



African Glory

A film by Thierry Bugaud



CHEICK TIDIANE
SECK

MICHAËL
LONSDALE

AFRICAN GLORY

Abubakari II, the Explorer Emperor

Directed by: Thierry Bugaud
Production: La Boîte dans la Boîte
Coproduction: Canal+ International
Duration: 52 / 64 minutes
Genre: Docu-fiction
Format: cinemascope 2.39:1

DISTRIBUTOR



PRODUCTION

Ludovic Lang

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06 76 28 58 34



Festivals

Best Documentary Feature film:

Short-Long World Festival (Corrientes-Argentina) - 2023

Best soundtrack :

Quibdo Africa film Festival (Columbia) - 2023

Prix du jury :

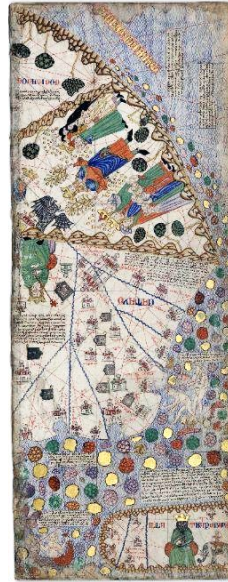
Festival international du film panafricain de Cannes (France) - 2023

Mención Honorífica :

Festival Internacional del Arte y del Independiente MIAx (México) - 2023

Official selections:

- San Antonio Black International Film Festival (USA) - 2023
- Vancouver Black Independent Film Festival (Canada) - 2023
- African Film Festival (Atlanta, USA) - 2023
- London International Pan african film Festival (UK) - 2023
- Luanda International Pan african film Festival (Angola) - 2023



Synopsis

In West Africa in the 13th century, a vast empire was established, the Mandingo Empire. 180 years before Christopher Columbus, its emperor Abubakari II set out to cross the Atlantic with a fleet of 2,000 ships.

Why was this story cursed within Mandingo culture ? What compelled the emperor to launch such a gigantic expedition? Did he succeed in his endeavour? Are there any traces of Abubakari II's arrival on the American continent? Was Christopher Columbus aware of his predecessor's expedition?

Did the African man reach the Americas as a slave or as a king?





Director's note

This film questions the way in which the African man arrived on the American continent: not as a slave, but as a king, not shackled in chains, but rich with the gold, culture and science of the Mandingo Empire.

It was Ousmane Sow's exhibition on the *Pont des Arts* in Paris in 1998 that led me to Africa, and in particular the sculpture of the Fulani warrior, whose physical impression will stay with me forever. Since then, films and research in West Africa have marked the rhythm of my life. Over these years, a project has grown within me: to recount the glory of the Mandingo Empire through the extraordinary epic of the emperor Abubakari II.

Paradoxically, one of the most glorious pages in African history is unknown to the general public and virtually absent from history textbooks. Yet in the 13th century, West Africa was extraordinarily rich in its

institutions, laws, economy and arts. The Mandingo epic is indeed a reality for the millions of descendants of the Mandé kingdoms scattered around the world: Keïta, Fakoly, Kanté, Sidibé, Cissé, Traoré, Kouyaté, Diabaté, to name just the beginning of a very long list of prestigious lineages.

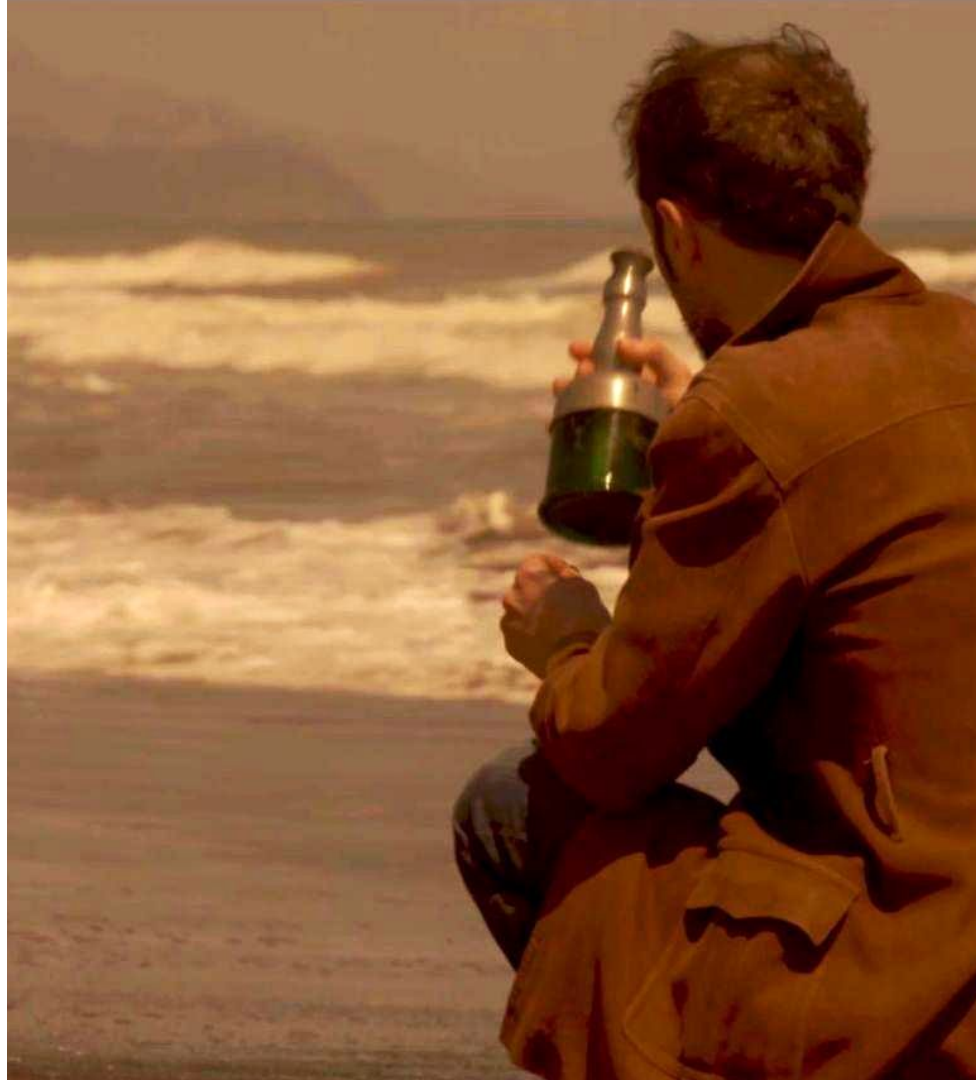
The film initially introduces us to the little-known story of the Mandingo Empire, and, at the heart of this narrative, lies the extraordinary adventure of Abubakari II's attempt to cross the Atlantic.

