

Adapting Daily Drama for the Screen: An Analysis of *Chronicles of Odumkrom – The Headmaster* (2015) and Reflections of Ghanaian Community and Citizenship

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Abstract

The cinematic construction of time and space, along with storytelling within these parameters, fundamental aspects that characterise film as a mimetic art form, have been widely employed and adapted in Ghanaian film discourse, spanning both popular and art films. However, neither of these cinematic approaches, especially when compared to traditional concepts like daily drama and community theatre, has been sufficiently explored within the Ghanaian context, as exemplified by *Chronicles of Odumkrom: The Headmaster* (2015). The effort to contextualise and depict filmmaking practices alongside common social issues rooted in Ghanaian communities is a noteworthy achievement. This paper seeks to link Ghana's independent digital filmmaking ingenuity to broader themes of nationhood, state, and citizenship, by analysing the film. The primary focus is to explore the relationship between citizen engagement in local and national issues, particularly in community interests, and cinematic expression as envisioned by some Ghanaian film artists. The theoretical framework draws on Foucault's (1977) insights on the modern world and Agamben's (2008) reflections on Foucault's ideas. The paper concludes that film is not only a form of professional artistic practice, but also a powerful mediating force within society.

Keywords: *Filmic construction, Time, Space, Daily drama, Community theatre, Citizen engagement*

Introduction

During the late 1960s through the mid-1980s, Ghanaian cinema experienced a vibrant surge of creative energy, marked by the emergence of filmmakers producing highly original and innovative films. This period was characterised by bold storytelling and experimental approaches, using folklore and folktales that set Ghanaian film apart such as in *No Tears for Ananse* (1968) directed by Sam Aryeetey. While the 1990s saw a shift toward more mainstream productions, the 2000s introduced a wave of films that were often eccentric (Aveh, 2010). However, seasoned directors and producers like Kwaw Ansah, King Ampaw and Ernest Abbeyquaye, continue to push artistic boundaries, creating films that are lively and innovative, even if not always commercially successful. Historically, Ghana was known for its cinema

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rooted in political activism and social commentary with films like *The Other Side of the Rich* (1992) by Ernest Abbeyquaye; *Crossroads of People, Crossroads of Trade* (1994) and *Heritage Africa* (1989) both by Kwaw Ansah; and *I Told You So* (1970) by Egbert Adjesu. But that tradition has waned over time.

In the contemporary context, filmmaking continues to serve as a powerful tool for preserving, promoting, and showcasing indigenous languages, cultures, and traditions, especially for marginalised communities often overlooked in global cinema. It functions as a medium for human development; storytelling that educates, enlightens, and fosters community identity through visual narratives. Films act as windows into indigenous worlds, shaping collective consciousness in an age dominated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Croffie, 2015; National Commission on Culture, 2004).

Regarding Ghanaian cinema, transforming everyday stories into visual narratives plays a crucial role in reflecting, shaping, and challenging community identities and social realities. *Chronicles of Odumkrom: The Headmaster* (2015) exemplifies this approach by translating local daily life and drama into a cinematic form that strikes a chord with both local residents and wider audiences.

This study investigates how *Chronicles of Odumkrom* functions beyond mere entertainment, serving as a platform for social discourse around issues such as power, sovereignty, and the concept of participatory citizenship in Ghana. By analysing its narrative style, visual techniques, and cultural themes, the paper demonstrates the film's role in fostering dialogue and raising social awareness. As Ghana continues to develop its filmmaking identity, it is increasingly important to understand the impact of digital storytelling, particularly those rooted in traditional daily drama. This paper offers a valuable contribution to the broader scholarship on African cinema, community-based filmmaking, and the social functions of visual storytelling, emphasising the transformative potential of independent digital films in building participatory and engaged communities.

1. Problem Statement, Objectives and Questions

Today, significant developments are taking place within the film and popular culture landscape among indigenous communities in the Global South, yet these have received limited academic attention (Abrahams, 2018). Recognising this gap, it becomes particularly relevant to examine indigenous language filmmaking in Ghana, specifically using *The Chronicles of Odumkrom. Filmmaking* methods that relate to everyday drama and community theatre as exemplified by this film have not been sufficiently explored within the Ghanaian context. It is crucial to raise awareness among producers and filmmakers about the importance of contextualising, depicting, and safeguarding Ghana and Africa's artistic practices, social issues, and cultural heritage through their works.

Thus, by examining the film's narrative, imagery, and themes, the paper aims to explore how it influences community identity and promotes social engagement. In particular, the paper analyses how the film adapts the storytelling techniques of daily drama for the cinematic form.

