

**EVALUATION OF KENYAN FILM INDUSTRY: HISTORICAL  
PERSPECTIVE**

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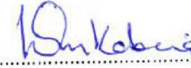
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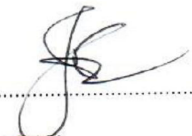
## DECLARATION

I, Edwin Ngure Nyutho, do hereby declare that this is my original work and it has not been submitted to any other institution for any academic credits.

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## DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to several people who have contributed to its creation in different ways;

To my father the late Benson Nyutho Matigi for having instilled in me the notion that education was the only alternative worth pursuing, along the path towards a better future;

To my mother Nelius Wanjiru Nyutho who nurtured me and endured my mischievous childhood, always checking the bedroom a second time to ensure that I didn't sneak back into bed after my siblings had gone to school. She was the most accomplished performer I have ever seen and she could mimic any person we knew in our village and beyond. She passed her performative genius to me and I went into Theatre and Drama owing to the art of storytelling that she gifted me;

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## ABSTRACT

This evaluation of the Kenyan film industry from its historical foundations, tried to fill a gap of shortage of data on history of film in Kenya. It traces the historical development of the film industry, the policies and institutional frameworks, impacted by changing political circumstances and technological developments over the study period from colonial Kenya to the present.

The qualitative study used both primary and secondary data methods. Primary data collection involved interviewing key informants who are policy makers and custodians of a lot of the information related to the management and the operation of the Kenyan film industry. This included policy makers in government and the CEO of FEPACI the regional film organization, and senior film producers some who have been in the industry since the 1970s.

For secondary data, the study carried out a rigorous critical evaluation desk study at the Kenya National Archives and Data Services (KNADS), local libraries and websites featuring film production in Kenya. For data on the colonial period, the research benefited greatly from data from the British Film Institute from where the researcher was able to access and preview relevant films from that epoch. For the postcolonial epoch, there was a lot of data available from KNADS. The desk study gave the researcher a clear grasp of the different issues and the stages that the Kenyan film went through and the challenges and opportunities at varying moments along the way. Because film's communicative power is in representations of reality on the screen, the study also evaluated how Kenyan people have been represented on the screen during the era under study by critically analyzing films, purposively selected from three epochs of the study period. The selected films included the colonial epoch when film propaganda became a major weapon against the nationalist struggle for independence, the postcolonial epoch, in the mid-1980s when the film industry was on the verge of takeoff, and for the contemporary epoch, 2012, when the Kenyan local film industry made its impact on the global screen.

The study outlines how the industry developed and how policies were made to suit regimes in power. In the post-independent epoch, there are revelations of whimsical policy decisions, made by middle level bureaucrats, which condemned great enterprises to start a film industry in the 1960s. The study also lays out the evolution and the establishment of Riverwood film industry. A surprising finding is the extent to which South Africa has risen to dominate cinema in Kenya since the end of Apartheid. The setting up of a Kenyan Schools, Colleges and Universities film festival indicates a bright future for the Kenyan film industry. The study makes many recommendations, including the improvement of distribution and marketing of movies in Kenya; professionalization of the Riverwood film industry, and a more rigorous study to affirm the chain-link of their business. Among many other recommendations are the measures to take, as the industry's management is devolved to the Kenyan counties.



## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

**AMI:** Africa Media Institute

**BBC:** British Broadcasting Corporation

**BEKE:** Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment

**Bollywood:** Film industry in India,

**CBD:** Central Business District

**CCK:** Communication Commission of Kenya

**CD:** Compact Disc

**CEO:** Chief Executive Officer.

**CGI:** Character Generator Interface.

**3D:** Three Dimensional Screens.

**Darwood:** The film Industry in Tanzania.

**DFFB:** German Academy for Film & Television Berlin (DFFB).

**DFS:** Department of Film Services.

**DSTV:** DStv Network is MultiChoice's digital satellite TV service in Africa.

**DVDs:** Digital Video Device.

**EABC:** East African Broadcasting Corporation.

**EMB:** Empire Marketing Board.

**FEPACI:** The Pan African Federation of Film Producers.

**FESPACO:** The Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (Festival Panafricain du Cinéma et de la Télévision de Ouagadougou or FESPACO)

**F.M.:** Frequency Modulated

**Hollywood:** the film industry in USA.

**ICDC:** Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation, (ICDC)

**ICT:** Information, Communication, Technology

**IFC:** International Finance Corporation.

**Imax:** a technique of widescreen cinematography that produces an image approximately ten times larger than that from standard 35 mm film."IMAX theaters"

**IMF:** International Marketing Fund.

**ITU:** International Telecommunications Union.

**KBC:** Kenya Broadcasting Corporation.

**KBS:** Kenya Broadcasting Service, established in 1954 as a national broadcasting service for local Kenyan and later was converted to KBC.

**KECOBO:** Kenya Copyright Board (KECOBO).

**KFC:** Kenya Film Commission.

**K.F.C.p:** Kenya Film Corporation.

**KIFF:** Kenya International Film Festival.

**KII:** Key Informant Interview.

**KIMC:** Kenya Institute of Mass Communication.

**KNADS:** Kenya National Archives and Data Services.

**KPMG:** is a global network of professional firms providing Audit, Advisory and Tax services.

**KTN:** Kenya Television Network.

**Mnet:** South African TV Network operating globally.

**Machawood:** The film industry in Machakos County with headquarters in Machakos town.

**M.P.A.A.:** Movie Producers Association of America.

**M.P.E.A.A:** Motion Picture Export Association of America.

**Mpesa:** A money transfer platform created by Safaricom, the leading data service provider in

Kenya.

**MPPC:** Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC)

**Multichoice:** MultiChoice is a pay-TV, which offers the DStv service across Africa

**N.C.C.:** Nigerian Copyright Commission

**NGO(s):** Non-Governmental Organization(s)

**NTV:** Nation Television

**Nu Metro:** A South African Digital Film Theatre Company

**NWICO:** New World Information and Communication Order

**Nollywood:** the film industry in Nigeria,

**PDA:** Personal Data Assistant

**PS:** Permanent Secretary

**QDA:** Quality Data Analysis

**Riverwood:** the film industry in Kenya

**Ugawood:** The movie industry in Uganda

**UK:** United Kingdom

**USA:** United States of America

**UN:** United Nations

**UNCTAD:** United Nations Commission on Trade and Development

**UNESCO:** United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation

**URTNA:** Union of Radio and Television Networks in Africa

**VCD:** Video Compact Disk

**VCR:** Video Cassette Recorder

**VHS:** Video Home Services

**V.O.K.:** Voice of Kenya

**Wifi:** Popular wireless networking technology that uses radio waves to provide wireless high-speed Internet and network connections.

**WIPO:** World Intellectual Property Organization

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# 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.0 Background of the Study

The question on whether Kenya would embrace film production as a viable industry is as old as the nation itself. The debate was in independent Kenya's first government and a feasibility study was carried out to find out how a film industry could be set up. Nyoike F. Njoroge (1967: 1-7) did a report on the industry which became the basis of establishing KFCp (Kenya Film Corporation) which was set up under the Industrial Development Corporation (ICDC). Even though today there's no doubt about the viability of the film industry as an investment option in Kenya more than sixty years after independence, there's still no government policy to regulate its operations.

Current critics of the Kenyan film scene don't have many nice things to say about the state of the current movie industry which has evolved over changing socio-political upheavals from colonial periods to today without clear documentation of how the changing circumstances were affecting the film industry over this entire period. This chapter will explore the background of this problem, set the context, explain the background and establish the researchable problem.

There is very little published research on history of film in Kenya. There is however ample documents in the Kenya National Archives and other collections of stories from elsewhere from which the records of the industry can be gleaned and the history reconstructed.

The film industry (also referred to as movie or cinema industry), is acknowledged globally as an important vehicle for social, cultural, political and economic development. It has globally become a powerful vehicle for culture, education, leisure and propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

Compared to other media, film is a young medium as it came into existence only a little more than a hundred years ago, much after dance, painting, literature, newspaper and theatre which have existed much longer. (Bordwell, David, et al, 2010:1) (Kingsley Bolton et al 2010: 14).

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<sup>1</sup> . <sup>1</sup><http://thoughteconomics.blogspot.com/2011/06/role-of-film-in-society.html>, accessed 17/10/2014,

More than most arts, film for many years depended on complex technology which to an extent impeded the creative expression of ordinary film producers, but that has changed since the advent of the digital era. Cinema is also the most prestigious cultural activity in the modern world. It is for us what theatre was in the age of Shakespeare or painting was in the days of Leonardo da Vinci:<sup>2</sup> the art form with the biggest impact, the largest budgets, and the most widespread audiences. Films are deliberately created to have effects on their audiences and over the years, film has been identified as one of the best tools for social transformation (Bordwell, David, et al, 2010:1). The film industry can be a magnet that draws communities together as it translates into a platform for their social, economic and even political debate and development.

Film has evolved over time to combine its artistic qualities and its business potential to emerge as one of the world's most formidable cultural industries. Film or motion pictures have emerged to be such an important part of our lives that it's hard to imagine life without them. As art, film is a combination of different art forms that include writing, dramatic performance, cinematography, music, editing etc. According to David Bordwell et.al (2010: 3), the audio-visual medium is widely recognized as a powerful form of communication, entertainment and by design; films have a massive influence on their audiences.

According to Prof. Mbye Cham (2006), "African filmmaking continues to be plagued by the same set of material challenges of meagre or no capital resources, equipment, production, and training facilities and effective distribution and exhibition channels and infrastructures". Although there has been some "improvement in terms of quantity, quality and perhaps infrastructure since its baby beginnings in the 1950s and earlier, not much has changed in terms of production, distribution and exhibition of this cinema."

According to Prof Cham, (ibid), she continued to observe that African cinema had also made significant strides in relying on her own resources for production, compared to reliance on donor funding when it was established. She went on to say that Africa too still feels the influence of the historical context of colonialism and liberation struggles within which African cinema came into existence. One of the nagging problems according to Prof.

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<sup>2</sup> [Utopia series: the cinema of the future | Philosophers' Mail](http://thephilosophersmail.com/utopia/utopia-series-the-cinema-of-the-future/)  
<http://thephilosophersmail.com/utopia/utopia-series-the-cinema-of-the-future/>, accessed on 6/8/2014

Cham (ibid), is the unavailability of local broadcast networks for African film products as well as the low level of broadcaster participation in production and co-production with African filmmakers. Prof Cham reiterated that “the absence of clear cultural policies and budget cuts, decaying infrastructure and services as well as the steady reduction and drying up of both external and internal sources of funds for production and distribution continue to plague the African film industry. Prof Cham reiterated that “these challenges are exacerbated by the fact that filmmaking in much of Africa operates within the context of a policy and institutional void both at the state and regional level.”

