

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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VILLAGE TEACHER / Sango Malo (1991)

Bassek Ba Kobhio

Contents (Overview-Synopsis-Characters-Character Analysis-Themes-Scenes)

OVERVIEW

Sango Malo is an adaption of a novel with the same title by Bassek Ba Khobio. According to the filmmaker, although the character Malo appears as the central figure in the movie, it is the character Sango whom he wanted to make central. That character was based partly on the image of his own father, who was also a school headmaster. He wanted the movie to be about education, because, as he once put it, "It is education which can form a new people ... It is hard to think about changing African society without envisioning an appropriate form of education." What is the appropriate form of education for Africa in the aftermath of its independence? This is the question that Bassek Ba Kobhio poses in *Sango Malo*. To help us start this discussion, he leaves us with two radically opposed educational methodologies: one that is taught from a centralized curriculum, which mirror the colonial program, and another one, which is based on a spontaneous curriculum whose goal is to seek practical solutions to real problems encountered in the field. The filmmaker makes his representative characters for both approaches so dramatically irreconcilable that he opens the possibility for a third way.

SYNOPSIS

Bernard Malo Malo, a new graduate of the teachers' training school, obtains his first post as a schoolteacher in Lebamzip, a small Cameroonian village cut off any modern amenities. Lebamzip is also the village of Ngo Bakang, a student-teacher, who is delighted to know that one of the best graduates of her school will be working in her village. The new pedagogical methods that Malo introduces in the village school and the social programs that he inaugurates for the villagers put him at odds with Sango, his old-fashioned, narrow-minded headmaster and the authoritarian village chief, who demand that he stop altering the established village routine. Malo refuses to get in line, and his supervisor writes a report to the school central administration that gets him fired. Malo is replaced by Ngo Bakang, who becomes his wife in a non-traditional wedding that causes her father to commit suicide out of shame. Though no longer a teacher, Malo remains in the village and continues to organize the villagers in a collectivized group for self-sustenance. When Malo pushes his audacity so far as clearing the sacred forest to make room for sustenance agriculture, his foes call in the police, who arrest and jail him.

MAIN CHARACTERS

La Fontaine Sango (Marcel Mvondo II): The headmaster of Lebamzip. He insists on teaching the conventional curriculum of the ministry of education.

Bernard Malo (Jerome Bolo): The new schoolteacher. He believes in teaching skills that are applicable to his pupils' rural environment, such as animal husbandry, agriculture, carpentry, and masonry. He is constantly in conflict with the headmaster and gets fired from his post.

Ngo Bakang (Edwidge Ntongon a Zok): She is a native of Lebamzip, a graduate from the same teachers training college that Malo attended, and an admirer of Malo. She is assigned to his post when he is fired. She becomes Malo's wife.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

SANGO, THE HEADMASTER Open

Sango is a civil servant who sees himself as entrusted with a noble task, that of producing well-behaved citizens with their heads full of knowledge at the end of their school cycle. To succeed in this work, he has a program with well-developed chapters and a timeline to put them into action. There is no question of him being distracted from his goal because his position depends on it. Malo appears to him as a threat to the successful completion of his program, and thus a threat to his position.

Conventional The headmaster is obstinately conventional. He was educated in the style of the old teachers training college. For him, the national curriculum is a master narrative, with its units, its outcomes, and its timeline never to be altered. His allegiance is to the metrics, and he measures his success on the number of his students that obtain their diplomas at the end of their cycle. He believes that his students have some responsibilities, such as the water and wood chores for the village chief. As an elite member of the village that he serves, he falls directly under the authority of the village chief, who deserves deference. This is the boat on which he has embarked, and he does not intend to rock it nor let anyone rock it.

Compassionate Sango, the headmaster, is surprisingly a compassionate man in private. He admits to his wife that he admires Malo's courage and his intelligence. He tells her that he would have liked to have a son like Malo. When the headmaster's wife blames herself for what their two sons have become, he comforts her. She has done a perfect job as a mother, he insists, and she cannot be held responsible for their sons going astray.