To address the study's objectives, the following questions are posed: How does the film's narrative structure and visual style reflect the conventions of Ghanaian daily dramas? In what ways does the film portray aspects of community cohesion, social roles, and citizenship in

Ghana? What are the implications of adapting daily dramas into films for cultural expression and social awareness in Ghana?

2. Methodology

This study employed qualitative, interpretive approach to analyse *Chronicles of Odumkrom* within its social, cultural, and cinematic contexts. The methodology integrates textual analysis, contextual interpretation, and theoretical application to explore the film's depiction of community life, citizen engagement, and cinematic adaptation of daily drama (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The core of the methodology involves a textual analysis of the film. This includes examining visual and narrative elements such as mise-en-scène, spatial representations, temporal structuring, character development, dialogue, and thematic motifs as suggested by Rose (2016) in studies such as this. The analysis aims to identify how the film constructs and represents time and space, reflecting community realities and social issues. To deepen the understanding of the film's social significance, the analysis considers Ghanaian cultural practices, community dynamics, and traditional storytelling forms, which Amoako and Agyemang (2017) believe are critical elements of films in the Global South. This contextual approach involves reviewing existing literature on Ghanaian community theatre and daily drama, as well as engaging with local cultural concepts and norms that influence cinematic storytelling. The study incorporated some interviews with the filmmaker, community members, and critics familiar with the film's production and reception. These interviews aim to provide insights into the intentions behind the filmic adaptation, community responses, and the perceived role of the film in fostering citizen engagement (Creswell, 2014).

Taking into account the qualitative nature of the study, findings are interpretive and context-specific. The analysis does not aim for statistical generalisation, but seeks to offer nuanced understanding of the film's social and cinematic functions within the Ghanaian community setting.

3. Theoretical Contexts

This paper argues that film is a typical form of artistic professional practice and an effective mediating mechanism prevalent in the contemporary world. To advance this argument, the paper draws on Michel Foucault's classical theories from the 1970s, particularly his concepts of power, knowledge, discourse, and societal structures, and of state systems and the mechanisms through which state control is exercised via what he terms "apparatus." These theoretical insights are complemented by the 2008 updated perspectives of philosopher Giorgio Agamben on Foucault's work. Specifically, Agamben's ideas on sovereignty, "states of exception," and community sovereignty provide a conceptual entry point for the analysis. These frameworks are employed to construct a definition of artistic professionalism and to establish a structural foundation for the research schema to interpret how *Chronicles of Odumkrom* mediates social power and citizen participation. By integrating Foucault's notions with Agamben's concepts, the analysis offers a comprehensive interpretive framework to understand the social dynamics, power relations, and political implications depicted in the film. In addition, these frameworks facilitate an examination of how the film reflects, challenges, or reinforces existing social discourses and community identities.

4. Literature Review

About literature review, the paper focuses on four main areas: perspectives on film as a mimetic medium; daily drama and community theatre in Ghana; Ghanaian cinema and independent digital ingenuity; and citizen engagement, nationhood, and media.

Perspectives on film as a mimetic form often emphasise film's capacity to replicate and represent reality through the manipulation of time, space, and narrative structures. Central to this view is the idea that cinema functions as a mirror to the real world, using visual and temporal cues to evoke honest experiences (Asante, 2014). Concepts of time in film include the use of editing techniques such as montage and continuity editing to shape viewers' perception of chronological flow and causality, while spatial representation pertains to mise-en-scène, framing, and camera angles that construct a coherent three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional screen. Narrative serves as the backbone that organises these elements into a coherent story, facilitating the viewer's understanding of characters, actions, and social contexts. These elements work together to create a mimetic illusion that fosters a sense of realism and emotional engagement (Bordwell & Thompson, 2003).

Building on the above ideas, Bordwell and Thompson (2003) highlight the significance of cinematic storytelling in representing social realities. Both argue that films serve as cultural texts that reflect, reinforce, or challenge societal values, ideologies, and social structures. Through narrative strategies such as character development, plot progression, and thematic motifs, cinema can offer insights into social issues, human behaviour, and collective identities. Both emphasise that filmmakers often employ specific narrative conventions to shape audiences' perceptions of societal norms and conflicts, thereby functioning as both mirrors and critiques of social reality. This perspective underscores cinema's dual role as an artistic medium and a social document, capable of depicting complex social dynamics while also influencing viewers' understanding of the world around them.

