

**VUTA N'KUVUTE
(A TUG OF WAR)**

AMIL ISSA SHIVJI

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN FILM
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

May 2019

© Amil Issa Shivji, 2019

Abstract

Vuta N'Kuvute (A Tug of War) based on Adam Shafi's award-winning Swahili novel, is a coming-of-age political drama about love and resistance set in the final years of British colonial Zanzibar. The novel is taught in high schools across Tanzania as an example of fine literature from the continent.

The script careens through 1950s coastal culture across the divides of class and racial segregation that were imposed by the colonial regime. Denge, a frustrated and rebellious Zanzibari young man who is part of the freedom struggle against British rule, meets Yasmin, a recent runaway Indian-Zanzibari bride whose equal rebelliousness drives her to seek her own independence. Their romantic but forlorn relationship is coupled with the daily struggles of finding their place in the resistance movement for independence.

The 100-page script will eventually be made into a film after completion of the thesis. My centre of interest has been how to appropriately bring the novel to life while grappling with socio-political issues of gender representation and the desire for resisting authoritarianism at all levels of society.

Adapting the novel in today's world has allowed me to find creative ways to portray strength and independence in the female characters as opposed to the submissive paternalistic relationships they had in the novel. In addition, I am approaching my script through the angle of Third Cinema that represented a cinematic movement which emerged in the 1960s in Africa and Latin America in response to colonial and imperialist wars against the two continents. In that sense, the colonial 1950s are viewed through the Third Cinema lenses embedded in anti-colonial struggles.

Acknowledgements

Throughout my life I have heard stories of Zanzibar. Of how my grandfather ran away from his house after his mother got remarried; how my grandmother would walk through the narrow alleyways; of the love between different communities; of loss and of nostalgia. I never met my grandparents, I only heard of the life they lived. This script and paper is my attempt to get to know them.

Without the undying and unconditional love and support from my parents, Issa Shivji and Parin Virji and sister, Natasha Shivji, my commitment and dedication to this story would have faltered a long time ago. I must also acknowledge my family in Toronto, Gullymasi and her family for providing me the much-needed emotional support during my stay in Canada.

I must thank my supervisory committee, Barbara Evans and John Greyson who's feedback and contribution has been vital to my completion. I also appreciate Rosa Luxemburg Foundation's financial support, making this dream into a reality, as well as my employers at the University of Dar es Salaam for giving me the final push to pursue my Masters while supporting my living expenses.

I am forever grateful to the people of Zanzibar for welcoming me into their communities, homes and *barazanis*, tolerating hundreds of questions about a sensitive time in their histories and sharing their lives with me. My deep gratitude to the Zanzibar Archives and my research assistant and comrade, Hawa Ally, who spent many days meticulously collecting and collating material and lending her ear to my many spontaneous thoughts for the script.

Finally, the hardworking and ever loyal Kijiwani Team, Cece Mlay and Wilson Rumisha who unequivocally channel all their energy into our work and have had faith in the story from day one. The script has also benefited immensely from the feedback, contributions and rewrites of Jenna Bass, Steven Markovitz and Tamsin Ranger. Thank you all.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Images	v
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	4
Story	10
Form.....	14
Third Cinema	16
Love in Zanzibar	18
My Work.....	20
The Research.....	23
Ethical Issues	27
Conclusion	29
Bibliography	31
Filmography	33

List of Images

Image 1: 1941 House. Photography by Amil Shivji	1
Image 2: Cleaning commissioner's car for Tsetse. Photography by British Colonial Services.....	4
Image 3: Boys going to pray. Photography by Amil Shivji.....	10
Image 4: Kwa Khani House. Photography by Amil Shivji.....	11
Image 5: Zanzibar City Map 1945 from Zanzibar Archives. Photography by Amil Shivji	14
Image 6: Shangani Street. Photography by Ranchod Oza, Capital Art Studio.....	16
Image 7: Girl goes to Tumbatu. Photography by Amil Shivji.....	18
Image 8: Taarab masters: Makame Faki, Mohamed Ilyas and Rajab Suleiman outside Culture Music Club. Photography by Amil Shivji	20
Image 9: Zanzibar Awakening Newspaper Heading. Photography by Amil Shivji	23
Image 10: Kofia. Photography by Amil Shivji	24
Image 11: Mkunazini 1932. Photography by Amil Shivji.....	27
Image 12: Kiponda Alleyway. Photography by Amil Shivji.....	29

Introduction



Image 1: 1941 House. Photography by Amil Shivji

I began working with the novel as a short script. I initially planned to adapt only chapter four of *Vuta N'Kuvute*, which depicts the moment when the two protagonists meet for the first time. The idea was to make a short film that could be used as a proof of concept in order to raise enough financing to eventually pursue the feature film. The short script was received very well by my committee and colleagues, including film producers who were keen to attach themselves to the project. I decided to change my thesis into a feature script after receiving considerable support to do so.

This support paper discusses the political and cultural context of the script which is set in Zanzibar, Tanzania. Working on the script had its fair share of challenges such as dismantling the gender archetypes established in the novel and personally having a sense of justified authorship of the story. This paper also explores the significance and potential implications of the final script in Tanzania while providing reasoning for the particular aesthetic approaches and references.

Denge and Yasmin meet in a romantic setting lit by lanterns throwing shadows across rusty windows and washed down walls. We find Denge torn between youthful decadence and revolutionary struggle. Although his commitment to the fight for Zanzibar's autonomy is clear, his youthful frivolity betrays his ideological calling. He is a portrait of a frustrated young man on the verge of giving up, but his fighting spirit is reignited through his passion for Yasmin. Yasmin, naïve to the attention from and freedom of young men her age, finds herself part of a struggle that leads to her own self-awareness.

After Yasmin runs away from her newly wedded, much older husband in Mombasa, she faces rejection from her own family at home. She seeks refuge at a friend's house in the Swahili quarters of segregated Zanzibar, immersing herself in an oppressed yet effervescent culture that she had always been secluded from. Her initial self-indulgence is called into question by the selfless solidarity of the people around her in their quest for survival. Her own awareness is framed by a larger struggle for the self-reliance of an entire people.