Self-critical After having maneuvered Malo's sacking, Sango visits the garden that Malo's students have created. He is impressed by what he sees, and he gets a pineapple from the orchard, which he takes to Malo with pride. Later, when the chief, the priest, and the store owner seek his support to have Malo arrested, Sango recognizes that they have not made a real effort to understand the young teacher.

NGO BAKANG Open

Ngo Bakang is probably the filmmakers' mouthpiece for bridging differences. A native of traditional Lebamzip but the wife of radical Malo, she is placed in an uncomfortable position. Yet, she plays the peace broker by smoothing the differences between the headmaster and the teacher with her non-confrontational approach. The child she carries signals the coming of an era of both social and programmatic reconciliations.

Non-confrontational Ngo Bakang is the character who brings the headmaster to the moment of his most candid admission of guilt and contrition. When Sango visits Ngo Bakang and her pupils in the orchard started by Malo, she asks a student to pick a pineapple for the headmaster; in other words, to show the headmaster what Malo's efforts have produced. Sango is impressed by the fruit, takes it to Malo and tells him: "This is your fruit ... I am going to enjoy it." In other words, this is your work. A beautiful work. I am sorry I opposed you. Ngo Bakang could have taken credit for Malo's work, but she wanted to show the headmaster how wrong he was to push for Malo's firing. She did it with subtlety, without being confrontational. Perhaps, if Malo had used Ngo Bakang's non-belligerent method, he would have brought the headmaster on his side.

Transitional Ngo Bakang marks the transition between an old school and a new school. However, that transition is not a destruction of anything old to replace it with something radically new. It is a smooth transition that reconciles the two. Like Malo, she is a graduate of the modern teachers training college. Unlike Malo, whom she loves passionately and admires, she is also respectful of tradition and other people's opinions, which she incorporates in her practice as a teacher. The child that Ngo Bakang carries will be born as the fruit of the transitional, conciliatory spirit that she represents.

THE VILLAGE CHIEF Closed

The village chief is a corrupt, incompetent, and useless character. He takes no meaningful initiatives to better his constituents' life. When they come to him for advice, his propositions are expeditive and influenced by his personal interests, rather than the collective interests.

Corrupt The village chief uses his position for influence peddling. He arbitrarily decides how much tax each villager must pay, and he uses his tax scheme as a blackmailing tool. Those who agree with him pay less, and the renegades pay more taxes. He characterizes any ideas that he does not like as 'political' and reports their proponents to the authorities.

Useless Besides ordering his constituents around and lounging on the veranda of his decrepit colonial residence, it is difficult to see the chief's work in the village. The state of his residence, which looks like it has never been repaired since its former colonial occupants left, denotes the chief's laziness and dereliction of duty. In fact, in a pique of anger, he tells Malo what matters most to him is to keep his job. The rest is secondary. Malo is disappointed to see that the chief does not consider working to improve the lives of his constituents a requisite of the job that he so much wants to keep.

MALO Conscientious

Malo is an intelligent young man. His contagious ingenuity helps the pupils of Lebamzip and their parents reach important milestones. However, Malo's impulsiveness and his spitefulness often get in the way of his good intentions and cause him to lose some support. Malo's enterprise in Lebamzip would have gained more support were the teacher less confrontational and more conciliatory in his method. Unfortunately, Malo decided from his very first day in Lebamzip that he was more intelligent than all the people of Lebamzip.

Practical Malo's first sight of Lebamzip and its inhabitants convinces him that there is useful, practical work to undertake in the village to positively transform the standard of living of his pupils and their parents. Malo does not sit around and theorize about how this can be done. He goes to work, organizing his pupils and their parents: The teacher recruits carpenters and masons to teach his pupils practical survival skills. Under his guidance, the pupils create a school vegetable garden and build a boarding house. Malo organizes the villagers into a collectivized agricultural group to have more control over the sale of their crops. The villagers also build a cooperative store to escape the store-owner's fraudulent commercial practices and his disdainful manner towards them.

