

Script Analysis and Play Making of Mohammed Ben Abdallah's The Fall of Kumbi: Directors' Concept.

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Abstract: Play making or production process is one crucial component that cannot be compromised or disregarded in the theatre. It is the "surgical" theatre of the artist where various explorative activities are admitted with critical analytical lenses to ensure the product to be served to the audience is good for consumption. This process is termed script analysis in the language of theatre practitioners. Consequently, for a play to succeed or otherwise is heavily dependent on the analytical approaches used by the analyzer herein the director. This paper attempts to analyse *The Fall of Kumbi*, a play written by Mohammed ben Abdallah and draw a link between the analytical process and the success in performance making.

Keywords: Script, Script analysis, play making, directing, interpretation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The significant role of the director in theatre production is one feature that cannot be compromised. It is the very fulcrum upon which play making is hinged. The director's function in today's theatre keep expanding as his art keeps improving. In recent times, the emergence of trends in the theatre have made directors adopted new approaches to productions. However, one significant fact that has remained basically constant with the passage of time is the director's overarching goal and responsibility is to interpret a playwright's text and vision and unify all the other artists work to bring out the main artistic theme and vision of the production. The director thus, rely heavily on the text and other artists as his or her main tools in a production concept. The director is therefore seen as the unifier who holds the whole production together. He or she then becomes the designer who coordinates all the creative team and other staff of the production such as; costume design, lighting design, props, acting, set design, stage combat, and sound design for the production (Downs & Ramsey, 2012).

Undoubtedly, the director has no excuse approaching the production with disdain. The director must a matter of fact be an ardent and studious student of the chosen script to break it apart for easy absorption to the intended audience. This will enable the director not to leave any aspect of the play in any tinge of gloom. For instance, if there are strange traditions and rituals that need to be researched into for deeper understanding, nothing stops the director. For without due diligence to analysis of the script, then the tendency for the production to fail is high. Therefore, any good director should as a matter of need be in a position to illuminate the thought and vision of the script and the entire play making process as that will be the guiding principle to achieving the over riding theme and vision of the production. Owusu (2013) asserts that understanding and interpreting a script is a sure way to determine the shape of conceptualization which leads to the design and nature of blocking and the entire ingredients needed for the success of the production ensemble.

With a look at Mohammed Ben Abdallah's *The Fall of Kumbi* calls for an ardent work on analysis, interpretation and understanding of his quest to use the total African theatre approach in reaching his homestead, the entire African continent and the world with issues of social, religious, cultural and

political thoughts as some major threats to the development of the Ghanaian and the African as unique people.

2. REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS PLAY

In Africa and for that Ghana, political arrogance is one particular ailment that is cancerous to the socio-political, cultural and religious life of its people. Largely people in power in all endeavours presumptuously behave as if such positions they occupy is eternal. Therefore, abuse such privileges and halts development and progress of the citizenry.

In *The Fall of Kumbi*, the central issue is essentially political where Abdallah works out the tragic theme of presumptuous pride that saw the destruction of the great city of Kumbi Saleh. It fulfills the maxim that *pride goes before a fall*. The play reveals the pride and arrogance the people of Kumbi Saleh brandishes itself with. They pride themselves in the fact that wealth, riches, and power are all theirs and thus do not respect others. This is what Aklilu has to say, "*The people of Ghana have become too arrogant...*" (p.24). Consequently, their arrogance, which they see in the wealth of gold and the corresponding power, and control they have grown to be in their own eyes caused them to show gross disrespect to the people of Audoghast. Taking away the betrothed wife of Aklilu, still have the impudence to kill their warriors and demand for the bride's wardrobe and maidens as well. The wealth and power of Kumbi has gone viral across the neighbouring communities that it has attracted the covetousness of the Marabout. In effect, they are in anticipation to have an opportunity to ransack Kumbi at the slightest lead. Therefore, Ibn Yacin tells Aklilu:

If I send my men to war, it will not be merely to recapture your kidnapped woman. The Sultan of Morocco has had his eyes on Ghana for sometime now. It is only a matter of time, Kumbi Saleh, the so called City of Gold has grown too big, too rich and too powerful for its own good (p. 24).

The flaw in Amu Diata's elopement with Princess Zainata of Audoghast, detonated like a time bomb that saw the ruin of this great city of Kumbi Saleh.

In effect, presumptuousness of most leaders in Africa and specifically in the Ghanaian circles have promulgated opportunities for some people who all other things being equal, would not have ventured in claiming positions to rule. However, pride has paved the way for such cliques to have access and therefore managing affairs of the country.

Given the damage created by presumptuous pride in our socio-political space and even in institutions which are held in high esteem in the discharge of their duties have all fallen short of this cancer.

The Fall of Kumbi will be used as a medium to address this issue and others that will be unraveled later in this discourse.

3. TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience relied on the academic communities, especially the Universities and their environs. They will be the exponents in disseminating education and information to political leaders, and all and sundry in asking thought provoking questions to leadership in their decisions in governing the people. By this, leadership in all institutions in the country will be on their toes to ensure the safety and the general good of its people.

4. PRODUCTION CONCEPT

The director as a creative artist must have in mind the image or picture of an outward object to which he can attach an impression, a thought or any product of memory or imagination. Thus, a director's concept for a production is a representation of the analysis and interpretation of the play. It includes the proper blending of the elements of drama and that of theatre such as characters, action, costume, properties, sound, light, set, diction among many others to really convey the actions of the play through stage blocking with style of acting.

