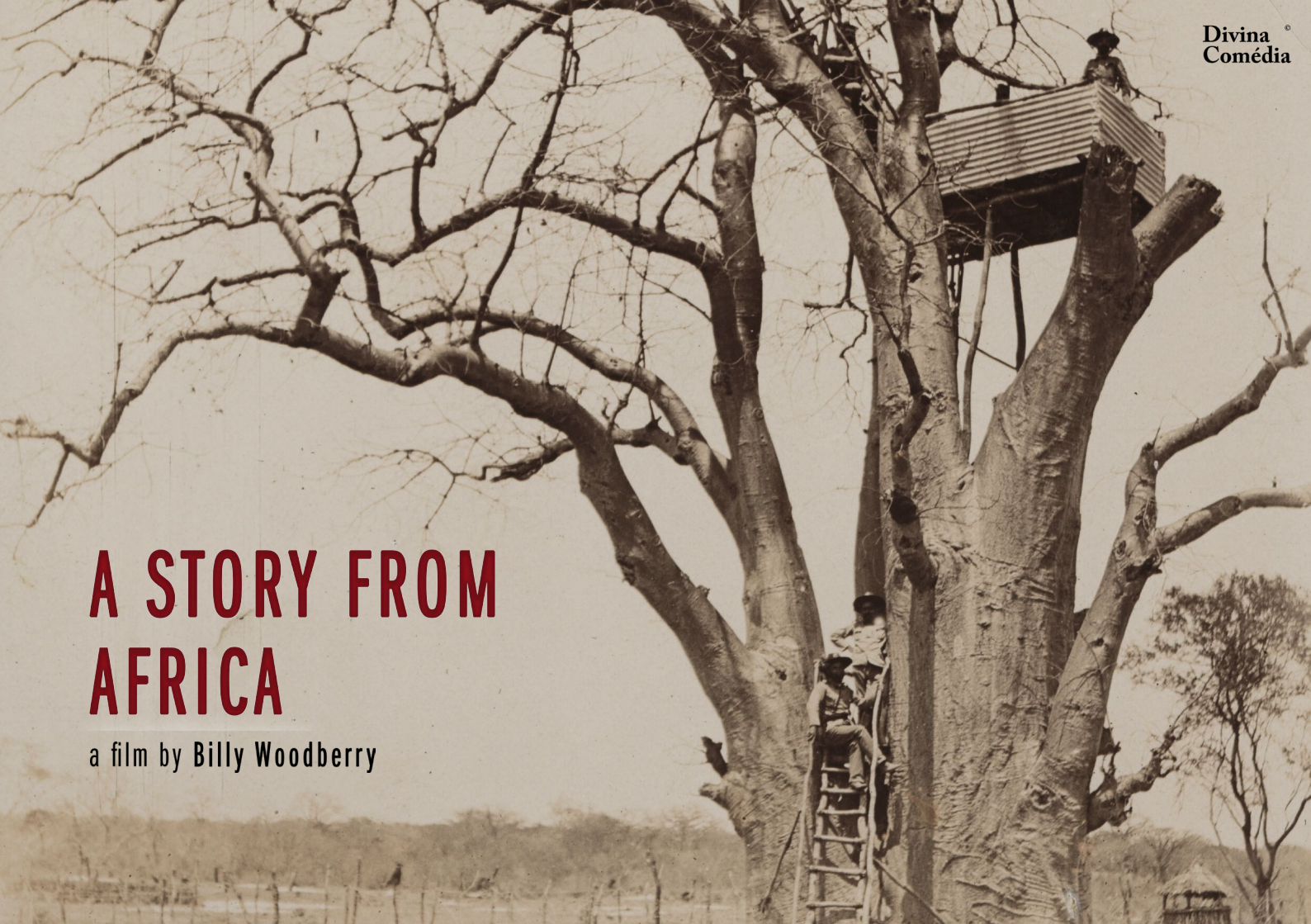


A STORY FROM AFRICA

a film by Billy Woodberry





Calipalula

“It seems that nations on the verge of war make a point of parading their own wealth.”

Remembrance of Things to Come, 2001, Yannick Bellon, Chris Marker.

As I was researching for my work-in-progress feature documentary on the pan-African intellectual and Angolan nationalist, Mário Pinto de Andrade, I encountered, out of context, the first photograph that appears in this film: a large group photograph with a row of shackled captive Africans.

At first cursory glance, the manner of constraining these men resembles the manner employed during the era of slavery in the new world.

A misreading...

The next two rows of standing African men are armed with rifles and bandoleros across their chest, they are uniformed with military posture and bearings.