Vindictive One thing that Mbog reproaches Malo with, besides his dictatorial and paternalistic ways, is his vindictiveness. Malo has initiated a village cooperative that many villagers were hesitant to join. Now that the program is successful, some of the former skeptics want to be part of it. Malo refuses, condemning them for not having trusted him in the beginning and accusing them of wanting to reap the benefits of something they did not start. When Mbog tries to reason with him, Malo threatens Mbog with expulsion from the cooperative.

Unempathetic Ngo Bakang's father has committed suicide out of shame, because his daughter and Malo wedded secretly in the city, without submitting to the traditional requirements of dowry and festivities. Malo's wife is crying inconsolably, and her husband paces angrily before her without a kind word or a tender gesture of compassion. In fact, Malo seems rather angry at his father-in-law's fatal decision, which comes as a total rejection of his understanding of marriage. For him, his father-in-law has made the ultimate gesture to show him that he was wrong, and Malo does not like being told that he is wrong. Malo has difficulty understanding that the symbolic goat requested by the bride's parents and the marriage festivities that gather the village are all rituals that reinforce village cohesion. Had Malo accepted to go through the ritual of dowry and festivities, his bride's parents would have gained in respectability and would have strengthened their positions in the village. Unfortunately, the village teacher was too imbued with his own person and too limited in his outlook on the world to understand other people's perspectives. So, he was upset that Ngo Bakang would even ask him to submit to these rituals, which he brushed aside as backward. As Malo said, what is important is what he thinks, not what others think. This is a very sad admission of failure to understand and share others' viewpoints. An admission of selfishness.

Stubborn When Sango explains to Malo that he is not against a few extracurricular activities, but that Malo must teach the ministry of education's curriculum, the teacher forges ahead with his own curriculum, convinced that he is right, and the headmaster is wrong. When Ngo Bakang insists that he marries her in the tradition of Lebamzip, Malo convinces her to elope and get married in the city because he sees her traditions as backward. When the villagers try to convince Malo that they cannot clear the sacred forest to make room for agriculture, Malo arms himself with an ax and enters the forest. Malo's hot-headedness not only runs counter to his role as a teacher supposed to infuse his pupils with critical thinking but can be infectious to the young minds in his care. Indeed, it is his radical, inflexible, and violent views that have led his pupils to attack the store-owner and ransack his store.

THEMES

SOCIETY (patriarchy, religion, language, theory, praxis, integration, class)

Patriarchy Ngo Bakang's father committed suicide because he lost his status as a respectable man in the community. The village chief refused to allow him to speak at a meeting, claiming that he was no longer a man because his daughter had married without fulfilling the tradition of the dowry and the popular feast. Thus, in this community, it is, among other things, through a respectable marriage of his daughter that a man's honor passes. The daughter becomes what in the society guarantees the pride of patriarchy. His daughter having soiled herself by marrying in town and in secret with Malo the undisciplined teacher from the city, the father decided to commit suicide rather than live in shame.

Religion Here, religion is abusive. Religion, represented by the pastor, is guilty of collusion with the administrative power represented by the village chief. The two powers work in tandem to secure their advantages. Like the village chief, the priest opposes any new initiatives presented by Malo, claiming that they are communist politics. In this way, religion prevents change, keeps the village in inertia, maintains obscurantism in mystification, and continues to live at the expense of the population. Although Malo pays the price by being imprisoned, Malo's persistence succeeds in freeing the villagers from the grip of the abusive religion and administration.

Language Language serves to establish and preserve class differences. From the first minutes of his arrival in the village Malo realizes that the village authorities value their social status and especially the language that sustains it. The principal insists that Malo address him by referring to his title of "Monsieur le Directeur." The village chief insists that Malo come and do his niceties. Malo finds all these linguistic contortions superfluous. He asks his students to call him by his first name "Malo" rather than "Mister Teacher." Malo's desire to erase social and class differences by leveling language puts him at odds with the village authorities, who make no secret of the fact that they value their social advantages.

