

Critical reflections on the destiny of fama as a desecrated prince turned a disgruntled foot-soldier in kourouma's novel: the Suns of independence

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ABSTRACT : *This paper examines the character of Fama, the protagonist in *The Suns of Independence* of Ahmadou Kourouma, as an exact replica of a foot-soldier in contemporary Ghanaian socioeconomic and political development. In this regard, it draws a parallelism between the character of Fama and a foot-soldier and makes recommendations for the way forward in order to sustain socioeconomic and democratic development.*

Consequently, the study draws attention to issues relating to political fanaticism and their accompanying tragic disenchantment for unsuspecting self-seeking citizens in emerging multiparty democratic states in developing countries such as Ghana. In the light of the inherent dangers in self-seeking political activism as seen in the character of Fama, for that matter, in that of foot-soldiers, the study recommends steps that will help sanitize political activities and democratic practice in Ghana, and Africa as a whole.

Keywords: *Foot-soldier democratic development political activism Africanized French language linguistic hybridity characterisation language and style stigma of illiteracy - disenchantment*

I. INTRODUCTION

Fama is the main character in Ahmadou Kourouma's very first novel, *The Suns of Independence*. Originally written in French language as "*Les Soleils des Indépendances*", this novel is seen as a clear departure from the usual attempts by Francophone African writers to fit themselves into a classical mould designed by the French colonialists for literary and artistic production, by attaching themselves to a strict respect for French grammar and syntax. The story of Fama is an authentic African story told the African way in an "africanized" French language. This position on the 'Africanized French language' is equally upheld by Peter Wuteh Vankuta (2011) when he asserts:

Postcolonial Francophone literatures exist at the interface of French as a hegemonic language and its many regional variants that transform this corpus of writings into hybrid literature. Linguistic hybridity compounds the reading and teaching of Francophone literatures of Africa and the Caribbean. An incontrovertible manifestation of linguistic variance in contemporary Francophone literatures is the tendency on the part of fiction writers to resort to modes of writing characterized by linguistic indigenization – an attempt to appropriate the language of the ex-colonizer. (p. 1)

Besides the characterization and the setting, the language and style of Kourouma in this novel remain an inexhaustible source of linguistic artistry for researchers and scholars in language and literature, since its first publication in 1968 in Montreal, and subsequently in France in 1970 by 'Les Editions du Seuil', following its initial success.

Fama is the last authentic prince of the Dumbuya, the ruling dynasty of Horodugu. Having been deprived and despoiled of his chiefdom by French colonialists and their activities, Fama jumps into political party activism with the inception of the Independence of his country, The Ebony Coast, in an attempt to regain his lost glory. Fama's hope is further dashed in his activism. He suffers various forms of disappointments, humiliation and rejection. Marked by the stigma of illiteracy, pauperization, marital sterility and social decline, Fama becomes pugnacious and abusive in his disenchantment, contrary to his aristocratic lineage and up-bringing as a legitimate prince.

The final blow to Fama's battered blue-blooded vainglorious status and cherished dream of restoring the extinct feudal system of the dynasty of the Dumbuya is his arbitrary arrest and imprisonment by members of the very political party for which he laid down his life and militated to win independence from the colonialists.

Chattered in his dreams and aspirations, Fama resolves to return to his native Togobala, following his release from jail. Unfortunately however, he meets his untimely death in a tragic manner on his journey back to

his roots, and therefore never has the opportunity to seek refuge in the dark shadows of his dilapidated native village.

The upsurge of the phenomenon of “foot-soldierism” in contemporary Ghanaian political discourse has become a matter of great concern to all and sundry. In recent times, the activities and demands of some individuals under the banner of foot-soldiers have attracted much attention among the Ghanaian populace to the extent of threatening public peace and national security. In our attempt to determine the causes of “foot-soldierism” in order to address them, the character of Fama, the protagonist of *The Suns of Independence* of Ahmadou Kourouma comes to mind.