Historically, ***daily drama and community theatre in Ghana*** have served as vital mediums for social cohesion, cultural expression, and education. Amoah and Osei (2010) assert that these theatrical forms are deeply rooted in Ghanaian traditions, often reflecting local customs, oral storytelling practices, community dialogue, identity reinforcement, and indigenous values. These often happens in rural areas where formal education and media penetration are limited. The activities often incorporate music, dance, and language specific to local communities, making them powerful tools for social commentary, thereby reinforcing communal bonds.

Transitioning from traditional community theatre to cinematic adaptation marks a significant evolution in Ghana's storytelling landscape. According to recent studies by Asante (2014) and Amoah and Osei (2010), there has been a shift driven by technological advancements and changing audience preferences, leading to the adaptation of traditional stories and themes into films and televised dramas. This shift aims to reach a broader, more diverse audience beyond local communities, allowing for wider dissemination of cultural narratives. While this transition facilitates modernisation and increased visibility, it also raises concerns about the potential dilution of indigenous storytelling techniques. Nonetheless, the adaptation process has opened new avenues for Ghanaian storytellers and/or film artists to blend traditional elements with contemporary media, fostering a dynamic cultural dialogue that bridges the past and present.

Ghanaian cinema as independent digital creativity has experienced a significant evolution over the decades, transitioning from traditional film production methods to embracing digital technologies and independent filmmaking. Asante (2014) and Aveh (2010) assert that contemporary practices in Ghanaian cinema are characterised by a proliferation of independent-individual digital filmmakers who leverage affordable digital tools to produce and distribute films outside ‘mainstream independent studios.’ This shift has democratised filmmaking, enabling a diverse range of voices, and stories and innovative storytelling techniques to emerge, often reflecting local cultural realities and social issues. This blends traditional narratives with modern digital aesthetics, enriching filmmaking and expanding its reach both, locally and internationally.

Community-based filmmaking in Ghana presents unique opportunities and notable challenges. On one hand, it serves as a powerful tool for social engagement, cultural preservation, and community empowerment, allowing local voices to be heard and their stories to be documented accurately. However, challenges such as limited access to funding, technical resources, and training often hinder sustainable growth in this sector. Additionally, community filmmakers frequently face issues related to distribution and recognition, which can restrict the wider dissemination of their work. Tetteh Abbeyquaye confirmed that the origin of *Chronicles of Odumkrom* dates back, approximately, three to four years. He explained:

My brother, business partner, and co-producer, Kojo Pobee Abbeyquaye, and I, came up with a bold idea to establish a film company dedicated to producing Ghanaian movies. [...]. We also agreed that our focus would be on projects that help preserve and promote African culture. However, we quickly discovered through experience that filmmaking is not as simple as we had been told (Personal Interview, June 2015; also in the Press Kit, www.trumpetafrica.com).

This candid acknowledgment underscores the difficulties faced by individual filmmakers and producers in Ghana, pointing out the gap between cultural aspirations and operational realities. In contrast, the Ghanaian government recognises the strategic importance of the film industry as a vital cultural vehicle and has taken, somewhat, comprehensive steps to foster its growth. As outlined by the National Commission on Culture (NCC), these initiatives include:

Firstly, promoting the establishment of institutions and agencies dedicated to film production and development; secondly, urging financial institutions such as banks to support the industry through favorable lending terms for filmmakers; thirdly, fostering the indigenisation of film distribution, supporting the marketing of Ghanaian films, and setting exhibition standards aligned with theatrical practices; and finally, implementing regulatory measures to oversee public and private broadcasters and film importers, ensuring the protection of Ghanaian values and national interests (2004, p. 33).

This policy framework emphasises the importance of developing a vibrant film industry as a crucial channel for cultural expression and national identity. It advocates for government and institutional support to nurture local talent and content, financial incentives to attract investment, and regulations to ensure the industry reflects Ghanaian values. Such measures are essential for creating a sustainable film sector that can serve as a powerful tool for cultural promotion and economic development.

Together, the above perspectives juxtapose the personal entrepreneurial challenges with the broader institutional efforts to harness film as a powerful medium for cultural preservation and promotion, illustrating both the hurdles faced by individual filmmakers and the systemic support designed to cultivate Ghanaian filmmaking excellence. In a keynote address titles,

“The Meaning of Independence: Challenges and Opportunities for Ghanaian Film in an Age of Abundance,” during the 1st Legon International Film Event (LIFE I) at the University of Ghana in March 2014, Professor Erik Knudsen of the University of Salford, Manchester, offered a critical perspective, stating, “What you see reflects the mind of those who make the decisions, not those who have the talents.” This remark emphasises that current films often reflect the perspectives and choices of policymakers rather than the creative voices of artists themselves. He questioned the sustainability of this situation, endorsing the biblical psalmist’s plea: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help” (Psalm 121:1). Knudsen’s point suggests that Ghanaian filmmakers and stakeholders should look beyond current limitations, seeking inspiration and support from higher ideals and collective effort to advance the industry.