Theory The battle between the headmaster and the village teacher is a proxy battle between two pedagogical approaches. The first one, propounded by the headmaster, is theoretical, rigid, seated on a curriculum unfurling from a bureaucratic, centralized authority, which is the ministry of education. Sango gauges a student's success on metrics, and on national standards of reading, writing, and mathematics. The headmaster teaches subjects that are removed from his pupils' daily lives and mysterious to them. The topics the headmaster teaches have evolved little since the times of colonization when the French colonial administration decided the curriculum for the colonies. However, these are subjects intended to prepare the students for the globalized marketplace of employment.

Practice The second approach, favored by Malo, is less structured and more spontaneous. It is dictated by the needs on the ground, which the village teacher determines as being practical survival skills. Malo rejects the headmaster's standards for evaluating students and insists that his pupils' success be assessed on their mastery of relevant skills, such as husbandry, carpentry, and masonry, skills that are applicable to their lives in the rural environment. For that, he points to his pupils' successful vegetable garden, their poultry farm, and their boarding house. Malo teaches his pupils classes that will serve them in their rural environment. However, these skills are less likely to outfit them with tools necessary to escape the cycle of poverty that has trapped their parents.

Integration Sango's and Malo's approaches both have their advantages and limitations. Ngo Bakang demonstrates that there is a third approach that can integrate what students know into the national

curriculum published by the Ministry of Education. She does not exclusively teach the headmaster's Eurocentric curriculum that has no relevance to the lives of the children of Lebamzip. She does not teach Malo's radical curriculum that condemns the children of Lebamzip to a life of peasantry. Ngo Bakang sends the two inflexible protagonists away and designs classes in-between their rigidities, classes that integrate the local and the global. The headmaster, who spies on Ngo Bakang, as he used to do with Malo, is more serene, less agitated, and Malo finds in Ngo Bakang an excellent substitute. Ngo Bakang has reconciled Sango's and Malo's perspectives, and this, for the benefit of her pupils.

Class Malo, the village teacher, is not preparing his pupils to transcend their social class. He is preparing them to repeat their parents' cycle of poverty. Malo's view that the children of the village can only have a fulfilled future in their rural environment, and that they consequently need an education adapted to rural life, is a big moral scam. African peasant parents generally send their children to school in the hope that one day they will escape the difficulties of rural life. They do not send their children to school to see them repeat the hard life that they lead. The skills that Malo develops in his pupils when he teaches them to love the earth, to care for their environment, to handle a hammer and a saw are certainly necessary skills in life. However, Malo is wrong to consider that these are the only skills that are needed by peasant children, and that the general education program mandated by the Ministry of Education is superfluous. It is, as the headmaster says so well, on this program that the children will be evaluated. It is on this program that the children of peasants will compete with the children of the rich for a place in Cameroonian society. Malo would do Lebamzip's students great service to prepare them for this competition, which makes a clean sweep of the children's family origin and which judges them only on their intellectual abilities. Instead, Malo makes himself the prophet of the future of his pupils, arresting their aspirations for social mobility at the edge of their rural environment, at the edge of their social origins, pretending to be the fountain of truth, refusing to listen to the point of view of others, and believing that he is right against everyone else.

POLITICS (power)

Power Malo's pedagogical methods, as well as the economic programs he initiates, have the particularity of eliminating class distinctions and ushering in a classless society, where the means of production are owned by the population, which determines what it wants to produce according to its needs. The construction of the community store and the creation of the collective garden are part of this approach. It is an approach that threatens the model of private ownership and accumulation of wealth enjoyed by the village chief, the shopkeeper and bar owner, and even the priest and principal, who profit from the labor of the people and the students. Malo is, therefore, rightly labelled a communist. For this, he is denounced to the high authorities who sanction him. Malo is transferred elsewhere, but he refuses to leave Lebamzip and loses his job. However, Malo remains in the village and keeps threatening the power of the authorities. He is eventually arrested and imprisoned so that the old pecking order of the village continues, undisturbed.