However, the play *The Fall of Kumbi* is a Ghanaian play and tragedy. It is fashioned on a dramatic form called 'Abibigoro'. It encapsulates the varied use of most of the traditional elements of drama but with much emphasis on the use of music, dance and rituals which is the main engine of the play.

Thus, as directors coupled with deeper analysis and interpretation of the script, we employed the realistic style of acting and Constantin Stanislavski's principles and technique of acting. This is how Wilson (1994) citing Stanislavski put it:

All of our acts, even the simplest, which are so familiar to us everyday life, become strained when we appear behind the footlights before a public of thousand people. That is why it is necessary to correct ourselves and learn again how to walk, sit or lie down. It is essential to reeducate ourselves to look and see on stage, to listen and to hear (p. 109)

To achieve 'this reeducation' Stanislavski said 'the actor must first of all believe in everything that takes place on stage, and most of all, he must believe what he himself is doing. And come one can only believe the truth' (Wilson, 1994, p.109)

By this, performers were directed to make the audience understand the actions and other hidden meanings imbibed in the dialogues to convey and drive home the message to invoke in them the pity and fear and hence its purgation.

The play being classic and set in the first century artistically depicted the era as close as possible, by building the costumes and set to that effect. It further created the ambience and imagery it connotes for the illumination and understanding of the audience.

Another concept implored was to develop and employ in the interpretation of the script was the positioning and placing of the Storytellers in the audience members to give a timbre that make them feel part of the action thus breaking the fourth wall hitherto believed that the performers or actors are oblivious of the presence of audience.

To achieve enunciation, diction, pitch, volume and interpretation of Amu's *Akwaaba Dwom*, A seven-member male voices was formed to sustain and effect the results of the set qualities that is desired to carry and set the tone of the play since it is this music that opens the play. It is not only the singing that was desired but breaking away from the conventional choral music approach to performing the song with actions or mimes among many others to carry or firmly make the audience glued to their seats and desirous for more.

5. PROFILE OF THE PLAYWRIGHT

The playwright Mohammed ben-Abdallah was born in 1944 in Kumasi, Ghana to Muslim parents. He traces his ancestry to a mixture of Mauritanian and Moroccan blood who settled in Ghana in the 1900's. The maternal side is of Guinean and Moroccan blood. He started life in Kumasi with two languages (Hausa and Twi). He grew up at a time when Muslims were suspicious of secular education as they thought it would sway their wards from their Islamic faith. But his father despite the pressure and ridicule by friends and relatives was undaunted.

He started his education in Kumasi, which to him meant a great deal of work for Young Abdallah. He had to attend secular as well as the 'Makaranta' (the traditional Islamic school). The 'Makaranta' was a priority so far as his family was concerned. Thus, he memorized verses from the Holy Qur'an under the tutelage of an Islamic scholar from Timbuktu, Mali who had visited the family. The training was so rigorous that at 4:00 a.m the exercise starts till 5:00 am morning prayers before he is allowed to attend school.

However, the unexpected happened just two weeks after he wrote the Common Entrance that the father died. He then left Kumasi after the funeral with his uncle to live in Nima, Accra to continue his schooling. He was enrolled in St. John's Grammar School then at Kokomlemlle in Accra.

At age fifteen young Abdallah trekked on foot from Nima where he resides to St. John's Grammar School at Kokomlemlle every day. Life at St. John's Grammar school was unbearable, as his uncle could not afford to pay the tuition fees let alone the boarding fees. This made the young lad absented himself from school many times. However, there was a window of hope for the lad as at the same time, the drama troupe of the school was rehearsing one of Shakespeare's plays *Macbeth* to commemorate the school's Speech and Prize-giving Day.

He was playing the lead role as Macbeth with the director or instructor being Miss Urrei a Scottish teacher. She was his inspirer.

According to him, the play went well that the Headmaster asked for the player of the character to step forward. He being so frightened stepped out still in his costume, was however, and applauded for the splendid performance he put up. He was then awarded full scholarship by the school. He was asked to go back to the house and pack, bag and baggage to the school as a border in form three.

After completing his secondary education, he pursued a course in Theatre Arts in the School of Music, Drama and Dance now the School of Performing Arts of the University of Ghana, Legon. He majored in costume and scenic designing. This he did because of the inspiration her teacher gave him and the scholarship received having put up a good performance as a lead character in no other play than Macbeth. So he believed that it is the performing arts that will make him realize his dream.

In 1972, when he was in the final year that he wrote his first play, *The Slaves* which was nominated for a competition in America. It won the contest and became the first play from Africa to achieve that feat. He was once again awarded a scholarship by the University of Ghana to pursue a post graduate course in Georgia in the United States. He later had his PhD at the University of Texas at Austin in U.S.A.

He has been a lecturer at the School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana for many years where was instrumental in the formation and establishment of *Abibigoro* the University's resident theatre company. He became the head of the Department of Theatre Arts of the School of Performing Arts briefly around 2003.

It must be noted that the doyen and the creator of Ghanaian theatre Efua Sutherland had a great influence on him as he and Sandy Arkhurst served as research fellows for her after his diploma studies. He is also a politician who emerged at a point when Ghana was in the revolutionary stage. He became the minister or secretary of education and culture. The national theatre of Ghana was built in his time.

Though Mohammed ben-Abdallah is retired from the University of Ghana, Legon, he assisted in the setting up of the University of Cape Coast Theatre Arts and Film Studies Department. He is also a part time senior lecturer at the Department of Theatre Arts of the University of Education, Winneba.