Kenya’s film industry is plagued by the same afflictions as those that affect most of African cinema as outlined by Prof Mbye Cham above. This is despite the fact that Kenya was among the first countries in Africa where films were shot on a regular basis. For one reason or another, the film industry has stagnated in Kenya while it has flourished in other countries such as Nigeria and South Africa. This study has endeavored to undertake an investigation to establish why this is the case.

According to the Kenya Draft Film Policy (July 2011), the government of Kenya sees film not only as a tool for information and entertainment but also as a powerful communication instrument for national integration, for social and economic development and for the exploitation, preservation and further enrichment of the country’s cultural heritage. In this policy document, the film industry has been identified as a key growth industry, “with potential to spur economic growth through tourist attraction, investment and employment creation.” According to Kenya Film Commission website, this is so because of the country’s great scenic physical and environmental features, which makes it an ideal location for film making.

Kenya has yet to harness the natural endowments of the scenic beauty fully to create a flourishing film industry. According to Notcutt et al (1937), since the colonial times, film in the British Empire was considered a way to beam propaganda to the masses. Unfortunately after independence, no one in the independent Kenyan government saw the need to reverse this unfortunate trend and film remained under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to play an informational role rather than at the ministry of culture where it rightfully belongs.

The emergence of the video technology in the 1980s and the development of digital technology in the 1990s gave the industry a shot in the arm as the celluloid film which was in practice before was far too expensive, and too technically demanding to make films cost effectively. The arrival of video technology in the 1980s and the later evolution of the digital era changed this equation and provided the developing world a convenient tool to leapfrog across the technological divide into an industry they would not have been able to engage in.

But if this technological leap has borne fruits elsewhere, it hasn't flourished in Kenya.

According to Manthia Diawara (1987), on the onset of colonization, Africans were disparaged by their colonial masters as a people who had no capability to appreciate cinema because their minds as it was said could not comprehend and interpret the juxtaposition of images on the silver screen. According to Jason Njoku (2012), today Nollywood is the second largest cinema industry in the world in terms of volume of movies produced per year. Nigeria took the lead in African film production because they realized the need to set their own local production standards and stop following the dictates of American or European standards. After doing this, they started filling the void of African cultural products in their local TV screens and in African television stations and cinema houses.

Like other commercial or cultural products, film cannot grow without intricate marketing networks. According to Manthia Diawara (ibid), as early as 1969 a need to create a regional film festival was felt and FESPACO was founded in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. According to [Africanfilmfestivals.org](http://Africanfilmfestivals.org)<sup>3</sup>, due to the admiration and hope that it inspired amongst the general populace and filmmakers alike, the festival became an institution by governmental decree on January 7, 1972. It is a biennial festival starting the last Saturday in February every odd year

FESPACO's objectives are to facilitate the screening of all African films; enable contacts and exchanges among film and audiovisual professionals; and contribute to the expansion and development of African cinema, as a means of expression, education and raising

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<sup>3</sup> Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panafrican\\_Film\\_and\\_Television\\_Festival\\_of\\_Ouagadougou](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panafrican_Film_and_Television_Festival_of_Ouagadougou), accessed 29/8/2015

awareness.” According to [culturaldiplomacy.org](http://culturaldiplomacy.org), although the African film industry does not currently attract the same levels of popularity claimed by the well-developed European and American industries, it has shown significant growth and progress in the beginning of the 21st century, a fact reflected in part by the creation of a Journal of African Cinema<sup>4</sup> and African TV channels.

According to Meredith Beal (2015), two of the leading African film bodies; African Media Initiative (AMI) and the Pan African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI) recently joined together, “to support the development of high quality audio visual and film content in the continent’s film industry.” The two organizations have united to create the conditions for the production of compelling African stories which meet international film standards. AMI and FEPACI are said to have joined forces with regional organizations and “national governments in developing legislative and policy environments which will drive the industry’s success and promote cross-border collaborations on production and distribution of films.”

The creation of such a medium will help to raise awareness on the need to watch African films and market the same, which requires regional collaboration for effective distribution and marketing into a wider market. According to Beal (ibid), the media and entertainment industries are a high growth area and are registering an above average growth in many African countries and are expected to grow at 5% GDP per capita up until 2015. According to Entertainment and Media Outlook report (2015-2019), Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa offer great opportunities for content producers and distribution platforms for film, television, digital media, mobile and other forms of entertainment.

The driving force for these trends is due to ongoing changes in most of Africa including urbanization, unemployment, young demographics, and the expanding and emerging middleclass. Africa has a rich and vibrant cultural diversity, historical and fabled social composition and the enigmatic traditions that are a reservoir of engaging film stories. According to the cultural diplomacy website, “an ever-growing film industry, encouraged

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<sup>4</sup> History of African Film Industry, [http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/experienceafrica/index.php?en\\_annualafrican-film-festival-2013\\_african-film-industry](http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/experienceafrica/index.php?en_annualafrican-film-festival-2013_african-film-industry), accessed on 9/8/2015

by increased investments and the abolition of censorship, will further add impetus to an already booming sector by allowing creative minds to harness this cultural capital. Furthermore, an expanded film industry translates into a flourishing labor market, providing new opportunities for young talent and thus helping to combat the global contemporary phenomenon of youth unemployment.”

Thus, in the long term, investments in the film industry of Africa will aid African countries in their quest for the universal goal of sustainable development.

According to Peter Mutie (2012), the immediate former Chief Executive Officer of Kenya Film Commission, the film industry in Kenya has stagnated for a long period, but different experts and even the government appreciates that the industry has growth potential to generate wealth and provide youth employment, besides providing local film content which is in short supply in the fast expanding entertainment industry.

The programming of local TV broadcasting houses is also currently filled with foreign content which is indicative of a people without a sense of national cultural identity. According to Ndirangu Mwaura (2005: 188), in a study carried out in Kenya, “out of 1302 weekly TV hours in 2004, only 5 hours, a mere 0.8% were allocated to programming positively African. The other 92.2 % were filled with foreign programming. On KBC TV the national station, out of 126 weekly hours less than 20 hours were devoted to African content and of these only 5% were positively African.” This is a poor show when divergent Kenyan communities who were lumped together by an arbitrary border by the British imperialists, as a nation called Kenya, have not been homogenized to create a common identity.

Television programming and films are very well suited for uniting the Kenyans through creating fables and mythologies around heroic Kenyans that can assist to give Kenyans a sense of common identity. The technology to make local content and the human resource base is abundant in the country. The country teems with many young talented youth whose creative potential is demonstrated year in year out at the Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festival, which according to Sirengo Khaemba (2014) is the biggest cultural festival of its kind in Africa. This creative energy unfortunately over the years has not been tapped into to spur the growth of a local film industry. This study looked into the challenges of

film production in Kenya from a historical perspective and evaluated the policies and institutional frameworks as it tried to address the intertwined issues from the context of finding out where it started, how it was established, by who, and accounting for why the industry is the way it is.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

This study was necessitated by the lack of publications on the history of film in Kenya. There are no available publications on the history of film in Kenya. Whatever secondary data exists, it is disjointed and scattered in many sources such as newspaper stories, magazine articles, individual and institutional websites, archival materials at the Kenya National Archives, academic journals, video productions, dissertations and thesis in academic institutions. In addition, some are references in some books which point out aspects of films shot in Kenya. These data need to be analyzed and critically evaluated to help create a document that details the emergence and growth of Kenya's film history and how the policies and institutional frameworks emerged over one hundred and fifteen years since the first film was shot in Kenya in 1909.

There are also a lot of individuals who are custodians of primary data accumulated through years of experience in the movie industry. Many experienced producers still actively involved in movie production in Kenya since the 1970s can provide information on how film has evolved since then. Besides this, there are also former graduates from the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication who trained in film production from 1975, who are still actively pursuing their film production careers, and who have a wealth of information about the film as it was before the migration from celluloid to video. The knowledge of these different individuals has not been tapped to strengthen the film industry.

Since the first documentary was shot in Kenya in 1909, many other feature films and documentaries have been shot in Kenya and these films have shaped the identity of Kenya to the outside world during the changing historical epochs. Because to an extent films contribute to shaping the perception and identity of a people, it is necessary to carry out an evaluation of these films to gauge how they represented Kenya during the colonial epoch, post-colonial epoch and in the contemporary epoch. Three films have been purposively



sampled from the three different epochs to show how the representation of Kenyans on the film screen has evolved over the period.

Over the study period, technological advancements have impacted the film industry in different ways in different countries. In Kenya, entry of video initially created a panic from the owners of cinema houses who feared that cinema theatre audiences would dwindle and die off because video would deliver the films to their door steps and most people would opt to watch movies in their own homes instead of going to the cinemas.

Over this study period, a local film industry called Riverwood emerged on a Nairobi back street called River road. How the Riverwood film industry was created and how it has grown over the years needs to be evaluated and documented. In other countries such as Nigeria, entry of video sparked off and created the growth of the now well established Nollywood film industry, the second largest film industry after Bollywood. Although this will not be strictly speaking a comparative study, the study will do a brief review of Nollywood industry so that it becomes a canvass against which the growth of Kenya's film may be looked against. South Africa too which has had a tremendous influence on Kenya's film during the entire study period will be looked at from a similar perspective.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

### *1.2.1 General Objective*

The general objective of the study is to critically evaluate and document the history of the Kenyan film industry, its policies and institutional frameworks from its establishment to the present day.

### *1.2.2 Specific Objectives*

The specific objectives of the study were:

- i. To identify and evaluate the milestones along the historical development of the film industry in Kenya from its establishment to the present.

- ii. To conduct a critical assessment of policies and institutional frameworks of the film industry and how they have impacted on film in Kenya.
- iii. To discuss challenges that affect Riverwood as a National Cinema. iv. To review the impact of South Africa cinema on Kenyan film industry.
- v. To critique selected films and assess how the cinematic representation of Kenyans has evolved over the years.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- i. What are the major milestones in the evolution of the Kenyan film industry?
- ii. How did the evolution of film policies and institutional frameworks affect the Kenyan film industry from the colonial period to the present?
- iii. What are the challenges facing the development of Riverwood cinema? iv. How has the South African movie industry impacted on the Kenyan film industry?
- v. How have locally produced films represented Kenyans?

### **1.4 Justification of the Study**

There's no single document that is available that gives a comprehensive history of film in Kenya or the milestones through which it developed from the perspective of evolution of policy changes and institutional frameworks. However efforts to highlight moments in the history of movies production in Kenya by scholars who have studied different aspects of film production in Kenya have pointed out certain aspects of the industry at specific time periods.

This study was created to fill this gap and availing for the first time to future scholars a story of Kenya's film history in one document that evaluates the growth of the industry and the changing of policies and institutional infrastructure over the study period. The study addressed itself to the policies created over the changing times, the institutional frameworks that were created to serve the industry and took note of how the Kenyans created innovative adaptations to technological challenges.

Human societies live in the present but history is an essential study because it is the foundation upon which the present and the future are built. For us to build a firm foundation for our future, we need to dig as far back as we possibly can so that we lay bare all the details as to how we came to where we are. It's a well-known truism that unless you know where you are coming from, you cannot tell where you are going. This study was therefore long overdue as a foundational study to establish how the Kenyan movie industry started, when, by whom, what mistakes were made, why the mistakes were made, and generally account for the obtaining status quo.

