

'Tongo is a Prison': revisiting *Hamile, the Tongo Hamlet*.

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**Abstract**

In 1964, The Ghana Film Industry Corporation recorded a version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with staff and students from the University of Ghana's School of Performing Arts. Transposed to the far north of Ghana, *Hamile* is described at the start of the film as a straight adaptation with very little alteration: 'The text is unaltered, except where it would not make sense in a frafra community, or where an archaic word obscures the meaning'. However, in this article we explore how the repositioning of Hamlet to the Ghana's Northern Region speaks to a brief window of radical post-colonial politics and culture. (Wiggins and Nketia)

1964 was also the year in which Nkrumah declared a one-party state and himself president for life before his government was toppled in a coup in 1966. (Rooney, 2002) Through an examination of contemporary Ghanaian post-colonial policy and Nkrumah's own political writings, we argue that not only is *Hamile* a profound reinterpretation of Shakespeare's text but that the combination of the iconography of northern Ghana together with the ambition of Ghana's nascent creative institutions encapsulate the essence of Nkrumahist cultural and national policy.