To his credit, Dr. Abdallah has written several plays. Such as *The Verdict of the Cobra*, *The Trial of Mallam Ilya*, *The Alien King*, *The Slaves*, *The Fall of Kumbi*, *The Witch of Mopti*, *Song of Pharaoh*, *Ananse and the Golden Drum* and *Ananse and the Rain god*. He is married to Akosua Amponsah Abdallah and they have four children.

6. SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

All is set for the historical grand wedding between Aklilu the prince of Audoghost and Zainata a Tuareg princess, but the heart of the bride is with another man, the prince of Kumbi Saleh the fabled city of gold. The morning of the wedding breaks and lo, there is no bride! While Audoghost sleeps, Amu Diata, the prince of the land of wealth and power elopes with their princess.

Feeling betrayed by one of his own, prince Aklilu seeks counsel from Ibn Yacin and joins forces with the moors. This provides a fine opportunity for the Moor who hitherto has his eyes on Kumbi with the pretext for raiding Kumbi's riches. They invade Kumbi Saleh to kill, loot, enslave and give up many of their victims of war in servitude in distant land.

The unwarranted crudely gruesome incidence is visited on the people due to their reluctance to the warnings by the gods not to go into war with the peace loving merchants of Audoghost. Kumbi disregarded the advice and went to war to claim the wardrobe of an unfaithful woman. The Temple Attendant who is the matron of the temple virgins recounts this unwise decision by the leaders of Kumbi as:

Kumbi then slapped Audoghost in the face and demand that they should not weep. We went to shit in their courtyard and turned round and asked them to wipe our arse for us (p. 33).

In a state of apprehension of the Marabouts attack, the High Priest summons the seven priests and priestesses of Kumbi. After an extended heightened tiresome ceremony of rituals and trances and praise singing, the High Priest admonishes them of the continual presence and protection of the gods

in their journey to the rain forest of the south. However, with regards to the Golden Stool, he assures them of its safe keeping in the womb of the heavens and it will come forth when a new High Priest shall "...cause the skies open to burst open and the golden stool will issue forth from the womb of heaven" (p. 39). This reveals the thematic interest of Abdallah's rendezvous with history and culture of its community.

At the crux of their crunch meeting, Ibn Yacin and his soldiers saunter in. The two spiritual leaders gravely hurl out abuses at each other. The High Priest not able to bear the contempt has himself killed by Khunata the mad daughter of the Queen mother of Kumbi to thrust the dagger into his chest. The women together with Astimalinke and Khunata were sent into exile as slaves in the court of Ibn Yacin in Sijilmasa. Khunata through the permission of the Moor performed their last 'pagan' ritual. It was at this ritual that Khunata utter prophecies to her fellow captives assuring them of the rise of Kumbi and the fulfillment of the golden stool's re-emergence when a new High Priest is born. After these assurances of hope, she then admonishes them to be strong to endure the trials ahead. However, in the dreadful final initiation dance she follows the steps of the High Priest and commits suicide with this remark:

Sisters!

Women of Kumbi!

My sisters! Remember!

... My people! Remember!

Ignorance is a terrible curse indeed!

And there is no ignorance more pathetic

Than the ignorance of the worth of your own soul! (p.79).

7. SETTING

Setting is the physical and spiritual background against which the action of a play takes place. It is the time and place in which the events of a play occur. The place may be a period in history, a particular time of year, or a certain time of day. The setting may be specific and detailed at the very beginning or may be suggested through the use of details scattered throughout the story.

However, the main setting of the play is in the desert of Sahara presently occupied by Mali and Mauritania in the year 300 A.D and 1079. "The Fall of Kumbi" has four main settings thus; the walled city of Audoghost, inside the bridal confinement chamber of the betrothed wife of prince of Audoghost, the chambers of Ibn Yacin's mud house somewhere in the desert, Al- Ghaba the spiritual heart of Kumbi Saleh and in Sijilmasa the fortress of Ibn Yacin's camp.

8. PLOT AND PLOT STRUCTURE

As a unique and distinct from the story, plot is the sequence of incidents or events through which an author constructs a story. The development of the action as arranged by the playwright containing climaxes, conflicts, crises among many others also amounts to the spine of the story as compared to a map. A plot is the unified structure of a play's incidents. It is the play's story line that helps us to discover what happens in the play, to whom, how, where and the actions and reactions and their results.

A plot structure divides the story into five main parts. These are; exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement or solution.

9. EXPOSITION

It is the beginning of the story where the playwright introduces us to the people, places and the situation we will need to know in order to savour the story. The exposition aspect establishes the essential facts about characters and the conflict that can be accomplished in a number of ways; from minor characters reveal information through conversation to plunging the audience right into action.

In the play, *The Fall of Kumbi*, the storytellers introduce us to the background of the people of Kumbi, their nature, riches, power and what led to the fall hitherto, the powerful land. Aside those characters

like Amu Diata, Khunata are introduced together with Zainata and Tani. In the conversation between Zainata and Tani, she gives a brief background of Khunata and their family. Similarly, in the conversation between Aklilu and IbnYacin the arrogance and pride of Kumbi was given.

The narrative-hook or the inciting action is also part of the exposition. This is the event that triggers the rest of the play to anticipate change in the subsequent actions. It creates the suspense into the rising action. The point of attack or inciting incidence is when Zainata elopes with her lover Amu Diata.

