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Adanggaman

Ivory Coast/France/Burkina Faso/Switzerland, 2000, 90 minutes

Director: Roger Gnoan M'Bala

Cast: Rasmane Ouedraogo, Albertine N'Guessan, Ziablé Honoré Goore Bi, Bintou Bakayoko **Producer:** Tiziana Soudani **Screenplay:** Roger Gnoan M'Bala, Jean-Marie Adlaffi, Bertin Akafou **Cinematographer:** Mohammed Soudani **Editor:** Monica Goux **Music:** Lokua Kanza **Production Company:** IMTM Films / Renardes Prods. / Amka Films Prods. / Abyssa Film / Direction Nationale de la Cinématographie (Burkina Faso) **Print Source/Sales Agent:** Celluloid Dreams **Format:** 35mm

Ostensibly factual, helplessly self-conscious, targeted like a smart bomb at African society but cagily aware of Western eyes, *Adanggaman* is being touted as the continent's first film about slavery as it was experienced on African soil - where the victims and enslavers were both native peoples, often battling along tribal lines. Coming from today's equatorial belt, it's a startling analogue of contemporary horrors...

Adanggaman's sociopolitical wallop belongs to the present... M'Bala's characters don't talk race; they just run, beginning with Ossei (Ziablé Honoré Goore Bi), a young warrior in love with a slave girl his father won't allow to muddy the family's lineage. After a raid by painted, spear-wielding "amazons" wipes out the village, the survivors are marched to the village of King Adanggaman (Rasmane Ouedraogo), an archetypal African plundercrat happily selling off humans for English rum and rifles.

The most persnickety viewers may suspect loaded iconographic dice, what with the hero's tribe's naked naturalness offset by the female rampagers' exotic body paint and festoonery. It's impossible to say how precise or opportunistic M'Bala is being, since even today Africa is commonly boiled down for us from thousands of disparate cultures to a mere handful. (The movie uses up to five distinct tribal languages, plus French.) In any case, since it is color-blind, *Adanggaman* effortlessly buries race hatred and tribal bile as issues, leaving only the raw grinder of capitalism.

- Michael Atkinson, *The Village Voice*

Selected Filmography: *The Hat* (75), *Ablakon* (85), *In the Name of Christ* (93)

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