FLAWS (pride, greed, mystification)

Pride In Sango Malo, pride borders on the ridiculous and the tragic. The school principal insists that when he is spoken to his name be preceded by his title of principal. The village chief insists that newcomers to the village come and genuflect to him. Proud of his modern education, Malo looks down on the village authorities and the villagers as much as he abhors their methods that he considers backward. Ngo Bakang's father commits suicide because he is humiliated by his daughter's marriage, which is not in keeping with the tradition of his community. None of these proud characters succeed in rallying their opponents to their cause. In fact, their pride makes them rigid and alienates them from each other. Just as the village chief does not gain more followers by scorning his constituents, Malo does not gain more followers among the villagers by destroying their sacred forest. The pride of the inhabitants of Lebamzip makes them rigid and prevents them from communicating effectively for the common development of their village.

Greed One of the most rampant evils in Lebamzip is greed. The store owner is the most obvious corrupt individual in Lebamzip by the unscrupulous methods he uses to cheat the village population, overpricing his articles and opening a dubious credit line for each villager. The store owner is not just corrupt, but he also seeks to corrupt the population. His store, which doubles as a bar at night, is the site of perdition.

The villagers go there to spend their hard-earned cash. Some, like Big Eyes, the tailor and his two companions are driven to alcoholism there. When a rival store is opened in the village by the cooperative, which threatens his bottom line, the store owner recruits prostitutes from the city to draw more clientele to his bar. The priest calls the store owner on his latest practice, which he sees as a corruption of the minds of the population and a way to further drive them away from God. However, a few pounds of sugar and a few liters of kerosene are enough to make the priest revise his position. This moralizer is also entangled in corruption. As for the chief, his position is an instrument of intimidation and racketeering. Those who espouse his position are free to go about their business. Those who, like the wine tapper, challenge his position are heavily taxed or are, as is the case with Malo, reported to the higher authorities as subversive.

Mystification Mystification seems to be the common flaw in most characters in the village. Sango holds firmly to his title. He insists that with him, every conversation begins with "Mr. headmaster" and ends with "Mr. headmaster." This is because, for him, the title is the locus of knowledge inaccessible to the other inhabitants of the village, a knowledge that he makes even more complicated by linking it to places that are remote, unfamiliar, and mysterious to the pupils: the snowy mountains of Europe or the port of Marseilles. It is a knowledge whose obscurity aggrandizes him. Similarly, the village chief would like everyone to never forget that he is the "supreme authority" in Lebamzip. He lives in a run-down colonial house raised on piers, which overlooks all the village huts. He is followed around by his servant, who hold his flywhisk when he is too exhausted to hold it himself. His house, his servant, and his flywhisk are all insignia of his authority. They are the mystifying apparatuses of his distinction from the other villagers.

ECONOMICS (sustenance/cash crop)

Agriculture: Sustenance vs cash crop Malo confesses to Big Eyes that his heart breaks each time he walks through a cocoa plantation. He contends that the Lebamzip farmers break their backs on growing export crops that bring enormous receipts to the state but do not feed the rural masses. When a local administrator arrives in Lebamzip to encourage the cocoa growers to increase their productivity, Malo confronts him and accuses him of peddling lies and exploitation. There is a general case to be made here about where the African peasants' agricultural priorities must lie. It is certainly not in export crops while the continent is so vulnerable to famine. Malo's advocacy for sustenance agriculture is perceptive. The rural zone must return to its primary role of being the granary of the national populations rather than the producer of crops that are meant for the enjoyment of the populations of industrialized countries. Most of the cocoa producers in Africa cannot afford a chocolate bar and have never tasted one. Yet, their governments continue to encourage them to produce cocoa on lands that could, instead, be used to fend off famine by producing sustenance agriculture.

SCENES

New teacher Malo arrives in the village Ngo has just read the posted teacher assignments. She rushes to congratulate Malo, who is delighted to realize that she knew his name. Ngo tells Malo that Lebamzip is her village, and it pleases her to see that he will be teaching there.