Evidence of the narrative-hook in 'The Fall of Kumbi' that create suspense:

Fourth Storyteller: Zainata is not here. She's gone!

All: Gone? Zainata gone?... Where?

Fourth Storyteller: Yes... Gone! Zainata has run away!

She's run away with Amu Diata, Prince of Kumbi! (p. 20)

10. RISING ACTION

The rising action is the series of events that leads to the climax of the play. Usually at this point, we become aware of the characters problems or challenges which build up suspense. It also adds to the complication to the problems and heightens our interest in the story. Therefore, the point of rising action in the play *The Fall of Kumbi* is sustained in Movement II and part of Movement III. It is at this stage that the struggles between and among characters are evolved all in an attempt to reach their goals of destination.

11. CLIMAX

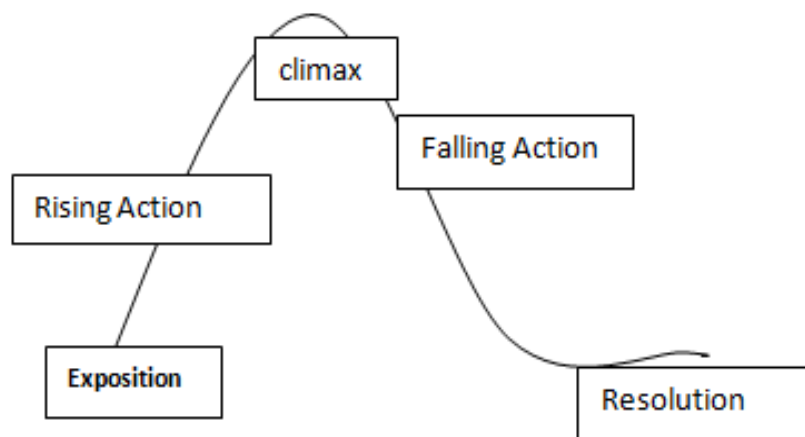
The climax is considered the highest point or the crux of the narrative action. It is the most exciting point of the play. It is also at this point that the complication that was built up in the rising action, suspense, conflicts all reaches its highest peak. It reveals the motives and actions of the characters. For instance, Ibn Yacin forgets about the pain and death inflicted on the people of Kumbi and decides to marry Khunata.

12. FALLING ACTION

It deals with the events that occur after the climax. These events are in contrast to the rising action which leads to the climax. At this point also the struggles and minor conflicts dim out. Evidence in the play is the point where Ibn Yacin grants Khunata the permission to perform the last pagan ritual in his fortress.

13. RESOLUTION

It is the crux of reconciliation or the point that all complications, suspense and/or the tensions in the play are unraveled. It again ends the falling action of the story by telling the ultimate outcome, the death of Khunata in the 'The Fall of Kumbi'.



14. FORM

The Fall of Kumbi is a tragedy. Form herein refers to the text of the play and performance. There are various definitions of tragedy, but the definition of Aristotle's appears to be more exhaustive to appreciating and understanding the play in this context. Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in appropriate and pleasurable language; in a dramatic rather than narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish a catharsis of these emotions." Tragedy is a type of drama that deals with serious themes ending in the suffering or death of one or more of the principal characters. It is a serious dignified character that typically describes the development of the conflict between the protagonist and a superior force such as destiny, circumstance, government or society and reaches a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion.

It is a tragic play because the events characterized and the actions of some of the characters make us sympathize with them. This therefore brings about the arousal of pity and fear and proper purgation of the emotions.

14.1. Character Analysis

➤ **Storytellers**

The Storytellers appear in the beginning stages of the action alerting the chorus it is time and must give way for Abibigoromma to perform. They are very significant characters in the dramatic piece. First of all, they give the exposition of the play. It is the Storytellers that give the accounts of the unfolding story of the destruction that has fallen on the people of Kumbi by exposing us to the setting, the characters and the cause and effect of the plot of the play. In fact, they are the spine of the dramatic piece. For instance, it was them that gave us the nature and the origin of the Kumbi's as it appears in the dialogue below;

➤ **First Storyteller:**

Our story is about Great Kumbi!

Kumbi Saleh!

Fabled city of Gold!

Pride of the Savanna!

Kumbi Saleh!

Beloved mother of old Ghana, Mali and Songhai! (p.6)

It is once again the Storytellers that give us a hint of the cause of Kumbi's fall. That is, how Amu Diata eloped with a Tuareg princess betrothed to the Aklilu the prince.

Fourth Storyteller: *She's run away with Amu Diata the prince of Kumbi. (p .20)*

They also comment generally on some issues a feature of Abibigoro which is unlike Anansegoro where the narrator or storyteller owns the story. Abibigoro storytellers only act as presenters and not representations of the dramatic piece.

Thus, it was not surprising to realize the quick rebuke slashed on one of the storytellers that '*... are you in the story...*' when Astimalinke rained curses on the gods for allowing such treachery and shame to befall her and the people of Kumbi.

So, in effect they are just storytellers and have no influence whatsoever in altering the story as being told. At best what they can do is to serve as counselors and allow the audience to make their deductions.

15. ZAINATA

Zainata is the daughter of Tani a Tuareg woman of Audoghast. Though her father's name was not mentioned it is believed that she comes from a well respected home whose social status is highly commendable and desired by the members in the community.