A study carried out by Justin R. Edwards (2008) of the World Story Organization contends that the state of Kenya's cinema industry is far below its optimum level but few people have tried to unearth why. Very little research has been carried out on the local film industry and the challenges that appear to have stunted its growth. Except for Peter Mwaura's (1980) study, other studies that have been carried out on the Kenyan media scene ignore cinema altogether and they address the issues as if cinema in Kenya does not exist as part of Kenya's mainstream mass media. As a result, anyone seeking data on local cinema is faced by a frustrating lack of data. Most of the published research on the Kenyan media industry has explored print and broadcast media and studying film as an industry hasn't received due attention. Yet, cinema over the years has demonstrated its efficacy as a medium of communication and its potential as an industry is indisputable.

According to an evaluation on Entertainment and Media Outlook Pdf (2015-2019), Kenyan filmed entertainment is dwarfed by Nigeria and South Africa. As the Kenyan film industry has stagnated, it is also necessary to research into why countries such as Nigeria and South Africa have been able to make huge benefits from film production. According to Rebecca Moudio (2014), Nigeria's film industry is said to be the economies' second biggest employer after agriculture. It is also the second biggest foreign exchange earner after oil. Nigerian films dominate the Kenyan entertainment scene both in the many hours of airing on broadcast television and pirated DVDs copies that are sold by hawkers cheaply to Kenyan consumers in most urban areas.

According to Bordwell David et.al. (2010: 43-48), there are many benefits to films beside the economic. A film industry can also enhance a sense of national pride, if we have quality

films that can be associated with us as a Kenyan people. Today in cinematic circles, a national cinema is as common as a national anthem, or a national flag. There is an unmistakable relationship in film studies between national identity, nationalism and transnationalism.

If foreigners have exploited Kenya's so called "magical beauty" to their advantage and Kenya has been a film-shooting destination since 1909, why have local Kenyans failed to make a film industry? Other than acquiring fame as a good film location because of the beautiful topography and the abundant wild life, Kenyans have gained minimal benefits from their famous beautiful scenery. The benefits from the movies shot locally have been going elsewhere except for the trickle down publicity, which has helped to promote tourism. There are very few Kenyans with anything to show to celebrate the success of the movies shot here, in spite of movies having been shot here for over 100 years.

Kimani Gabriel et al (2014) in a study of film in Kenya classified it into formal and informal sectors. Despite the technological convergence and the narrowing of the digital divide, no local study has established how much this change has led to bridging this divide in the cinema industry. According to Kimani Gabriel et al (ibid), around the late 1990s, with the proliferation of affordable and user friendly video technologies, informal video viewing shacks sprouted in most towns and villages. These seem to have paved the way for wider DVD distribution into many people's homes which created what is now called the Riverwood industry. No conclusive studies have been done yet to show how this came about.

With all the above, there was great need to do a thorough study of the industry to measure its capacity to provide quality content produced to international standards, for both local and international consumption. As discussed earlier, it was also imperative to document the film history and the creation of institutional frameworks so as to make future scholars understand fully how Kenya's film industry got into where it stands today.

As a trainer in film production and film studies, one of the challenges has been to cope with introducing the subject without any background information on how film was introduced to Kenya. It's important to know who introduced film locally, how, when and the purposes

for which it was used. This is a challenge that faces many scholars and students when they want to check the historical background of film in Kenya. The normal mode of study in any discipline is to begin with the historical beginnings, which creates the foundation upon which everything else is built. As the country gets more and more people studying film, the need for providing the literature is growing.

This study was therefore conceived for the purposes of creating a baseline study of Kenya's film industry and it tried to understand fully why the Kenyan film industry is the way it is, and also identify how the policies and institutional frameworks available over the period drove the film industry from its early beginning to the present. According to Nyoike F. Njoroge (ibid), an institution to facilitate the film industry growth was created by the first Kenyan government after independence from as early as 1967, when Kenya Film Corporation was created.

Despite this early start, the benefits from this government enterprise appear to have evaporated. What is observable is that Kenyans using their own ingenuity and innovativeness to provide relevant local entertainment developed their own fledgling film industry in the 1990s, popularly known as Riverwood but the details of how Riverwood evolved and how it grew to be what it is has not been well researched and documented.

Except for occasional references to Riverwood's products being low quality films, an evaluation of the quality and the parameters or yardsticks used to measure quality has yet to be done. Quality of a film is not easily quantifiable, because people appreciate art from the limitations of their own individual experiences. What may bother a film professional as a poorly edited film sequence may not bother a newcomer who is not schooled in editing. Whatever the case, Riverwood's ingenuity, and innovativeness has not been fully studied and analyzed to show how it came about and why it has continued to grow despite being judged low quality by some detractors.

Film has been identified as a high growth area not just in Kenya but in the region (FEPACI 2006). Many local universities have included film studies in their curriculum but there is currently no local publications addressing this development. A publication to address this gap will be developed from this study and resolve the problem. On the other hand, entrepreneurs wishing to establish new business enterprises, need baseline reports to make

them understand the terrain they are investing in. This study which will be available online will help to fill this gap.

The Kenyan film industry has gone through many policy changes from the declaration of Kenya as a protectorate by the British from 1895 to the present. According to Peter Mwaura (1980), over all these years, the industry like other Kenyan media had been operating on laws scattered haphazardly in different pieces of legislation and with no clear film policy. As the present is always determined by the past, this study will trace the development of the Kenyan film industry along the historical path from its creation to the present. The study sheds light on how the state of the Kenyan cinema today is a byproduct of the policies and the practices of earlier days. The study also reflected the Kenyan film industry against that of countries such as Nigeria and South Africa, which have thriving film industries.

### **1.5 Scope and limitations of the Study**

This qualitative research relied heavily on secondary sources but supported where possible with primary sources. Secondary research involved collection and consolidation of data from various documents related to policies and evolution of institutional infrastructural frameworks to regulate film over the study period. Information for this research was drawn from diverse literature including books and journals, non-academic literature such as reports, archival files from the Kenya National Archives and Data Services (KNADS) and internet sources. The study also critically reviewed some of the films made in some of the critical periods so as to demonstrate how film representation of the Kenyan people has changed over the years.

The study traced the history of film production in Kenya from as early as 1909 when according to available records the first film was shot in Kenya, to the present period and assessed how the policies that arose over this period impacted local film production. Since there are no living people over the precolonial and early colonial days to shed light on the practices of those days or to corroborate some of the findings, the study depended on documented evidence from available sources such as books, newspapers, magazines, pdf files, videos and internet websites.

The study also explored the evolution of both the formal and the informal aspects of the film industry and explored the differences in approach to film production between the two sectors. The founders of the Riverwood cinema who have been the backbone of the local film industry had no formal film production training and yet in their own way, they have been able to create an informal industry which today is being touted to be doing more than put food on the table. Peter Irura (2013) claims that “300 million is exchanged down Riverwood (Tom Mboya Street, Luthuli, Accra, and River Road) every week. This is through various business associated with audio visual production and distribution.”<sup>55</sup> The validity of this claim needs to be authenticated. According to Peter Irura (2013), Riverwood which was started by informally trained film producers, it has limitless possibilities in terms of the potential of film production. On the other hand, there are many formally trained Kenyan producers who have much lament about lack of government support and inappropriate policies that impinge on their film production enterprise. It was essential to explore these glaring contradictions and ascertain where the real challenge lies.

Among the formal sector producers interviewed through Key Informant Interviews included Lenny Juma; Wanjiru Kinyanjui; John Karanja of RiverWood; Dr SP Otieno coordinator of the Schools Film Festival; Lizz Chongotti the CEO of Kenya Film Commission; Jane Munene of FEPACI, and Mr. Kerich head of Film Production Services of the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts and Kajetan Boy an independent film writer, trainer and producer.

The study also interrogated the media policies and regulations as they relate to film production and evolution of film policies between pre-independence and post-independent Kenya. During the colonial era, the legal, regulatory and policy framework governing media was closely tied to the political and economic interests of the colonial government and white settler communities. A lot has changed between then and today, when the key national film regulators and policy makers include the Department of Film Services of the Ministry of Culture Sports and the Arts, who handle film licensing for both local and

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<sup>5</sup> Transacted mentions 2014-social peek, <http://www.social-peek.com/Keywords/transacts>, accessed on 13/9/2015

foreign films. The study also traced the evolution of the Kenya Film Commission which was established to coordinate and nurture both local and foreign film production in Kenya from 2005.

One of the key limitations of the study was that due to its goal, structure and other resource shortages, it wasn't able to investigate the Riverwood film industry thoroughly enough. There are still many inconsistencies about the number of films Riverwood produces and the number of producers in the so called Riverwood ensemble.

It was realized as the study was underway that the definition of a 'film' in Riverwood doesn't match the conventional definition of film, in the general film theory definition. In Riverwood, anyone who records a musical DVD, a live comedy event or any entertainment for that matter, including a stage drama is referred to as a film producer so long as he has packaged a DVD for commodification. This incongruity requires a thorough study so as to distinguish the formats that are currently being produced and how they are trading. The study has made recommendations on how to address this gap in chapter eight.

Because the study stretches over a wide span of time, it was not possible to go to all the details of the industry and refer to all the key players at the different stages. The study therefore gives a broad overview of the history, policies and institutional infrastructures over the study period which stretches over a hundred and fifteen years. It however provides a framework upon which other more detailed studies can be done over specific time periods. The sources of primary data were all sourced from Nairobi where the targeted policy makers work. Nairobi also happens to house most of the veteran film makers who are the custodians of the knowledge and experience that the study wanted to tap into.

Like all qualitative historical studies, this study was limited to the researcher's point of view, experiences, available literature, analysis and interpretations. The researcher has been involved in the Kenyan movie industry since the 1970s and in fact was an actor in the *Bush Trackers* one of the three films under review, and has been a practitioner in the industry since then.



Although this provides him an opportunity to evaluate the industry from an insiders' point of view, this may bias him to dwell more on the aspects of the industry close to his heart. This is the challenge of the 'insider looking out,' compared with an evaluator who has had no personal experiences in the industry, and therefore would have the advantage of a more objective perspective of an 'outsider looking in.' It must be appreciated that despite efforts to be detached and to evaluate objectively, all scholars are limited by the scope of their own perspectives and experiences. Nonetheless, the study provides a framework that other scholars can critique and improve on.

### **1.6 Validity of the Study**

This was a qualitative study that to an extent relied on data gleaned from diverse sources with the sole purpose of consolidating history of film in Kenya and the formation and evolution of policies and institutional infrastructure in a single document. To ensure for validity and reliability of the data, the study identified key experts in the area of study for Key Informant Interviews and applied triangulation where possible across the primary and the secondary data. It verified the data from different research documents and corroborated some of the views from print documents through in depth interviews.

