteriorates, with stalled electoral reformation. Writers therefore function as watchdogs, holding political leaders accountable.

Another powerful poetic warning appears in:

Ìjọba yẹ kí ó bẹ̀rù Ọlórùn

Èni bá fara rẹ̀ hàn gégé bí ẹ̀ni rere

Kò gbòdò padà sẹ̀yìn nínú ẹ̀ṣẹ̀

Ayé tí a bá kọ̀ lóri ìwà búburú kí í pé

Ká mò pé ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ tí kò dára kí í bọ̀ lábẹ̀ ọ̀fin Ọlórùn

Ìjọba tó n hùwà àitọ̀

Kí í jẹ ká àwọn ọ̀mọ̀ ilú gbé ayé àlàáfíà

Bó bá jẹ pé wọn n ẹ̀ ohun tí kò tọ̀

Àkóbá á padà wá bá wọn nínú ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ wọn.

This reflects tension between political authority in party systems and intellectual voices calling for reform. Attempts to silence critics through thuggery cannot suppress truth permanently. The actions of political leaders greatly determine the condition of society. Where justice, accountability, sincerity, and electoral reformation prevail over party thuggery, development flourishes. But where corruption and violence dominate, suffering spreads among the people.

The Actions of the Masses in Modern Politics

It is commonly said that whoever plays with fire will eventually be burnt; whatever a person sows is what he will reap. Politics in society is not the responsibility of leaders alone because governance is sustained by collective participation.

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Although politicians hold formal authority to govern, the masses also possess their own form of influence. This is what ensures that society does not collapse, because continuous tolerance without accountability leads to disorder. As the Yoruba proverb implies, when a person watches wrongdoing silently, he becomes complicit; what one refuses to confront boldly may grow beyond control especially in contexts of party politics, thuggery, and stalled electoral reformation. Writers observe that the masses must not remain passive in societal matters, especially in political affairs, because collective silence strengthens oppression, electoral malpractices, and the use of thuggery by political actors. In Yoruba literary discourse of the late twentieth century, particularly in Dúró Adéléké's *Aṣo Ìgbà* (1997), which foregrounds party politics, political thuggery, and the urgent need for electoral reformation, the role of the masses is highlighted as crucial in resisting such vices. An example appears in poems within *Aṣo Ìgbà*, where the masses are urged not to be complicit in political disorder. The poet critiques how citizens' inaction or participation in thuggery perpetuates corrupt party systems and flawed elections. The poem states:

Ìfẹ̀ ni dọ̀rò ìjà máa ń lẹ̀rẹ̀ sí iwà jàrè
Kí a mò pé a kì í ẹ̀ ẹ̀ tó mọ̀gẹ̀ bí ẹ̀niyàn
Gbogbo ẹ̀niyàn káàkiri ayé
Kò sí láíní íṣẹ̀ àkàdà
Bó jẹ̀ lórílẹ̀-èdè, bó jẹ̀ onímọ̀ tàbí oníṣẹ̀
Íṣẹ̀ àkàdà ló ń fí mò bó ẹ̀ ẹ̀ gidi
Íṣẹ̀ ilòkàn-òkàn ni ń dá ipinnu sílẹ̀
Bí a bá yàn kinnùún lórí àga ìjọba
Àkàdà á ràn
Wón lè wò ó níta
Wón bèrẹ̀ àròjò lésèkẹ̀sẹ̀ nípa íṣẹ̀ àkàdà wòn.