She who is of age to marry is however; betrothed to the fiery prince of Audoghast, Aklilu as it is their custom and practice. She is kept in confinement preparing her for the 'big' wedding, whereas she had premeditated to elope with her love Amu Diata the prince of the savage King of Kumbi just when all is set for the grand occasion. It is the insistence of the choice of suitor for her that she resulted in this

act of gross insubordination to her parents and the society all in the bid to emancipate herself from the straight jacket that shrouds marriage.

Therefore, Zainata is a representation of the younger generation that believes in the liberation of the orthodoxy of our cultural heritage. She again, unlike her mother who despises anybody who is not in agreement with especially religious beliefs, the daughter is tolerant irrespective of the religion or the background of others.

Once again, she is bold and confident to confront the mother on the erroneous misconceptions, she harbours about the family of her lover. She stood for what she wanted and was prepared to pay the price no matter the cost.

16. TANI

Tani is the proud mother of the young and beautiful betrothed daughter to the prince Al-malwalAklilu of Audoghost. She is a caring mother who gives advice to her daughter about to marry. Tani is that African and for that the Ghanaian who religiously obey whatever they are asked to do without questioning. For instance, in the dialogue between her and Zainata she admitted by saying that "... when I was your age, I thought the same way you do now. I used to think how unfair it was for a girl to be given away without her consent...". Unlike her daughter, she is not bold and firm. She compromises and furthermore a prisoner of the traditions and customs of it people. She is myopic and being clad with the misconceptions she carries about marriage among other tribes.

Again, she is xenophobic and not tolerant as she never wanted her daughter to marry from especially pagans.

17. KHUNATA

Khunata is a twenty-two-year-old virgin daughter of the savage king of Kumbi Saleh and Astimalinke the mother. She is the sister to Amu Diata the lover of Zainata. She is the heroine of the play. The most beautiful woman that traders and merchants always talked about irrespective of her condition, believed to be mad and a vessel of the gods through which they transcend and communicate through to her people. She is thus the priestess of the people of Kumbi after the death of the High Priest. However, brave and powerful as she is believed to be had her hands and feet chained and dragged into the fortress of the fiery leader of the marabout army in Sijilmasa as a captive and a slave of war foolishly orchestrated by her father the King of Kumbi.

Khunata as the spiritual leader of her people represent the soul and mouthpiece of the people and the gods. As very bold, beautiful and intelligent young lass, she seductively breaks the ascetic, pious and fiery leader of the Almoravid army Ibn Yacin to grant her permission to carry out '*one last pagan ritual*' in his holy ground in order to wear the name Khadija and hence marry him. Not all can do that but she did as it appears in the dialogue below:

Khunata: One last pagan ritual as you would call it...You must grant me this special request!...

IbnYacin: I will consider it seriously...

Khunata: ...for if you refuse, not only will you hurt Khunata very deeply; but you will also make khadeeja a very unhappy wife! (pp.54 -55)

Khunata again, is a representation of a visionary leader that can be likened to the legendary Yaa Asantewaa who at point all hope was lost to surge on for their liberation, she defied all odds and led an army even though she lost, and she served as hope for her people. It was in the light of this the daughter of the gods rebuked and charged her people for their foolishness regardless of the warnings from the gods and their revolt against their leaders in some time past. However, as a visionary leader she charged her people to suffer patiently till they are emancipated and found a permanent place to settle.

18. IBN YACIN

Ibn Yacin the Murabethin is the spiritual and commander of the army of the Almoravid. He is an elderly man whose face is almost entirely covered by a big white beard. He is about 70 years of age

and very strong. He is a holy man who is a faithful servant of Allah and a disciple of the prophet Mohammed. He is also a knowledgeable, wise, patient and an experienced old man.

Again, the ascetic leader of the Almoravid army is the desert hawk who lurks and preys on his spotted animals for his selfish gains. For instance, in the conversation between him and Aklilu, he made a comment that '*... The Sultan of Morocco has had his eyes on Ghana for some time now...*' (p. 24) suggest that he has spotted Ghana and looking out for a platform to unleash on the people of Kumbi till he met Aklilu seeking for his assistance on the injustice meted out to him and his people. In effect the prince of Audoghast provided the opportunity to rage on the city of gold for all its wealth and women.

Despite his patience, Ibn Yacin does not care to rape, loot, kill and destroy all in the bid for his selfish gain and unwarranted justification of killing in the name of his religion. Thus, it was not surprising when the High Priest of Kumbi said that '*...I see you are what they said you are. You destroy in the name of your god*' (p. 44)

He is power drunk and very ambitious a representation of most African leaders in government and some position of trust. Most often than not they abuse these offices by demanding sex and other unnecessary things from especially the weaker sex or lower ranks. This is evident when Ibn Yacin the slaver changed the name of Khunata to Khadeeja because she is a weakling or he being ascetic and also a sexist.

19. ASTIMALINKE

She is the queen mother of Kumbi Saleh the wife of the deceased King, of the city of Gold. She is strong, prim and psychologically strong with her principles and beliefs. It is uncharacteristic of a mother and wife to be slapped on both cheeks with the news of the death of her children and husband to still have the inner tenacity to withstand it and to make the situation more serious was to still continue to mother her people in servitude. This is evident in the dialogue of the high priest to her saying '*... I beg you to go with our people... but you are still the mother of the rest of our people...*' (p. 41)

Astimalinke is very much concerned about the observation and obeisance to the customs and traditions of its people and even that which is practiced elsewhere. Thus, she does not trivialize what has been instituted as a measure of society's standard. For instance, in her conversation with Zainata, on the adverse effect that her 'elopement' has brought on her and her people.