Despite these challenges, the emergence of digital platforms and collaborative filmmaking models such as Netflix, YouTube, Vimeo, Prime Video, and others, as well as families and friends pooling resources, provides promising opportunities to promote grassroots participation, broaden audiences, and enhance the role of community-based cinema in Ghana. Tetteh states:

It is our fervent hope that the film will serve its intended purpose; to educate, to entertain, to uplift, as well as encourage selflessness and volunteerism in our communities. Trumpet Africa also hopes that this movie would contribute its small part in rejuvenating the film industry in Ghana (Personal Interview, June 2015; also in the Press Kit, www.trumpetafrica.com).

With regards to ***citizen engagement, nationhood, and media***, the pivotal role of media (film inclusive) as a mediating force for citizenship, serving as a conduit through which individuals engage with their nationhood and participate in civic life cannot be overstated (Cox & Smith, 2017). Nyamnjoh (2005) emphasises that media, particularly in its various forms, shapes citizens’ perceptions of their identity, rights, and responsibilities within the nation-state. It facilitates dialogue, democratises access to information, and fosters a sense of belonging, thereby reinforcing or challenging existing notions of nationhood. According to NCC (2004), media’s capacity to mediate these processes underlines its importance in shaping participatory citizenship, especially in contexts where traditional institutions may be less accessible or ineffective.

5. Analysis and Discussions

In Ghana, everyday drama television shows have been a popular way for communities to share stories, discuss social issues, and reflect their daily lives. These shows are often produced locally and focus on everyday experiences, making them relatable and meaningful to viewers. Recent productions include, *Kejetia vs. Makola*, *The Fisherman*, and *Yolo*, among others. The earlier works are those of *The Jaguar Jokers* in the 1960s and 1970s, and later, the *Key Soap Concert Party*, *Cantata*, *Obra*, between the late 1990s and 2000s. Another popular television show was *Taxi Driver*. Throughout both current and past performances, these productions have consistently reflected the latest trends in fashion, music, dance, and social commentary.

With the rise of digital technology, many of these dramas are now adapted into films, offering new ways to reach audiences and share community stories. *Chronicles of Odumkrom: The Headmaster* (2015) is one such film that transforms a traditional daily drama into a filmic piece.

The film is a heartfelt, yet humorous social drama that depicts the life of a headmaster in a Ghanaian community and focuses on social themes like leadership, education, and community values, personal sacrifice, self-help, and volunteerism.

Drawing on theoretical perspectives from Foucault (1977) and Agamben (2008), the analysis of the film explores how it portrays and impacts social power dynamics, community sovereignty, and citizen engagement. Thus, it is appropriate to begin with an overview of the film to establish the foundation for its subsequent analysis and discussion.

Chronicles of Odumkrom, is a 143-minute length film written and directed by Ernest Kofi Abbeyquaye, and features a cast of celebrated Ghanaian actors that includes, Charles Kofi Bucknor (Master Andoh), Doris Sackitey (Ama Dapaah), Frederick Amugi (Kofi Bediako, Money Lender), David Dontoh (Mr. Brown), Adjetey Anang (Kweku), Clement Bonney (Ata Yaw, Mr. Beautiful), William Addo (Elder Opanyin Acheampong), Ebenezer Donkoh (Katawere), Theodorah Amuah (Abena, Master Andoh's daughter), Kofi Laing (Koshwe), Paulina Oduro (Naa Dede, Bediako's Wife), among others.

The story focuses on Mr. Andoh, affectionately known as Master Andoh, a dedicated retired teacher committed to educating his pupils to gain knowledge and become better citizens for their community and country. He is also a loving father, devoted husband, and a respected figure in Odumkrom. Despite limited resources and a dilapidated school building with no funds for repairs or refurbishment, Master Andoh and his staff keep the school open. However, one fateful April morning, a powerful storm destroys the entire village school, leaving the children without a place to learn. Determined to restore the school against all odds, Master Andoh leads the community effort to reconstruct the building through communal labour and voluntary donations. As he mobilises the townspeople, he quickly discovers that rallying an apathetic community is no easy task. His call for volunteerism sparks division within the town. One faction supports him, advocating for the community to take responsibility to rebuild the school, while another argues that it is the government's duty to provide educational facilities. Meanwhile, some residents threaten to oppose the reconstruction altogether. Faced with dwindling support and community indifference, Master Andoh makes a profound personal sacrifice. He decides to pawn his only daughter, Abena, a beautiful sixteen-year-old girl he loves dearly, to a notorious moneylender, Kofi Bediako, for a loan to fund the construction of two classrooms. The film raises critical questions: How does Master Andoh navigate the challenges as the deadline for repaying the loan approaches and the school remains incomplete? What is the true cost of providing education? What sacrifices must be made to bring enlightenment to a community resistant to change? These are the themes explored throughout the story.

