



## **Perspectives of Ndako Kutigi's Selected Songs on the 2019 Elections in Niger State**

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### **Abstract**

Songs generally have multiple roles and functions in every society. Political songs in general are a powerful means of communication to the electorate. This study examines the influence of selected political songs by Ndako Kutigi on the 2019 general elections in Niger State, focusing on the content, composition, structure, and style of these songs. The research explores how these songs affected voter perception and contributed to the election outcome. Using the theoretical frameworks of Formalism and Deconstruction, the study demonstrates that Ndako Kutigi's songs played a significant role in shaping political opinion, mobilising support, and influencing voter behaviour. The findings confirm that political songs were instrumental in supporting specific candidates while discrediting others. The paper concludes with recommendations for preserving and enhancing the use of political songs as a cultural and political communication tool in democratic processes.

**Keywords:** Politics, Songs, Perspective, Elections.

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### **Introduction**

Human beings have, since the beginning of civilisation, demonstrated an inherently political nature. The tendency to pursue individual and collective interests through strategic engagement is a hallmark of political behaviour. It is therefore not surprising that political participation has remained central to the development and survival of societies across time and space.

Politics manifests in various forms and dimensions, including ideological, religious, ethnic, partisan, and even academic politics. Each stage of societal evolution brings with it new political challenges that demand innovative approaches for advancing collective aspirations. Among such strategies is the use of political songs, which have emerged as potent tools for mobilisation, persuasion, and political expression. This study aims to explore how these songs have been employed in the context of partisan politics, with specific reference to the 2019 general elections in Niger State.

Nigeria, and Niger State in particular, continues to witness dynamic political activities, especially in the realm of party politics. The often combative nature of electoral competition, frequently characterised as a “do-or-die” affair, has given rise to the widespread use of political songs as tools for promoting candidates and discrediting opponents. These songs, both positive and negative in tone, play a critical role in shaping political narratives and influencing voter perception.

The 2019 general elections in Niger State, like previous elections across Nigeria, saw a significant reliance on political songs. These compositions were deployed to champion specific candidates and



parties, as well as to criticise rivals, making them central to political communication during the electoral process.

For the purpose of this research, political songs refer to songs that were specifically selected and performed to promote or discredit political candidates and parties during the 2019 general elections in Niger State. The term artist/performer is used to describe the individuals who composed and performed these songs, often drawing on oral traditions and cultural motifs.

One such artist is Alhaji Abubakar Ndako Kutigi, an indigenous Nupe musician from Kutigi in Lavun Local Government Area of Niger State. Known for his performances at weddings, naming ceremonies, and political events, Ndako Kutigi is a respected praise singer who also engages in theatrical presentations. Active since 1990, he holds a Higher National Diploma in Computer Science from Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru. He is married with six children and is widely recognised for his contributions to both cultural and political musical performance in the region.

### Literature Review

Songs are a universal cultural form found across all societies, often serving as powerful tools for communication. They perform numerous expressive functions, including the conveyance of political messages. In Nigeria, the use of songs for political communication dates back to the post-independence period and has since remained a significant part of electoral discourse. Political songs are commonly employed to mobilise, inform, educate, and influence the electorate, and their impact on democratic participation cannot be overstated. As Scharter (2011) noted, music—and by extension, songs—has a unique capacity to engage both the intellect and the emotions.

The political utility of music is a global phenomenon. For instance, in the United States, the 2016 national conventions of the Republican and Democratic parties saw extensive use of music to promote candidates and reinforce campaign messages. Similarly, during the 2019 general elections in Niger State, oral political songs in the Nupe language were deployed to promote, satirise, and critique political parties and candidates, depending on the intentions of the performers.

Political songs in Nigeria are not limited to glorification. They function as a double-edged sword—used not only to eulogise leaders and parties but also to criticise their policies and conduct. In the 2019 elections, campaign songs featured prominently in the activities of parties such as the All Progressives Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and Action Democratic Party (ADP). The use of music in political campaigns has become a mutually reinforcing relationship, wherein politics provides material for songs, and songs, in turn, shape political perception. Globally, leaders such as George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, and Barack Obama have used songs to strengthen their political narratives and appeal to the masses.