The study establishes similarities between Fama and “foot-soldiers” through a careful examination of their motive, behaviour and activities. It therefore examines the new status of Fama, an authentic prince of the famous Dumbuya royal lineage, under “The Suns of Independence” as he falls from grace to grass, having failed to appreciate the exigencies of the new era and the accompanying phenomenal socio-cultural transformations that have long ago rocked the dynasty of the Dumbuya and brought it to its extinction. In fact, this dynasty at the moment exists only in the minds of Fama alone, hence his solitary struggle for reverence under the ‘suns of independence’.

It also examines the character of Fama as a lost soul, a pitiable declining prince in quest of self-identity in a drastically transformed society at all fronts: political, economic and social. This status closely reflects the states and circumstances in which foot-soldiers find themselves in contemporary democratic dispensations across the African continent. The novel, being a socio-political satire, will be examined in correlation with current democratic developments in the Ghanaian politics, marked by abuses, insults, character assassination, media terrorism, and above all, the upsurge of “foot-soldiers” demands and incessant agitations.

The study is a literary analysis conducted on the basis of data gathered from the set-novel: *The Suns of Independence*, “Les Soleils des Indépendances” of Ahmadou Kourouma, a renowned francophone African writer of the second half of the 20th century. The data to be analyzed will therefore be mainly collected from this novel. Nonetheless, relevant materials will be accessed from other sources such as journals, articles, newspapers and interviews granted by the writer on the internet in the conduct of this study.

Who is Fama?

Fama is the main character in Kourouma’s famous novel, *The Suns of Independence*. He is presented as the last legitimate prince of the Dumbuya dynasty of Horodugu. This is revealed in the following lines:

Fama Dumbuya! A true Dumbuya, of Dumbuya father and Dumbuya mother, the last legitimate descendant of the Dumbuya princes of Horodugu, whose totem was the panther – Fama was a ‘vulture’. A Dumbuya prince! A panther totem in a hyena pack. Ah! the suns of Independence! (p. 4)

Fama’s ambivalent status following the era of independence is highlighted in the above quotation. From the status of a legitimate prince whose totem is the panther, Fama is now referred to as a “vulture”, “a panther totem in hyena pack”. This quotation sets the tone for the unveiling of Fama’s devaluation as a blue-blooded character. As such, the very first activity Fama is associated with in the text is a funeral rite. The narrator says: “Fama was going to be late for the funeral rites of Ibrahima Kone.” (p. 4). The enthusiasm of Fama in this venture is also emphasized as follows: “Faster and faster he walked, as if seized with diarrhoea.” (pp. 4 – 5). The comparison in this line is not complimentary, considering the status of Fama as the last legitimate prince of the Dumbuya dynasty. Indeed, this submission serves as a foregrounding to a further revelation of Fama as a mere mortal disposed to anger and insulting behaviour, contrary to virtues associated with his aristocratic status. His propensity toward the use of abusive and foul language is brought to the fore at first instance in a feat of anger occasioned by his inability to arrive at the funeral rites in good time, not for what he is going to contribute but for what he expects to gain from the distribution of the funeral donations, having become a scavenger under the malefic suns of independence. The narrator states: “He was still at the far end of the bridge linking the white men’s town with the African quarter, and it was time for second prayer; the ceremony had begun. Fama grumbled: “Hell and damnation! *Nyamokode!*” (p. 5)

The term “Nyamokode” is a foul and vulgar insult in Malinke language. Combining with “Hell and damnation” at this stage, it reveals the state of mind of Fama. These should have been the last words to be used by a blue-blooded prince worthy of his salt, brought up to rule and be revered by all. By virtue of his birth and lineage, Fama ought to be measured and decorous in every sphere of his life. His behaviour, language and looks, in both private and public, must depict his aristocratic upbringing at all time. These are however, clear signs of his social disintegration and desecration. This is so, in the light of the spiritual position of royals as true representatives and legitimate intermediaries between the living and the ancestors in the African traditional religion and cosmogony. Indeed, the story of *The Suns of Independence* is entirely that of the socio-political and economic disintegration and demise of Fama. This position is corroborated by N’guessan Kotchy, Barthelemy

(1977) as follow: « En effet, *Les Soleils des Indépendances* traite de la déchéance du héros Fama, déchéance due à la mutation des structures sociales du pays Horodougou. » (p. 85). These lines translate: “Indeed, The Suns of Independence is about the decline of Fama, the hero, owing to changes affecting the social structures of the Horodugu country.”