This reflects how intellectuals and ordinary citizens are marginalized within political systems dominated by party thuggery. Ideally, the masses should demand enabling policies and electoral integrity. However, instead of empowerment and active participation in demanding reformation, fear or complicity often suppresses resistance, allowing thuggery to thrive during elections. Similarly, the actions of citizens themselves determine the direction of society. In *Aṣo Ìgbà*, the youth and masses are reminded of their responsibility toward their homeland amid party driven violence and electoral crises:

Àmọ̀ àfojúsùn ni wòn pè é
Ó yẹ̀ ká máa ṣiṣẹ̀ takuntakun
Àmọ̀ àfojúsùn bí ó bá ọ̀ra rẹ̀ di kánkán
Tí íṣẹ̀ bá dà bí odò
Ọ̀ṣọ̀-ídídámọ̀ fí dán ẹ̀ni sí
Ajẹ̀nilókàn-òfifó máa ń da ẹ̀niyàn lójú
Músùn-músùn irò ọ̀kàn ni ó ń sọ jòwójùwọ̀
Ìtẹ̀síwájú
Ìtẹ̀síwájú fí iyàsótò hàn lááárín ẹ̀niyàn
Gbogbo omọ̀ orílẹ̀-èdè parí pọ̀ sí nkan kan
Wón ní kò sí ẹ̀ni tí yòd gba ìmọ̀ kúrò lówó ẹ̀ni
Kò sí ẹ̀ni tí yòd gba íṣẹ̀ ọ̀wọ̀ kúrò lówó alágbára
Kò sí baba ẹ̀ni tí yòd gba orúkọ rere kúrò lówó ẹ̀ni.

The youth are warned that they are heirs of their father's land. Even if they travel abroad, their homeland remains their foundation. The political crises in Nigeria—marked by party thuggery and lack of electoral reformation are therefore connected to both leaders and citizens. Writers emphasize the interaction between rulers and the masses. If leadership becomes corrupt through thuggery, the children of the masses will eventually resist injustice, but only if they reject passive complicity.

As another poem declares:

Ohun gbogbo ló lè ẹ̀lẹ̀
Ó lè mọ̀ ara ilé
Ó lè mọ̀ ara oko
Kò dára kí a fí iwà búburú hàn
Tí ẹ̀ni tí a bá ń tọ̀ ni dáńgájí
Tàbí ẹ̀ni tí a bá ń tẹ̀lẹ̀ ni dáńdàn
Aláíṣòótọ̀ ń bà owó jẹ̀ bí ó ti fẹ̀

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Aláìṣòótó n fá ìṣòrò káàkiri ara wòn

Aláìṣòótó jé èni àkúnya

Ó n fá orúkọ ilé bàjé

E jé ká bèrù Olórùn

This suggests that the masses ultimately hold decisive power over leaders. When leaders misuse public funds, deploy thuggery, or rig elections without fear of the people, society suffers. Therefore, citizens have a critical role in monitoring governance, rejecting thuggery, and demanding electoral reformation. Politics cannot function properly unless the masses remain vigilant, informed, and courageous enough to demand accountability. In conclusion, both leaders and citizens share responsibility in political development. Where citizens remain silent or participate in thuggery, corruption and flawed elections flourish. But when the masses become aware, active, and united against party malpractices, leadership becomes accountable, electoral processes reform, and society moves toward justice and progress—as foregrounded in Adélékè's *Aṣọ̀ Ìgbà*.

The Problems Confronting Nigerian Politics: A Discourse Stylistic Perspective on Party Politics, Thuggery, and Electoral Reformation in Dúró Adélékè's *Aṣọ̀ Ìgbà*.

Modern Nigerian politics grapples with entrenched structural and moral crises, prominently featuring corruption, leadership irresponsibility, and institutional abuse. These manifest in embezzlement of public funds, abuse of office, political favoritism, manipulation of state apparatuses, and the pervasive deployment of thuggery during electoral contests. Such pathologies undermine democratic consolidation and perpetuate underdevelopment, as consistently foregrounded in late twentieth-century Yoruba written poetry through discourse-stylistic critique. Yoruba poets function as socio-political commentators, employing poetic discourse to expose governance failures while often stopping short of prescriptive remedies. This limitation risks perpetuating cycles of crisis, as mere denunciation without actionable reformist orientation yields limited transformative impact. In Dúró Adélékè's *Aṣọ̀ Ìgbà* (1997), a seminal collection within contemporary Yoruba political poetry, these issues are vividly interrogated, with particular emphasis on corrupt party politics, thuggery as a tool of electoral coercion, and the imperative for electoral reformation.