In Nigeria, artists often use their lyrics to reflect societal events, document political histories, and provide cultural critique. As Sharu (2016) observed, musicians chronicle and recreate political and social realities, offering both criticism and proposed solutions through their music. In Nupe culture, traditional songs accompany almost every occupation—from fishing, hunting, and blacksmithing to farming, each with its distinct song type (e.g., *Eni Kyadyazhi*, *Eni Egbe*, *Eni Enu*, and *Eni Tswachizhi*). This cultural grounding provides a rich foundation for political expression through song.

Sharu, referencing Finnegan (1970), also highlights the historical significance of court poets in African kingdoms. These poets were often tasked with singing praises of kings and nobles,



preserving history and genealogy through poetic language. Such practices are evident in the royal praises of the Hausa Emirs, the Zulu and Sotho praise poems, and the eulogies of rulers in the Congo. These traditions laid the groundwork for using songs as tools of political legitimisation and critique.

In recent Nigerian elections, the political role of music has become increasingly prominent. During the 2011 general elections, songs were central to voter mobilisation, particularly in presidential and gubernatorial races. Their rhythm and emotional appeal not only rallied citizens but, at times, stirred tensions (Titus & Bello, 2012). Traditional songs continue to be used to relay party manifestos and express grassroots dissatisfaction (Alabi, 2023).

In Southwestern Nigeria, campaign songs from 2011 to 2019 employed rhetorical strategies such as cultural allusions, proverbs, and native language to engage voters emotionally (Osisanwo, 2020). These methods enhanced relatability while discrediting political opponents (Omidiora et al., 2020). In Benue State, songs during the 2019 elections focused on farmer–herder conflicts to manipulate ethnic sentiments and dissuade support for certain parties (Ugbudu & Buter, 2020). Campaign jingles in 2015 were similarly used to build or damage political images through music-infused advertisements (Ariroguzoh, 2019).

Moreover, post-2015 campaign music evolved beyond mere promotion to include protest and satire. Songs criticising President Buhari’s administration emerged as channels of civic engagement and political consciousness (Akinola, 2019). By 2023, oral poetry and protest songs openly challenged political myths and portrayed disillusionment with the democratic process (Diala, 2025). However, some songs, such as those used in Tiv communities, featured hate speech and inflammatory content, exacerbating tensions and threatening peaceful elections (Ugechi & Damkor, 2021).

These developments illustrate that political songs in Nigeria are not merely for entertainment but serve as instruments of mobilisation, persuasion, resistance, and sometimes division. Their influence necessitates greater regulatory oversight, civic education, and responsible engagement from artists and political actors.

Despite the broad literature on political music in Nigeria, a notable research gap remains regarding the contributions of indigenous musicians such as Ndako Kutigi. His songs, deeply rooted in the Nupe cultural and linguistic landscape, played a significant role in shaping voter perception during the 2019 general elections in Niger State. However, there is a lack of focused scholarly attention on his lyrical strategies, themes, and sociopolitical influence. Most existing studies prioritise urban or mainstream musical narratives, thereby overlooking the nuanced and culturally grounded messages of rural artists. Understanding Kutigi’s work could provide valuable insights into grassroots political engagement and the interplay between culture, music, and democracy in Northern Nigeria.

### **Formalism and Deconstruction Theory**

This study is anchored on Formalism and Deconstruction Theory, both of which offer critical tools for analysing the selected political songs of Ndako Kutigi beyond surface meanings.

Formalism focuses on the internal structure of a text—its language, literary devices, patterns, and stylistic features—without reference to external contexts such as politics or biography. This theory is relevant to this study as it allows for a close reading of Kutigi’s songs, emphasising how he uses poetic devices, rhythm, metaphors, and repetition to communicate political messages. The goal is to understand how the songs function as literary artefacts with intrinsic meaning, independent of external interpretation.



Deconstruction, as developed by Jacques Derrida, complements this by encouraging the reader to uncover internal contradictions and multiple interpretations within a text. In the context of this research, deconstruction is useful for unpacking the deeper, often ambiguous meanings in Kutigi's lyrics—especially where a song may simultaneously praise and critique political actors. It allows for a nuanced analysis that recognises how meaning in political songs is unstable and shaped by context, listener interpretation, and cultural codes.