Concluding the wretched state in which Fama finds himself as a scavenger, hopping from one funeral to the other, the narrator decries ironically: “It was an immense disgrace and shame, as great as that of the old panther caught fighting with hyenas over carrion, for Fama to be chasing after funerals in this way.” (p. 5). He then goes further to evoke the aristocratic pedigree of Fama and juxtaposes it to the current disgraceful state of pauperization in which he (Fama) finds himself under the suns of independence. The narrator loudly expresses this extinct pedigree of Fama in the following lines: “He, Fama, born to gold, food in plenty, honour and women! Bred to prefer one gold to another, to choose between many dishes, to bed his favourite of a hundred wives! What was he now? A scavenger... A hyena in a hurry” (p. 5).

Under the current circumstances depicted in the just quoted lines, Fama has fallen from grace to grass. He has as result lost count of the importance of time. Time consciousness, which is, by virtue, a mark of integrity, can no longer be associated with him. On the contrary, lateness to social gatherings has now become his trademark. He arrives hastily late to public functions and gets humiliated for it by no other persons but “descendants of slaves”, contrary to his expectation. A clear case in sight is found in the following quotation:

After crossing, he turned up the central avenue of the government employees’ quarter. Praise be to God! It was here alright. But Fama was late, all the same. That was unfortunate; it meant he was going to have flung in the face, and in public, the kind of insulting reproof that’s like having a snake in the folds of your trousers: unbearable whether you’re standing, sitting, walking or lying down. (pp. 5 – 6)

A critical examination of the nature and usage of the four verbal phrases – standing, sitting, walking and lying – in the embedded clause unbearable whether you’re standing, sitting, walking or lying down’ vis-à-vis the person and situation of Fama, clearly brings to the fore the unacceptability of shame and disgrace by any person no matter what, regardless of its position or social status. It is very instructive to note Fama’s belongingness to a stratified society where one finds the upper social caste, on one hand, and the lower social caste, on the other. Fama belongs to the upper social caste, the class of free men, made up of royals, (the slave masters). The lower social caste, naturally, is made up of slaves. The imageries evoked by the aforementioned verbal phrases tacitly points to the various positions resulting from this social stratifications.

The metaphoric decline of Fama is further evoked as the narrator describes his (Fama’s) structure and where he sits on his late arrival to the late Ibrahima Kone’s seventh day funeral rites:

In any case, he had arrived. The Julas, the Malinke traders, in their white, blue, green, yellow, let us say many-coloured robes, filled part of the space between the building’s pillars; they were all crowded together, arms waving, the palaver in full flow. Ibrahima, dead and buried, had drawn a good crowd for his seventh day! At a glance he could recognise and count ears and noses from all the neighbourhoods and all the professions. Fama greeted the assembly, with what broad smiles! Found a place among the pillars, gathered up the folds of his robe and **lowered his tall frame** on to **the corner of a mat**. (p. 6)

Fama has not only lost a place of choice as a royal among the Malinke as tradition demands, but has to compromise his physical structure so as to have a place at the corner of a mat spread on the bare floor in public. This description is a picturesque representation of Fama’s degeneration and that of the feudal institution of traditional chieftaincy under the suns of independence. To add insult to injury, “the wizened old praise-singer who was calling out announcements and comments humorously draws attention to the late arrival of Fama in replying to the latter’s greetings: “The prince of Horodugu, the last legitimate Dumbuya, has condescended to join us ... a bit late” (p. 6). Following this, the narrator reveals the intimate desire of Fama as he presents the reaction of the people: “People looked up with sarcastic smiles. Let’s face it: a prince who’s practically a beggar is a grotesque figure under any sun. Fama didn’t waste his anger insulting those sneering bastards, those sons of dogs.” (p. 6) This statement is a true reflection of Fama’s inner thoughts and disposition vis-à-vis his peers of the Malinke stock. Confronted with this reality in his mind, he cannot react to this insulting behaviour instantly. But the subsequent utterances of the wizened old praise-singer push Fama to burst out and demand respect for tradition and social order. The narrator states:

The praise-singer continued: ‘That he is late, does not matter: the customary rights of noble families have been respected; the Dumbuya have not been forgotten. The princes of Horodugu have been put with the Keita.’ Fama asked the praise-singer to repeat what he had just said. The man hesitated. Those who are not Malinke may not know it: in the circumstances this was a deliberate insult, enough to make you

eyeballs explode with rage. Who had lumped Dumbuya and Keita together? The latter are kings of Wasulu, and their totem is the hippopotamus, not the panther. (p. 6).

