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THE CRIES OF HUMANITY AND THE QUEST FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE: A STUDY OF FRANK RAJAH'S FILM *SOMEWHERE IN AFRICA* AND PRINCE AFO-A-KOM'S SONGS "LIBERATION" AND "CRYING FOR SALVATION"

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Abstract

*Africa has come a long way from colonial subjugation to post-independence dictatorship, with many nations still grappling with internal oppression from their own leaders. This study critically examines the manifestations of torture, suffering, and the dehumanization endured by the oppressed in selected African contexts. It explores the cries of humanity echoed in contemporary African societies, as represented in Frank Rajah Arase's film *Somewhere in Africa* and in Prince Afo-A-Kom's songs, "Liberation" and "Crying for Salvation." The central focus lies on how individuals who demand justice and human dignity are often dehumanized, and how the works under study function as tools of resistance, sensitization, and awakening, calling both leaders and citizens to a collective moral consciousness. These artistic expressions serve as a mirror to the socio-political realities of the continent, particularly in Cameroon, where the Anglophone community continues to experience systemic marginalization. The relevance of this study is to expose how art engages with the socio-political and historical dynamics of internal colonialism, and how the creative imagination becomes a platform for advocating good governance and liberation. By revisiting history and drawing parallels to current events, the paper argues that the African struggle for justice and inclusive governance is cyclical and ongoing. The guiding questions of this inquiry include: How do Frank Rajah and Afo-A-Kom depict the cries of humanity and the struggle for emancipation in their respective works? Can the African subject ever attain true freedom in the face of unending cycles of oppression? This study, therefore, chronicles the collective memory of suffering born out of exploitative regimes, both military and civilian, and emphasizes the continuity of marginalization as a historical and political pattern. Employing the theoretical lenses of intertextuality and internal colonialism, this research contributes to the broader discourse on freedom, resistance, and the enduring quest for humane leadership in Africa.*

Keywords: cries, humanity, governance, liberation, internal colonialism.

Introduction

Throughout history, humanity has consistently struggled for liberation and salvation, driven by an enduring quest for justice and good governance. As with all forms of literature, films and songs reflect the socio-political realities of the societies in which they are produced. This study investigates contemporary African society as mirrored in Frank Rajah Arase's film *Somewhere in Africa* and in Prince Afo-A-Kom's songs "Liberation" and "Crying for Salvation." Both the film and the songs serve as artistic interventions that spotlight pressing issues such as torture, marginalization, dehumanization, and the continuous suffering inflicted upon the masses by dictatorial regimes. These creative works powerfully expose the exploitative mechanisms employed by some African leaders who, having replaced colonial masters, perpetuate a new era of internal colonialism.

Following the wave of independence across Africa, there was widespread hope that self-rule would usher in an era of justice and prosperity. Unfortunately, in many cases, liberation from colonial rule only gave way to oppressive indigenous leadership. This reality affirms the postcolonial notion of "us versus us," a concept suggesting that the colonized eventually became the colonizers of their own people. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o points out in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), the real struggle of postcolonial Africa is not only political or economic but deeply ideological, an ongoing battle against self-inflicted subjugation. This sentiment is echoed in Ayi Kwei Armah's novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, where the protagonist realizes that independence has merely changed the faces of power, not its corrupt essence. As Ayi Kwei Armah writes, "the dancers have changed, but the music remains the same." Similarly, Shadrach A. Ambanasom, in *The Cameroonian Novel of Expression*, interprets Armah's title as signifying that "the upright ones are not yet born," further emphasizing the moral bankruptcy in postcolonial African leadership.

Prince Afo-A-Kom's songs function as cultural critiques and revolutionary calls to action. They not only create awareness among the oppressed about their socio-political condition but also instigate resistance. His music invites the masses to demand their rightful share of national resources and warns leaders that the cries of the hungry will not be silenced forever. In his prophetic voice, he echoes sentiments like those of Honorable Joseph Wirba during the early days of the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon: "When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes a duty" (2016). The songs embody a powerful artistic activism akin to that of Fela Kuti's music, which also served as a political weapon against military and civilian oppression in Nigeria.

The experiences of the oppressed in the works under study are paralleled in poetic works like Yashmin Haroon's poem "You mercilessly butcher us when we ask why," which underscores

the brutal repression that often greets voices of dissent. This brutal reality is vividly captured in *Somewhere in Africa*, where peaceful protests are met with violent crackdowns, rape, and murder. In this light, the film and the songs contribute to a long tradition of resistance art, reminiscent of texts like Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood* and Ousmane Sembène's film *Xala*, which critique the betrayal of African independence by corrupt elites.