In the center is the lone, large, bearded white man with the pith helmet associated with colonial explores in the Tropic. Learning then that the Photograph was made in 1907 in southern Angola made it of even greater interest.

From this encounter and learning that the photograph was a part of a larger series made during the Portuguese “pacification” campaign of 1907 led to the search for the name and story of the photographer and the photographs.

After much research this is what we found, however trying to understand what one was actually seeing became an additional challenge.

How could these photographs allow for the story of this experience to represent the point of view or subjective position of the Africans being depicted. To subvert what would obviously be understood as the “colonial gaze”?

The narrative in the film has been created through reading the book Velloso de Castro wrote during the campaign, which, though destined to the annals of the Portuguese empire’s contribution to civilization, bears a gloomy testimony of its own dawn through the story of Calipalula. In fact, the preface was written six months later in 1908, and only a few weeks after the assassination of the Portuguese King Carlos and his heir Prince Luíz Filipe to whom the glory of the campaign had been dedicated.

With *A Story from Africa* I sought to unleash the violent movements for conquer captured in the photographs while assigning frequency to the sounds and cries of a defeated world the photographs bear and project forward into the tumultuous future of the twentieth century Africa.

Billy Woodberry

Synopsis

Following the 1885 Berlin Conference resolution on the partition of Africa, the Portuguese army uses a talented ensign to register the effective occupation of the territory conquered in 1907 to the Cuamato people, in the south of Angola. A Story from Africa enlivens this rarely seen photographic archive through the tragic tale of Calipalula, the Cuamato nobleman essential to the unfolding of events in this Portuguese pacification campaign.



Map of Africa before the Berlin Conference

- 1884 Berlin Conference
- 1885
- 1884 Founding of German South-West Africa
- 1886 Portugal publishes the Pink Map, a declaration to conquer and link the the Angolan African west coast with the Mozambican African east coast.

The Berlin Conference had established the principle of effective occupation to have African territorial rights recognized by the European Colonial Powers thus replacing the previous historical right principle. The Portuguese Empire in Africa controlled the Congo river connection to the Atlantic and coastal areas in Eastern and Western coast of sub-Saharan Africa under the principle of historic right turned obsolete after the resolutions of 1885.



A national effort of pacification campaigns to secure its African territories and a grand expansion colonial project called Pink Map will lead the Portuguese to take men and arms to prove the British and German Empire Portugal's ability to submit to vassalage and lead a civilizing mission in the interior areas of Angola and Mozambique.



- 1887 France recognizes Portugal's claims over the territory drawn in the Pink Map
- 1890 Imperial Germany negotiates recognition of Portugal's claims in the Pink map in exchange for setting the German West Africa border as high as the Cunene river.
- 1890 The British Empire issues an Ultimatum to Portugal demanding immediate withdrawal of Portuguese troops in the territories between Angola and Mozambique and abandonment of the Pink Map project.



Map of Africa as of World War I
1914

*The Cuamato people had gained fame of invincible after defeating the Portuguese in Mufilo in 1904, they forge alliances with the neighboring peoples knowing the Portuguese would come back for revenge.**



- 1902 *Defeat of the Boers at the hands of the British*
 - 1904 *Defeat of the Portuguese at the hands of the Cuanhama allied with the Cuamato*
 - 1907 *Cuamato Campaign*
 - 1908 *The Belgian parliament decided that the king was not a fit person to be entrusted with a colony and Congo is annexed by the government to become Belgian Congo*
- On February 1st, the Portuguese King D. Carlos is assassinated together with his heir, prince Don. Luíz Filipe.*

*Thousands of throats launched in the air in unison strident clamorous cries. The Portuguese, alarmed, ran for their combat positions, yet Calipalula cried back to the darkness vociferating the peace proposals previously negotiated with the invaders.**



*The cries persisted as if a collective clamour of impotency. Finally, something of it was understandable Sihetekela! Sihetekela!**

**From Veloso Castro's Account*





BILLY WOODBERRY | DIRECTOR

Born in Dallas in 1950, Billy Woodberry is one of the founders of the L.A. Rebellion film movement. His first feature film *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1983) is a pioneer and essential work of this movement, influenced by Italian neo-realism and the work of Third Cinema filmmakers. The film was awarded with an OCIC and Interfilm awards at the Berlin International Film Festival and was added to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress in 2013. His latest feature film *And when I die, I won't stay dead* (2015) about the beat poet Bob Kaufman was the opening film of MoMA's Doc Fortnight in 2016.

Woodberry has appeared in Charles Burnett's "When It Rains" (1995) and provided narration for Thom Andersen's *Red HOLLYWOOD*" (1996) and James Benning's "Four Corners"(1998).