As the researcher personally administered all the Key Informant Interviews with all the respondents, the accuracy of the data collected in the field is assured. All the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed word for word and both written and the oral versions of the interviews are preserved. The researcher took notes as the interviews went on, which provided guidance on issues during the data analysis. As the identified respondents from the relevant government departments are key policy makers and have many years of experience in their respective areas of specialization, data collected from these sources is highly reliable and valid. The producers purposefully selected are also highly experienced in many aspects of film production and some have been operating in the movie industry for over forty years. Some of the producers interviewed took part in creating some of the institutions under study and therefore have highly relevant experience with the issues being researched on.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the theories used in the study and will review the relevant literature. The overarching theory in the study is the post-colonial theory under which several other theories such as media imperialism, cultural imperialism, third cinema, national cinema and representation theory have emerged. Media representation theory and stereotyping are discussed because cinema engages its audiences through a representation of fiction as reality on the screen and in the process creates powerful impressions of things that appear real when they're far from so.

Any attempt to study Kenyan cinema without invoking Nigeria and South Africa would not be conclusive because besides Hollywood which impacts the global screens, South Africa and Nigeria impact Kenyan film industry even more directly than Hollywood does. The Nigerian film industry popularly called Nollywood is according to Jake Bright (2015), said to be the world's second largest film producer after Bollywood. The study reviewed how the industries started, how they developed into their current status and what's currently trending. South African and Kenya's film industries appear to be joined at the hip from the colonial cinema times to today. On the other hand, Nigerian cinema is so dominant in Kenya, and the Kenyans are so complacent with it, that it seems to have taken root and to have been embraced to fill the void created by failure of Kenyan cinema to develop.

## 2.1 Post-colonial Theory

Postcolonial theory is founded on colonialism. It's imperative to understand that without colonialism there would have been no post-colonialism and postcolonial theory would have had no basis. Colonialism was about the invasion and conquest and dominance of European nations over weaker African, Asian and American nations by force, and imposing European values, religion, mode of dress, language, technology, and all imaginable cultural attributes and lifestyles over the conquered people.

Post-colonialism is therefore a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies that went through the vagaries of colonialism. It is concerned with both how European nations conquered and controlled "the Third World" cultures and how these groups have since responded to and resisted those encroachments. Since its formulation, post-colonialism theory has evolved as many different scholars tried to understand and apply it. As both a body of theory and a study of political and cultural change, it has gone and continues to go through three broad stages: an initial awareness of the social, psychological, and cultural inferiority enforced by being in a colonized state, the struggle for ethnic, cultural, and political autonomy and a growing awareness of cultural overlap and hybridity.<sup>6</sup>

Colonialism is defined as the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. The colonialist, while committing these atrocities against the natives and territories of the colonies, convinces himself that he stands on high moral ground. His basic assumptions in defense of his actions are that he is doing it for the benefit of the colonized who are savages in need of education and rehabilitation.<sup>7</sup> According to the notion of the colonizer, the culture of the colonized was primitive, and it's the moral duty of the colonizer to do something about abolishing it and imposing a better way of life on the backward people. That was the excuse of imposing Christianity from Europe onto a people who were quite at home with their own beliefs.

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<sup>6</sup> Key Terms in Post-Colonial Theory <http://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/postcold.htm>, accessed on 1/10/2015 <sup>7</sup> <http://www.bachelorandmaster.com/criticaltheories/about-colonial-postcolonial-theory.html#.VgF8ctKqqko>, accessed on 20/9/2015

When they invaded Africa, Asia and America and dominated and subjugated the natives and imposed their will at large on them, their main interest was plundering resources for their individual and national benefit. The colonizers eroded the natives' cultures and languages, and established their autocratic rule based on settlers' supremacy because the settlers had superiority of the gun which could not be compared with the bows and arrows and the spears of the conquered nations. The most devastating aspect of post colonialism is the cultural dislocation and deliberate destruction of the so-called primitive cultures so as to impart a new more 'modern' way of life.

According to Stephen W. Littlejohn et al. (2008), Edward Said's work "otherness" is often considered to be the origin of postcolonial theory. In his book '*Orientalism*,' Said discusses the systems of discourse in which the world is divided, administered, plundered, by which humanity is thrust into pigeonholes, by which 'we' are 'human', they are not.<sup>7</sup> Post-colonial study is concerned with how the western world legitimizes certain power structures and reinforces colonizing practices of western nations over the 'other' world. According to Stephen W. Littlejohn et al. (ibid), post-colonial theory involves a critique of colonialism, which has been an important cultural structure of the modern period. An important theme in postcolonial work is 'hybridity,' the spaces between cultures. Living between cultures and truly not being part of either creates a displaced position that carries with it a special consciousness and a way of seeing that is valuable to both cultures. Post-colonial theory calls upon scholars to recognize 'power' and 'privilege' and be conscious to how these elements are used or abused. Because of its broad outlook, colonization and the aftermath, postcolonial theory relates to a host of other theories that have cropped up in the globalizing world.

The study of film production in Kenya and its history is best looked at through the lenses of postcolonial theory because film in the first place is a foreign tool that was imposed on Africa alongside other vestiges of western technology during the colonial occupation when the colonialists dominated and oppressed Africa. On the other hand, according to Dr. I. Daramola et al. & Dr. Babatunde Oyinade (2015), ever since it was brought in to Africa,

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*,( New York Random House 1978), 41

film as a technology and as a way of life, has abetted cultural globalization and the infiltration of foreign cultures into African culture, norms, values, and alteration of African social structure. Film as a technology and as a media has been a conduit of continued erosion of the culture of the African people especially through Hollywood movies leading to the disintegration of African identity and creating what Bhabha referred to as hybridity. According to Haj Yazdiha (2010), hybridity comes in as a fusion between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized.

Because film as a technology is a European invention, adoption of film for cultural conservation will still create hybrid byproducts because it is a fusion of the two worlds, Film has not yet been fully integrated or fused into the cultural practices of most of the African people as a cultural production tool but still continues many years after independence to be a channel of foreign culture to bring western images and stories into Africa and by so doing deny space for Africans to share in their own stories and experiences. But more importantly, during the colonial era, cinema was a tool of domination, oppression and indoctrination and in the post-colonial era, most of the African nations have not been able to adopt it as a tool to conserve and propagate their own culture to reverse the damage inflicted on the African culture and the disintegration of African identity.

According to Young, R J C (2001:383-426), postcolonial theory as a “political discourse” emerged mainly from experiences of oppression and struggles for freedom after the awakening in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the continents associated with poverty and conflict. Postcolonial criticism focuses on the oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world (Young 2001:11). The philosophy underlying this theory is not one of declaring war on the past, but declaring war against the present realities which, implicitly or explicitly, are the consequences of that past. Therefore the attention of the struggle is concentrated on neocolonialism and its agents (international and local) that are still enforced through political, economic and social exploitation in post-independent nations.

The term post-colonial is a binary fusion of two concepts of ‘after’ and ‘colonial.’ Post colonialism implies that the political ‘freedom’ that was granted to the colonies was an exercise in futility in regard to culture in post-colonial states, especially due to the power

the former colonial powers wield in controlling and influencing the culture and lives of former colonies through communication. This controversy has been ranging since the liberation of the colonized world from the 1960s. The theory however has aroused controversies due to what some critics claim to be ambiguity of the term while others claim it is problematic for researchers because of its “lack of consensus and clarity”.<sup>8</sup>

Colonialism was the imperialist expansion of Europe into the rest of the world during the last four hundred years in which an imbalanced relationship was established between the ‘center’ and the ‘peripheries,’ the dominant and the oppressed. Colonial rule was an exploitative system that bound former colonies to the colonizer, with a “primary object of promoting the colonizer’s economic advantages<sup>9</sup>” and this exploitative trend is what fueled rebellion and fight for independence in the third world countries most of which were colonized. It is characterized by mechanisms involving power through direct conquest or through political and economic influence that effectively created a form of domination by one nation over another. In the postcolonial era the domination persists in spite of the granting of political self-determination.

This unfair, unequal, and denigrating relationship tended to extend to social, pedagogical economic, political, and broadly cultural exchanges often with a European settler class and the various indigenous people who were controlled. Such a system carried with it inherent a notion of racial inferiority and what has been referred to as exotic otherness.<sup>10</sup>

Understanding postcolonial theory therefore requires reference to its historical roots. Young (ibid), links the origin of postcolonial theory to humanitarian (moral), liberal (political) and economic oppressions that the former colonies have had to put up with even after they acquired their independence most of whom did so over sixty years ago. It is therefore a broad based theory under which other theories have evolved such as media imperialism, cultural imperialism, representation theory, otherness etc.

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<sup>8</sup> XI. Postcolonial / Decolonial Theories [http://culturalpolitics.net/cultural\\_theory/postcolonial](http://culturalpolitics.net/cultural_theory/postcolonial), accessed 11/9/2015

<sup>9</sup> (ibid)

<sup>10</sup> Quick definitions, Cultural Encounters and Colonial Studies Unit <http://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/postcold.html>, (accessed on 25-05-2014)

According to Rukundwa et al. (2007), post-colonialism is seen broadly as a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies. It is concerned with how European nations conquered and controlled, 'Third World' cultures and how these groups have reacted to this domination. So in a way it is a study of political and cultural change which continues to go through three broad stages.

The first one is the awareness of the social, psychological and cultural inferiority enforced by being in a colonized state. Secondly, there's the struggle for ethnic, cultural and political autonomy and finally, there's a growing awareness of cultural overlap and hybridity. These three manifestations are evident today in the state of film in Kenya besides other cultural traits which are noticeable under critical scrutiny.

Closer home within the cultural realm, according to Gikandi Simon et al (2012), within the department of literature of the University of Nairobi between 1968 and 1973, there was a big post colonial struggle spearheaded by Ngugi wa Thiong'o to liberate literature from English and to recognize other literatures other than the English Literature. According to Gikandi et.al (ibid), Ngugi wrote a memo titled 'On the abolition of the English Department' which sparked a big debate. Ngugi and his colleagues set out to challenge the assumption that "the English tradition and the emergence of the modern west is the central root of our consciousness and our cultural heritage." According to Gikandi et.al (ibid) although the memo didn't use Black Aesthetics and its concerns were humanistic rather than nationalistic, it created a wave that resonated with black cultural nationalism in other parts of Africa and the Caribbean. This awareness and cultural liberation that took root in African literature is yet to sprout in Kenyan cinema, despite a Kenyan being central in creating such a great impact in cultural consciousness on a global scale.

Cinema study arouses issues related to national, transnational and global essence because in their nature, films are an expression of cultural or national identity. In the globalized world, cinemas have grown to be very variegated products with concept and image converging from diverse parts of the world to create a single film resulting in hybrid products. The dynamics that created human mobility and settlement in different parts of the world from around the thirteenth century stirred up the human society in such a way that few, if any part of the world retains its original cultural tableau. The practice of co-productions in films is an acceptance that film production like the premier league in football cannot anymore

wholly rely on only home grown talent. This is why hybridity in film is today becoming more and more eminent. It is the basis on which Lupita essentially a third world human resource is a most sought after artiste at Hollywood the heartbeat of global entertainment. According to Editors Sandra Ponzanesi et al (2012), “postcolonial cinema studies” denotes a hybrid field of research, which attempts to create a dialogue between film analysis of movies that deal closely with the representation of colonialism, and critical approaches that examine movies through the lenses of postcolonial theory.