Vuta N'Kuvute is a story of a people, the self and the other. It ties together struggles at all levels of oppression in a colonial society into a history of one people, a free-er people.

At this current point in time, when the Tanganyika-Zanzibar union is at the mercy of alt-right politicians and parochial nationalism is at the forefront of political propaganda, cinema in Zanzibar is forced into the corner of the status quo. Zanzibar's desire for autonomy has been exacerbated as political visions look towards the western state-centric model of political organization, jeopardizing the once united struggle against colonialism. Nevertheless, Zanzibar has unique struggles of its own. Zanzibar has always wanted to 'live,' yet its UNESCO 'World Heritage Site' recognition is forcing its culture to remain static. Nonetheless, in the old architecture that Zanzibar seeks to preserve, there is embedded a culture of struggle, from the dockworkers strikes of the '40s through the bloody revolution of 1964 to the constant battle for

greater autonomy from the Mainland. This historical drama aims at emphasizing and reminding us of the solidarities and tensions across the Indian Ocean that challenge the racial, gender and class barriers generated by the colonial and post-colonial state. Love is political in *Vuta N’Kuvute* and I’m interested in showing how it liberates itself from the constraints of colonialism.

My main concern is whether the novel can be adapted, while also acting as an intervention in Zanzibari society. With the constant tensions between the mainland and island, a project of this scale that incorporates crew and cast from both sides of the union telling a story together, I do believe it will highlight solidarity rather than divisions within the union. I want to address issues of gender representation that were overlooked in the original work. I also seek to create a piece of work that brings to life the culturally rich and politically vibrant fabric that Zanzibar became synonymous with in the 1950s. Historical accuracy is vital, hence the question of truth versus fiction in the adaptation is one I must reckon with. I am also interested in talking revolution in cinema: can the principles of Third Cinema still be applicable in today’s neoliberal views of art and society?

Background



Image 2: Cleaning commissioner's car for Tsetse. Photography by British Colonial Services.

“Moreover, I believe that Africans, in particular, must reinvent cinema.”

— Djibril Diop Mambéty

The current political and artistic climate in Tanzania is ambiguous and uncertain. There is a general atmosphere of fear and silence. The political administration recently admitted that ‘art is the biggest threat to the regime’ (Masinde, 2017). Globally, narrow nationalism is at the forefront of political ideology, whether in Europe, Africa or North America. In Tanzania we are experiencing the same level of parochial attitude from our government leaders which, even if unintentionally, undermines the union between Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. Each nation-state seeks to declare its autonomy at the risk of further divisions within society. With decreasing spaces for dialogue and lack of local cultural institutions, films are now being made to serve the status quo rather than to question it.

No culture, including that of Tanzania's, is homogenous. All cultures have internal struggles, sites of conflict and agents of change. Culture is a site of liberation, but is now being referenced as an event to be set in stone and left untouched. The debate between culture as a preserve of ostensibly traditional values and culture as a site of struggle for national liberation is best illustrated by the examples of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau. These two progressive paragons of the national liberation struggle had amazingly different perspectives on culture. Amilcar Cabral said "Whatever may be the ideological or idealistic characteristics of cultural expression, culture is an essential element of the history of a people" (Cabral 13). For Cabral, national culture could not be anything but an embodiment of the continuing struggle for national liberation, whereas Nyerere underlined the importance of resuscitating old culture and former traditions to give pride to the formerly colonized people. He once said "Our young men's ambition was not to become well educated Africans, but to become Black Europeans!...it is hard for any man to get much real excitement from dance and music which are not in his own blood" (Nyerere 186).

Implicit in *Vuta N'Kuvute* is a perspective on culture that merges Cabral and Nyerere. There is an emphasis on historical accuracy in its representations of the music and fashion of the time, but these are seen as active rather than passive tools of ongoing resistance. In the script, we witness forbidden love act as a social resistance to authoritarianism that is manifested in the paternalistic colonial state. Zanzibaris living on the fringes of society are born into a culture of struggle. However, there has not been any representation of these contradictions in Tanzanian mainstream cinema. Images of white beaches and sultan's palaces flood our screens, promoting the country as a serene tourist destination, and imposing the identity of an 'other' on the Zanzibari people. Tourism continues to gobble up the people and suffocate local culture. Our images must resist. Our images must love. Love is at stake if we do not resist. As Che

Guevara said, “True revolutionaries are guided by great feelings of love” (Guevara, 1965). My script reminds us of the power of love in political resistance.

Tanzanian cinema prides itself on its quantity of production, peaking at second in Africa in terms of numbers of DVDs right after Nigeria’s infamous Nollywood industry. Quality is severely compromised when budgets typically range anywhere between USD500 and USD5000. Most films use melodramatic genre tropes, telling stories of witchcraft and infidelity. There has never been a Tanzanian period film produced, let alone one made in Zanzibar. To tell a story from one angle would be regarded as biased and downplay human complexities. Thus, I chose to portray a range of characters in *Vuta N’Kuvute* that represent the true social structure of Zanzibar.

Vuta N’Kuvute is a novel that is set in the world of 1950’s and 1960’s Zanzibar amidst a decade that is known as the time of ‘political awakening’ (Juma 56). The script is an exploration into what life was like for Zanzibaris during an era when they lived their lives under the rule of law of the British colonial government, as administered through the Sultanate. This was a time in history when the people were divided along social, racial and economic lines, creating a tug of war between race and culture. In addition, this script highlights the political resistance that arose against the colonial rule led by the freedom fighters whose ideology was decidedly to the left of even the liberal ideology of the enlightened British.