5.1.Filmic Construction of Time and Space

The cinematic construction of time and space in *Chronicles of Odumkrom* can be analysed through two key lenses: the spatial representation of community life and the temporal narrative strategies employed by the film. These elements work together to deepen the social commentary and emotional impact of the story, underscoring the communal struggles and personal sacrifices within village settings in Ghana.

Regarding spatial representation of community life, the film visually depicts the village, Odumkrom, as a communal space where social interactions and collective endeavours occur, exemplified by the lively fishing port and its bustling activities. The school, initially a dilapidated, but functional space, symbolises the community's hopes and unity. Its destruction by the storm is more than a physical event; it signifies a rupture in the social fabric and aspirations of Odumkrom's inhabitants. This impact is so significant that it has become the talk of the town, as illustrated in various scenes. Physical settings serve as narrative symbols. For instance, the school's physical state reflects the socio-economic challenges faced by the community. Its initial dilapidation and subsequent destruction serve as visual metaphors for neglect and the need for communal effort. Scenes of rebuilding the school through communal labour, the community meetings in open spaces and village squares prior to this, highlight collective agency and the importance of shared space in community life. Contrast of spaces regarding the transition from the school to the community's efforts to rebuild underpins a spatial dichotomy, public spaces representing hope and collective action versus the private, familial space where Master Andoh's personal sacrifices unfold. The film depicts division and conflict as spatial dynamics. The split factions within the community are portrayed through contrasting spaces or groupings, supporters and opponents, visualising the social divisions. These spatial distinctions accentuate the internal conflicts and the fragmentation of community cohesion (Figure 1).

Temporal narrative strategies such as linear and non-linear elements, pacing and timing, symbolic time markers, and cycle of time and social change, have been portrayed in the film. The film employs a predominantly linear narrative, depicting events from the storm's destruction through the rebuilding process to the climax of Master Andoh's sacrifice. However, flashbacks or reflective sequences have been used to provide background on Master Andoh's motivations, the history of community efforts, moments of introspection, enriching the narrative temporally. The progression from hope to despair and ultimately sacrifice is paced to evoke emotional responses. The storm's destruction marks a pivotal temporal moment, a sudden rupture that shifts the narrative from stability to chaos. The subsequent slow efforts to rebuild and the mounting tension as the deadline approaches build suspense and emotional engagement. Specific dates, seasons (e.g., the mention of April and the storm), and events are used to mark key moments, fixing the story in a tangible temporal framework. These markers evoke a sense of real-time struggle and perseverance. Also, the film subtly suggests the cyclical nature of community life, emphasising that struggles and sacrifices are ongoing, reflective of larger social and historical processes in Ghana. The narrative's temporal layers emphasise that individual sacrifices are embedded within the broader flow of communal history.

The interplay of space and time in cinematic construction is the hallmark of *Chronicles of Odumkrom*. The film's visual and narrative strategies intertwine space and time to create a textured storytelling approach. The physical destruction of the school is a temporal marker that signifies a turning point, stressing the fragility of community efforts. The rebuilding process takes place over a period, with scenes showing communal labour, meetings, and setbacks, illustrating the passage of time and collective resilience. Master Andoh's personal sacrifice is portrayed through intimate sequences within his private space, his home, family interactions, contrasted with the public space of the community's efforts, calling attention to the tension between personal and communal timelines (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: *The construction of Master Andoh in his private space in a public place, showing his personal concern and sacrifice towards the building of the Village School.*

In the film, cinematic construction of time and space serves as a powerful framework to explore themes of community, sacrifice, and social change. Spatial representation emphasises the collective identity and divisions within Odumkrom, while temporal strategies highlight the narrative's progression from hope through crisis to sacrifice.

5.2.Narrative Storytelling and Community Issues

The examination of the *Chronicles of Odumkrom*, using narrative storytelling and community issues, focuses specifically on the portrayal of local conflicts, leadership, social cohesion, and the adaptation of daily drama tropes into film language.