Adélékè's poetic discourse employs repetition, rhetorical questioning, and direct vituperation to foreground systemic corruption and irresponsible leadership. An illustrative excerpt captures this:

Aláìṣòótó jé èni àkúnya

Ó n fá orúkọ ilé bàjé

Ibi tí ó bá wà

Ibi tí ó bá dé

Gbogbo ibi ni aláìṣòótó tí n pa pò sí pápò

Gbogbo omọ́ ilú aláìṣòótó máa n wáyé bíi gárí

Aláìṣòótó n ṣe ká-rí-kírí

Aláìṣòótó kò rántí ipilẹ̀ orúkọ

Aláìṣòótó n yípo bí èni pé ó dára ju èlòmíràn ló

Ṣé èsùn nikan ni aláìṣòótó fi kan alájoṣepò?

Pé alájoṣepò ò mọ̀nà tó

Pé alájoṣepò ò mọ́ bí a ṣe n ṣiṣé

Pé alájoṣepò n fi jàndùkú dá ilú rú

Pé alájoṣepò n ṣe bí èni tó ní ilé

Wòn n ṣe àròyè bá a ṣe lè jọba

Wòn ò jé kí omọ́ tuntun fòrò sòrò ní gbangba

Ìṣe kékeré-kékeré ni n tàn aláìṣòótó jáde

Ilé mọ́ pé kásàkàsà ni iwà aláìṣòótó

Ṣé ijànbáyàn ni iwà aláìṣòótó?

Wòn kí í yípo kí wòn fi ìdí òtító múlè

Ìwà ni n tàn aláìṣòótó jáde ní gbangba.

Stylistically, the iterative use of “aláìṣòótó” (the dishonest one) and rhetorical interrogatives (“Ṣé èsùn nikan...?”) intensifies condemnation of corrupt practices bribery, embezzlement, selfish enrichment, and betrayal of public trust within party frameworks. Public office is discursively reframed as a private enterprise, enabling thuggery (“jàndùkú”) and electoral manipulation that marginalize genuine voices and perpetuate poverty amid elite extravagance. Leaders’

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insensitivity to mass suffering exacerbates these ills, as regressive taxation burdens grassroots economies without reciprocal developmental returns. Adélékè articulates this moral accountability:

Ó yẹ ká bèrù láti ẹ ohun tí kò tó
Ó tún yẹ ká rántí pé a
ó jẹ ìdáhùn fún gbogbo iṣẹ wa ní ojú ìkẹyìn
Ní ìpèyà tàbí ní àlàáfíà ní a fí ní fí ìwà hàn
Ìwà ẹni ní í di iṣẹ lára rẹ, a sì máa rí èrè rẹ
Àbájáde ní iṣẹ ní bí
Ìṣẹ ojú kan ni ó lè pa mó èniyàn mókàn.

This passage underscores eschatological accountability, critiquing opaque revenue utilization that neglects infrastructure and social services, thereby fostering disillusionment, unemployment, inequality, and potential unrest conditions fertile for thuggery and electoral violence. Adélékè advocates civic vigilance and ethical voting to counter such pathologies:

Mo ní inú-dídùn láti kọ ẹkọ nípa àwọn omọ orílẹ̀-èdè mi
Tó rọrùn pé a ti bèrè láti kọ o
Èbùn kan tí mo ní
Àyò kan ni mo ní ní nínú ẹkọ yí
Ó ti ní fí ìmọ hàn
Nígbà mí ni mo ní fí ìmọ hàn
Kò sí ẹsùn tó wà lórí mi
Omọ ni pèlú àwọn ẹlòmíràn
Kí ẹkọ tó lè dà bí pé kò parí
Kí ó dà bí pé ó tútù
Kí ó dájú pé a lè lóye rẹ
Èkọ náà ní fí itèsíwájú hàn
Èkọ náà kò dájú pé kò ní ẹsùn.