Tanzania did not always have this name. Under the British, it was called Tanganyika and Zanzibar was a separate country. In 1890, Zanzibar became a British Protectorate and was ruled by the Omani royal family. During this period, the Sultan’s authority was reduced under the protectorate, even though the royal family was generally aligned with the British. The British ruled the Zanzibar protectorate through the indirect rule method, and one of its key features was to divide society into different social castes with different rights and liabilities based on their race. British colonialists emphasized that Zanzibaris should be treated according

to whether they were Arab, Indian, African or 'other' in all aspects of life. They encouraged the formation of associations based on ethnic lines, and these eventually became the foundation of the new political parties. These uneven relationships within the social-political make up of Zanzibar started far back but revealed their ugliest faces during colonialism.

Prior to the British presence, Zanzibar was part of the Omani empire. The Omani Sultan had ruled across the Indian ocean coast, primarily trading in cloves and slaves. Many slaves were abducted from mainland Tanganyika and forced to work on clove plantations in Zanzibar. In the late 19th century, the British took control of areas along the coast and colluded with the Sultan to gain more influence in the region. As colonialism has demonstrated many times, the administrative, legal and judicial systems were implemented and created by the British, and the Omani (Arab) aristocracy enjoyed no more than positions of ceremonial grandeur. The British further divided society along racial lines and attached privileges to each race. This caused havoc in Zanzibar as it was a hub for traders across the Indian ocean, and over generations had become a cosmopolitan country with many races and ethnicities. Identity in Zanzibar could not simply be put into African, Arab or Indian boxes and as the census would illustrate, the numbers of racial populations could change significantly overnight depending on why the census was taken (Lofchie 74). For example, the Comorians went to court to change their identity from African to Arab so they could receive more social privileges (Lofchie 72). These small pockets of resistance across the races slowly began to simmer through the early 1900s.

After the abolition of slavery in the late 1800s, former slaves stayed in Zanzibar, now as free men, and many lived on the same plantations as their previous Arab masters. The British found it easier to implement their thievery if Zanzibar were to be divided into two areas, namely Old Town (now called Stone Town) and Ng'ambo (the other side). The rich and privileged who stayed in Stone Town were mainly the Arab aristocracy, the British and some well-off Indian

merchants and traders, whereas the African and Indian working people and poorer Arabs lived in Ng'ambo, side by side.

Even with constant cultural resistance to colonialism, the British managed to sow racial tensions and reap from the divisions in society. From gathering intelligence on movements of liberation to enhancing trade with racialized associations, the British continued to propagate the idea that there would be utter chaos without their presence. The main political parties fell in line with the racial segregation, as complex as it was, and even though there were attempts at unifying people across races, the main political parties that were the most threatening to colonial rule were the minority Arab-ruled ZNP (Zanzibari Nationalist Party) and the African-led ASP (Afro-Shirazi Party). More progressive parties such as the communist-oriented Umma Party started later, and were crushed as they began gaining momentum.

Tanganyika gained independence in 1961 under the leadership of Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, and Zanzibar was promised full independence in the coming years. Even with independence around the corner, there was fear on the island that the British would leave power with the Omani Sultan and this would cost the black African population their personal freedom. In addition, ASP used this propaganda to rally against ZNP, calling them slave owners and instilling fear in the hearts of African Zanzibaris. The ZNP did want colonial rule to end, but they also sought to maintain the Sultan as the constitutional head. They did not have support of the masses, so they formed a coalition with the Zanzibar and Pemba's People Party (ZPPP) to gain support over more constituencies. After a tense election period in 1963, the ZNP/ZPPP coalition won with a total of 18 seats, while the ASP won 13 seats (Lofchie 219). The ASP felt cheated out of an actual victory.

The ZNP/ZPPP barely spent two months in power before the revolution happened in which thousands of people died. The 1963 independence which appeared to give power to the 'minority' was not acceptable to the African majority. Thus, a volcano of grievances was

waiting to erupt and it did in an unplanned insurrection led by the young lumpen proletariat (Hashil, 2018). It was not until the intervention of *Umma* Party cadres that the insurrection shaped up into a revolution. Meanwhile, there was mayhem resulting in thousands of deaths, the number of killed is still contested but the figures cited are between a few thousand and ten thousand (Shivji, 2008). The revolution has left behind bitter memories with which the Zanzibar society as a whole has yet to come to terms with. The revolution has always been a contentious issue and “public” discourse on it is conducted more by word of mouth in whispers rather than openly, frankly and honestly. Zanzibaris have been denied any chance for tribunals or even to mourn for the ones they lost.

In 1964, following the revolution, Tanganyika and Zanzibar formed a union and birthed the Tanzania that exists today. In the opinion of Zanzibari political pundits such as Wolfgang Dorado and Aboud Jumbe, their island got the bitter end of the deal and Zanzibar has remained politically subservient to the mainland over the subsequent 55 years. This has caused many tensions and a growing desire to secede from the union. Today, in a time when political and cultural pan-Africanism is seen as a more progressive solution, which would unite the continent in resistance to ongoing imperialism(s), the impulse to continue drawing up even more borders is seen as more detrimental than beneficial to Africa. In my view, an ‘independent’ Zanzibar could become a grazing ground for imperial powers that would fuel political tensions and push for a break up in the union. Under the guise of ‘a Singapore like model’ (Hamad, 2016) Zanzibari conservative politicians seek to work with foreign powers to develop their nation and once again be the hub of the Swahili world. Oman has increased its political and cultural influence in Zanzibar through financing the reconstruction of heritage sites and museums. However, this comes at a fatal expense of culture, economy and sovereignty as now, according

to Prof. Abdul Sheriff, the museum will state that it a history of the Zanzibari and Omani people.¹

Story



Image 3: Boys going to pray. Photography by Amil Shivji

Denge, a frustrated and rebellious young man, meets Yasmin, a young Indian-Zanzibari girl in the middle of the night. She is on her way to be betrothed to a man three times her age, while he is distributing Swahili translations of Soviet political pamphlets. This chance meeting sparks a series of missed opportunities and thwarted chances for the forlorn lovers.