Because of his class-consciousness, Fama finds it difficult to accept the binding reality of a common humanity which defies race, culture, colour and ethnicity. He is demanding respect without commanding it. He is unconscious or oblivious of the new times and the social transformations that characterise the suns of independence. Fama is therefore an embittered character disposed to pouring anger and venoms on everybody, like this wizened old praise-singer, who fails to appreciate his blue-bloodedness in any public gathering. This explains his indignation with the comment made by the wizened old praise-singer that seeks to associate the Dumbuya whose totem is the panther, with the Keita whose have the hippopotamus as their totem. He therefore challenges the old praise-singer to restate the insulting association which defies social taboos, as the narrator intimates: "Once more, his voice firm and resonant with anger, Fama asked the praise-singer to repeat himself." (p. 6). But instead:

The man launched into a flood of self-justification: symbolic, everything was symbolic in these ceremonies, and people should be content with that; it was a shame , a great shame for custom and religion that some old men in this city had to live off what was handed out at funeral rites... In other words, a lot of damned nonsense, quite uncalled-for. (p. 6)

At this point, the narrator intrudes into the mind of Fama once more and reveals his thoughts to us, discrediting the praise-singer with insults in an attempt to assuage his anger: "Bastard of a praise-singer! There were no real praise-singers left; the real ones died with the great masters of war, before the European conquest." (p. 6). From thence, Fama can no longer contain his anger, considering the extent to which he thinks his aristocratic pride and image have been dented by a 'bastard of praise-singer'. He must prove his manhood to all so as to redeem his dented image and restore past aristocratic glory. As the narrator puts it:

Fama was going to have to prove there and then that there were still men alive who wouldn't put up with such bastards. If you pretend, out of discretion, not to notice a shameless man's fart, he'll just assume that you've no sense of smell. (p. 6)

Fama goes on to demonstrate his pugilistic disposition in public in the name of defending his name and that of the dynasty of the Dumbuya of the great Horodugu, which now exist only in his mind as a pitiable disgruntled desecrated prince:

Fama rose, and thundered so the building shook. The praise-singer, disconcerted, no longer knew with what wind to sway. He asked the seated throng to listen and open their ears to the offended, the outraged son of the Dumbuya whose totem is the panther, himself a panther and unable to conceal fury and rage. Then he called out to Fama: 'True descendant of the masters of war! Speak truly! Say what ails you! Explain the offence! Spit out your grievances for all to hear!' (p. 7)

Fama has been energised by the humorous exhortations from the very astute praise-singer whose comments drove him mad in the first instance. Here goes the narrator once more in a sarcastic pectoral description of Fama and his uncomplimentary behaviour:

Emboldened by the praise-singer's uneasiness, Fama prepared to launch on a flood of speech: he had the floor, an audience and a just cause. Tell me what more could a proper Malinke desire? He cleared his throat with a panther's roar, straightened his cap, unfurled the sleeves of his robe, strutted a few paces forward so that everyone might see him, and began to palaver. The praise-singer repeated Fama's words. Fama was shouting, and was about to roar still louder, when... Damned praise-singer! Damned cough! Seized with an ill-timed violent fit of coughing, the praise-singer was suddenly bent double, hawking his lungs out, and Fama's speech was interrupted. (p. 7)

At this stage, the narrator abandons the description briefly and highlights the insensitivity and selfishness of Fama in the face of the plight of the praise-singer who was giving extra echoes to his submission. In this regard, he decries this attitude of Fama in the following words: "The last of the Dumbuya, who felt not the least sympathy for the praise-singer, was not discouraged; on the contrary, he lowered his gaze to collect his thoughts and remember a few suitable proverbs, and did not look about him." (p. 5).