The film portrays local conflicts, which dwell on community divisions and divergent perspectives. It vividly captures the internal conflicts within Odumkrom, embodying broader societal struggles over responsibility, agency, and resource allocation. These conflicts are exemplified by the split between those (Master Andoh and his supporters) who believe the community should rebuild the school through local efforts and those (Katawere and his followers) who insist that the government should shoulder this responsibility. This dichotomy reflects real-world debates about communal versus institutional roles in development, drawing attention to issues of dependency, self-help, and local agency.

Katawere and his associates have sown obvious seeds of doubt within the community in an attempt to oppose the new building project. The situation is further complicated by the contentious issue of land ownership, escalating construction costs, and the covert use of black magic. Master Andoh experienced nostalgic moments at this point, intertwined with regret upon confronting the reality that a once-significant person now exists only in memory with the collapse of the school building. This emotional stance serves as a form of resistance to the irreversible nature of loss, stressing a desire to recover what has been lost. Such nostalgia challenges the conventional, linear view of time, transforming it from an endpoint, something irretrievable, into an ongoing longing to reconnect with the past in the present. According to Geniusas (2025), this emotional response cultivates both regret and an active yearning for the return of those bygone moments, a phenomenon vividly depicted in *Chronicles of Odumkrom*. Equally disturbing is Master Andoh's deteriorating mental state as the horrifying scope of his altruistic plan becomes evident. He is haunted by nightmares, and the progression of his

project begins to strain his relationship with his wife, ultimately leading to Ama Dapaah being hospitalised for a period.

Agamben's (2008) 'state of exception' refers to a situation where normal legal and political order is suspended, often justified by emergencies. In the film, the storm that destroys the school is an 'emergency' disrupting the normal order of education and community life. The community's failure to rebuild the school symbolises a suspension of their sovereignty, an inability to act as the sovereign power over their educational destiny. The community's division and inaction reflect an abdication of sovereignty. The community appears to be caught in a 'state of exception,' where their collective authority to decide on educational matters is suspended due to external (government) and internal (apathy, factionalism) constraints. Master Andoh's efforts to mobilise the community is an attempt to reassert community sovereignty, but external factors (government's perceived responsibility, economic hardship) limit this sovereignty. Personal vis-à-vis collective sacrifice are sufficiently depicted in the film. His personal sacrifice, pawned daughter (her future), personal debt, can be viewed as an attempt to transcend the 'state of exception' by restoring normalcy through extraordinary measures. Again, his sacrifice exemplifies how individuals may act as 'sovereign' figures in moments of crisis, to galvanise collective action, attempt to re-establish social order and community sovereignty, but also raises questions about ethical boundaries and the limits of individual sacrifice.

The film illustrates how power is exercised through discourse, whether by community factions, the government, or individuals like Master Andoh. The struggle over responsibility for education reflects broader societal tensions about authority, responsibility, and agency (Personal interview, Charles Kofi Bucknor, Sept. 2015).

This conflict underscores the moral dilemma faced by individuals in impoverished communities where the cost of social progress often falls heavily on personal or familial sacrifices. The narrative, thus, portrays local conflicts not merely as disagreements, but as moral struggles deeply rooted in cultural values and survival instincts. The factions opposing the school's rebuilding symbolise resistance to change, traditional mind-sets, and possibly skepticism towards external aid or government intervention. This resistance manifests as social conflict, illustrating how deeply ingrained social attitudes can hinder community development.

In terms of leadership and social cohesion, Master Andoh serves as an exemplary moral and community leader. His leadership embodies resilience, moral authority, and dedication. He personifies the ideal of a community leader who is committed to social upliftment despite facing adversity. His persistent efforts to rally the community highlight themes of grassroots leadership rooted in empathy and moral uprightness. However, Master Andoh faced challenges to his leadership, illustrating how power is exercised through discourse. The film depicts how leadership is tested when community support wanes. Cinematic techniques such as close-ups of Master Andoh's emotional struggles, poignant music, and symbolic imagery (e.g., the destroyed school, the pawned daughter's picture) heighten the emotional impact.

The film explores how conflicts threaten social cohesion, but also presents opportunities for reconciliation; that is, erosion and restoration of social cohesion. Master Andoh's eventual perseverance and sacrifice serve as catalysts for uniting the community, emphasising that genuine leadership involves moral courage and the capacity to inspire collective effort.