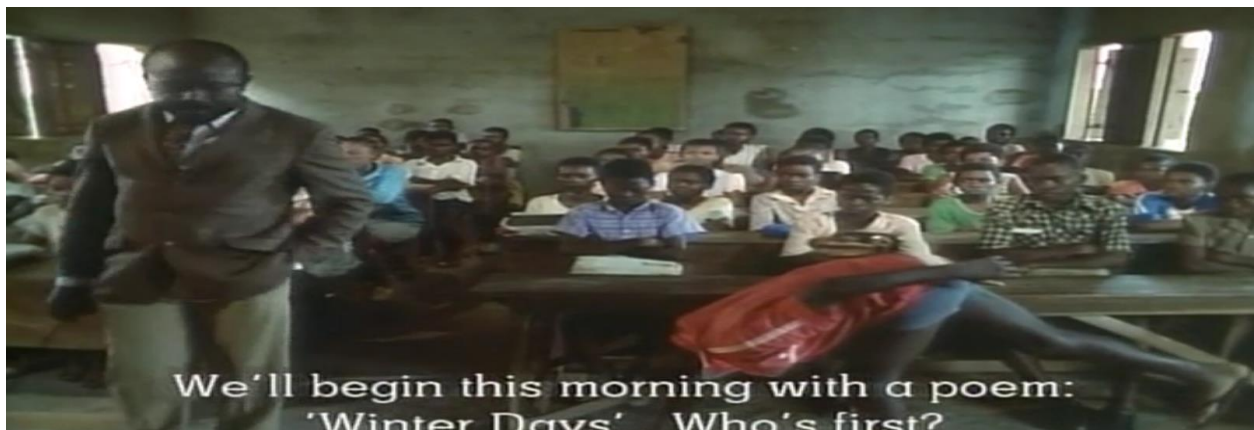
Malo meets the school headmaster

Malo knocks on the headmaster's classroom door as he is admonishing the pupils, who are standing up with their hands on the back of their necks. The headmaster is not happy to have his class interrupted, and he will not give Malo the opportunity to say a word unless Malo addresses him with the proper title of "Headmaster." Malo finally introduces himself, and the headmaster mellows down and launches in civilities. Leaving the students in their uncomfortable positions for the remainder of the day, the headmaster gets two pupils to carry Malo's suitcases, and he walks the new teacher to his new residence.



Sango, the strict headmaster

Dressed in a European suit, a whip in his hand, Sango, the headmaster, beats the music in front of his pupils who punctuate their song by stamping their feet. One pupil in a position of punishment, his right hand resting on the ground and his left leg stretched in the air behind him, struggles to keep his balance. The song fades, and the headmaster orders his pupils to sit down, then stand up, then sit down again, then fold their arms. The students execute his demands while describing their gestures in chorus. Sango follows a **Eurocentric curriculum** and asks that they start the school day with a poem titled "Winter Days." Another lesson is a dictation about the port of Marseilles.





Malo's teaching Malo favors teaching outside the classroom in nature. He tells the students to call him simply 'Malo'. He also teaches sexual education to the pupils. The village teacher has negotiated a patch of land with the palm-wine tapper to create a school vegetable garden. The village chief summons the palm-wine tapper to let him know his dissatisfaction. The tapper tells the chief that he is free to give his land to whomever he chooses. The chief threatens to increase his taxes next year.



VILLAGE PEOPLE

The village chief The village chief lives in a run-down colonial-era house elevated on piers, which dominates all the huts in the village. He is flanked by a servant holding his flywhisk. He spends his days drinking palm wine, wandering in the village or getting his feet massaged by his young wife. He sees Malo walk by with his pupils and has his servant hail him. He wants to know why the new teacher did not come to introduce himself, and he makes it clear to Malo that he is the top authority in the village and deserves reverence. He thinks that Malo is insolent, but his wife finds Malo handsome and courageous, which upsets him further.



The Greedy shop owner The bar owner, who is also the owner of the only store in the village, cheats the villagers by overpricing the articles he sells. The villagers pray that God give them a second store one day but do not know how to make it happen. One day, to avenge one of their classmates who is slapped by the store-owner, the pupils of the village attack the store-owner and his assistant and ransack the store.