Now in Mombasa, Yasmin escapes her oppressive marriage and returns to Zanzibar where she faces rejection from her own family. She seeks refuge at her friend Mwajuma's house in the Swahili quarters of the segregated island. Mwajuma, a taarab singer, shows her the 'other

¹ Interview conducted by myself with Prof. Abdul Sheriff (12th September 2018)

side’ of home as they skirt around curfews and find freedom in dance and music. Yasmin meets Denge again, who is deeply immersed in the independence struggle against British rule, busy translating and distributing Soviet propaganda. She is pulled towards his ideals of independence, while he in turn feels free around her. Through the labyrinth of alleyways, Denge’s friends help with his cause – hiding information and transporting secret documents to the leadership “exiled” in mainland Tanganyika. It’s an intricate network that falls under the surveillance of the regime’s police chief Inspector Wright and his subordinate officers, who track Denge’s every move.



Image 4: Kwa Khani House. Photography by Amil Shivji

After a night of heavy drinking, Denge convinces his friends to cause a riot at the wealthy social club drawing the ire of the Inspector and endangering the very people he is fighting for. In Dar es Salaam, Denge’s action puts him in the scrutiny of the party leadership and he is questioned about his loyalty to the people over his selfish actions. Back on the island, Yasmin feels alone and abandoned as Denge disappears without a word. She is subjected to

police interrogation and witnesses British brutality. She finds herself unable to hide from the realities of the battle raging around her. When her betrayal and Denge's recklessness lands him behind bars, it is up to Yasmin to be part of the larger struggle and free the one she loves. Yasmin puts everything, including herself, at risk when she journeys to Dar es Salaam to meet with the leadership. A scheme is hatched but it is foiled and Yasmin narrowly escapes death at the hands of the British. Behind prison walls, Denge is plagued by hunger, torture and isolation. They are both caught in a tug of war between love and freedom as Yasmin and the comrades carry out a final plan to free Denge.

When I first read *Vuta N'Kuvute* in 2006, I was sixteen years old and had just finished reading *Macbeth* in my English literature class. After thoroughly enjoying Shakespeare's work and then watching the Thames production film adaptation from 1979, I saw the impact of the moving image in relation to deconstructing literature. The idea of adaptations has stuck with me ever since, so when I read Shafi's novel and was struck by how I could envision every sentence and hear the music from the pages, I always felt the urge to see the novel adapted for the big screen. Until today not a single work of literature in Tanzania has ever been adapted into film, and with the overpowering presence of digital technologies at all levels of society, we as Tanzanians risk losing an earlier generation's cultural expressions without ever giving them a second life. A film adaptation that can then be used in schools is a potential solution to this. But it must start with a script!

The novel *Vuta N'Kuvute* has many shortcomings that I wanted to address in my adaptation. As a result, I eventually moved from describing my script as being an adaptation to being 'based on the novel'. In the original book, Yasmin's character plays a very submissive role and marriage is used to keep her 'busy' as Denge does the political groundwork. To be specific, Yasmin is married three times in total in the novel, has a child and spends a lot of time whining and complaining about her situation. The novel was written in the 1970s and was

published in the 1990s. During interviews with the author and publisher² I learned about the writing process. The publisher Walter Bgoya admitted noticing the shortcomings of Yasmin's character and how her role played into a voyeuristic male gaze. There was a final attempt to fix this by overtly politicizing Yasmin's character through dialogue in the final pages of the novel, but in my opinion, it did not do justice to the story and felt impulsive rather than authentic to our characters. This was the primary issue that I wanted to address in the script. In my script, Yasmin takes on a larger, more active role in the struggle for independence and her love for Denge comes from a sense of solidarity of fighting for independence with a fellow Zanzibari. I did not find the need for depicting the other two husbands, and the lack of these other men actually gives Yasmin more prominence and agency in her actions. Instead of having her constantly respond to and be the victim of the patriarchal world around her, she now paves her own way and contributes to the larger struggle based on her own experiences.

Of course, Yasmin has her internal complexities and by living in Ng'ambo she is forced to strip herself of her racial privileges. Her class suicide is what makes her appreciate the struggle for independence and its mutual relationship with her own development. I also gave more attention to her relationship with Mwajuma to highlight the people around her and their everyday struggle against colonialism through different mechanisms. Mwajuma sings with ever-so subtle stories of the downtrodden.

² Interview conducted by myself with Adam Shafi and Walter Bgoya (22nd August 2016)

Form

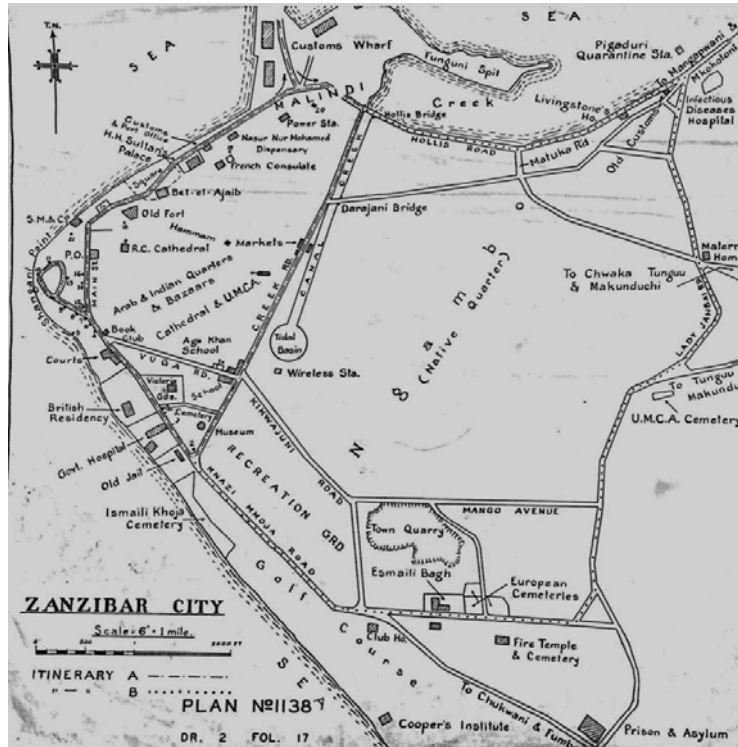


Image 5: Zanzibar City Map 1945 from Zanzibar Archives. Photography by Amil Shivji

I would call my script a love affair between *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) and *In the Mood for Love* (2000). It goes without saying that this is an ambitious choice of references / role models, especially considering the high budgets of each of those productions, versus my limited resources. As much as I am cognizant of this, my experience in filmmaking in Tanzania has proven more than once my ability to make stylistic, high-end productions with scarce resources. I am confident this will be no different this time.