Together, these perspectives support a layered analysis of Kutigi's political songs—examining their literary structure (Formalism) and exposing hidden assumptions, ambiguities, or ideological tensions (Deconstruction). This combined approach is crucial for understanding how his art contributes to political discourse in the 2019 general elections in Niger State.

### **The Nupe Political Songs on 2019 General Elections**

The Nupe race, language and communities like every other in the world, is said to be known for having various types of songs as part of her culture. Amongst such songs is the one this study has picked "Political Songs". Thus, this study is particularly interested in looking critically at the political songs that featured during the 2019 General Elections in Niger State, Nigeria. Niger State is home to a larger population of Nupe speaking people and communities in the world. It is this fact that resulted into the numerous political songs performed during the 2019 political campaigns from amongst which some have been chosen for this study.

Political songs are usually performed by artists for individual political figures, groups of politicians as well as political party or parties. These songs are also used to project government policies, initiatives and programs. Performances during political campaigns or activities are quite often, solicited and in some cases simply undertaken by the artists for a targeted personality and or audience. The theme as expected is political propaganda to enhance victory for political aspirants and parties at the polls.

Thus, songs rendered for political purposes are usually concerned with praises aimed at promoting the suitability and appropriateness of one aspirant or party over the others. In essence, while the performer enumerates the virtues, competence and capabilities of the preferred aspirant or party, the reverse is the case for the perceived opposition. It is therefore, a common occurrence to have the performer singing praises and pointing out reasons why a particular aspirant or party should be aligned with instead of another who and which is usually termed the opposition and described using negative terms.

This paper looks at Two Nupe who performed by Ndako Kutigi, during the 2019 General Elections. These songs are:

- (i) GominaNeja Abubakar Sani Bello (Abu Lolo 2019: Appendix 1)
- (ii) Abubakar Sani Bello (Abulolo 2019: Appendix 2)

It is important to note here that the songs mentioned above were performed at various occasions for the same political purposes even as there are similarities in the title of the songs. All the songs convey political messages that aim at promoting the cause and course of the politician(s) and the party at the polls. To achieve these aims, they discredit other aspirants and parties which they consider as oppositions to their patrons.



**Selected Political Songs by Ahaji Abubakar Ndako Kutigi**

The form the performance takes is dependent on the performer as there is no strict order to be followed. In the song "Gomina Neja Abubakar Sani Bello (Abulolo 2019)" by Alhaji Abubakar Ndako Kutigi, we are not introduced to who the performer is, instead the opening format begins with proverbial expressions which indicate that a contest between the strong and the weak is at hand. This, he achieves using symbolic animals thus:

Makun dunu dabe tsari ba enangizhi abicia so  
Abu lolo dabe tsari ba. Enangizhi ala bici' eee

**Translation**

Hyena has come to contest, goats should go into hiding  
Abu Lolo has come to contest, goats should run away.

**(Appendix 1: Line 1-2)**

The implication of the above is that any other person who is in contention with Abu Lolo should simply give way as he is a too strong a force for anyone to challenge.

The artist goes to demonstrate the belief in the mighty power of God as a guiding spirit whose blessings must be sought after by saying:

Soko mi bawe aduwa wala asiri yo so yizhe babo  
Toh Kiyoma bona ye cin bici  
Hemm abu lolo yali gomina "2019"  
Abulolo yali gomina "2019"

**Translation**

God to you we pray, guide us in this world and  
hereafter as we make mistakes. Hmm! Abulolo! Our  
governor 2019 we will choose Abu Lolo as governor in  
2019. **(Appendix 1: Line 6-7)**

The artist (performer) in continuation introduces another political figure who politically is associated with success, change manstrā as well as the political party under which his main subject in the song is contesting. To effectively achieve this, he proceeds with the song;

Tishi Kin buhari yo 2019  
Buhari Muhammadu Buhari 2019  
Tishi Kin APC yalio 2019  
Abu lolo tacin tacin wade fe be

**Translation**

Leader of the Nation Buhari for 2019  
Buhari Muhammadu Buhari 2019  
Leader of Nation, APC is our choice 2019  
And Governor of Niger, is APC 2019  
Abu Lolo! Centre! Be coming.  
**(Appendix 1: Line 8-12)**