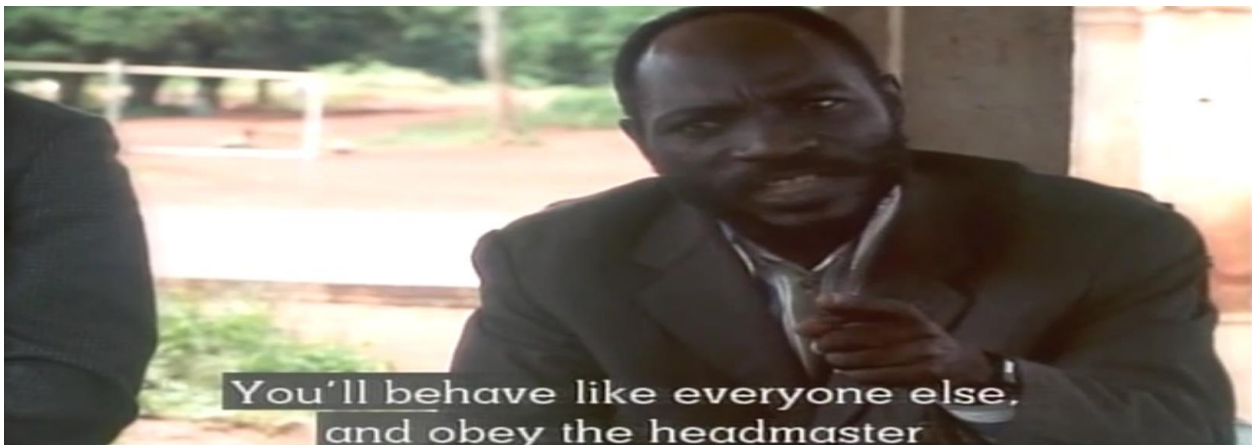


Malo wants a farmers' cooperative

Malo has recruited the village carpenter to give some practical skills to his pupils. He wants to do something for their parents, too. A government official has come to Lebamzip to encourage the farmers to increase their cocoa output. Malo interrupts him and asks the official how he could honestly advise the farmers to grow cocoa when he knows that the cocoa business does not improve the farmers' lives. Malo suggests instead that the farmers organize themselves in a collectivized group to grow food. The villagers find Malo's idea of a cooperative intriguing, but they do not know if they can trust him. They ask the village chief for advice. He tells them to forget it because it is just politics. Then they ask the priest. He tells them that it is communism, and communism is the denial of God. The farmers decide to put the idea to a vote. Most of the villagers in attendance vote in favor of the cooperative. Mbog, who was thinking of leaving the village, finds Malo's idea interesting and decides to stay and be part of the cooperative. The village cooperative successfully builds a new store. There, prices are fair, and the villagers are treated with respect and dignity. Malo also organizes a program of alphabetization for the members of the cooperative.