Astimalinke in a similar fashion, defied all the reverence she had for the gods as she accused the gods for the injustice done to her especially, for allowing her husband to die and the death of her two children. She rained curses and dared them to strike her if indeed she is guilty. This is what she said;

...Drunken, drowsy, sleeping and impotent gods... I accuse you all of injustice, wall-straddling, condoning and conniving. I accuse you of the murder of my husband. His son Amu Diata... (pp. 63 -64)

She did not only end there but went ahead to say that since they could not strike her dead with '*bolt of lightning*' she decreed that '*henceforth the world shall be ruled by man*'.

It demonstrates her level of brevity and her insights in understanding the times and the operations of her beliefs.

20. GENERAL PASHA

General Djuder Pasha is his real name and the lieutenant to the ascetic leader of the Almoravid army. He is a tall, slim but very strong-looking man with high cheekbones, sunken eyes a thin moustache and a goatee beard. He has a large bulging eyes bushy hair, bushy eyebrows and a creasy forehead. His voice is high, shrill and sharp and he speaks with a clear crispness.

He is very impatient, intolerable and a committed follower of his belief practices. It was not surprising to see him rebuked by Ibn Yacin when he ranted over Kumbi's rage on Audoghast that '*... we fight in the name of Islam and for justice*' (p. 22) disclosing his impatient and being shut up with his leader to exercise *patience*. Despite his flaws he is very respectful and obeys orders.

21. AKLILU

His name is Al-MalwalAklilu. He is the prince of Audoghost and would-be husband of Zainata the Tukulor daughter of Tani. He had the shock of his life when on the eve of his grand wedding her betrothed wife had eloped with her lover. Not finding an appropriate way to reclaim her captured woman, sought the help of the fiery desert hawk Ibn Yacin. This eventually resulted in burning, looting, killing, rapping of women and all sort of sacrilegious acts by the Almoravid army on the people of Kumbi.

Unlike his counterpart the prince of Amu Diata, who stepped out to go for what he cares for, Aklilu as revered as he is could not organize to go claim what belongs to him but ignorantly depended on the army of the marabout to claim what is his. Thus, he signifies those leaders who are not tactical and resilient in making appropriate decisions in solving societal or personal challenges. In effect he is not able to distinguish between personal issues from societal ones which resulted in a more gruesome act of wiping off a whole civilization.

22. MAYA

She is the chief bride's maid and an intimate friend of Zainata. They, that is the maidens tease and play with the bride as custom demands. Maya is supposed to be the guardian of the bride, assist and a security to her. However, she could not execute her duty as the demands are and allows Zainata to elope with Amu Diata.

She is indecisive and easily to be persuaded.

23. AMU DIATA

He is the son of Astimalinke and the prince of Kumbi Saleh. He is also the brother of both Ma'Inna and Khunata the mad priestess. Amu Diata the proud prince of Kumbi was very impetuous and his act which was not rebuked by the parents caused the destruction of the city of gold. It was this impetuousness, greed and defiance of the traditions and customs of society that gave the Murabethins the impetus to vent their long-awaited premeditated action on the people of Kumbi and their resources.

24. ANSA

She may be a young beautiful lady in her late twenties. She is a trusted and devoted servant to Astimalinke; the queen of Kumbi. This is seen as the two are standing and in each other's arms sobbing quietly. She is a prisoner too in the camp of Ibn Yacin at Sijilmasa. She acts to please the wishes of the queen as she breaks down, shakes and vomits. Notwithstanding, the rebukes by the first and the second women, she insists on fulfilling the wishes of her mistress irrespective of the pain, anguish and all the likes.

Ansa loses hope in the gods and believes that the 'gods are against them' and have been cruel to Kumbi Saleh. That is 'before the all- seeing eye of the gods a daughter of Kumbi was whipped until blood oozed out of her back and streamed down her legs.

She is fearless, bold and strong as she candidly retorts with her captors as she with impudence asks Bin Talal 'deliver your message fool and get out of here'.

Again, she gives preference to higher authority. She ignores the counsel and rebuke from the other women and continues to narrate how Astimalinke lost her husband and children when she wished to hear it all. She pays attention to details and a very good presenter of issues.

25. TEMPLE ATTENDANT

The Temple Attendant is a special aide to the High Priest at the shrine. She is a very old woman with a unique young voice. On her appearance to the shrine she is seen and heard singing. As part of her duties as a helper at the shrine, she serves the priests and priestesses with drinks and leads them in making libation. She also addresses the priests and priestesses the reason of their meeting. In effect and by default the linguist of the High Priest.

Unlike the High Priest who believes that Kumbi's fall was possible because of fate, she believes that Kumbi caused her own demise due to pride and gross insubordination against the warnings of the High Priest by the gods.

The Temple Attendant loves detailed description of events. She gives clear and vivid accounts of the foolish war that Kumbi led by its leaders engaged in with the Almoravids. This she gives her view of the cause and hence the fall of Kumbi. She is very objective and sincere in her judgement of the actions of her own people.

Moreover, she is very inquisitive and curious in finding out issues and events occurring in and around her surroundings. No wonder at the sound of the 'sudden gun shots, screams curses and commotion' took her out to ascertain the cause of the acts before the appearance and looting of the temple of its gold and enslavement of women by Ibn Yacin and his cohorts.