The choice of these two films is primarily because of visual style. I plan to echo the rugged yet seamless camera movement occurring within tight spaces in Pontecorvo's political masterpiece, matched with the mesmerizing colour palette and hanging tungsten-bulb lighting in Wong Kar-wai's romantic drama. My perspective and style will seek to do justice to Zanzibar's timeless architecture and the film's revolutionary/romantic plot. My practice as a

filmmaker has always been profoundly influenced by the Third Cinema movement. Considering that I am based in Tanzania and work within the realities that Third cinema first addressed fifty years ago, I feel I have been practicing its principles in all my work.

Love and revolution are not new themes whatsoever in the world of cinema. From the 1960s onwards, it can be considered a sub-genre with films like Soy Cuba (1964), Mandabi (1968), The Year of Living Dangerously (1982) and Reds (1981) to mention but a few. Pulling from these films, I attempted to avoid the clichés of didactic political writing wrapped up in melodramatic scenes of undying passion that can typify the genre. Instead, I picked film references that were polar opposite in style which I used to create a common ground for my characters in *Vuta N'Kuvute*. Zanzibar's ambience and setting allows for the scenic romance expressed in Wong-kar Wai's work, while the period of 'political awakening' (Juma 56) when the film is set references actions such as those in Pontecorvo's film.

Third Cinema



Image 6: Shangani Street. Photography by Ranchod Oza, Capital Art Studio

Third Cinema, in brief, is a form of retaliation against the mainstream cinema and provides a social commentary on those areas that are denied a spotlight in First and Second Cinema. Third cinema was born out of the anti-classist, anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and nationalist sentiment of the colonized people during and after independence of their countries. This cinema also addresses issues of class, culture, religion, sex and national integrity.

For example, the constant struggle of 'developing nations' during colonialism and now neo-colonialism and the cinematic depiction of revolutions that earned people their independence is a kind of Third cinema. First cinema is the high budget, star studded system, and industrial cinema such as Hollywood's. Second cinema is the individualistic, self-indulgent first world 'art' cinema (Espinosa 25) whereby the director is recognized as an auteur by clearly

incorporating his or her style into their movies. Third cinema is a cinema which arose to oppose, so as to speak, these First and Second Cinemas. It is not necessarily produced in third world countries but normally it is about the struggles of countries in the global south. Because Third Cinema is a concept which involves both an aesthetic and a firm 'internationalist' ideology, it is 'less geographically bound' and highly influenced by movements that criticized imperialism in the 1960s.

For my script, Third Cinema allows form to play an equal role to content in resistance to mainstream expectations/requirements. This has allowed a unique approach to the common story of 'boy meets girl'. This movement has been researched extensively by theorists such as Octavio Getino, Fernando Solas and Julio Espinosa and practiced by the likes of Ousmane Sembene and Djibril Diop Mambéty. A film reference and example of this is The Battle of Algiers (1966) directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. BoA is a form of revolutionary cinema that depicts the struggle for independence in Algeria between the years 1954 and 1962. This struggle was led by the FLN (The National Liberation Front) against the French colonialists. Common Algerians made up the FLN who fought the French because they were through with being treated as "second-class citizens" (Algerian National Liberation [1954-1962]) by the colonial government. BoA, as Chanan describes in "Outsiders: The Battle of Algiers and Political Cinema", is not biased and is quite realistic in showing the two ends of the struggle which allows the viewer to "sympath [ize]" (Chanan 39) with the freedom fighters but also challenge their procedures. Following the Algerian revolution, many more revolutions in other 'third world' countries coincided or followed. BoA does not only illustrate the political demands and urgency of these independence struggles but it also offers an insight into 'terrorism' and violence as a tool of resistance against the imperial and colonial first world.

Vuta N'Kuvute pulls inspiration from Pontecorvo's work in expressing urgency for Revolutionary cinema - a type of cinema that allows for an "imperfect cinema" as termed by

Espinosa. Espinosa explains that imperfect cinema can be “created equally in a studio or a guerrilla camp in the middle of a jungle” (Espinosa 24). It does not follow a particular technique nor does it adhere to a form of style; however, imperfect cinema is required to break the stereotypes that exist in art.

Love in Zanzibar



Image 7: Girl goes to Tumbatu. Photography by Amil Shivji

In the Mood for Love (2000) provides a strong reference for using two protagonists who are on the same path but who are haunted by missed opportunities. However, the big difference is that in Wong Kar-wai’s film, both characters stagnate in their arcs and behave very passively to their surroundings. This isolates their actions, or lack thereof and disassociates their

relationship from their surroundings. Whereas in my script, Yasmin and Denge push each other's arcs forward and very actively communicate, clash and collaborate with their spaces.

In the script I have worked a lot with silence and missed opportunities to build towards a crescendo and intensify their passion. I wanted to avoid the melodrama trap that many love stories fall into and which take advantage of vulnerabilities in the audience. I have chosen their independent struggles to be the push and pull factor for their own relationship. This was a struggle in itself for me as the writer to not become dependent on the political overtones, thus overwriting the love angle or vice-versa.