This excerpt emphasizes personal and collective moral agency, warning against vote-buying, ethnic bias, and apathy that sustain corrupt party dominance. Corruption, amplified by party thuggery and electoral malpractices, erodes institutional trust and risks authoritarian reversion absent meaningful reformation. Adélékè's *Aṣọ Ìgbà* exemplifies how Yoruba written poetry discursively foregrounds Nigeria's political pathologies corruption, thuggery, and electoral dysfunction as intertwined barriers to democratic progress. Sustainable transformation demands transparent institutions, accountable leadership, judicial autonomy, and civic ethical reorientation to dismantle thuggery and institutionalize fair electoral processes.

Coordination and Hierarchy in Political Administration: A Discourse-Stylistic Perspective on Party Politics, Thuggery, and Electoral Reformation in Dúró Adélékè's *Aṣọ Ìgbà*

In Dúró Adélékè's *Aṣọ Ìgbà* (1997), coordination and hierarchy are discursively foregrounded as essential yet corrupted principles in Nigerian party politics. Coordination organizes collective political action and electoral processes, while hierarchy structures authority, accountability, and command. Through repetition, proverbs, and rhetorical admonition, Adélékè exposes their subversion manifested in thuggery, factionalism, and electoral malpractice while implicitly advocating for their ethical reformation.

Coordination

Effective coordination aligns party actors across levels to pursue transparent elections and accountable governance. Its breakdown enables thuggery and electoral chaos. Adélékè stylistically conveys this through iterative proverbial warnings:

Ta ni kò mò pé ìwà búburú máa ní yorí sí ìbànújẹ?
Gbogbo iró máa ní hàn ní ojú kan
Bí a tilẹ̀ fí pamó fún ìgbà díẹ̀
Òfin kò fí ẹni kankan sílẹ̀
Ní ojú kan ni wón máa fí dá ẹjó
Ilé ayé kò fara ró ẹni tó ẹ búburú
Ìbáṣepọ̀ àìtọ̀ kì í pé lórí itẹ̀

These fragments underscore delayed but inevitable consequences of uncoordinated deceit, urging realignment of political efforts toward integrity.



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Hierarchy

Hierarchy establishes clear chains of command, ensuring directives flow downward and accountability upward. In corrupt party systems, it inverts into godfatherism and impunity. Adélékè critiques this through moral imperatives and vituperative sequences:

Bí ẹni bá ẹ iwà búburú, ìyẹn máa dà á lára

Àìtò kì í pé títí

Gbogbo iwà búburú n jà fún àìtò

Aláìṣòótó n fa ìṣòro bá ayé

Ìwà búburú n dá àlàáfíà rú

Ìwà aláìṣòótó jé ẹni àkúnya

These lines stylistically depict hierarchical failure as a source of societal disorder, implicitly calling for restored ethical authority.

Integration and Practical Critique

Coordination and hierarchy interlock: the former executes collective will, the latter enforces oversight. Their perversion fuels thuggery and electoral fraud. Additional excerpts reinforce this:

Wón máa ẹ àfiyèsí àwọn tó yàtò

Wón fi ẹsùn kàn àwọn tó ẹ àìtò

Àkóbá kò ní pé nígbà gbogbo

Ó dà bí ẹni pé iwà búburú máa parí

Wón n yan ẹni tó yẹ fún isẹ pàtàkì

Kò sí ẹni tó lè fi isẹ àìtò bó lábé òfin

These highlight selective enforcement, impunity, and the urgent need for hierarchical discipline and coordinated reform. Adélékè's discourse-stylistic strategy in *Aṣọ Ìgbà* portrays coordination and hierarchy not as mere administrative tools but as moral-political imperatives subverted by party thuggery and electoral malpractice. Their ethical restoration through vigilant alignment of action and accountable authority is presented as indispensable for genuine electoral reformation and democratic health in Nigeria.