The narrator then goes ahead to recount how Fama has become a public nuisance, an unwanted character in all gathering because of his quarrelsome disposition. This disposition is at variance with the virtues of his royal lineage. He opines: "But how could he not feel it? People were tired, they were fed up with Fama's

attention-seeking at every gathering, his palavers without head or tail.” (p. 7). Following this observation leads to some unfavourable comments which do not sit well with Fama, the last legitimate prince of Dumbuya. It goes:

There was a rustling of robes and mats in the throng, people began to frown and to talk among themselves with emphatic gestures. Always Fama, always shares that were too small, always something. They had had enough. Make him sit down! (p. 7)

Fama is however not deterred by these comments and the demand on him to be made to sit down. He therefore continues his palaver, to the utter dismay of the audience. The narrator states:

The praise-singer had finally got rid of his cough, but it was too late. The atmosphere was seething with irritation. Fama saw nothing, heard nothing; he talked and talked, long and forcefully, waving his arms like the branches of the silk-cotton tree, plucking proverbs out of the air, his mouth wry with excitement. Intoxicated, carried away, he could not see that the audience was in a frenzy of restlessness, as if they were been bitten by an army of ants; legs folding and unfolding, hands moving from pocket to chin and chin to pocket; he could not see their faces twisted with anger, nor hear remarks like ‘Ah! It’s getting late, to hell with it!’ bursting forth. (p. 7)

Fama’s lack of respect for others in the pursuit of his parochial interest is once more brought to the fore in the above lines. He displays gross disrespect towards all his peers in public because he considers himself more important than any of them. Fama must obviously be under the influence of his vainglorious presumption that he is the last prince of the Dumbuya who must be respected, worshipped and adored by all, at all time, in all places. He is unmindful of the drastic socio-political changes that have turned everything upside down and dealt the feudal Dumbuya dynasty of yesteryears a deadly blow. It appears Fama is still at the comatose stage of that blow prior to his final extinction. Apart from him, every other person under the suns of independence is a bastard living in a bastardized era. He bemoans the irreverence to which he is subjected as he “remained occupied with how degenerate the Malinke had become, how depraved their customs.” (p. 8). At this instance, Fama seek the attention of the ancestors as he sees the late Ibrahim Kone recounting to them what has become of the dynasty after they have departed:

The dead man’s shade would inform the ancestors that under the suns of Independence, Malinke insulted their prince and even went so far as to strike him. Shades of ancestors! Shade of Moriba, founder of the dynasty! Truly, it was time, high time to mourn the sorry fate of the last legitimate Dumbuya! (pp. 8 – 9)

The irony here is that, whereas Fama goes about abusing and denigrating everyone with impunity, he rather feels insulted. For instance, he refers to Bamba who challenges him to a fight, as “the son of a slave”; “[...] son of a dog” (p. 9). He calls the old praise-singer ‘son of a donkey’. The narrator describes Fama’s feelings and reveals his thoughts about the old praise-singer, following the melee with Bamba, as follows:

[...] He had been right not to calm down, not to forgive; that son of a donkey of a praise-singer was intermingling his praise of the deceased with venomous innuendoes: what was the connection between the deceased, and descendants of great warrior families who were prostituting themselves through beggary quarrels and dishonour? (p. 9).

Fama therefore considers him a disgraceful person unfit to be a praise-singer. He says:

He’s no son of a caste, he’s a son of a dog! The real praise-singers, the last of the true caste of praise-singers, were buried with Samory’s great war captains. This squawker here didn’t know how to sing, or talk, or listen. (p. 9)

From all the above examples, it is clear that, Fama is the one who is insulting everybody out of disrespect for his royal lineage. Fama has really degenerated and disintegrated morally and socio-politically and has become a real laughing-stock. The narrator summarizes his current circumstances as follows:

For one of his shameless kind, a pillar is as good a barrier as a river or a mountain. Standing there, he let himself go, and went too far: descendants of great warriors (that was Fama!) were living off lies and beggary (that was still Fama), authentic descendants of great chiefs (Fama again) had traded their dignity for a vulture’s plumage, and were forever scenting out new events, a birth, a marriage, a death, so as to hop from one ceremony to another. (p. 9)

This, indeed, is the real picture of Fama under the suns of Independence in the land of his ancestors, the land of his birth and his legitimate inheritance.