This work chronicles the persistent struggle against systemic oppression, where each regime, whether military or civilian, introduces its own machinery of exploitation. The cyclic nature of such suffering is portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, which opens with a military coup and ends with hints of another, symbolizing the repetitive cycle of failed leadership in Africa. Achebe's literary philosophy that "the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration" (*Morning Yet on Creation Day*, 1975) reinforces the idea that art must serve as a conscience of society.

The primary aim of this study is to determine whether the selected film and songs function merely as entertainment and education tools or whether they serve a deeper revolutionary purpose. The study is significant in its quest to understand how film and music raise the consciousness of the oppressed, evoke resistance, and highlight the pain and suffering endured by those who demand justice. The central questions driving this research include:

- Can humanity ever be truly free from oppression?
- Is there a viable path to redeem Africa from internal colonialism?
- In what ways do the oppressed articulate and sustain the quest for good governance through artistic forms?

This research is grounded in the hypothesis that, from colonialism through the postcolonial era, the African subject has remained in a relentless struggle for liberation. Despite setbacks, African nations remain hopeful for a better future, though this future is often seen as contingent upon active resistance. This hope is echoed in *Somewhere in Africa*, where Mrs. Archibong tells her students: "They say there is hope for a better tomorrow, but we must remember that today was yesterday's tomorrow."

This study will be analyzed through the theoretical frameworks of intertextuality and postcolonialism, which enable a cross-dialogue between texts, linking the visual and the lyrical to shared ideological concerns. Intertextuality will allow us to examine how the film and songs echo and reinforce one another in their representations of suffering, resistance, and the pursuit of liberation. Postcolonial theory will help contextualize the internalized forms of colonial domination that persist in African societies, often under the guise of nationalism and patriotism.

Textual Analysis

Frank Rajah Arase's *Somewhere in Africa* opens powerfully with a protest song. The singers use this musical form to awaken students to the realization that they are the future

torchbearers, the ones capable of liberating Africa from the clutches of dictatorship and oppressive rule under General Mumbassa. The fictional nation of Kimbala is a microcosm of many African nations where leaders, much like Mumbassa, style themselves as demi-gods. These leaders often impose brutal regimes, silence dissent, and operate above the law, leaving citizens with no choice but to protest. Mumbassa becomes the cinematic embodiment of the tyrannical African leader in the 21st century, obsessed with power and disconnected from the suffering of his people.

The presence of protest songs throughout *Somewhere in Africa* is significant. These songs are not mere background elements; rather, they serve as artistic weapons of resistance and public enlightenment. They highlight the citizens' cries for salvation and justice. In one of the songs, a poignant plea is made: "Save your people from economic crises, save your people from political Marxists..." This line exposes two major postcolonial afflictions: economic instability and ideological manipulation. It is no exaggeration to state that many revolutions and civil unrests across Africa have stemmed from economic hardship and the misuse of political ideologies, often termed political Marxism to justify autocratic control.

Frank Rajah uses his film to evoke pan-African consciousness, reminding viewers of the continent's potential when freed from exploitation. In a reflective moment, Mrs. Archibong, a teacher and voice of reason, reminisces: "Yes, a beautiful land of freedom before the hovering dark cloud [colonialism] came with the mist of sorrow and the fog of death, and man became an enemy to man." Here, the filmmaker underscores the tragic impact of colonialism not just in historical terms, but in how its legacy continues to haunt Africa through neocolonial and internal systems of oppression. The implication is clear: Africa's quest for liberation must go beyond political independence to encompass economic justice, social harmony, and moral leadership.

Turning to Prince Afo-A-Kom's song "Liberation," the title alone signals a call to arms—a cry from an unliberated people. The song functions as both lament and directive. Through his lyrics, Afo-A-Kom calls on the masses to rise and demand their freedom. Whether from dictatorship, systemic marginalization, or economic suffocation, the need for liberation remains urgent. His song becomes a rallying cry, much like protest songs used in South Africa during the apartheid struggle or in Fela Kuti's music during Nigeria's military regimes.

Afo-A-Kom's message aligns closely with the narrative in *Somewhere in Africa*, particularly in a critical scene where a journalist confronts Mr. Archibong, stating: "The government has failed in its duty." This confrontation articulates the collective frustration of a society where institutions have become instruments of fear rather than of service. The voices in both the film and the songs point to a shared African experience—where the failure of leadership

triggers suffering, and where the arts become a potent medium for consciousness-raising and resistance.