26. HIGH PRIEST

He is a priest and a prophet of Kumbi Saleh. He is referred to as 'High Priest' because he is the leader of all the priests of the land of Kumbi. His prophetic uncton is seen as he murmur some unintelligible words before he breaks the silence '*...Great one, powerful one yes I can hear and I shall transmit...*' (p.37)

Though, earlier the Temple Attendant had blamed the fall of Kumbi on the proud people of Kumbi. However, the High Priest believes that the fall of Kumbi was possible because it was fated as 'the wish of the gods' that Kumbi should fall to the Marabouts.

Furthermore, he predicts the future of the remnants of the war of the fallen city by encouraging and raises their hope of a brighter future when they had come to the proper land. He consequently builds the hopes of the despairing survivors though they are fallen they should go wherever they will be taken to and that later 'build up a strong and a better nation'.

He is a very highly respected and revered individual that the people cannot do away with since they consider him as 'their eye'. Thus, his orders are taken without doubts except the one the King of Kumbi turned a deaf ear to it and the result is evidently clear to us.

Among other things the High priest is very hopeful and optimistic even though Kumbi has fallen he is no doubts confident that it shall rise again and bids the priests of the seven clan of the land to take comfort and solace in that and forge on till they had settled again as a people. He exhibits that because of the trust and believe that the gods cannot lie he speaks with certainty to his subjects.

Again, he loves detailed description. In his charge to the priests of the priests and priestesses of the seven clans of Kumbi, outlines vividly what awaits them as he says '*... lead them through suffering, pain, and death. Lead them through desert, savannah, and the forest to a better land*'. After these he gives a thorough insight into what they should expect when they had come to a better place. He also describes the future and implications of the golden stool to them saying it would be 'swallowed up in the womb of heaven' and would 'burst out' when you had settled. His spirit and that of the gods will also be with them through and through their period of servitude.

He is also courageous and selfless leader. He exhibits this when he boldly in the face of Ibn Yacin and his lieutenants defended the just course of Khunata being the sole prerogative instrument of the gods and it *harem* and sacrilege to touch her. He then selflessly offers himself to be sacrificed for the betterment of the remnants and custodian of the seeds of life for that great nation he hopes for them.

Figuratively, the High Priest represents OkomfoAnokye the great priest of the hitherto the indomitable Ashanti Kingdom. He predicted the future of the golden stool and when asked where the stool would be, he states that he must stay to perform some duties thus to make a special appeal to the 'Father of gods' on behalf of his people. However, he tells them he will join them wherever they will be when the right time comes. So, he knew where the golden stool is and he is the only best person to bring it down. All this is seen in the life of OkomfoAnokye in the history of the Ashanti Kingdom when he conjured and brought forth the golden stool from the womb of heaven.

27. THE FOUR WOMEN

The four women in the play are representatives of the fallen city of gold-Kumbi Saleh. They are old people as they try to console and comfort the broken heart Ansa. Though they weep and suffer they are only sympathizing with the queen and not necessarily empathizing with her. However, they are kind of tight lipped the attitude of the Ghanaian as stooges.

➤ Break Down of the Play Into Movements

The play 'The Fall of Kumbi' is written as one whole dramatic piece without any scenes or whatsoever. However, with the analysis done, we decided to break it down to movements to aid in understanding the flow of event.

❖ Movement I

The play opens with Abibigoro, actors, dancers, story-tellers and chorus form a big choir ready on stage to sing Ephraim Amu's "AkwaabaDwom" which literary mean welcome song. Immediately the Storytellers applaud the chorus letting them it is time for the real play to begin. However, the chorus continues to sing and this make the storytellers to take charge by sauntering in to unfold the story. The storytellers recount the rich history of Kumbi Saleh as the mother of the hitherto Old Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires. They then introduce us to Audoghost believed to be the cause of Kumbi's destruction and fall.

Inside the bridal confinement chamber, Zainata and her friends have finished eating and playing while Tani the mother of the bride is seen seated on the bed and looking at the girls at play. She breaks her silence and engages in some conversation with the daughter on her august wedding the next morning. She admonishes her to be strong, accept the choice of suitor and be of good cheer since she felt the same way during her marriage too. Zainata is not too pleased with her mother's comment about her true love's family as house of madness. Thus, Zainata registers her strong opinion about the family of her love in a bid to erase the erroneous misconception the mother holds about the family of Amu Diata. Immediately the mother exit, Hafsatu and the other maidens take turns to tease Zainata with the peak of it being Maya the leader of the maidens pulling a wooden phallus at the bride. She retreats and later abandons herself to the dance until Alwanka the washer of bride appears to execute her duties. After a rigorous hell of time with this custom, they all fell asleep with the exception of Maya and Zainata who are awake in a conversation. There is this rattling sound that frightens them and with mist feelings she goes to the window and there appears Amu Diata's head. He comes in and hurriedly elopes with Zainata. To her utmost shock and disbelief she screams and wake all the others reporting of the missing bride on the eve of her wedding. The storytellers appear and mimic the incidence.

❖ Movement II

Ibn Yacin the fiery warrior and spiritual leader of the Almoravid army is standing and looking out of a window. General Djudar Pasha the lieutenant of the army enters. They exchange pleasantries. He comes to report of the trouble brewing at Audoghost with the perpetrators being the people of Kumbi Saleh, the city of Gold. As they discuss the situation a guard enters and announces the presence of Aklil el Malwal the Tuareg Prince of Audoghost. Aklilu comes in to Ibn Yacin to seek for support to have the woman betrothed to him. Just about resolving the situation enters Bin Talal announcing the presence of a messenger from Audoghost. The message of the messenger is the untimely death of Aklilu's father the King of Audoghost and many warriors. Ibn Yacin having had an insight of the treachery, pain and injustice that Kumbi had inflicted on the people of Audoghost marshals his forces to attack Kumbi.