Like foot soldiers, Fama is disillusioned as a result of the apparent neglect he suffers from his own political party after fighting very hard for the party to attain independence for his country. Fama’s involvement

in the struggle for Independence is not based on a collective conviction for freedom and justice, but an opportunity for revenge on the colonialists who have denied him the legitimate opportunity to succeed his late father. The narrator submits:

When his father died, Fama, his legitimate son, should have succeeded him as chief of all Horodugu. But he came up against intrigues, dishonour, sorcery and lies. In the first place, a little boy, a rascally little European administrator always dressed in dirty shorts, restless and rude as a billy-gaot's beard, was put in charge of Horodugu. Of course, Fama could not respect him; that made the man's ears turn red, he gave the preference to, can you guess? Cousin Lasina, a distant relative who in order to succeed had cast spells, sacrificed beast upon beast, intrigued, lied and crawled so low that... Men are impatient; but divine justice and the divine will are always done sooner or later. Do you know what happened? Independence and the one-party system disgraced Cousin Lasina, removed him from office and left him no more than a vulture's droppings. (p. 13)

The period of independence struggle therefore provides the unique opportunity for Fama to pursue a personal vendetta against the European administrator and the imposed chief Cousin Lasina. He therefore put in all his might in the anti-colonialist activism:

Like a distant storm the suns of Independence had given warning of their coming and at the first gusts of wind Fama had shed everything: trade, friends, women, to use up his nights and days, his money and his anger in railing against France, the father and mother of France. He wanted revenge for fifty years' domination, and for the loss of his birthright. That period of agitation has been called the suns of politics. (p. 14)

No wonder, Fama has hyper high expectations for his personal fortunes following the Independence of his country. Fama's role as outlined in the above quotation brings to focus that of foot soldiers in contemporary multiparty democratic dispensation in Ghana. The question then is "who is a foot-soldier? What similarities and differences exist between Fama and a foot-soldier?"

II. WHO IS A FOOT-SOLDIER?

A foot-soldier, according to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, (2000; 2009), the *Free Online Dictionary, Thesaurus and Encyclopedia*, is "a soldier who fights on foot; an infantry trooper". The term "foot-soldier" also designates "One who performs necessary but basic, often mundane tasks". The term "foot-soldier" in Ghanaian socio-political discourse refers to any person who assumes or may have carried out some form of activity to further the course of any political party. Foot-soldiers are not necessarily registered political party members. They are mostly unemployed youth whose services are sought in the organization of political party outdoor activities such as mobilization of people to attend rallies, posting of bills, dissemination of information, etc. They operate in the periphery of the political party structures. In this case, most of them are known by some party apparatchiki in their localities. Although these individuals are paid some form of money for their services, their ultimate dream is to be given a much more financial and social recognition once their party is in power and takes control of state resources. However, when the realities of governance point to the contrary, with a greater responsibility of nation building on the shoulders of their leaders upon assumption of office, foot-soldiers become disillusioned and angry with their leaders. In this state of disillusionment, most of them become bitter, abusive and irrational on all fronts.

In the minds of foot-soldiers, by virtue of their association with the political party in power, they are more important than all other citizens who in their own ways are sympathetic to the course of a governing party but do not see themselves as foot-soldiers. It is therefore not far fetched for one to intimate that these individuals are self-motivated persons whose political activism is driven by inordinate selfish ambitions at the expense of the general desire for nation building and prosperity for all.

It is interesting to note that the mention of 'foot soldier' connote nothing but violence, hooliganism, lawlessness and crime. Worthy of note is Julian Gilbey's movie (2007), "Rise of the Foot soldier". According to the summarized plot of this movie:

The Rise of the Foot soldier follows the inexorable rise of Carlton Leach from one of the most feared generals of the football terraces to becoming a member of a notorious gang of criminals who rampaged their way through London and Essex in the late eighties and early nineties. It is three decades of his life following him from football hooliganism, through to his burgeoning career as a bouncer, his involvement in the criminal aspects of the early 'rave' scene and subsequently to his rise to power as one of the most feared and respected criminals in the country.