While applying postcolonial theory, the study focused to see the extent to which film producers apply any awareness or consciousness of the postcolonial state that the society they are filming for has been through. Because film is a mass medium with high impact, those who produce films need to have a thorough knowledge of their audiences especially as it relates to their history and their cultural orientation. Post-colonial studies in film focus on issues related to ‘colonial hangover’ that is evident in film portrayal and representation in the post-colonial era. Sixty years after independence, many African film makers appear not to see the lingering imperialism that is still rife around emerging African societies which are bedeviled by many challenges of a people coming out of colonial bondage with all its misgivings and debilitating manifestations.

Postcolonial theory requires the African film maker to grasp the need of utilizing the power of film to address and resolve some of the myriad challenges brought about by colonialism such as the dislocation of African economies and the dissolution of African cultures and imposition of social and political values that somehow have failed to take root in Africa. Many local producers continue to base their stories on frivolous themes that have little relevance to Africa’s core challenges. Even where the films must criticize and poke fun through caricatures and parodies, this must be done in the context of a society still recovering from the trauma of cultural dislocation. Because political independence did not liberate Africa from cultural imperialism, cinema cannot afford to be criticizing, oblivious of the challenges, the aspirations and the limitations of the people being criticized.

Secondly, even though cinema should rightfully be engaged in entertainment, African cinema must indigenize the narratives and recapture the African story telling stylistics and



ethos using African languages. As this study emphasizes when discussing literature review, Nollywood became widely acceptable because it created stories from home told in the local people's languages and traditional idiom. The stories are spiced with African idioms, proverbs, costumes, juju, witchcraft, artifacts, cultural display, and the imagery of Africa is perpetually in the picture.

In the aftermath of British colonialism, English language use in Kenyan entertainment remains an enormously contestable issue especially in situations where a lot of the folk are still marginalized communities in the rural areas. The modern elite who comprise the bulk of film and television producers have abandoned their vernaculars and continue to use the colonizers language in their creative expressions. They have 'uprooted the pumpkin,' to borrow words from Taban Lo Liyong, the author of 'Song of Lawino,' while in Nollywood the pumpkin appears to still be in the center of the homestead in spite of the pumpkin being nourished by foreign and artificial fertilizers resulting in hybridity. In Song of Lawino, the traditional Acholi wife Lawino beseeches her estranged husband to be mindful of abandoning his culture:

*"Ocol my husband, Son of the Bull, Let no one uproot the Pumpkin."'<sup>11</sup>*

Taban lo Liyong was one of the leading figures in the in the 1960s at the University of Nairobi along with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Henry Owuor-Anyumba who wrote the seminal 'On the Abolition of the English Department' (1968), asking "Why can't African culture be at the center so that we can view other cultures in relationship to it ?" He continued to argue for the necessity of an African perspective including a return to the use of local languages.

According to Mark L. Lilleleh (2008), in the preface to the books' translation he notes:

"I advocate not only the use of the vernacular, but much more so, the use of the vernacular for restating and stating the innermost thoughts of indigenous cultures. In other words, the return to African languages is not enough. We should return to African languages to use

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<sup>11</sup> The Defence of Lawino (tr. Taban lo Liyong) by Okot p'Bitek <http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/uganda/pbitek2a.htm>, accessed on 23/9/2015

them as paradigms and lenses for seeing much more clearly the inner meaning and strength of African culture.”

Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) has argued his case very convincingly and has written extensively beseeching Africa to return to writing and creating literature in African vernaculars. This notwithstanding, there are very few films done in vernacular languages, yet most of the indigenous masses do not speak English and those who do have very rudimentary mastery of the language. Ngugi wa Thiong’o has stated categorically that those who abandon their own languages turn themselves into slaves. Film in a postcolonial setting needs to be used as a tool to rebuild African self-confidence after the many years of hallowing denigration and subjugation by racist propaganda spread through cinematic depiction. Technology provides solutions to share meaning across linguistic divides by subtitling for those who do not understand the vernacular and even dubbing different vernaculars in the digitalized soundtracks.

Africa must use cinema in “rewriting African history from African dignity.”<sup>13</sup> Even without being overtly ideological, African cinema cannot afford the luxury of engaging in art for art’s sake. Stories that we tell must reflect African values and must be sensitive to the cultural traits that were uprooted by colonialism. In my analysis of the three films, I will be bringing this out especially in the two movies done in independent Kenya where in some situations the only difference in characterization of the story is only skin deep. Beyond the skin, there’s very little authentic African character.

According to Walter Rodney (1973:24) underdevelopment of whatever type expresses a particular relationship of exploitation: namely, the exploitation of one country by another. Rodney observes that all of the countries named as ‘underdeveloped’ in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment with which the world is now preoccupied is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. As I will argue and demonstrate in my thesis later, the disheveled state of our film industry is owed partly to the effects of colonial brainwashing that foreign products are superior to our own, coupled with the laxity and myopia of our independent governments who failed to make the right policy

decisions to prioritize salvaging our image and national self-integrity ever since we gained our independence in the 1960s.

In building film characters who become the carriers and the embodiment of the values we want to instill in society, creation of characters like Kimathi in *Bush Trackers* as I will point out leaves a lot to be desired because he does not encompass the values of a man conscious of his neocolonial setting.

The study has focused on three films produced at different stages in Kenya's history but which build up a montage that clearly demonstrates the manifestations of post-colonialism in the Kenyan film industry over the period. The Film *Simba*, a propaganda film produced by the British as propaganda locally and internationally against the Mau Mau at the height of the fight for liberation is a colonial cinema and the imperialist agenda in its filmic production and the use of negative characterization to undermine the confidence of African characters will be analyzed. The second film *Bush Trackers*, produced in 1979/80 by an African American who had 'benevolent' intentions exported American cinematic style into Kenya, when Kenyan cinema should have been by the 1980s adopting a better cinematic representation to redeem the image of a people tarnished through negative colonial representation by Western cinema.

Ironically, Gordon Parks Jr. and Garry Strieker the men behind this film were inspired by the need to improve the cinematic representation of Kenyan people because they claimed that the main image coming out of Kenyan movies was that of the dominant white hunter while the African was shown in a servant role according to Mwaura Peter (1980:46). The same sentiments had been expressed by Kenyan ambassadors in the first Kenyan independent government as the study demonstrates in chapter four. Because they were oblivious of the postcolonial dilemma of the Kenyan state, Gordon Parks Jr. and Garry Strieker could only make arguments on the skin colour because the image of the white man was dominant but their motive was to make money from the Kenyan attractive topography like other foreigners had done before them. The assumptions from Parks Jr. and Strieker, was that so long as you have Africanized the hero and you made him black, issues related to his ideological pursuits, his integrity of character, his culture, his values or his agenda are

of no concern. Authentic representation is more than supplanting white heroes or villains with black ones.

My third film to critique *Nairobi Half Life*, the most successful ‘Kenyan’ film to date produced in 2012 has many issues related to the negative portrayal of Africans and is perpetuating the myth that was entrenched by colonialists that Africans are hopeless through and through. The study has investigated and will demonstrate that the film is masquerading as Kenyan whereas it is actually a German film, because a German producer and company hold the film’s certificate of origin and the real director of the film was a German but a Kenyan name was used for it to qualify for Hollywood nomination. This is a manifestation of the colonial ‘hangover’ that still is evident in local cinema. The study contention is that deliberate efforts to address the malaise that post-colonialism poses to Kenyan cinema are yet to be effected especially when we expose our trainees to foreigners with hidden agenda. Ngugi WA Thiong’o took up the mantle in literature and he has in his publications been able to change the landscape and to liberate Kenyan literature and give it a voice and a face to address Kenyan and African issues loudly and clearly on the global arena. The same needs to happen in film representation so as to put wholesome Kenyan films on the local and global screens.

The postcolonial theory provides the bedrock or canvass upon which the evolution of history of film in Kenya will be dissected. Using an eclectic approach, the dissecting tools will comprise other theories which have developed from the postcolonial discourse such as cultural imperialism, third cinema, national cinema, media representation, miss representation and African film theory. Each one of these theories will address more concrete issues as opposed to the wider array of issues under post colonialism which range from politics, economy, history etc.

## **2.2 Cultural imperialism**

Cultural Imperialism was popularized by Jeremy Tunstall (1977: 57), who describes a situation in which “authentic traditional, local culture...is being battered out of existence by the indiscriminate dumping of large quantities of slick commercial and media products from

the US. The theory applies very well in the study of cinema where Hollywood has dominated the global scene since the end of the First World War.

According to Movious Lauren (2010), another scholar who has expanded the discourse, the cultural imperialism debate gained momentum after decolonization led to new states in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Scholars saw the colonizer invent a new form of capitalist subjugation of the Third World countries by especially American consumer culture which pervades most parts of the developing countries. Lauren (ibid) continues to argue that these neo-colonialist powers have turned to symbolic means of control, which has been facilitated by the integration of global telecommunications systems and the proliferation of television and the widespread of US movies in most parts of the developing world. To America which soars above the skies like a predatory eagle swooping and embellishing its appetite on whatever it chooses, culture is not sacred. It is a product to be manufactured, chewed and discarded like chewing gum.

Tensions have brewed between the French government and the Hollywood film industry since 1919 and they continued to the 1990s because the US considers arts as an industry making profits, whereas Europe considers culture as the product of ideas that extend beyond strict commercial value. According to Sophie des Beauvais (2014), Jack Valenti, former head of the Motion Picture Association of America, once said in Uruguay, during a round table discussion on World Trade Association that , “Culture is like chewing-gum, a product like any other.” Contrastingly according to Beauvais (ibid), French President Francois Mitterrand once said, "The mind's creations are no mere commodities and can't be treated as such." Moreover, the notion that cultural diversity requires to be protected at all costs, without profit-making consideration, is crucial globally to protect cultural diversity especially from third world countries against being obliterated by the power of Hollywood domination. Protection of native cultural resources is critical to the vitality of traditional native religions, customs, languages, and status as sovereign nations.

In perpetuation of neocolonialism ties, in Kenya for example, the colonial government launched KBS TV in 1962, just one year to independence, to facilitate television transmission but with limited capacity to produce content. According to Oriare Mbke (2007), the obvious intention was that TV content would come from London. Kenya Broadcasting Service (KBS), molded on the lines of BBC had no framework for local

content production and practically all programmes being transmitted except local news were produced in Britain. This was a perfect liberation gift to Jomo Kenyatta as a conduit for cultural imperialism.