Foucault (1977) asserts that power and knowledge are intertwined, with power not merely repressive, but productive – shaping realities, identities, and social practices. In the film, Master Andoh embodies a form of institutional power rooted in education and moral authority. His advocacy for rebuilding the school and his personal sacrifice reflect a desire to generate knowledge (through education) as a means of empowerment. The community's division reflects competing discourses: one that aligns education with communal progress and responsibility, and another that delegitimises this effort, instead emphasising governmental authority or apathy. The community's apathy and division are manifestations of dispersed power, where multiple discourses compete for dominance. The film depicts discursive struggles over who bears responsibility for education, whether it is a community obligation or the state's. The faction that insists the government should provide schools exemplifies a discourse that invokes state authority and perhaps a sense of entitlement. On the other hand, Master Andoh's discourse promotes grassroots agency, self-help, and communal responsibility, challenging official narratives that often marginalise local initiatives. His personal sacrifice underscores the limits of individual moral authority within these power structures, showing the tension between moral persuasion and institutional authority.

Chronicles of Odumkrom (2015) adapts daily drama tropes into cinematic language. This is evident in the ways of the Hero's moral dilemma, conflict and resolution, cultural specificity and use of humour and poignancy. Regarding the hero's moral dilemma, the narrative employs the classic trope of the self-sacrificing hero, Master Andoh, whose personal sacrifice for communal good resonates with traditional storytelling. In her 2015 review of the film, critic and editor-in-chief of *aladimagazine.com*, Abena Serwaa Osei-Bempong asserts that,

Watching *Chronicles of Odumkrom* reminded me so much of my school days reading Shakespeare. Ernest Abbeyquaye's film exudes all the hallmarks of a typical Ghanaian drama ... the well-meaning individual, a problem that threatens to destabilise that individual and or his family, and those archetypal characters hungry to bring down the good. But unlike the myriad of Ghanaian dramas I have seen, I felt *Chronicles of Odumkrom* successfully pulls the audience to the bosom of the protagonist, Headmaster Andoh.

Concerning conflict and resolution, the film's narrative structure follows familiar dramatic arcs: introduction of the community's plight, rising tension with factional conflicts, climax with Master Andoh's sacrifice, and eventual resolution. These are conveyed through dialogues, visual contrasts (e.g., dilapidated school vs. rebuilt school), and community interactions that dramatise the stakes involved.

In balancing humour with social commentary, the film employs comedic moments such as relatable village characters and humorous dialogues to make the heavy themes more accessible. This blending of humour and tragedy reflects daily drama tropes where life's hardships are intertwined with light-heartedness, making the social issues more engaging and culturally compelling. For instance, even the fiery moneylender and debt collector, Kofi Bediako, could have easily exploited his influence over Master Andoh to intensify his suffering. However, Abbeyquaye chooses to resist and instead employs the local drunkard, Ata Yaw, as the moral voice of the community. Ata Yaw is a humorous character to watch, a man who struggles to maintain his balance due to his constant inebriation, with a costume to match (Fig. 2). Despite this, he demonstrates remarkable insight, offering the audience sharp observations about the escalating problems in Odumkrom through a series of digressions and monologues. He even

dares to interrupt a town meeting where the chief is addressing the crowd with words of wisdom. Ata Yaw effectively provides comic relief, enriching the film with his presence.



Figure 2: *Ata Yaw as the town drunk*



Figure 3: *One of such gatherings with Kofi Bediako, the man with all the cash.*

In the adaptation of local storytelling techniques into cinematic language, moments of cultural specificity play a significant role. Techniques such as oral storytelling, proverbs, myths, folktales, and community gatherings (Fig. 3) are seamlessly integrated to deepen the narrative's cultural significance and rationality (Owoo, 1985). Proverbs like “Children know haste, elders know patience” and “Knowledge is the property of elders” stand out for their cultural depth and insight. The seamless fluidity of actors switching between Fanti, Twi, and Ga languages, is effective. By incorporating these indigenous languages, Ernest Abbeyquaye, an accomplished film director from a “minority nationality,” emphasises the importance of the mother-tongue as a core element of cultural identity and a powerful medium for expressing and transmitting cultural values. Visual cues, including traditional attire such as Ashanti and Ewe kente cloth for men, and slit and khaba garments with matching headgear for women, along with local settings and community rituals, function as visual shorthand, conveying cultural identity and social nuances without the need for explicit explanation (Fig. 2). This integration enriches the storytelling by embedding viewers in a true cultural context. These elements exemplify what Stoller (1992) describes as “the total experience in African film connected to African culture of communication” (p. 20).

5.3. Ghanaian community practices and cinematic representation

Examining *Chronicles of Odumkrom*, focusing on community practices and cinematic representation reveals rich insights into Ghanaian societal norms and the film's role as a mirror and mediator within communities. Two main aspects of community practices and cinematic representation call for discussion: reflection of everyday realities and cultural norms, and the film as a mirror of Ghanaian society.