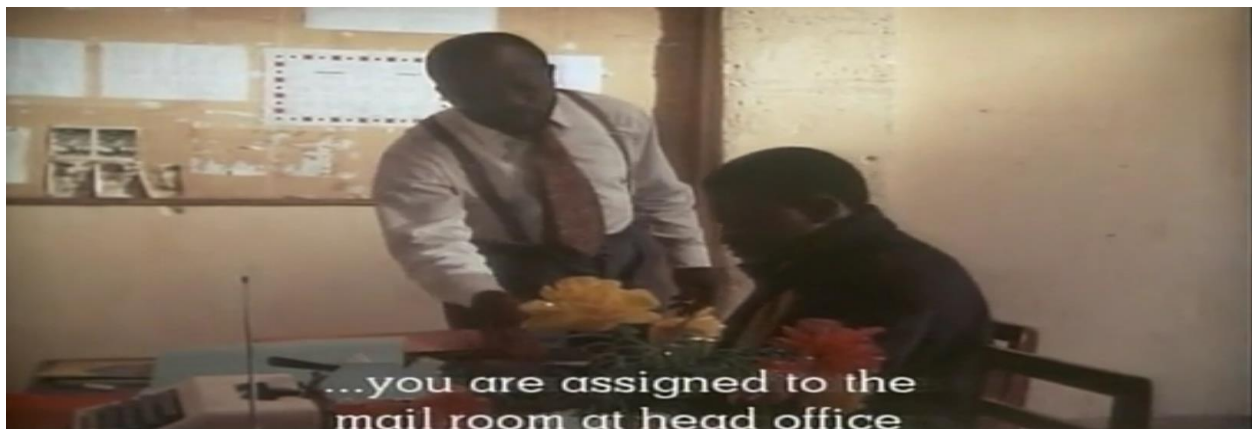
Leaders of the community Sango, the chief, the preacher, and the store-owner are collectively distrustful of Malo. The preacher warns his flock against Malo, the evil person lurking among them. The chief warns his constituents against Malo the communist. Sango is wary of Malo the renegade, and the store owner is suspicious of Malo the subversive. This gang of four constitutes the core of the village council. They summon Malo to let him know their displeasure. The chief orders him to get in line, to listen to the headmaster, and to teach the conventional curriculum. The chief travels to the sub-prefecture to report that Malo is a revolutionary. The sub-prefect is alarmed and promises to report to the governor. Meanwhile, Sango is admonishing Malo, telling him to rethink his pedagogy, for, ultimately, it is his students' performance on the conventional materials that will determine whether they obtain a diploma or not. Malo scoffs and retorts that what matters to him is less the diploma than the practical skills that his pupils will get from his teaching.



Malo gets married to Ngo Bakang without the traditional dowry Malo is delighted to see Ngo Bakang. She gives Malo news of the teachers training college Malo declares his love to Ngo Bakang. He tells her that he is tired of living alone and would like her to come live with him. She replies that she will move in with him when he is ready, meaning, once he is satisfied with the dowry and feasting ceremony. Malo retracts and declares that he will not comply with these practices because he finds them backward. Malo and Ngo Bakang elope and wed secretly in the city. Ngo Bakang's father becomes the laughingstock of the village and commits suicide by hanging himself. As they get him down, the chief exclaims that he is after all a good man, that is, a man who has chosen death over the shame of seeing his daughter and his son-in-law trample on traditions.



Malo loses his post A decision by the school superintendent has removed Malo from his teaching post and assigned him to the mailroom at the central administration. Malo prefers to resign rather than work in the mailroom. Ngo Bakang announces to Malo that she has been assigned as his replacement. Malo is delighted that she, instead of someone else, will be taking over his position.



Malo is arrested Against the advice of Mbog and the other members of the cooperative, Malo decides that he will clear the sacred forest to grow foodstuffs. 'Big Eyes', the man who sees and hears everything, comes to help him. Before Malo leaves, his wife tells him that she loves him. The police arrive as Malo and Big Eyes are clearing the forest and arrest them.



Malo in Prison Months later, Big Eyes arrives in the village with not-so-good news from the prison, which he tries to spin positively: Malo will have a good, long rest in prison, and by the time he comes back, all his enemies in the village will be dead, he says. Big Eyes also reveals to the villagers that Ngo Bakang is expecting a child from Malo.



QUESTIONS

1. Who is the teacher that had the greatest impact on you? What made that teacher memorable?
2. In your country/state which authority determines public elementary and secondary school curricula? Are there dissensions about these curricula? Who are the conflicting parties? What is usually the source of the conflicts? How are those conflicts usually resolved?
3. Capitalism, socialism, and communism are some of the world's popular economic models. What is the economic model that runs in your country/state? What are some of the advantages and limitations of that economic model?
4. Many observers have noted that women in politics have a more conciliatory approach than men. Do you see this in Ngo Bakang's teaching method? How?
5. The notion of a dowry is for either the parents of the bride or the parents of the groom to pay something to the a family to compensate for the loss that comes with their daughter or son being taken by another family through marriage. Is the system of dowry something that exists one way or another in your culture? What is your stand on that practice?