It was perfectly in place as the Kenya started celebrating their political liberty while television and colonial cinema maintained the imperial cultural stranglehold. After Independence, the Kenyan government made many pleas to foreign governments for help to build local film production facilities but the pleas went unheeded for many years. This is not to mention that the British had placed film under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for film to perform an informational role other than a cultural role. Film in Kenya remained for over 60 years under Information and Broadcasting and was only elevated into the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts in 2013.

Under the cultural imperialism discourse, the mass media are seen to be fitting in with the spread of global capitalism, which pushes mainly American culture that promotes ideologies of consumption, instant gratification, and individualism. The cultural imperialism thesis argues that media globalization leads to a homogenization of culture, identity and locale which in return decimates cultural diversity to the threat of total elimination of other cultures except the dominant one. Boyd-Barrett, one of the original proponents of media imperialism (1977), has revised his thesis to take into account different types of audiences, but argues that media imperialism remains a useful analytical concept.

According to Movious Lauren, (ibid), throughout the developed world the globalization of media is often argued to be tantamount to the globalization of culture in a domination form. According to Roach C. (1997), a cultural imperialism theory, came to prominence in the 1970s out of these observable trends.

According to Kaarle Nordenstreng (1984), the theory provided one of the major conceptual thrusts behind the movement for a New World Information and Communication Order, (NWICO) involving international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and regarding the flow of information between nations of the world. The US was always seen as the culprit due to her domination of the world through the pervasive use of Hollywood films globally.

The US with their hegemonic control of the media especially cinema were miffed by this development. While the US advocated vociferously for freedom of information, her critics compared this freedom to the freedom of the fox in a chicken pen. According Robin Mansell et. al. (2006) the main issue was that there was an unbalanced flow of mass media from the developed world (especially the United States) to the underdeveloped countries especially in the movies because, “everyone watches American movies and television shows.” The only nation in Europe that is yet to be fully suffocated under the wings of the American eagle, France, is currently fighting a new attempt by the US to try to dominate her culture through trade agreements with Europe.

A former French President - Francois Mitterand is quoted to have stated that “A society that surrenders to others the means to depict itself would soon be an enslaved society.” He is said to have stated this in reference to the so called ‘evil empire,’ meaning the US, which invades distant lands, crushes resistance with superior technology, and enslaves inhabitants through insidious mind-control. The struggle to secure the planet from US cultural imperialism has run headlong into conflict with world trade law. According to Sean Pager, (2011) for the past three decades, culture defenders and free traders have fought a pitched battle over global regulation of audiovisual industries, a collision of seemingly incompatible worldviews whose destructive repercussions policy-makers and scholars have struggled to contain without success against the might and influence of the US. The battle has played out at multiple levels of international trade law, investment treaties, and UNESCO conventions. The culture-trade war threatens to engulf e-commerce as the wired world is trading more and more through ebusiness.

In spite of much of the world being committed to cultural protection in WTO, concern over cultural diversity is not surprising in a world where Hollywood movies account for more than 80% of global box office sales and American popular culture is pervasive. According to Pager, (ibid) for countries on the receiving end, Hollywood’s dominance assumes a more sinister guise; like the “conquistadors who destroyed Inca and Aztec civilizations,” American popular culture is said to threaten a “mental colonization” that would enslave the rest of the world to American thought and values.

The very underpinnings of the nation state are imperiled. Some scholars have started an argument that the nation state in the currently globalizing wired world is anachronistic as the young governments have no power against the might of the foreign transnational corporations who dominate the market in the globalized world.

There are arguments by scholars of movie piracy in third world countries that even when American movies are pirated and reproduced and sold on the Kenyan streets, Hollywood producers have no reasons to complain because this does not hurt their industry in any significant way. There is a study commissioned by US government that claims that Hollywood in fact is beneficiary of movies piracy. According to Ernesto (2010), US government Accountability Office questions Hollywood's billion dollar losses claims, citing a lack of evidence as the main reason for the doubts. On the other hand, the Congress commissioned report emphasizes that piracy may also benefit the entertainment industries and third parties.

If anything, the pirated films work for the interests of Hollywood because they distract Kenyans who are hungry for film from viewing their local content and by so doing stop the local industry from establishing its roots. This flipside of cultural imperialism claims that piracy is in fact helping to promote the box office of Hollywood producers. According to Ernesto (2013), "Despite the Motion Picture Association of America's (MPAA) claim that online piracy is devastating the movie industry, Hollywood achieved record-breaking global box office revenues of \$35 billion in 2012, a 6% increase over 2011," the report reads. According to the report there is ample evidence that digital file-sharing is helping, rather than hurting the creative industries in the developed world. The scholars call on governments to look at more objective data when deciding on future copyright enforcement policies in developed countries.

The pity is that what is good for the goose isn't good for the gander. When Kenyans continue to enjoy pirated foreign movies, the local film producer who is trying to make a livelihood by producing movies suffers and is in some cases forced out of the market. And so long as the cultural imperialism and the notion that what is foreign is better persist, the local film industry will never come out of the doldrums.



According to a local film producer Alexandros Konstantaras<sup>12</sup> whom the study discusses in more detail under ‘piracy in the movie industry’, the local film industry suffers because we appear to have legitimized piracy of foreign movies and that seems to have killed our local productions with the government taking no action at all.

According to Movious (ibid), these are clear symptoms of cultural imperialism that have succeeded in promoting “ideologies of consumption, instant gratification, and individualism”. These consumerist habits have pervaded society through being spread by media such as films. One of the films the study will be critiquing later, *Bush Trackers* has a hero Johnny Kimathi, whose character looks artificial because the values he exudes are foreign to a Kenyan of his class at the time of the movies setting.

### **2.3 Third Cinema**

According to Cinephile (2015), in their manifesto, “Towards a Third Cinema,” Solanas and Gettino seek to revitalize cinema’s role in revolution and liberation. Third Cinema and its project of decolonization rely on an investment in the audience’s active spectatorship. The audience does not merely observe; instead, through witnessing the truth of its oppression, the audience challenges (neo)colonialism and the colonial production of national histories.

According to Teshone Gabriel(2011), the origin of the Third Cinema concept is related to the Third World countries that refer to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America where colonial exploitation had such a negative effect that it created within the communities a sense of revolt and need for search of self identity. The term is also related to the dominant cinematic forms of ‘First World’ nations and commercial national film industries. Cinema theorists equate ‘First Cinema’ with Hollywood movies, consumption, and bourgeois values, and ‘Second Cinema’ refers to European movies that pursue art and aesthetics first as opposed pursuing monetary interests as a first priority.

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<sup>12</sup> Alexandros Konstantaras [Alex Konstantaras awarded best film director \(Africa\) at the 10th NEA awards](#), ACCESSED ON 28/9/2015

Third Cinema takes a different approach to filmmaking, by embracing ideology before art and using cinema to raise people's consciousness of inequalities in society, and combating the passive film-watching experience of commercial cinema according to Kim Dodge (2007).

The concept of Third Cinema according to Thomas Gaynor (2010) was begun in Latin America in the 1960's by two Argentine filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino. According to Solanas and Getino, Third Cinema is concerned by not just making ordinary films but making political films that can make a difference in people's lives. This is in contrast to both 'First Cinema,' which describes the type of films made by Hollywood with the aim of making a financial profit; and Second Cinema, which refers to so-called 'Art Cinema,' where the aim is to depict the director's vision of the world and to enjoy art for art's sake, a bourgeoisie indulgence that the African proletariat cannot afford.

According to Gaynor (ibid), the main aim of Third Cinema is not only to enlighten audiences to their sociopolitical reality, but also to engage and provoke them into confronting this reality with a view to changing it. Third Cinema is a call to arms, "a gun (the projector) that can shoot twenty times per second" (Solanas and Getino, 1973)<sup>13</sup>, in the struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism. The Third Cinema according to Solanas and Getino is an intervention against neocolonialism; "revolutionary cinema is not fundamentally one which illustrates documents or passively establishes a situation: rather it attempts to intervene in the situation as an element providing thrust or rectification. It is not simply testimonial cinema nor cinema of communication, but above all action cinema" (1973). One of the core functions of Third Cinema is asserting a self-identity as a people as an effort in self-discovery from colonial domination and indoctrination that colonized communities were lesser beings.

Third Cinema aesthetics and principles have guided some of the filmmakers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. While its principles were originally defined and used to rally filmmakers in the 1960s and 1970s, Third Cinema still influences filmmaking strategies and

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Thomas Gaynor (ibid).

projects today (ibid). It continues to evolve as political, social, and cultural climates change throughout the world.

The tone of a Third Cinema film can reflect a militant if not revolutionary atmosphere and deliver its message with confidence, convey the disillusionment of failed or coopted revolutions, or express frustration with class, racial, gender oppression, or even continued colonial impulses from First World nations. For this reason, Third Cinema's importance in filmmaking history and its power to deliver social commentary with the aim of inspiring change cannot be understated especially for nations like Kenya which went through a very traumatic period of repression during the struggle for independence.

The Third Cinema agenda is wide and varied. According to Kim Dodge (2007), it questions among other things structures of power, particularly colonialism and its legacies and it drives towards “liberation of the oppressed, whether this oppression is based on gender, class, race, religion, or ethnicity”. It also engages questions of identity and community within nations and diaspora populations who have left their home countries for reasons such as political exile, persecution, or economic migration. Third Cinema also hopes to challenge previously held conceptions of the past, to demonstrate their legacies on the present, and to reveal the “hidden” struggles of oppressed groups such as women, impoverished classes, indigenous groups, and minorities.

According to Kim Dodge (ibid), unlike Hollywood cinema which uses cinema for entertainment and enriching themselves or Second Cinema which celebrates art, Third Cinema challenges viewers to reflect on the experience of poverty and subordination by showing how it is ‘lived’, not how it is ‘imagined.’ It also facilitates a platform among intellectuals and the masses by using film for education and dialogue in almost the same way Paulo Freire did with other art forms such as literature to prod oppressed people to a new consciousness in books such as ‘*Pedagogy of The Oppressed*’ and Frantz Fanon, ‘*The Wretched of The Earth.*’ Third Cinema also strives to recover and rearticulate the nation, using politics of inclusion and the ideas of the people to imagine new models and new possibilities. Third cinema articulates the politics of the third world people who are oppressed through art and culture.

## 2.4 National Cinema

“National cinema” as the title suggests is associated with the nation that is the sponsor of the particular film especially when films are being sorted or categorized in film festivals. According to Elizabeth Ezra, (2007), the first two or three decades after the birth of cinema, films were not explicitly identified with a particular nation-state; and production companies were international. Films themselves had an element of universality because they were silent, and so were not limited or defined by language. The development of sound on film helped to target specific language groups. None the less, even without sound, films were still expressions of specific cultural entities.