Even though Carlton Leach does not deal with a political party, his behavioural pattern is similar to that of contemporary foot soldiers. For instance, on numerous occasions under the various Republican Constitutions in Ghana, state institutions, public servants and private citizens have been victims of persistent harassment and

physical assaults in the hands of amorphous groups of individual under the guise of foot-soldiers of the ruling party. Offices, public places of convenience, party offices, etc have been reportedly seized by these so-called foot-soldiers with impunity. One case that readily comes to mind is the reported seizure of Ashaima Lorry Park by some foot-soldiers of the National Democratic Congress. Quoting Abubakar, Razak Mardorgyz's online article (2011), he says:

Barely 24 hours after a group of angry National Democratic Congress (NDC) foot-soldiers captured Ashaima's main bus terminal, the group struck again on Saturday. This time around, the beat up some of the party executives and vandalized the constituency's party office. Among those beaten were the party organizer, James Vee-Jay and three other executives as well as some other party members who had arrived at the place for a press conference at the invitation of the organizer. [...] They accused the Municipal Chief Executive of 'chop-chop', giving out juicy contracts to his girl friends and not developing the municipality.

Decrying the activities of foot soldiers, in sharp contrast with Nigerian youths, a columnist, Akumey-Affizie, Nunya (2010) writes:

Unfortunately, while youths in Nigeria are focused on getting their leaders to address their problems in a civilized manner, some hooligans in Ghana who tagged themselves as "foot soldiers" or for want of a better description "fool-soldiers" of NDC are busy seizing toilets and National Health Insurance offices, locking out party executives and even threatening to kill others.

Like foot-soldiers, Fama's contribution to the victory of the one-party system is appropriately rewarded when "After the suns of politics, Independence fell upon Africa like a swarm of grasshoppers." (p. 14) As the narrator further puts it:

Fama had been like the little swamp rat who digs a hole for the rat-catcher snake; his efforts had brought about his ruin, for like the leaf that's just been used to wipe somebody's arse, once Independence had been won Fama was thrown to the flies and forgotten. (p. 14)

Again, like most foot-soldiers, who according to Akumey-Affizie (ibid) "are clueless and possess no certificates to work with, no skills training nor even have the zeal to do any meaningful jobs", Fama is a stuck illiterate and cannot be appointed to any official position. He is therefore rightly 'thrown to flies and forgotten'. As the narrator sarcastically puts it:

That was understandable while they were appointing ministers, deputies, ambassadors; for those, reading and writing is not quite as pointless as a ring for a leper. There was an excuse for leaving Fama out of it, since he had remained as illiterate as a donkey's tail. (p. 14)

Fama cannot take this act of ingratitude, hence his descent into the gutters like a foot soldiers ready to fight everybody verbally and physically. To him, he is on a missionary struggle to restore his lost honour and that of his aristocratic ancestry. But ironically, the more he fights, the more he desecrates that very lineage and defames himself. Just as Akumey-Affizie (ibid) considers foot-soldiers in Ghanaian politics as people who "are in a state of nostalgia, still swimming in the glory of election victory and are making their presence felt.", so also is Fama. He is perpetually leaving in a nostalgic world of an extinct feudal state, the Dynasty of the Dumbuya of the great Horodugu. He feels ill-treated and cheated by the one-party system he has helped to win Independence for his country.

Similarities and Differences between Fama and foot-soldiers

Considering our discussion so far, it is obvious that the only differences between Fama and foot-soldiers is fiction and reality. Whereas the former is a fictional character, the latter is real. But, one cannot lose sight of the fact that imagination stems from already existing concrete reality. This means that fiction is nothing but imagination grafted on reality. Besides, Fama is a royal, but foot soldiers are mostly ordinary citizens, mostly marginalized from mainstream society and economy. They are therefore in search of space to feel accepted. Whereas Fama is an individual in quest of recognition, foot soldiers are an amorphous and anonymous group of individuals with discordant interests and voices in quest of political rewards and socio-economic space in an infant democratic sphere. Apart from these dissimilarities, Fama and foot soldiers have a lot in common.