He introduces a twist to show that any opposition to Abu Lolo, Buhari and APC 2019 would not be welcomed in the political contest at hand as he says:

Zafuna nnadi Zuma Zuma yede felo  
 (Yeee abulolo dazhi dazhi wode felo Zafu nnadi Zuma Zuma yede felo)  
 Yee abu lolo dagan caba etun wage  
 Kae esun tsoma shaka dan bwa wodefe lo  
 (Yee neja sai lolo)  
 Abu lolo next level  
 2019 sai lolo  
 Neja next level  
 Bi lo bi lo next level  
 Zanae lotun Kpako na  
 Yeee mai dobu dobu aiki  
 Egan wa wagi dan bwa  
 Sai de etun Zhi

**Translation**

Opposition! Back! Back! Be going back  
 Yes, Abu Lolo! Come! Come! Opposition! Back! Back!....  
 Yes, Abu Lolo, from beginning you have good even tomorrow?  
 there is no doubt, carry on yes, Niger! Just Lolo  
 Abu Lolo Next Level  
 He works in hundreds  
 Yes, thousands of work  
 Without making noise  
 But working. (**Appendix 1: Line 13-22**)

We can see that as from line 17, the refrain "Just Lolo" is introduced and the chorus now joins the lead singer in singing the introduced refrain to add tone and rhyme to the song.

Since the intent of the song is to rate Abu Lolo far and above any other contender in the race to the Government House of Niger State, the performer had to use metaphorical expressions coded in superlative words to iconize his subject while reducing the significance of the assumed opposition. No wonder, he goes on to say:

Eya wunchiko gatinya  
 Wawa gizhi afea lo Zuma Zuma  
 Eza wunciko gatinya  
 Wawa gizhi afea lo Kasan Kasan  
 (hmmm neja sai loloo)  
 Abulolo mai biya pension  
 Sai mai biya seven point five  
 Hmmm barayi sunci bashi  
 Eighty Six billion naira  
 Hn be bibe Abu egi lolo' e  
 Gbata Zhi Kpata wun wo  
 (Yeee Zafu nnadi fe lo yefo loo)  
 Zafu nnadi felo yigbecizhi feda emi

**Translation**

When the big ship comes out  
 Small ones should step aside  
 When the elderly ones come out  
 Children should draw back  
 Hmmm! Niger! Just Lolo  
 Abu lolo! Payer of pension  
 Just the payer of 7.5  
 Hmmm! Thieves are indebted  
 86 Billion Naira  
 With the coming of Abu Lolo's son?  
 He paid all the debts  
 The opposition! Be going, be going  
 The Opposition! Be going, thieves be going  
 (Appendix 1: Line 26-39)

In addition, the performer proceeds to highlight the achievements of his preferred candidate by referencing specific instances of their good works, as portrayed in the song. This is often done through allusions to other well-known figures who are recognised for their positive contributions. It is therefore unsurprising that the singer refers to “*Baba Buhari*” as a symbol of diligence and integrity, positioning Abu Lolo as someone who emulates these virtues. This comparison is repeated throughout the song to reinforce the intended message. The use of repetition, particularly of exaggeratedly expressed virtues, serves to emphasise and drive home the performer’s point.

While extolling the qualities of the favoured candidate, the performer simultaneously makes disparaging remarks about the opposition party and its candidate. This contrast is strategically used to persuade the electorate against casting their votes for the opposition in the upcoming election. In this song, Alhaji Abubakar Ndako Kutigi accomplishes this through the following statements:

Na yejin tsu won a wun gia yimakpe  
 Eza tsuwozhi yegaye zhin be ma.  
 Hmm it's a lot of wu logia  
 Na yejin tsuwo and wun gia  
 Ebogao yeda Zuma be Zdo  
 Hmmm yeda Zuma be Zdo  
 Yeeee yeloZuma be zdo.  
 Yeee yeko guakpea yami  
 Yeko gua Kpea yami  
 Ohooo igbeci asun Zunye  
 Ohoo Kunsu Zha sun Zunye  
 Yeee yeee kunsu zhe asun zunye  
 Asa afe yiwo iku Ngala yife lo zuma loo