African cinema, like the South American one has been going through a state of self-discovery after over a hundred years of foreign domination. As very lucidly expressed by Alberto Elena and Marina Díaz López (2003),<sup>14</sup> before cinema has had any other impact, it is first and foremost, “the projection of a cultural identity which comes to life on the screen. It mirrors, or should mirror, this identity. But that is not all. It should also ‘dream’ it. Or make it flesh and blood, with all its contradictions. Unlike Europe, we are societies in which the question of identity has not yet crystallized. It is perhaps for this reason that we have such a need for cinema, so that we can see ourselves in the many conflicting mirrors that reflect us.” Kenya like Africa, like the rest of the developing world needs a cinema that can assist to create and nurture its nationality after having been fractured by the debilitating colonialism and the deliberate divisions according to ethnicities, with inbuilt hostilities for purposes of divide and rule.

According to Jimmy Choi<sup>15</sup>, a film may be considered to be part of the "national cinema" of a country based on a number of factors, such as the country that provided the financing for the film, the language spoken in the film, the nationalities or dress of the characters, and the setting, music, or cultural elements present in the film. To define a national cinema, some

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Salles, ‘Preface’, in *The Cinema of Latin America*, ed. by Alberto Elena and Marina Díaz López (London: Wallflower, 2003), pp. xiii-xv (p. xv).

<sup>15</sup> Jimmy Choi. Is National Cinema Mr. MacGuffin? International Films. The Institute of Communications Studies, University of Leeds, UK. Available at:  
<http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/vp01.cfm?outfit=ifilm&folder=17&paper=22>

scholars emphasize the structure of the film industry and the roles played by "...market forces, government support, and cultural matters.

As discussed earlier under Third Cinema, in the 1960s and 1970s, cinema was embraced by many nation-states as a potential tool in the struggle to reassert national autonomy in the wake of decolonization. According to Elizabeth Ezra (2007), the Third Cinema movement which began in Latin America and was soon invoked by film-makers in Asia and Africa, at once supported these national struggles and asserted an international solidarity among Third World countries. But it appears that the existence of a national cinema must coexist with counter driving forces. In the absence of clear principles of political commitment or propaganda, Elizabeth Ezra (ibid) argues that national identity is an elusive category when applied to cinema. Even the most apparently straightforward criteria of the director's nationality or audience preferences are not always helpful.

The notion of a national cinema has raised more questions than answers because there are many critical voices who find setting up of national cinemas untenable in the globalizing world when nation states are in a being made irrelevant by the multinationals in the 'flattening' world. Nevertheless, nationality of a film cannot be gainsaid because categorization of films by where they come from in film festivals always necessitates to referring them by the country from which they originated. This then brings the nationality debate back into the discourse. This discussion comes into focus later when discussing *Nairobi Half Life* as a Kenyan film while there's evidence to suggest that the certificate of origin of the movie is held by a German company.

## **2.5 Media Representation Theory**

The term 'representation' carries a range of meanings and interpretations. According to O'Shaughnessy (2005), in literary theory, 'representation' is commonly defined in three ways: to look like or resemble; to stand in for something or someone; to present a second time; to re-present. Representation began with early literary theory in the ideas of Aristotle and Plato and has evolved into a significant component of language studies alongside semiotics.

According to Mitchell W. (1990), it is impossible to divorce representations from culture and the society that produces them. He argues that in the contemporary world there exists restrictions on subject matter, limiting the kinds of representational signs allowed to be employed, as well as boundaries that limit the audience or viewers of particular representations. In the rating systems of films, M and R rated films are an example of such restrictions, highlighting also society's attempt to restrict and modify representations to promote a certain set of ideologies and values. This notwithstanding, according to Mitchell W (ibid), representations still have the ability to take on a life of their own once in the public sphere, and cannot be given a definitive or concrete meaning; as there will always be a gap between intention and realization, original and copy.

According to Andy Wallis (2012), Media Representation Theory refers to the construction in any medium (especially the mass media) of aspects of 'reality' such as people, places, objects, events, cultural identities and other abstract concepts. The representations may be in various forms such as speech or writing, or even in photographs, paintings or movies. Watching a TV programme is not the same as watching something happen in real life. Mediated reality re-presents the real world to the viewer and shows the viewer only one version of reality, not reality itself. So, the theory of representation in Media Studies means thinking about how a particular person or group of people is being presented to the audience.

According to Andy Wallis (ibid), media representation refers to both the processes involved in its creation as well as to its products. In relation to the key markers of identity for example such as class, age, gender and ethnicity, what is normally called the 'cage of identity,' representation involves not only how identities are represented, (or rather constructed) within the text but also how they are constructed in the processes of production and reception. In cinema for example, the process goes through several stages from concept development, proposal writing, scripting, casting, shooting, editing, special effects and final track laying before distribution of films.

Representations need to be looked at from the perspectives of 'constructions.' A key concern in the study of representation is the way in which representations are made to seem 'natural' which manages to make audiences forget that what they are witnessing is not real.

All texts especially in film, however realistic they may seem to be, are 'constructed representations' rather than simply transparent reflections, recordings, transcriptions or reproductions of a preexisting reality, Andy Wallis (ibid). The film maker creates his own 'frame' from which to construct his own version of reality and he can subvert the frame through many techniques such as camera angles, lighting, editing etc. (Bruce Mamer, (2006: 195-204). However, representations which become familiar through constant re-use come to feel natural and unmediated. Once this representation is done repeatedly, for example on Africans being inferior to white people, it then becomes fixated in the mind of audiences that this is the reality of life.

In contemporary film theory, it is argued that an average film spectator is 'fundamentally deceived into believing what is seen on the cinema screen is real.' The basic principle in film production is to make audiences feel that they are watching real life by peeping through the removed fourth wall to watch unmediated reality. That illusion of reality becomes a powerful psychological force in making audiences perceive and make judgement from images mediated through the cinema screen. The film producer and director ensure that this principle is executed perfectly to ensure that the audience does not even for a moment get a chance to think that what they are viewing is not real. According to Richard Allen (1993: 21-48), cinematic production or even art as a whole attains its highest standard when it perfects the 'illusion of reality.'

One of the theorists Jean-Louis Baudry<sup>16</sup> in his essay, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," argues that projection and narration in film work together to "conceal" from the spectator the technology and technique that underpin the production of the cinematic image, so that the film viewer believes she or he is in the presence of unmediated reality.'

Other arguments have asserted that audiences know that they are not necessarily seeing reality but that notwithstanding, their perceptions of representations are still greatly influenced by the representations that are created on the screen. The audiences are in the

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<sup>16</sup> Representation, Illusion, and the Cinema Author(s): Richard Allen Reviewed work(s): Source: Cinema Journal, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Winter, 1993), pp. 21-48 Society for Cinema & Media Studies, <http://ncadjarmstrong.com/year-3-postmodern-moving/representation-illusion-and.pdf>, accessed on 16/10/2014

process of seeing the film willing to suspend disbelief and assume the illusion on the screen to be reality. But even after the film is over, the audiences are not left the way they were before the film started. The film spectator is fully aware that what is seen is only a film and that it is acted and the process of performance creates a lie fundamentally.

Representation in art stems from the fact that art works through signs and symbols to represent what the communicator wants to say through the mass media. It's impossible to portray every aspect of an individual in a photograph, or even in a feature film, so certain features of their personality and appearance get highlighted, and are often enhanced, when it comes to constructing the representation that the audience will see. When representing a person, media texts often focus on their; age, gender, race/ethnicity, financial Status, job, and culture/nationality.

When analyzing representation, it is necessary to know the motive of the person making the representation before asking the following questions: Who or what is being represented, and who is the preferred audience for this representation? The motive or objective is the driving force during the entire creative process because the motive oversees the entire creative process from story origination, to casting, directing, lighting and special effects, and editing before the film is released to audiences.

It is also necessary to analyze the dramatic action being performed by the character. What is the character doing? Is their activity presented as typical, or atypical? Are they conforming to genre expectations or other conventions?

In addition, it is important to establish why that character has been created by the film maker. Why is that particular character present? What purpose does he/she serve? What are they communicating by their presence? What's the preferred message?

Another important point to consider is where the character is. The setting that the character is in and how he or she is framed is critical in appreciating representation. Are the characters represented as natural or artificial? There are other questions that require answers. What surrounds them? What is in the foreground and what is in the background? Answering these questions is crucial because in cinema especially, things are perceived in



relation to what was there before and what emerges later. In visual editing for example, the image that comes before adds meaning to the image that follows immediately whether they were shot to work together or not.

This study like Mitchell W. (1990), appreciates the importance of highlighting the film producers efforts to restrict and modify representations to promote certain sets of ideologies and values. Using this theory and looking at the world through post-colonial theory, the study set out to analyze the ideology and values presented by the different film producers during the three epochs. This study therefore, using this as a guide, looked at the three films to analyze how the film producers represented Kenyans and evaluate the ideologies and values perpetuated by the same.

## **2.6 Misrepresentation of Africans and Stereotyping**

Children in the developed world are socialized by television and films to a great extent because they spend many hours watching these media as they mature. Unfortunately, European and American children primarily encounter Africa through stereotypes and myths and they grow up believing these myths and stereotypes because of their pervasive projection by the media. Nigerian novelist, Chimamanda Adichie (2009), in 'The Danger of a Single Story,' explained how as a child she read British and American children's books which created the image of white people who have blue eyes and lived in a land filled with ice, and how this single track projection of the world influenced her without knowing and she also started writing her own stories with white people with blue eyes playing on snow even though she had never been out of Nigeria. She only got to discover the influence much later. When she found African books, she discovered that people with her own skin color and warm weather climates could also be literary subjects. Finding these African books saved her from "having a single story of what books are."

According to Adichie, there is danger in a single story and how it creates one view and that view becomes the sole defining representation of a thing, or worse, a place and its people. In the United States and Europe, there is a single negative story of Africa. The single story "presents Africa as a place of danger, darkness, violence, poverty and hopelessness." According to most news representations, "there is no good news from Africa". It is not

surprising that a candidate running for the White House in 2016 Mr. Donald Trump, who has been bred and raised on these prejudices can claim on a campaign trail that ‘Africans are lazy fools, only good at eating, love making and Stealing’, Christine Mendoza (2015). The single negative story of Africa was created by the efforts of colonial officials and institutions to perpetuate white supremacy and Western domination of the African continent. It is tragic that the prejudices some of which are done for comical relief can have such far reaching psychic effects on such highly placed individuals such as Donald Trump.

This single negative story continues because the stereotypes and myths that undergirded colonialism have not been challenged by the Western media and unfortunately, some African media have unwittingly continued to perpetuate the same myths that support the stereotypes and myths of Africa that began with colonial conquest. The danger of the single story as Adichie warns is that it “robs people of their dignity”. The double jeopardy of a single story not only robs those who it maligns and oppresses, but it also lowers the dignity of those who believe and perpetuate it. Adichie warns that the stereotypes and myths, which are still prevalent, “are perpetuated because the media, the government, and individuals are focused on other concerns which further obscure the harm that the single negative story of Africa does to both Africans and Westerners”. When this happens, it becomes as if there is a conspiracy of silence to allow a wrong perception to be perpetuated unchallenged.