The Relationship Between Religion and Politics: A Discourse-Stylistic Perspective on Party Politics, Thuggery, and Electoral Reformation in Dúró Adélékè's *Aṣọ Ìgbà*

In *Dúró Adélékè's Aṣọ Ìgbà* (1997), the relationship between religion and politics is foregrounded through discourse-stylistic devices repetition, proverbs, moral imperatives, and eschatological warnings that position religious ethics as a counterforce to corrupt party politics, thuggery, and electoral malpractice in Nigeria.

Communication of Religious and Political Ideologies

In Yorùbá poetic discourse, communication is central to propagating religious and political ideas. Religious leaders and poets transmit moral directives that shape political behavior, urging alignment with divine principles against corruption and violence. Adélékè stylistically links divine morality to just governance:

Òrò náà ni pé ó yẹ kí a máa fi ìmò àti ogbón

Ẹ àkóso àti ìdàrayá àwọn ọmọ ẹniyàn

Ó dájú pé kò yẹ kí a fi ẹsùn tàbí àìtò ẹ àkóso nípa ìjọba,

Ìmò, àti ìbáṣepò àwọn ọmọ ẹniyàn

Òrò náà ni pé ìbáṣepò tó dára

Ní ó yẹ kí ó wà láàárín àwọn ọmọ Yorùbá

Àti àwọn ọmọ orílẹ̀-èdè mí

These examples show that communication is a tool of influence: it guides behavior, shapes thought, and ensures alignment with broader ideological objectives. Religion and politics, when interlinked in poetry, often rely on structured, repeated, and persuasive communication to critique party thuggery and advocate electoral reform.

Integration of Religion into Political Systems

Religious principles often serve as a foundation for laws, policies, and governance structures. In *Aṣọ Ìgbà*, ethical guidelines derived from faith inform critiques of party systems, social norms, and leadership conduct. The poetry highlights the role of Yoruba cultural contexts and Christianity in shaping political participation:

Ní orílẹ̀-èdè àdúgbò yí,

Àwọn ọmọ Musulmi àti Kristẹni n gbé pẹ̀lú àlàáfíà

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Ó yẹ kí a máa fi ìbáṣepò tó dáa hàn láàárín àwọn ọmọ egbé idílẹ̀ àti èkó

These examples illustrate that religious doctrines influence political engagement and moral reasoning. The adherence to ethical frameworks derived from religious teachings can affect voting patterns, legislative priorities, and public accountability, countering factionalism in party politics.

Practical Implications of Religion in Politics

Religion does not only influence policy theoretically; it also manifests in the actions and organization of political structures. In Adélékè's poetic critique, religious institutions can:

1. Advocate for social justice and policy reform
2. Mobilize communities around shared ethical concerns
3. Mediate conflicts and promote cohesion
4. Support educational and welfare initiatives

For instance, the poetry shows how religious directives guide followers' behavior and political engagement against thuggery:

Ó jẹ̀ kedere pé iwà búburú n dá àlàáfíà rú

Bí eni bá ẹ̀ àìtò, kò dájú pé ìbáṣepò yòò pé

Nígbà mî, iwà àìtò lè fà àjálù

Iwà búburú n fa iṣòro àti idààmú bá àwọn ènìyàn

These examples show that religion serves as a stabilizing and guiding force, shaping the actions of individuals and groups within political contexts, and foregrounding divine judgment against electoral malpractice.