In the original work, Yasmin plays a stereotypical feminine character who is pulled towards Denge out of infatuation and eventually (and suddenly) out of political will. With the adaptation, I have pushed for Yasmin's infatuation to be politicized from the beginning. Her show of rebellion begins when she slaps her much older husband and runs back to Zanzibar. In Zanzibar she falls in love with Denge as she witnesses his desire for freedom and relates it to her own. Under the tungsten lights and washed down walls, the two protagonists fall in love but overpowering colonial pressures keep them apart. This is where I pulled from Wong Kar-wai's work, who brought two characters together in his film because they have the same problem. However, they do not consummate their love because it's not rooted in authentic feelings for each other, but rather, it's to fill the void of absence left by their respective partners. Although my storyline takes a different angle, I do see the power of delaying 'the consummation moment' which Wong does perfectly.

My Work



Image 8: Taarab masters: Makame Faki, Mohamed Ilyas and Rajab Suleiman outside Culture Music Club.
Photography by Amil Shivji

My work has represented Tanzania on many occasions across the world and I have made films across the country establishing my production house, Kijiweni Productions, as a force to reckon with in the region.

Kijiweni Productions is an independent Tanzanian film production house that is focused on producing socially conscious films in an attempt to help set up a sustainable industry committed to the social liberation of the African continent. With the success of our five films Shoeshine (2013), Samaki Mchangani (2014), Aisha (2015), T-Junction (2017) and Wahenga (2018) I came to learn the necessity and importance of cinema's role in portraying local realities, historical accuracies and struggles of the working people. I have been able to measure audience interaction and the impact of my work through live public screenings and reactions from government bodies. *Samaki Mchangani* - my film on land grabbing - has been screened on academic campuses across the world and is part of various institutions' Development Studies

syllabi. In addition, *Aisha*, that addresses sexual violence in rural areas and stigmatization of rape victims, has been referenced many times in cases bringing perpetrators of rape to justice in local courts in the coastal region. *T-Junction* took the government to task by examining an operation to clean the streets that included breaking roadside stalls and removing vendors from their usual spaces of operation. The film was very well received with audiences even after being banned from public screenings due to an arbitrary and draconian age restriction. However, trade unions and worker associations have continued to attend pop-up screenings and I may have aided in pirating the film for it to reach a larger audience. *Wahenga* follows John Kitime, an elderly musician, as he attempts to put a band together to revive a dying genre of Swahili jazz music called *Zilipendwa* ('the ones that were loved'). His journey shows the history of Tanzania's once thriving music scene that supported socialist ideology and how the musicians in return sang in support of socialism until its neo-liberal induced cultural death in the 1980s.

Undeniably, my five productions have already set a trend of reclaiming visuals that have long oppressed my people. Major themes addressed in my films are inequality, voices of the downtrodden, stereotypes, self-emancipation, exposing historical inaccuracies and struggling against the status quo. In hopes of removing the escapist tradition of cinema, I merge documentary and fictional forms by using archival footage, newsreels and non-fictional images so as to push across our messages in real time, with the belief that form is married to content.

The quality of all of my films has been of a high standard according to local and international juries. My films have played at numerous festivals around the world, literally having screened in six of the seven continents. The cinematic quality has been lauded highly, proved by *Aisha* and *T-Junction* being honoured as the 'number one film that shook the nation' in 2015 and 2017 respectively, according to Azam TV, and selected to showcase at America's largest black film festival, *The Pan-African Film and Arts Festival 2016*.

I teach film production and screenwriting to undergraduates in the Department of Creative Arts at the University of Dar es Salaam. As a lecturer, I have been using cinema in other aspects of filmmaking: training, mentorship and exhibition. I work with many of my students in the field after they graduate, as well as during their three-year course of study via internships and field placements. The harsh truth is that many students, if not all, do not receive the necessary historical or technical training over their three years due to lack of resources in the department. Hence, I use my film sets and films as a teaching tool for film production and criticism.

To make good films, we must watch good films. The majority of renowned African cinema cannot be accessed in Africa! I was horrified by the fact that I needed to pay California Newsreel a screening fee to show Sembene's work in Tanzania in an academic space. And after accepting this, I realized that they could not screen in Africa because they did not have a license for that territory and didn't know who did. Maybe cinema exhibition is still living its colonial hangover, considering most distributors exist outside the African continent. In response to this, I set up a monthly screening series called *Kijiweni Cinema* that ran for two years where I screened African cinema from the continent at a local art space. Every month I would pick a film from an African country and after the screening a discussion would ensue on and around the film. On some occasions, I was able to get the filmmaker to participate in discussion.

With this script, I am pushing in the same direction as I have previously pursued but am taking a huge leap forward. A script of this scale, being both a period film and an adaptation, is new territory for me. The amount of meticulous research that has gone into the script has allowed me to re-create the world that once existed, to be mesmerized and to appreciate it over and over again.

The Research

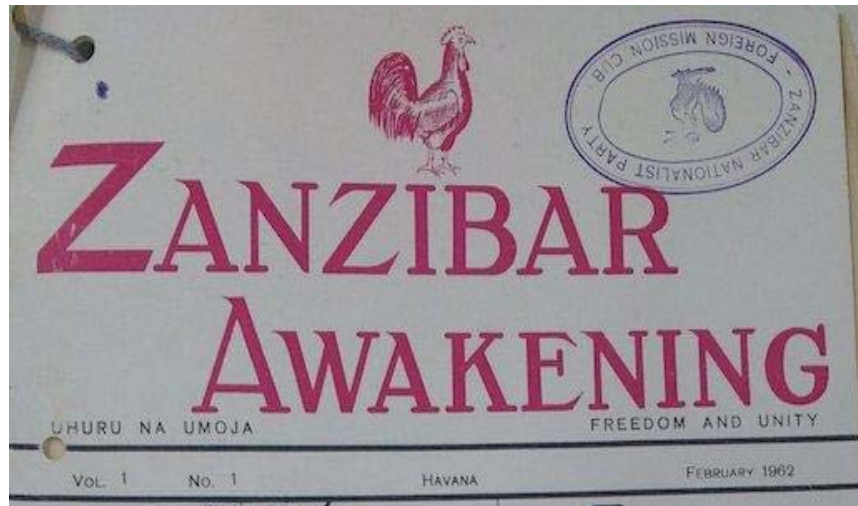


Image 9: Zanzibar Awakening Newspaper Heading. Photography by Amil Shivji

With *Vuta N’Kuvute* I have tried to tell the story from the people’s perspective as opposed to an individual’s point of view. Yasmin and Denge’s individual story lines are filtered with the actions of their comrades and their surrounding environment. I spent five months in Zanzibar researching the world I wanted to delve into. Unfortunately, there is very little visual material from that time period around Ng’ambo areas. Most of the photographs that exist were taken in Stone town for British colonial purposes or by tourists. Ng’ambo was the unseen other side where the “collective other” lived. This meant working through oral storytelling and speaking to older folk who could confirm or reject and advise on the script plot lines.