**Translation**

What you did before was bad, this we know  
 Let the out gone ones go and never come back  
 What you did before was bad  
 For that, go away  
 Shout at them



Shout on the thieves  
Oh! The thief is disgraced  
Oh! The rat is disgraced  
They were looting  
The reason why we were going back...  
(Appendix 1: Line 44-51)

Having emphatically sang these to discredit the opposition, the performer now eulogizes the approved and preferred aspirants namely: Abu Lolo, Buhari, the Party APC thus:

Ama gbani yi yalo Zuma bia  
Ohoo ama yi yalo Zuma bia  
Ewo nae iku na wun dan bo bia  
Yee baba buhari gawama  
Hmm abulolo gawama  
Yee lolo ga wama  
Yee eya gututa nana cim cim nyi  
Eya gututa na na cin cin nyi  
APC Na na hem hem  
APC Na Nah cincin nyi  
Hmmm, Abu lolo cin cin nyi  
Neja yi cin cin nyi  
Neja sitati cin cin nyi  
Neja sai lolo  
Hmm neja sai lolo  
Zone A Kpata  
Zone B Kpata  
Zone C Kpata  
Kencizhi Kpata  
Nupe Kpata  
Gwar Kpata  
Jema nya neja kpata

**Translation**

But now, backward never  
Oh! Yes, we shall not go back again  
Free money is no more  
Yes, Lolo thank you Baba Buhari....  
Yes, Lolo thank you.  
Yes, Eight full years...  
This APC hmmm!  
APC is complete  
Hmmm! Abulolo, is complete  
Niger is complete  
Niger! Just Lolo  
Zone A  
Zone B  
Zone C





All the Hausa  
All the Nupe  
All the Gwari and  
All Niger lites (**Appendix 1:** Line 65-88)

To all the qualities, individuals and party mentioned in the song, the chorus responds the refrain "Just Lolo" meaning, Abulolo of APC is the only acceptable contestant for the post of Governor, Niger State. The song therefore, is composed and performed to promote his candidature far an above any other person or party.

In another song titled "Abubakar Sani Bello (Abulolo 2019)", the performer brings to fore his artistic prowess to prove that songs are n necessarily repeated verbatim in the form of written works. This demonstrated with the introduction of different tones aimed at achieving the same purpose of promoting the aspirant far and above any other aspirants for the gubernatorial seat of Niger State in the 2019 gene election.

This song opens with the names of the aspirant and a brief statement of his background:

Abu lolo yo nya kontagora gomina neja nya 2019 hoo sai lolo  
hnn Eda gogo gi yada next level yeefe loye lo wundan Zdakangio  
wunda dZakangio wunda toh nusao wundan toh fitio wunda toh  
Kinbo  
gbarufu woyo gomina esun APC yalio'o gomina esun ohhh sai lolo  
ilimin nasara dana beu nyi Ilimin mamadiya dana beu nyi sutra  
dana nya Zunye wunde ladabi toh eyeshi wande tarabiya wangi Zhi  
Za Zhe wayan lo bau toh Zdakangi toh nusa.

#### Translation

Abubakar Abu Lolo  
Governor of Niger 2019  
Abu Lolo from Kontagora.....  
You have stepped in to Next level.....  
You are youth and elder, you are on top and at the base  
youthful governor of tomorrow, APC's chosen  
governor knowledgeable in Western and Islamic  
Education, Neatly dressed, respectful, compassionate  
and assessable to all. (**Appendix 2:** Line 1-9)

With this positive background, he moves ahead to challenge and rebuke the opposition even as he continues promoting Abu Lolo above them. He places side side the positive attributes of Lolo and the negative attributes of the past government that is at this point referred to as the opposition:

Wun mai la gbata woya yetun locizhi  
Manafikizhi madanboe jin yan  
Ama sai aga sun zunye

#### Translation

He pays the civil servants their wages



Yet, the opposition remain unhappy  
But, they will be put to shame... (**Appendix 2:** Line 10-13)

To lay more emphasis on this, he turns to further pay allusion to references made by other performers who have sang praises of Abu lolo by saying:

Ezdan zhi eyami taki abulolo  
Abu lolo gomina zhi yaka erengi  
Abu lolo eya eza gaskiya gajin esun  
Lolo gayi yinao lolo wazhe za ga gi  
Hmmm abu lolo ooo gomina yina nya naja sitati APC wun yoo  
Zafu nnadizhi ewozhi yiku eightin sistin million naira  
Toh seven point five yedealia be ma re

#### Translation

Praise singers have praise songs for Abu lolo  
Abu lolo! Governor of governors, small pepper  
Abu lolo! A true friend till tomorrow  
Lolo is today, Lolo is moving on  
Hmm! Abu Lolo, governor of Niger State is of APC  
Opposition have stolen 85 billion Naira and 7.5 pension money  
Don't vote them again. (**Appendix 2:** Line 15-20).

With this position, he goes further to eulogize Abu Lolo by comparing him symbolically to "Big ship," "Elder," and asking others to step aside for Abu Lolo to move ahead. This illustration readily subjects smaller candidates to clear off the scene as a bigger candidates is on ground.

In the political cycle, people of same political party working together are often praised along with the aspirant. It is to this effect that the performer goes ahead to list other associates of Abu Lolo as the proponents of Abu Lolo 2019 race. In the same vain, the associates are considered to be of equal status with their principal.

Egi ibro ga loda  
Woga yakubu ga loda  
Zdakangizhi ada lafedun  
Oga muazu baba kande  
Yerima nya abulolo  
Zdakanigizhi ada lafedun  
Alhaji ketsi zhi alo da  
Zda kangizhi ada lafedun  
Ya min kayilu maitosayi  
Zdakangizhi ada lafedun  
Eye lolo beee  
Ohoo loloe bee  
Ena APC yalio  
Ena ikima yalio  
Ena Ilimain yalio  
Ena yanba arziki  
Ena emawoo yalio



hmmm sai lolo

### Translation

Ibro's child is taking to the dance floor  
Yakubu the Boss is stepping in  
Younger ones go and sit down  
Muazu Baba Kande is stepping in  
Yerima of Abu lolo....  
Alhaji Ketso is stepping in....  
Mikailu mai Tosayi is stepping in younger ones, go and sit down,  
Yes Lolo is coming...  
We will choose APC  
Diligent party is our choice  
Knowledgeable party is our choice  
Prosperous party is our choice  
Beneficial party is our choice....  
Yes, Next level... (**Appendix 2:** Line 21-40)

As is customary in such performances, each of these statements is accompanied by the refrain “*Just Lolo*” (*Sai Lolo*), which the backing singers echo at the end of each line. Throughout the song, the performer repeatedly references President Muhammadu Buhari, Abulolo, Vice President Osinbajo, and the All Progressives Congress (APC) as the preferred choices of the Hausa, Gwari, and Nupe peoples, as well as the constituents of Zones A, B, and C of Niger State. At the same time, he intermittently discredits the perceived opposition party and its supporters.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Political songs have long served as the proverbial “palm oil” with which political promises are consumed, and the 2019 general elections in Niger State clearly demonstrated their significance. These songs were employed in various ways: to inform, teach, and promote political candidates and their platforms; to mobilise, sensitise, and educate the electorate on the most viable options among numerous aspirants and parties; to support or hinder the success of particular individuals or political groups; to recall past political events—positively or negatively—as tools for persuasion; and to influence electoral outcomes by shaping public opinion. Collectively, these functions had a notable impact on the outcome of the 2019 elections in Niger State, contributing to the victory of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the overwhelming defeat of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which faded into political obscurity.

In light of both the constructive and adverse effects of political songs observed during the election, this study proposes several recommendations for improving future electioneering experiences. First, artists should aim for factual accuracy in their compositions to preserve unity and avoid misinformation. Second, songs should include content that educates the electorate on electoral laws, civic duties, and appropriate conduct during elections. Third, artists are encouraged to focus more on persuasive, mobilising, and appealing language rather than resorting to insults and defamatory content. Lastly, electoral bodies should consider engaging these performers in continuous voter education initiatives, beyond campaign periods, to enhance the democratic process. By doing so, greater value can be added to Nupe political songs and their cultural relevance. This study also



serves as a springboard for future research, encouraging further exploration into areas not fully addressed here.

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