In reflecting everyday realities and cultural norms, the film vividly portrays the Ghanaian value of “susu” (communal effort) and collective responsibility, especially in rural settings. Despite the dilapidated school building and limited resources, the villagers' initial willingness to rebuild reflects a deep-rooted communal spirit. The subject of respect for elders and leadership has been forcefully pressed in the film. Master Andoh embodies the revered figure of a teacher, akin to the traditional spokesperson (okyeame), whose ethical authority and dedication serve

as a moral compass. His leadership reflects Ghanaian norms where elders and educators are custodians of societal values and catalysts for social change. Though not explicitly religious, the film's themes of sacrifice, duty, and perseverance reflect Christian and traditional Ghanaian values, pointing to “sankofa” (learning from the past) and “ahobrase” (respect and humility).

Chronicles of Odumkrom functions as a cinematic reflection of Ghanaian societal dynamics. The film showcases resilience amidst adversity in Odumkrom; the community's resolve despite poverty, infrastructural decay, and political apathy, illustrates Ghana's broader narrative of post-independence development struggles. The portrayal of Abena's sacrifice draws attention to traditional gender roles and expectations, emphasising the value placed on women's chastity, family honour, and the personal sacrifices women and girls make for societal stability (Fig. 4). Regarding the way the film encourages community dialogue and involvement in Odumkrom, one of the main participants shares the following perspective:

Through characters representing various factions, supporters, skeptics, and opponents, the film models how diverse perspectives coexist within a community. The narrative invites viewers to empathise with different viewpoints, encouraging active participation and discussion about how to address local issues collaboratively (Personal interview, Fred Amugi, Aug. 2015).



Figure 4: *Abena and her friends at a durbar to celebrate the rebuilding of the School, showing the important role women and girls play in Ghanaian community life.*

Chronicles of Odumkrom and the role of independent digital artistry in shaping national discourse cannot be understated. Independent digital filmmaking, exemplified by this film, allows Ghanaian film artists to produce authentic narratives rooted in local realities without the constraints of mainstream commercial filmmaking. This democratisation fosters a more genuine reflection of societal issues, making the stories deeply discernible with local audiences, contributing to a more pluralistic national discourse.

The depiction of village life, traditional values, and social tensions offers a nuanced perspective often underrepresented in mainstream media. Digital platforms and independent productions lower barriers to distribution, allowing such films to reach wider audiences both within Ghana and internationally. This dissemination fosters cross-cultural dialogue, raises awareness about local issues, and sparks conversations about development, education, and social justice. An elder community member from Awutu Breku, where much of the film was shot, remarked on the role of independent digital artistry in shaping national discourse, stating that

By portraying real-life social tensions and the emotional toll of sacrifice, the film becomes a conversation starter in community gatherings, schools, and media discussions. It acts as a catalyst for dialogue about education, community development, and social cohesion, empowering citizens to voice their opinions and participate in problem-solving (Personal interview, Anthony Mensah Archer, Aug. 2015).

By harnessing digital tools, Ghanaian filmmakers can craft compelling visual stories that shape socio-cultural debates, challenge stereotypes, inspire change, and influence policy discussions. In this context, *Chronicles of Odumkrom* serves as a form of civic engagement, promoting reflection on the costs and sacrifices inherent in community development. The broader implications in all this is that the film's approach influences national discourse, exemplifies how grassroots storytelling stimulate activism, challenge official narratives. This underscores the importance of community participation in development projects and demonstrates the potential of digital creativity to foster a sense of shared identity and collective responsibility for social cohesion.

Employing Foucauldian and Agambenian frameworks to analyse the film reveals that *Chronicles of Odumkrom* is not only a social drama, but also a commentary on the complex power relations underpinning community efforts for social betterment. It highlights how discourse shapes perceptions of responsibility, how power is exercised through moral authority and institutional structures, and how crises can suspend sovereignty, requiring extraordinary personal sacrifices to restore social order and advance collective development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the significance of adapting daily drama formats for the screen as a vital means of reflecting and engaging with Ghanaian community life and citizenship. Through the analysis of *Chronicles of Odumkrom*, it becomes evident that Ghanaian filmmakers are employing cinematic techniques rooted in traditional storytelling, community theatre, and daily drama to construct a nuanced portrayal of social issues, time, and space within local contexts. The application of Foucauldian and Agambenian theoretical insights highlights the role of film as a mediating force, one that shapes societal perceptions, amplifies community voices, and encourages active engagement with governance and social concerns.

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