Filmmaking is a very disruptive process for any local community that lives and works in the space of production. As part of my research, I spent many evenings on the *barazanis* of Zanzibar which are the stone benches that cater to communal gatherings. I earned the respect of communities and through informal conversations over coffee and peanut brittle I was able to learn of cultural signifiers from the 1950s that one cannot find in any book. For example, the *Kofia*, worn by most men on the island, is a round-shaped cap with a flat top, adorned with embroidered designs all over. For convenience of simplicity in classification, *kofia* are divided

into two main groups, simple-designed and complex-designed caps. The cap is a very important part of Swahili dress, as it shows the wearer's devotion to God, a marker of a believer of Islam, a marker of a certain tradition or a stylish accessory to an outfit. Each cap has its own unique style, design and embroidery. The embroidered designs came about as markers of the history of a community, their surroundings, their culture and their daily activities. Examples of these designs are the mosques embroidered on a cap that would signify faith, fishing nets for fishermen, palm leaves that were a symbol of coconut farming and so on. During slavery, slaves could not wear these caps until they became freemen. This gave the wearer of the cap a status, a separation of the free and the enslaved. Even after the abolition of slavery the cap was still seen as representation of a 'civilized' man:

'[When I see the way] your cap is [placed], I can know where to meet you... The wearer knows how to place the cap and you know what he means without anything being communicated to you... so you know what is being said, just by the placement of the cap.'

Interview with Mohammed (Regular customer at coffee shop)



Image 10: Kofia. Photography by Amil Shivji

In the past the *kofia* played a certain role in communication, particularly on matters related to sexuality. Because the liaison between a woman and a man was always kept away from the public gaze, *kofia*-related communication was used to arrange a date with a woman. The meeting in public of a man and a woman who were not related, was normally received with suspicion. So, women were sent messages by their lovers through the particular way of wearing the *kofia* and its intended meanings. There were styles, for example, if the *kofia* was pointed towards the front, then the wearer was informing his lover to meet in their regular secret place.

Apart from the informal conversations at the *barazanis*, I have been working alongside local historians and visiting archives and museums on the mainland and in Zanzibar to provide historical context and accuracy. With music playing such an important role in the film, I collaborated with local taarab musicians in Zanzibar to seek out the music from Zanzibar's first music star, Siti bint Saad, focusing on those songs with appropriate lyrics for the script.

For the script to really have flesh on its bones and to do justice to the ideological passions and paraphernalia of the time, my approach has been to cross-check all of the novel's references with people, and keep the ones that could actually be agreed upon. This became a very arduous process but it gave me the confidence to include such details and actions when writing about a period of time that I never witnessed.

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation financially supported the research phase as I was running around working with archaeologists and consulting historians. They have supported me in my previous projects and saw this as an opportunity to contribute to the preservation of revolutionary cultures in East Africa.

Considering that I am from the mainland, I decided that a formal agreement with the Zanzibari Government would be necessary to have support from their administration in accessing many historical sites. Thus, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between

myself and the commission for tourism under the auspices of the Ministry of Information, Tourism and Antiquities.

I also have been consulting with a South African producer, Steven Markovitz of Big World Cinema, who will be producing the film. He has an impressive track record of producing high quality films, such as Rafiki (2018) (Cannes Film Festival) by Wanuri Kahiu and aKasha (2018) (Venice Critics' Week) by Hajooj Kuka. Steven's 25 years of producing experience will be invaluable during the preparation of this film and will ensure that the project is executed in the most cost-effective and efficient way possible, while ultimately producing a strong African film.

Ethical Issues



Image 11: Mkunazini 1932. Photography by Amil Shivji

As addressed earlier in this paper, the tension between Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar continues to plague the union. Mainlanders are treated with disdain and suspicion in Zanzibar and the reverse is also true. Even though my roots in Africa began in Zanzibar with my great grandfathers and grandmothers, I am a ‘mainlander’ by virtue of being born and raised in Dar es Salaam. I have been very conscious of this throughout the research and writing phases, hence a significant portion of research was spent amongst Zanzibaris, gaining their trust before moving forward. I also spoke about this issue with the novelist Adam Shafi who is Comorian in ancestry, Zanzibari by birth and now lives in Dar es Salaam. He completely understood my initial reservations about writing the adaptation but reminded me of the solidarity that existed between the mainland and island during the movement for independence. This is what I was looking for as well, and it’s a solidarity that I have emphasized in my adaptation. In the spirit

of pan-Africanism, the union should be strengthened although the constitution requires a re-write. There have been discourses around this topic and this script is my contribution.

Another ethical question that I debated with was whether I had the knowledge and right to write a story primarily focused on a woman's journey. In my previous film, T-Junction (2017) I had two female protagonists who I worked with meticulously to re-write dialogue for their understanding of the characters. This allowed me to gain significant experience with working with female actors and their characters. In this script, I do not assume I can be in the mind of a female character but I can and have written actions and reactions to the political struggle happening around Yasmin. She responds as a working class Zanzibari woman. As mentioned earlier, detailed research was used to tell the story with as much historical accuracy as possible, but with the proviso that I was taking a different approach to the novelist vis a vis Yasmin's representation. She plays a more active role and rather than slipping into the shadows of Denge's revolution, she becomes an important player in her own right and paves a way forward when he is losing control.