Fama and foot soldiers believe strongly in political cronyism. They consider political activism as an opportunity for the pursuit of their personal interests for the realisation of their personal and parochial ambitions. Political party identity also seems to provide them the opportunity to use the public sphere for the pursuit of personal vendetta.

Like foot-soldiers, Fama is forcing to impose his selfish ambition on the public as a social project. This is detrimental to the collective will of the people, hence the resistance from the majority of them through the effective arms of ridicule, sarcasm, humour and irony. The violent nature of the character displayed by Fama both verbally and physically, and by extension that displayed by foot-soldiers, is not an attribute of royals or honourable citizens under any aristocratic or democratic dispensation. Indeed, this character does not contribute to job creation or employment for the teeming unemployed citizens; neither does it lead to the resolution of the numerous socio-political and economic problems bedevilling human societies across the African continent and the developing world, as a whole. Democratic nation-building is a serious social programme which calls for

critical thinking, art and tact. It has no room for self-seeking, irrational and unreasonable individuals like Fama, a royal with a foot-soldier-like character, and his likes who descend into the gutters as hooligans and social deviants in pursuit of their inordinate ambitions.

III. CONCLUSION

In the light of the above discussions, it is difficult for one to pity Fama as a desecrated prince decimated and dishonoured, first, by colonialism, and then by the one-party system under the suns of Independence. Like foot-soldiers, he has failed to attract social sympathy in his attempt to be seen as the only one who must gain from every socio-economic and political transformation engendered by the era of Independence. At the same time, he appears to be resisting the system because it does not permit him to realize his inordinate dreams of restoring his extinct feudal dynasty of the Dumbuya and occupying one of the juicy political positions in the party he has fought to bring to power. Fama's lack of respect for the interest of others grounds him in the irrational pursuit of his personal interest, in spite of the changed times he lives in. He has eventually become not only a foot soldier, but also a 'food soldier' scavenging and fighting over left-over and donations at funeral rites.

As a result, Fama cannot be seen as a pitiable desecrated prince. He has indeed become a disgruntled foot soldier, if not a 'food soldier', clouded in his disillusionment, hooliganism, greed and jealousy. By his own words and deeds, Fama has largely contributed to his own desecration as the last legitimate Dumbuya prince of the great Horodugu. In the image of an epic antihero, Fama has fallen from grace to grass in his unflinching resolve to halt progress considered inimical to his personal parochial project. No wonder, progress has crashed him down.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the fact that Fama's behaviour is a reaction to a socio-political system that has been largely unfair to him, just like the situation in which foot soldiers find themselves in contemporary democratic dispensation in Ghana. It is important to approach the foot soldier menace with a great deal of tact and in a holistic manner. In doing so, citizens should be sensitized to appreciate the true values of democratic politics as a means to empowering them for sustainable human development and nation-building. Citizens should be orientated toward a patriotic political education that will enable them see themselves as active stakeholders in the democratic project, and not as dormant onlookers at the beck and call of politicians and power-brokers who tend to use them only to dump them sooner or later.

The media, civic education institutions, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSO), community based organizations (CBOs), churches, among others, should actively engage in the awareness creation for the true ownership of politics by an informed citizenry so as to give real meaning to democratic governance and ensure sustainable human development and security. In addition to this, politicians should manage electoral promises reasonably in order to avoid disillusionment among their supporters when they assume power. Cronyism, nepotism and divisive tendencies in political party organization are inimical to democratic governance and nation-building. Paradoxically, Fama's demand, and by extension the demands of foot soldiers, border on these various ills of democracy. Urgent steps must therefore be taken to help political party activists appreciate and live by the tenets of democracy, such as responsiveness, accountability, transparency and participation. Unreasonable demands on the state actors and politicians can only create fertile grounds for corruption to thrive in all its forms, to the detriment of democratic gains and the general welfare of all the citizens.

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