



La sirène de Faso Fani

The Siren of Faso Fani

Michel K. Zongo

Producer Christian Lelong, Michel K. Zongo, Michael Bogar.
Production companies Cinédoc Films (Annecy, France); Diam Production (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso); Perfect Shot Films (Berlin, Germany). **Director** Michel K. Zongo. **Screenplay** Michel K. Zongo, Christophe Cognet. **Director of photography** Michel K. Zongo. **Sound** Moumouni „Jupiter“ Sodre. **Music** Smokey. **Sound design** Fanny Lelong. **Editor** François Sculier. **With** Rachim Naser Sanou (Radio voice).

DCP, colour. 90 min. French, Mooré.

Premiere 11 February 2015, Berlinale Forum

World sales Cinédoc Films

After it was shut down in 2001, the Faso Fani textile factory in Koudougou, Burkina Faso's third-largest city, was left to rot. It probably figures in the World Bank and IMF archives as one more piece of collateral damage, yet another write-off in a West African sideshow. Michel Zongo, who grew up in Koudougou, reopens the case of this legendary factory. He visits relatives and former employees, including his uncle, who once owned a much admired modern cult object thanks to Faso Fani: one of the first refrigerators in town. Zongo digs through radio and TV archives and pieces together the factory's proud history, which produced so much more than just textiles. As a true local, however, Zongo is not focussed on the demise of his hometown, but rather discovers women in its courtyards who have begun to weave again – and men conversing beneath the trees. His film is an homage to a specifically African form of resistance in the face of the madness of globalisation, a visually powerful document of a revolt by energetic women and eloquent men. Out of necessity and conviction, they work out their own contemporary ideology of progress – with ingenuity and charm and without the IMF.

Dorothee Wenner

The textile factory Faso Fani

For a long time, Koudougou was considered Burkina Faso's main textile-producing city, a reputation established by the presence of one factory: Faso Fani, which means 'the country's pagne' (pagne is a colourful cotton textile widely worn in West Africa).

The whole city would rise in the morning to Faso Fani's siren. I was born and grew up in Koudougou, and the factory played a central role in my childhood.

Faso Fani was the nation's project and a strong signal of its independence.

The factory was a gamble that soon proved its worth: the pagnes produced were of a very high quality and their reputation spread far beyond the borders of Burkina Faso. It was the pride of our city. However, in 2001, following several restructuring plans imposed by the IMF and the World Bank, the factory shut down and hundreds of employees suddenly found themselves jobless.

More than ten years later, I set out to meet the ex-employees of Faso Fani and reveal the disastrous consequences of global economic policies that are blind to local realities – specifically those of Koudougou. Along the way I also met the textile workers who are tirelessly working away producing their own home-made pagnes. Together, we dream of the day when we will witness the revival of the cotton industry in our city.

Michel K. Zongo

„Faso Fani was the project of the whole nation“

Your film focuses on the history of the Faso Fani textile factory in Burkina Faso. To what degree is the decline of the factory emblematic of the situation in your country?

My country is one of the biggest cotton producers in West Africa. But it is also a country in which eighty per cent of the population lives from agriculture. The problem is obvious. Cotton is still sold to France at the same price as it was sixty years ago. Faso Fani was the project of a whole nation that found itself at the end of the colonial era and on the eve of independence. At that time, Burkina Faso was exhilarated by a vision, sought paths to autonomy and sought its dignity and also its pride. The people had a common history, a fiction they spoke to each other about; together they lived through an adventure. They were inspired by the desire or urge to feel useful: to do something for themselves, but also for the whole nation. We were like one big family. The factory was an important symbol of independence, because it processed what our farmers grew on our fields. The cotton for clothing was made into pagnes, which were made into clothing, so with these fabrics our farmers could clothe themselves. That was the core idea.

How did you come up with the idea for this film?

When I saw *Roger and Me* (Michael Moore, USA 1989) for the first time, I immediately thought of Faso Fani. I felt a connection between Michael Moore and me. Not so much in relation to the obstinacy and passion of his settling accounts with 'Roger' or to his downright criminological approach, which was supported by a provocative and sometimes even aggressive camera work. My affinity to Michael Moore results from our common interest in what ties us to our childhood: a factory, people we knew

who worked in it and a city. I was immediately aware of how important and meaningful it was to make a film about Faso Fani.

What is the international importance of the history of this factory?

When companies are dissolved or factories are closed – whether in Detroit in the United States, in Besançon in France or in Koudougou in Burkina Faso – no one is interested in the thousands of employees who become jobless. For us, these people have no face; we hear about them solely in the form of numbers or curves. Unfortunately, we live in a world in which the system of economic exploitation is all too easy to understand. The rule according to which the world functions is to bring the poorest, who are also the largest group, up against the rich, who form the elite. You have to realise that the dissolution of the factory was carried out in the framework of a structural adjustment programme that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund launched as an economic assistance measure. They had called on the Burkinabé government to withdraw from a number of so-called 'unproductive' businesses. One of these businesses was Faso Fani. The history of this factory in the southern Sahara clearly illustrates the influence that the global economy has on the lives of thousands of people in a small city in Africa.

Source: *Diam Production*



Michel Kiswendsida Zongo was born in 1974 in Koudougou, Burkina Faso. He attended Cinematography courses at the Centre national du cinéma Burkina Faso (CNC) and at Télévision Nationale du Burkina (TNB). Since then, he has worked as a cinematographer, director and screenwriter. From 2003 to 2008, he worked for Cinomade, an association based in Burkina Faso whose objective is to create and distribute tools to increase political awareness, notably through cinema. In 2010, he founded the production company *Diam Production*. *La sirène de Faso Fani* is his second feature-length film.

Films

2009: *Sibi, l'âme du violon* (38 min.). 2009: *Ti Tiimou / Nos sols* (30 min.). 2011: *Espoir voyage* (Berlinale Forum 2012, 82 min.). 2015: *La sirène de Faso Fani / The Siren of Faso Fani*.