"I shall not return, but my name shall return". These were the final words of the explorer emperor before embarking on his journey across the ocean. The Brotherhood of Hunters (a secret Mandingo society holding traditional political powers) has veiled the story of Abubakari II in secrecy, for reasons that will be explained later in the narrative.



All those who held the knowledge and attempted to narrate this story have died. Therefore, I had to get permission from this brotherhood to unlock the gates of knowledge. I made this a key sequence in the film. I also faced obstacles and resistance within the scientific community, which, event to this day, generally refuses to give credence to the evidence we possess.

The portrayal of Christopher Columbus (Michael Lonsdale) at the end of his life is also based on biographical elements: in his *Book of Prophecies*, around ten pages have been torn out. In their place, a mysterious inscription claims that these pages contained the best of his revelations. Without presuming anything, we simply witness this historical figure in the process of writing his book, extracting a few pages, sealing them in a bottle, and throwing it into the sea. Interpretation is left to the discretion of each viewer !







The Knowledgeable



Jean-Yves Loude holds a doctorate in ethnology and is an author. He carried out an investigation into the Abubakari II expedition, as documented in his book *Le Roi d'Afrique et la Reine mer*. He encourages the scientific community to reconsider our history, on the basis of the Al Omari manuscript preserved at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.



Lassana Kamissoko comes from a community of traditional griots tasked with perpetuating the memory of the Battle of Kirina and the Mali Empire founded there. He accurately recounts every detail of the advent of the empire. The words of this great initiate (ngara) are a treasure collected here in the context of African Glory. In particular, Kamissoko gives us an account of the abolition of slavery in 1222.



Sagrario Cruz Carretero is a professor-researcher at the Institute of Anthropology at the University of Veracruz. Under the direction of the eminent anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, she has conducted studies on the black population in Mexico. She shares the current state of her research regarding the evidence of African presence in pre-Columbian America.

The Cast



Cheick Tidiane Seck is a renowned Malian keyboardist who has played throughout his career with giants such as Carlos Santana, Jimi Hendrix and Salif Keïta. Inspired by Aimé Césaire, he works towards the rehabilitation of the name of Abubakari II in African history. Therefore, it was only natural that, following their meeting, a close artistic collaboration was established between him and director Thierry Bugaud. His contributions to the film are manifold: he composed the original music; he plays the father of Abubakari II; and he is the "voice" of African Glory.



Michaël Lonsdale has an impressive filmography - over 140 films! - and that's not even counting theatre, TV films, countless radio readings and his work as a painter. This gentle mystic has worked with the greatest (Buñuel, Welles, Truffaut, Eustache, Spielberg...) without ceasing to experiment, venturing into the avant-garde. It was with humility that he agreed to join the young crew on the set of African Glory, taking the role of Christopher Columbus, his last film role.

The Talents

Giovanni Quene – Director of photography : For over 20 years, he has worked with some of the biggest names in cinema: Luc Besson, Martin Scorsese, David Fincher, Agnes Jaoui, François Ozon, Alain Resnais and many others. He created the images for the fictional parts of the film with his film team, who came together during the filming of the *Versailles* series.

Ludovic Lang – Associate producer : He has been involved in a number of films as producer, director, cinematographer and editor, including *Et si on vivait tous ensemble*, *Quelqu'un à qui parler*, *Les damnés* and *Les Anges se penchent parfois*. He is also a partner in La Boîte dans la Boîte, ensuring continuity in the production of *African Glory*.

Charles Grémion – Production manager : A long-time content producer for France 2 (broadcasts, short films, documentaries), he is working with Thierry Bugaud on *African Glory*, helping to write and produce the film.

Thierry Bugaud – Director : In 1998 he set up the Art Evolution studio and produces music recordings and documentary films. He is the director of *Azalai* (Arte, France 5, Planète, Rai, RTBF...). He has been working on *African Glory* for the past 20 years, meeting those who know and are responsible for oral transmission in Africa.







La Boîte dans la Boîte was founded in 2008 by two writers and directors. Today it is an audiovisual production company specialising in documentaries. It won the Special Jury Prize at the Georges De Caunes International Film Festival in Vallauris. It also has a music recording studio that produces artists, as well as an audiovisual creation department.