Ultimately, both Frank Rajah and Prince Afo-A-Kom employ their respective mediums to document, critique, and resist the systems that continue to oppress African societies. Their works remind us that the fight for freedom, good governance, and human dignity is not over. Through music and film, they keep the revolutionary spirit alive and remind the oppressed that change begins with awareness and resistance.

I do not know why elected public officials defraud their people by betraying the trust imbedded in them, I do not know why African nations wallow endlessly in the vicious cycle of poverty and suffering in the midst of plenty.

The above quote from the film aligns closely with the message in Afo-A-Kom's "Liberation," where the artist calls upon the masses to rise and demand their rights. In his song, Afo-A-Kom vividly portrays the themes of poverty, helplessness, and suffering of the common people. These conditions reflect the socio-political decay and the selfishness of those in power. The lyrics below express this lamentation and plea for divine intervention:

*People are suffering, Matagini eh
Because of selfishness, na motemba-eh
Cow e no geti tail oh
Na God di drivam fly
Oh nini eh oh
Give us long life and security oh
Almighty God, your children are crying
Na you bi Alpha and Omega.*

These lines are rich in imagery and metaphor. The phrase "Cow e no geti tail oh, Na God di drivam fly" suggests vulnerability and divine protection, emphasizing that the oppressed depend solely on God in the absence of just leadership. Afo-A-Kom gives voice to the voiceless, pleading for security, dignity, and the basic right to live in peace. His song, much like the film *Somewhere in Africa*, becomes a tool of resistance and a call for moral and political awakening.

Similarly, in *Somewhere in Africa*, the suffering students lament in song, directing their cries to God and pleading for deliverance: "...help us from economic crises, help us from Political Marxist." Both Prince Afo-A-Kom and Frank Rajah portray the harsh realities of capitalism and political betrayal in their respective works. Despite the grim realities, Afo-A-Kom remains hopeful for a brighter future. In "Liberation," he sings "I have a dream that time shall come for me to enjoy the fruit of my labour with my wives and childrens"

This same note of hope is echoed in "Crying for Salvation," where he alludes to the biblical story of deliverance, saying: "When the children of Israel began crying for salvation at the

bank of the Red Sea, it was just a matter of time.” Through these references, Afo-A-Kom emphasizes that although the struggle for liberation may be long and painful, eventual freedom is inevitable. He affirms this belief when he sings “Will there be success after a long struggle? But anything get e own time, Mandela”

By invoking Nelson Mandela, who endured decades of suffering before seeing the end of apartheid, Afo-A-Kom consoles the oppressed and reinforces the message of perseverance. Both the musician and the filmmaker stress the need for political consciousness and active participation in societal reform. For them, true revolution begins when the people are awakened. Afo-A-Kom urges political reformation in “Liberation”, “Democracy, democracy, democracy will stand for justice oh” He then advises:

Whenever we shall learn to play the politics of development

By building a stronger political foundation

Will guarantee the future of tomorrow

This is a call for the people to vote wisely, choosing leaders genuinely committed to development. On the other hand, Frank Rajah’s **Somewhere in Africa** exposes the betrayal of this very trust. Leaders, once elected, often turn against their people, resulting in despair, poverty, and repression. For Rajah, the only route to salvation is through revolution. Through Mrs. Achibong, she declares:

They say there is hope for a better tomorrow, but we must remember that today is yesterday’s tomorrow. We cannot reap from where we did not sow for neither God nor the spirits will grant us the favour. You are the hope for tomorrow. You are the future; you are the stars in the darkened skies. You are the hope of Africa and the leaders of tomorrow...

This speech suggests that divine intervention only follows human action. Rajah affirms that transformation requires a continuous struggle, echoing the words from the film:

Change does not roll on the wheels of inevitability but comes through a continuous struggle, and we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man cannot ride you unless your back is bent.

Like Afo-A-Kom, Rajah recognizes the spiritual dimension of suffering. In *Somewhere in Africa*, mourners sing after the killing of Christopher Achibong:

Who is our deliverer? The Lord is our deliverer who is now and forever God. We cannot fight the battle, the battle of pain and sorrow. We strive, but it is you oh Lord who will be our strength, our courage and hope for tomorrow. You alone is our God, even though they hurt us, kill our children, and kill our people, we shall stand strong and unite, be one people, and say no more to suffering...

Afo-A-Kom delivers a similar plea in “Crying for Salvation”:

Yesus Christos oh rememba wi... ala sadiki bantuna muh

Both artists suggest that power struggle lies at the heart of suffering in Africa. Rajah states: “Because of power they fight and lack the knowledge of the people,” while Afo-A-Kom laments:

Power struggle e don do wonders oh!