Conclusion



Image 12: Kiponda Alleyway. Photography by Amil Shivji

In the year to come, I plan to shoot a film from this script. In addition to cinematic dissemination, there will be a strong presence of the film as teaching material in schools. The novel is currently mandatory reading in high schools and is analyzed as an example of ‘fine Swahili literature’. We have partnered with the publisher to eventually release the DVD of the film to high schools so that it may be used as an educational tool in preserving the historical narrative of Tanzania’s progressive culture of resistance.

In writing what was first thought to be a script adaptation but has now become a script based on the novel *Vuta N’Kuvute*, I have utilized Third Cinema references to create a piece of work that represents a politically progressive time in its story and form. By bringing out the characters’ transformations through the context of their surrounding spaces and the politics they

are involved in, while avoiding a singular perspective, Third Cinema principles still continue to hold a vital approach to storytelling in today's age.

Finally, after much deliberation, I truly believe the script can revive the debates from the 1950s about mainland-island unity in building a stronger union. By using love and revolution, like Yasmin and Denge do, the reader witnesses the power of solidarity over difference.

Bibliography

- Buchbinder, Amnon. "The Way of the Screenwriter." Toronto, ON: Anansi, 2005.
- Cabral, Amilcar. "National Liberation and Culture." *Transition*, no. 45 (1974): 12-17.
- Chanan, Michael. "Outsiders: The Battle of Algiers and Political Cinema." *Sight and Sound* 17.6 NS (June 2007)
- Department of Urban and Rural Planning, Zanzibar and African Architecture Matters. "Ng'ambo Atlas". The Netherlands: LM Publishers, 2019.
- Diawara, Manthia. "Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance." *Film Theory & Criticism: Seventh Edition*. Ed. Leo Braudy & Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Espinosa, Julio. "For an imperfect cinema." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 20 (1979).
- Fair, Laura. "Pastime & Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890-1945." Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001.
- Fair, Laura. "Reel Pleasures: Cinema Audiences and Entrepreneurs in Twentieth-Century Urban Tanzania." Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2018.
- Gabriel, Teshome H. "Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation." Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1979.
- Guevara, Che. "Socialism and Man in Cuba." *The Che Reader*. 12 March, 1965. 13 Mar., 2019. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/guevara/1965/03/man-socialism.htm>.
- Hamad, Seif S. "Democracy Deferred In Zanzibar, By Maalim Seif Sharif Hamad." *Premium Times Opinion*. 28 June, 2016. 13 Mar., 2019. <https://opinion.premiumtimesng.com/2016/06/28/democracy-deferred-in-zanzibar-by-maalim-seif-sharif-hamad/>
- Hamdani, Mariam M., Ali Rashid, Salim, and Fatma Saleh, Amour. "A History of Zanzibar Media: Traditions and Transitions." Dar Es Salaam: Media Council of Tanzania, 2014.
- Harrow, Kenneth W. *Postcolonial African Cinema: From Political Engagement to Postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.
- Hashil, Seif. H., "Mimi, Umma Party na Mapinduzi Ya Zanzibar." France: Buluu Publishing, 2018.

- Juma, Ali S. "Zanzibar Hadi Mwaka 2000." Zanzibar: Rafiki Publishers, 2007.
- Lofchie, Michael F. "Zanzibar: Background to Revolution." Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- Masinde, J. (2019). "Tanzania's president is trying to force the media to shut up, listen and be nice." 03 April 2017. 13 Mar. 2019. <<https://qz.com/africa/945629/john-magufulis-tanzania-is-one-which-hurts-press-freedom-and-journalists/>>
- Moloo, Shaukat. "Nothing certain: A Memoir of Migration, Love, and Resilience." Toronto: Migrant Memory Press, 2018.
- Mongia, Padmini. Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Murphy, David and Patrick Williams. Postcolonial African Cinema: Ten Directors. New York: Manchester University Press, 2007.
- Nyerere, J. K. (1962) 1967, 'President's Inaugural Address' in Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, 176-187.
- Parker, Mark. "The Battle of Algiers." *Film Quarterly* 60 (2007): 62
- Ryan, Tom. "The Battle of Algiers." *Entertainment/Film*. 20 June 2004. 13 Mar. 2019 <<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/06/16/1087244972795.html>>.
- Shafi, Adam S. "Vuta N'Kuvute". Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki Na Nyota Publishers, 1999.
- Shivii, Issa G. "Pan-Africanism or Pragmatism: Lessons of the Zanzibar-Tanganyika Union." Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki Na Nyota Publishers, 2008.
- Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam. "The Third Worldist Film." *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Solanas, Fernando and Octavio Getino. "TOWARD A THIRD CINEMA." *Cinéaste* 4, no. 3 (1970): 1-10. 13 Mar. 2019 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41685716>>.
- Stam, Robert and Louis Spence. "Colonialism, Racism and Representation." *Screen* (1983): 24(2).

Filmography

Beatty, Warren, Director. *Reds*. Paramount Home Entertainment, 1981.

Casson, Philip, Director. *Macbeth*. ITV, 1979.

Chande, Omar, Director. *Aisha*. Azam Media, 2015.

Kalatozov, Mikhail, Director. *Soy Cuba*. Image Entertainment, 1964.

Pontecorvo, Gillo, Director. *The Battle of Algiers*. Casbah Films, 1965.

Sembene, Ousmane, Director. *Mandabi*. New Yorker Films, 1968

Shivji, Amil, Director. *Samaki Mchangani*. Kijiweni Productions, 2014.

Shivji, Amil, Director. *Shoeshine*. Kijiweni Productions, 2013.

Shivji, Amil, Director. *T-Junction*. Kijiweni Productions, 2017.

Weir, Peter, Director. *The Year of Living Dangerously*. Warner Archive Collection, 1982.

Wong, Kar-Wai, Director. *In the Mood for Love*. The Criterion Collection, 2000.