❖ Movement III

This scene takes place at Al-Ghaba the spiritual heart of the people of Kumbi Saleh. The High Priests, Priests, Priestesses, Temple Attendant together with Astimalinke the queen mother of Kumbi have all assembled at the shrine. The Temple Attendant welcomes all the Priests and Priestesses of the seven clans of the land. She then recounts the reason and the cause of Kumbi's unfortunate demise. She vividly or explicitly without fear or panic the cause of Kumbi's burning for the outrageous attack waged on the people of Audoghost. The seven clans' Priests and Priestesses with appellations as a sign of showing respect to the gods asked for the purpose of such an emergency assembly. The High

Priest speaks of the trouble brewing which the resultant effect will make the people serve as servants in other words, slaves in distant lands. He charges them to lead the people and counsel them until they find a new place for settlement.

However, he will not go with them but his spirit will be with them till they are settled. The Priests and Priestesses pay their homage by performing varied dances and receive blessings from the High Priest. Astimalinke mother of the falling city is charged to continue to be a mother to the people in slavery till they find a new place and most importantly take care of Khunata.

At the nick of time Ibn Yacin, his lieutenants and soldiers invade the shrine. After some exchanges of words, a death sentence is passed on the High Priest and the rest chained and held as captives for slavery.

❖ **Movement IV**

At the Almoravid Fortress at Sijilmasa, Ibn Yacin orders the guard to remove the chains on Khunata and leaves. They begin to dialogue as Ibn Yacin appreciates the beauty, eloquence and the level of intelligence they believed to be a daughter of the god's exhibit. Khunata intentionally seductively tease him out however, the ascetic leader rebukes her and releases his cloak for her to use as a cover. Having done this act of care he unravels his intention of keeping her safe that he wants to marry and make a good woman of her. He then confers a new name on her as Khadeeja and entreats her to wear it with pride since it is the name of the Prophet Mohammed's wife.

Khunata in effect commits him by agreeing and request that one last pagan ritual be done and if not granted not only will Khunata be sad but Khadeeja too. As if an avalanche is about falling, he immediately grants her the request.

Shortly after her exit, General Pasha enters to announce the coming of Aklilu into the fortress. He is charged to ensure the Tukolor woman Zainata is unchained for Aklilu to meet her. There is an interjection by the storytellers commenting on the change of name on Khunata. It is revealed by one of them that it is the act of the slaver to intoxicate his slaves with the wine of forgetfulness. They also reiterate that not only Khunata is a captive but her mother Astimalinke too.

At Sijilmasa, Ansa the chief servant of Astimalinke sympathizes with her mistress together with other women too. She reports the tragic death of both Amu Diata and Ma'Inna the children of Astimalinke as well as her husband King of KumbiTunkaManin. She breaks down in tears since she could not comprehend the gory or bloody state things were. Astimalinke insisting on hearing everything she spills it out and she could not withstand it she breaks down and orders her to stop. Just at the time Bin Talal one of the lieutenants of the Almoravid army enters to inform them of their respective designation of serving as slaves. Astimalinke cursed the god's and dared them to strike her dead-on hearing that she is to serve as a nurse in the Sultan's harem and the abomination of Ibn Yacin wanting to marry Khunata.

There is an abrupt stop by one of the story tellers why Astimalinke should behave in that manner. He is immediately rebuked and asked whether he is in the story and how can he interfere with the story. He apologizes and the story continues.

Astimalinke rebukes Zainata for her act of elopement which has resulted in the state they are in now. Zainata defend herself as she never loved the suitor imposed on her by her parents. Thus, it is Amu Diata she loved. Aklilu declares what awaits her as it is a custom for any woman of their society put up such behavior or act. General Pasha spills the fortune that Khunata would be married and be a wife of Ibn Yacin and that she should be proud. Astimalinke seeing par them asks to speak to their leader to rescind his decision. She is denied of the request. Suddenly, they see Khunata and her maidens in their mist. She affirms her mother's role as a baby sitter in the Sultan's harem.

Khunata full of wisdom and an instrument of the god's reminds the people of the treachery, killing, and destruction caused when their leaders were corrupt and greedy. She then prophesies of the pain they will go through yet there is a window of hope awaits them and should not give up till they are settled and have a new high priest. She beckons the mother to preside over her initiation as she has

sought permission from Ibn Yacin. She again reminds the women of their mission. The initiation is done with General Pasha, Bin Talal and Aklilu look on as a form of entertainment.

28. CONCLUSION

Understanding script analysis is a scenario-creating approach for directorial communication. It is indeed an intellectual engagement between the director and the selected script for the production. It must be understood that this engagement of analysis calls for discipline and entrance to the world of the play to unravel and decoding all the hidden life of the text for a better view of understanding and application to life of the stakeholders of the theatre. Besides the director being empowered in his craft to birth a successful production, it serves as a further in his or her cap as his or her confidence and knowledge base is strengthened and deepened to face any demand with dramatic criticism. With this it is therefore imperative for due diligence done to script set for a production since it is the very fulcrum of the success or otherwise of the production.

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