Power struggle e don too much oh!

In “Crying for Salvation” Afo-A-Kom explores themes of negligence and abandonment. He criticizes leaders’ insensitivity through metaphor:

Pikin di cry oh instead for papa for ask am say na weti you di cry,

Pikin di cry oh papa di vex oh, Nigeria na wusi you di go?

He further reflects on the displacement caused by bad governance as he sings, “Any corner for Ngoketunjia, Boyo oh!”

Afo-A-Kom's use of irony highlights the cruel attitude of many African leaders. The metaphor “Pikin di cry oh, instead for papa ask am say na wati you di cry? Pikin di cry oh papa di vex oh! Africa na wu sai we di go oh!” vividly portrays a leadership that is indifferent to the suffering of its people. The themes of tyranny and dictatorship are equally explored in *Somewhere in Africa*, where students protesting injustice are raped and killed, and freedom fighters like Mrs. Achibong are murdered for speaking truth to power. Her courageous declaration, “We will fight for freedom and with our blood, we will fight for it—parallels Nelson Mandela’s famous words:

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of Africa... It is an idea which I hope to live for and to achieve, and if need be, it is an idea which I am prepared to die for.

Afo-A-Kom uses metaphors and proverbs to deepen his message. He warns of the dangers of excessive patience, “The patient dog that has been waiting to eat the fattest bone as its own share of the national cake will soon be dying of starvation”.

He compares the masses to patient dogs, warning leaders that prolonged neglect could lead to unrest. Similarly, the proverb “A hungry man is an angry man” serves as a subtle threat, cautioning that suffering people will eventually resist.

Victor Hugo’s quote, “When dictatorship is a fact, revolution becomes a right” finds expression in *Somewhere in Africa*. A journalist incites students to resist Mumbassa’s tyranny, “Information is liberation!” He reminds them that when injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty.

In the Cameroonian context, Afo-A-Kom’s “Crying for Salvation” critiques the failure of national integration. The song implies that English and French-speaking Cameroonians must work together to manage the country equitably. The neglect of this principle has fueled the Anglophone crisis. His song encourages perseverance, “What a hard road to travel, and very very rough...”

This line motivates revolutionaries to persist despite hardship, mirroring the ongoing struggle in Cameroon. The cries of humanity resound:

Slowly the world watches our home set ablaze...Why do you put us in a never-ceasing hostile maze?You do not only strip us of our innate rights,You slaughter all our own in our sight,You indulge us in this seemingly endless fight; You mercilessly butcher us when we ask why...How do you watch us helplessly cry?

This tragic imagery echoes the brutal conflict between the Mumbassa and Kokoli tribes in *Somewhere in Africa*, where the most vulnerable, children, the elderly, and the poor bear the brunt of war.

Together, Afo-A-Kom and Frank Rajah offer a powerful commentary on suffering, resistance, and the hope for a better tomorrow. Their works are spiritual and political, emotional and revolutionary, calling on Africans to unite, rise, and transform their nations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Frank Rajah and Prince Afo-A-Kom emerged as revolutionary propagators through their creative works. Their film and songs awakened the consciousness of the people, revealing the entrenched evils of their societies; dictatorship, corruption, power struggle, and negligence, and the devastating effects these have on the masses. Through emotionally charged lyrics and dramatic scenes, they stirred the spirit of revolution and resistance, offering both spiritual and political frameworks for salvation and change. Their works affirmed that revolution appeared to be the only way out of persistent suffering. However, as this study has argued, the human struggle is unending. Every regime, regardless of how well-intentioned, carries inherent fault lines that eventually lead to dissatisfaction and renewed calls for change. As Chinua Achebe reflected in **Anthills of the Savannah**, “It is the storyteller who makes us what we are, who creates history. The storyteller creates the memory that the survivors must have.” Afo-A-Kom and Rajah, through song and film, have positioned themselves as cultural storytellers, chronicling the people’s anguish and yearning for justice. Furthermore, like Ayi Kwei Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, both artists seemed to suggest that true liberation may remain elusive unless society collectively confronts its inner decay. As Ambanasom A. Shadrach also observed in *The Cameroonian Novel of Expression*, the post-colonial African state remains riddled with exploitation and betrayal. Thus, Rajah and Afo-A-Kom’s works serve as cultural roadmaps, portraying the cries of humanity while urging the people to take action. Ultimately, the works suggested that humanity may never be entirely free from dictatorship, capitalism, and systemic oppression, unless a new Moses or Jesus Christ emerged to liberate mankind. Until then, the battle for justice, dignity, and equity remains an enduring human duty.

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