His work has been screened at Cannes and Berlin Film Festivals, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Harvard Film Archive, Camera Austria Symposium, Human Rights Watch Film Festival, Tate Modern and Centre Pompidou.

He received his MFA degree from UCLA in 1982 where he also taught at the School of Theater, Film and Television. Since 1989 Billy Woodberry is a faculty member of the School of Film/Video and the School of Art at the California Institute of the Arts.

A STORY FROM AFRICA (Portugal, 2018)

Medium-length/ Documentary

World Premiere - 69th Berlin International Film Festival - Forum Expanded

MARSEILLE APRÈS LA GUERRE (USA/Portugal, 2016)

Short Film / Documentary

World Premiere - Roy and Edna Disney Theater - CalArts' Downtown Center for Contemporary Arts - Los Angeles, 2016

AND WHEN I DIE, I WON'T STAY DEAD – BOB KAUFMAN (USA/Portugal, 2015)

Feature Film / Documentary

World Premiere - 53rd Viennale, Vienna International Film Festival 2015

BLESS THEIR LITTLE HEARTS (USA, 1983)

Feature Film / Fiction

World Premiere - Cannes Film Festival – Critics Week, 1984

THE POCKETBOOK (USA, 1980)

Short Film / Fiction

*World Premiere - UCLA Film and Television Archive - 2013 **

*Harvard Film Archive -2013 **



RUI ALEXANDRE SANTOS | PRODUCER

Rui Alexandre Santos, born in Lisbon in 1981, graduated in the Portuguese National Film and Theatre School.

Since 2010 he has developed a rich career as producer of feature films such as Vítor Gonçalves' *The Invisible Life*, premiered at the International Competition of Rome Film Festival and Joaquim Sapinho's *This Side of Resurrection* with premiere at Toronto International Film Festival.

He has co-produced Soon-Mi Yoo's journey into North Korea, *Songs from the North*, recipient of the Golden Leopard for Best First Feature at Locarno Film Festival, João Bénard da Costa – *Others Will Love the Things I have Loved*, an original tribute to a cinephile, part of the official selection of the 44th International Film Festival Rotterdam in 2015; and *And when I die, I won't stay dead*, the feature documentary Billy Woodberry dedicated to beat poet Bob Kaufman, part of 45th MoMA's DocFortnight in 2016.

Rui Santos has also been the co-producer of *Cinema Dialogues: Harvard at the Gulbenkian*, a two-part series of dialogues and screenings that gathered filmmakers, producers, artists and critics from all over the world to debate contemporary film in a different meeting format. Held in Lisbon in a collaboration with The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Harvard Film Archive, in 2014 and 2015.

In the end of 2015, Rui has founded his own film production company, *Divina Comédia*, having launched its first feature documentary in 2017, *Song of Ossobó*, a multi-layered look at memory and collective identity in two former cocoa plantations in the island of Sao Tomé by young San Tomean director Silas Tiny

He is now working on new projects from Billy Woodberry, Soon-Mi Yoo and the San Tomean director Silas Tiny.

A STORY FROM ÁFRICA (2018)

69th Berlin International Film Festival - (2019)

SONG OF OSSOBÓ (2017)

15th DocLisboa International Film Festival - National Competition

AND WHEN I DIE, I WON'T STAY DEAD – BOB KAUFMAN, POET (2015)

Documentary by Billy Woodberry

53rd Viennale, Vienna International Film Festival 2015

JOÃO BÉNARD DA COSTA (2015)

Documentary by Manuel Mozos

12th DocLisboa: Documentary International Film Festival

SONGS FROM THE NORTH (2015) co-production with South Korea and U.S.

Documentary by Soon-Mi Yoo

67th Locarno International Film Festival 2014

THE INVISIBLE LIFE (2013) co-production with the UK

Feature Film by Vítor Gonçalves

8th Rome Film Festival 2013 — Official Selection

WHAT'S NEW ABOUT LOVE? (2011)

Feature Film by Rui Alexandre Santos, Hugo Alves, Tiago Nunes, Patrícia Raposo, Mónica Santana Batista e Hugo Martins

8th IndieLisboa Film Festival 2011 — Official Selection in Competition

THIS SIDE OF RESURRECTION (2011)

Feature Film by Joaquim Sapinho

36th Toronto International Film Festival

directed by **Billy Woodberry**, produced by **Rui Alexandre Santos, Billy Woodberry** ,
editor **Luís Nunes**, music and sound design **António de Sousa Dias**, research **Teresa Andrade**

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