Cultural and Linguistic Considerations

The interaction between religion and politics is also influenced by language and culture. For example, instructions and guidance conveyed in local languages such as Hausa or Yoruba allow religious and political messages to resonate deeply with followers:

Àwọn akéḳò Hausa n kó èkó

Nípa bí àwọn ọmọ Kedè àti Akúṣù

Ṣe n hùwà ní àdúgbò wọn, pèlú fífi ìtàn

“Onkòwe yòò ríra” hàn gbangba fún wọn

Wọn n kó èkó nípa àwọn Kedè,

Àti pé wọn kò yẹ kí wọn ẹ̀ àṣiṣe

Sí àwọn Akúṣù nígbà gbogbo

By conveying religious teachings in familiar linguistic and cultural contexts, poets ensure that political engagement and moral responsibility are fully understood and acted upon, promoting harmony amid party-driven violence.

Case Study: Religious Instruction and Civic Responsibility

Religious teachings often stress personal accountability, moral integrity, and civic responsibility. The poetry references examples of how religious guidance intersects with social behavior and political action:

Akúṣù kò ní fá àìtò

Kedè kò ní fi àìtò hàn

Àjèjì kan kò ní ẹ̀ ìtànkáḷẹ̀ ìrònú búburú

Akúṣù àti Kedè ní inú-dídùn láti kó ara wọn

Ṣòná kò ní fi Kedè hàn ní àìtò

Ṣòná kò ní fi Akúṣù hàn ní àìtò

These examples show that followers are not passive observers; they actively integrate religious teachings into decisions that affect society, governance, and ethical conduct, urging rejection of thuggery and participation in electoral reform.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian policymakers and electoral bodies should engage literary works such as Aṣò Ìgbà in civic education programmes to highlight the dangers of thuggery and malpractices.
2. Scholars of African literature should expand discourse-stylistic studies to other contemporary Yorùbá poets, comparing their strategies for political reform.
3. The collection should be translated into major Nigerian languages and incorporated into secondary and tertiary curricula to foster political awareness among youth.



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4. Political parties and civil society organisations must heed the poet's call for electoral reformation by implementing transparent processes and curbing godfatherism and thuggery to prevent the cycles of violence and disillusionment depicted in the poems.

This study ultimately affirms that Yorùbá written poetry remains a potent tool for foregrounding politics and driving societal transformation.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Dúró Adélékè's *Aṣọ Ìgbà* is not merely a collection of Yorùbá poems but a powerful discursive garment that both clothes and exposes the naked realities of Nigerian politics in the 1990s. Through a rigorous discourse-stylistic lens, the research has established how the poet systematically foregrounds party politics, political thuggery, and the imperative of electoral reformation using traditional Yorùbá poetic resources repetition, rhetorical questions, wordplay, metaphor, and historical allusion in ways that transform aesthetic form into a weapon of resistance and reform. The findings confirm that Adélékè does not lament political decay; he actively performs critique and offers a clear roadmap for change. Devices such as the satirical pun on "Abacha" as *básabàsa* (chaos), the predatory metaphors of *olè* and *olósà*, and the haunting portrayal of the June 12 annulment in *Osù Ìṣonu* collectively shift discursive power from military dictators, godfathers, and thugs back to the suffering masses. By calling for transparent elections, rejection of ethnic servitude, and genuine power transfer, the collection positions electoral reformation as the only viable path to egalitarian governance and national healing. Ultimately, this discourse stylistic analysis affirms the continued vitality of Yorùbá written poetry as a medium of socio-political activism in Nigeria. *Aṣọ Ìgbà* stands as enduring testimony that when poets foreground politics with stylistic mastery, literature ceases to be ornamental and becomes a catalyst for societal transformation. In an era still plagued by electoral violence and thuggery, Adélékè's poetic voice remains urgently relevant, reminding every generation that "the cloth of the era" must be rewoven if the nation is to clothe itself in dignity, justice, and democratic renewal. The study therefore closes with the conviction that Yorùbá poetry, when subjected to serious stylistic scrutiny, continues to offer profound insights into and solutions for the political challenges of our time.

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