Failure to give the other side of the story hinders realizing the stereotypes one holds regarding others, and further contributes to creating unfair characterizations. Thus, the overwhelming success of colonialism continues to cause the Western media to perpetuate unquestioned the ingrained stereotypes and myths that were created in order to justify colonial conquest and racially based exploitation and accounts for the continued underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Africa in the media.

Amy E. Harth (2012) in a study of the myths and misrepresentation of Africa identifies several of the myths and stereotypes which are still being perpetuated by the media especially the news to date. Some of these include a myth of lack of progress. This myth promotes the idea that Africans are isolated from global processes and therefore are not modern or advanced, and they are instead considered “a backward people”. There is a very popular myth perpetuated by especially cinema of Africa being “primitive/exotic.”

The uses of the words primitive or exotic encompass a value judgment. Their use means that there is something better (less primitive, more modern/advanced, smarter). These are reference points generally used to demonstrate how one culture is better than another. There is also a myth of tradition, ceremony or ritual that is supposed to be unique to Africa.

According to Harth (ibid), this myth promotes the idea that African history is static rather than dynamic. African traditions are viewed as bizarre and always existing in an unchanging way. The myth of 'oath taking' for example featured in one of the scenes in *Simba* movie which I will review later is taken to be a weird, malevolent act that connects man with evil or satanic forces and yet there is no iota of difference between oath taking and the Christian Holy Communion, which is glamorized to be a saintly communion with God and the saints.

Another myth perpetuated by especially cinema is that of hopelessness. The hopelessness myth claims that there is so much violence, instability, corruption, poverty, disease, and other problems that these issues can never be resolved; therefore, it is not worth trying to help or concerning oneself with the continent. As I will point out later, this myth is dominant in Kenya's most successful local film production *Nairobi Half Life* which in 2012 was nominated as Kenya's entry to the Oscar Awards. As I will demonstrate in the critique, this myth in the film is still being perpetuated by German film makers hiding behind a Kenyan trainee whom they falsify to be the director of the film.

According to Leo Braudy et al (2004), film is a very recent technology compared to other media. The Lumiere brothers invented Cinema in an era when the western world was consolidating its colonial expansion and cinema therefore emerged in the context of a lasting 'Eurocentric philosophical discourse' that viewed non-whites especially Africans and their lands, as animals and empty spaces to be conquered.

Since the beginning of cinema coincided with the height of European imperialism, it is hardly surprising that European Cinema portrayed the colonized in an unflattering light. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2014: 67-80), observes, in his *Reflections on Writers and Empire*, that

“the development of cinema in Africa was shaped or misshaped by the historical moment in which the art was born.” Ngugi notes that “cinema came to Africa under colonial conditions and the necessary technology, finance, the distribution machinery remained with the racial descendants of the ‘Lumieres’, the ‘Melieres’ and the ‘Edisons’”.

He observes that Africa remained a consumer of images of itself and of other countries, but all these images were produced financed, distributed from the centers of Western empires. At this period, the colonialists, literary and journalistic voices were painting Africa in the darkest of colours.

Ngugi continues to argue that the negative filmic representation is much more than plain or mere art. “It is, in a sense, an ideological tool that can serve to enforce systems of inequality and subordination. Since the power of film lies in its ability to either improve or destroy perception, the ‘African’ produced by ‘Hollywood cameras’ is exactly the kind of ‘African’ invented and crafted by a racist rhetoric and philosophical tradition.”

Emeka Dibia Emelope (2009), another scholar in the area opines that the effects of such representation are highly abysmal. “As foreign indoctrinated film language burrows itself into the sub-conscious of the black African, and he sees his own development in terms of that of a foreign culture, it is worthy of note here that the problem of Hollywood representation of Africa in films is not really that of the legitimacy of the representation, but the discourse behind it. The continent and people represented are in fact imagined and invented.”

Emelope (ibid) continues to argue that in order to study the politics of misrepresentation of Africa in Hollywood films; one has to understand the socio-historical context of the arrival of the moving image in Africa. It is obvious that representations are much more than plain likeness. They are in a sense ‘ideological tools’ that serve to reinforce systems of inequality and subordination. They help sustain colonialist or neo-colonialist projects. For instance, Hollywood’s representations of Africa are largely misguided. Their movies and literature place Africa at a one-dimensional stereotype based on their preconceived notions.

These notions, as we have pointed out, are mostly negative, primordial, biased and unbalanced.<sup>17</sup>

Early images of Africa on screen were not only those of misrepresentation or appropriation of African identity, but early films shot and shown in Africa were part of the colonial endeavor, contributing to the implementation and solidification of colonial policies in general. Cinema came to Africa as a potent organ of colonialism. “Films proved to be a powerful tool for indoctrinating Africans into foreign cultures, including their ideals and aesthetics”.

While audiences most times don't think much about the way portrayals are done, cinema is highly deliberate in making things appear the way they do. American media products are embedded in its value system and cultural identity and often serve its own economic and political interests according to Silj and Alvarado (1988). As a result, critics and scholars alike are concerned about the potential power of American movies to influence local cultures with American ideals and values perverting them in the process with commoditization, at the expense of art. The British colonial government after the proliferation of American cinema in her colonies had a lot of misgivings of American influence over their subjects through cinema. If the British who are foster parents to the Americans

Over the years, representation of an under-represented group is often over-charged with allegorical significance. The western world's view of Africa is often marginalized and subjective. According to Bohannan, B. (1964), <sup>Africa</sup> has for many generations now been viewed through a web of myth so glib that understanding it becomes a twofold task, the task of clarifying the myth and the separate task of examining whatever reality has been hidden behind it. Bohannan goes on to say that until precision and thoroughness are integrated into research on any African issue, the true identity of Africa will remain a myth. It goes without saying that since representations of Africa (or the colonized) are limited, the few available are thought to be representative of all marginalized people. Also, the few images are thought to be typical, thus it is assumed that a dark complexioned man can stand in for a whole continent of dark complexioned men.

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<sup>17</sup> Emelobe(ibid)

According to Emelobe (2009), representation affects the ways in which actual individuals are perceived. They are meant to relay messages, influence opinions and actions. Representation or images formed in the mind have vast implications for real people in real context. The works of postcolonial writers and artists attest to the continual attempts to counter all colonial subversions.

Emelobe (ibid), goes on to argue that Hollywood's representations of Africa are largely misguided. Their movies and literature place Africa at a one-dimensional stereotype based on their preconceived notions. These notions are mostly negative, primordial, biased and unbalanced. The post-colonial writers and film makers see it as their duty to project a true image, to rediscover lost or submerged identities and cultures that mark the signpost of combative cultural representation by many postcolonial writers.

Therefore, it is the attempt to project a true image, to rediscover lost or submerged identities and cultures that mark the signpost of combative cultural representation by many postcolonial writers and film makers. On the African continent, postcolonial resistance through writing has been on course from inception with the writings of Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Okot pa Bitek, Sembene Ousmane, and many others. These writers have been involved in the herculean task of demystifying the myth of Africa's inferiority and incapacity to assert itself culturally.

Another scholar, Okome O. (1995), rightly points out that the influence of American gangster films on the local (African) people in the colonial era was so perverse that names, modes of dress, and general physical comportment approximate to the heroic styles of these foreign movies were easily adopted. He warns that motion pictures (film, television, etc) are more than a technological construct. They are symbols of power, which can be utilized to condition the minds of the audience. Thus, it is the attempt to project a true image that brings about the issue of resistance.

Another scholar in the same area Yurii Horton et al (1999), argues that stereotypes of blacks as lazy, stupid, foolish, cowardly, submissive, irresponsible, childish, violent, sub-human, and animal-like, are rampant in films watched in today's society. These degrading

stereotypes are reinforced and enhanced by the negative portrayal of blacks in other media. The situation in Kenyan film is such that the stereotypes started when the early films were being shot and were perpetuated by films of *Tarzan of the Apes* shot in the 1930s and 1940s.

## 2.7 Authentic African Film Theory

The question of 'authenticity' has been at the heart of much critical thinking about African cinema. From the outset, the colonizer used cinema to prove to the African that he was an inferior being. During the colonial era, cinematic images of Africa effectively served to reinforce the Western vision of the 'dark continent,' viewing Africa as a wild and savage place, existing outside of history, according to Murphy David, (2000). When African filmmakers began to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s, they set out to counter these demeaning Western representations of their continent.

However, although there was widespread agreement that colonial representations were distorted and 'inauthentic,' the definition of an 'authentic' African cinema has remained deeply problematic. There is no consensus of how African cinema should be modeled.

While some film producers like Sembene Ousmane have produced their films inspired by protest from the negative representation of Africans by western cinema, other producers have adopted a different approach. I will be applying this theory to critique two Kenyan films, *Bush Trackers* and *Nairobi Half Life* to argue that they fail to qualify as 'authentic' Kenyan films due to the inconsistencies related to their failure to articulate a genuine African agenda and representation that has continued to spread the myth of Africa's hopelessness coupled by unrealistic casting that creates an unrealistic characterisation looked at from the lenses of indigenous Kenyans of the 1950s .

The struggle for pan-Africanism at the turn of Independence of African states in the late 1950s and early 1960s was undoubtedly inspired by a sense of shared, past oppression at the hands of the colonizers and, in film terms, it marked Africa as a continent that 'was trying to reappropriate its image' (David Murphy, 2000 p. 240).

African productions protesting against the negative representations have adopted different production styles. According to Diawara, the “colonial confrontation” narrative style<sup>18</sup> presents Africa confronting its former colonizer, Europe. The productions situate the viewers to identify with the African resistance against colonial and imperial powers. Such historical narratives are motivated by the need to bring out of the shadows the role played by the African people in shaping their own history and to assert their own humanity.

Historical narratives provide a clear and appealing conflict to base an African story because conflict is the central pillar of film narrative. As I will argue later on in chapter four, Kenya after independence had a golden opportunity to launch her film industry using this approach, based on the Mau Mau’s heroic rag tag army using pangas and homemade guns confronting a superbly armed battalions armed with all conceivable weaponry of the time; spraying bullets through the bushes at the Mau Mau taking cover in the bushes, while raining bombs on them from the skies.

But the policy stalwarts who were licensing film didn’t consider it appropriate to develop films on the controversial and sensitive topic for unknown reasons. The Kenya policy we are told was forgive and forget! Could this have costed Kenya the launch pad for the film industry? The Mau Mau story is still alive to this day and the world is still waiting to watch how the gallant rag-tag army overcame the might of the British empire.

The second narrative style calls upon the Africans to ‘return to the source’ and locate value in the so-called ‘primitive’ African cultural practices. The return to the source filmmakers turn to this style in order to show that there existed a “dynamic African history and culture before the European colonization.” The films therefore, attempt to unearth pre-colonial traditions and present them for consideration in solving current socio-cultural problems in film narratives such as Wanjiru Kinyanjui’s *Battle of the Sacred Tree*.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, Mbye Cham (2011), argues that the experiences that emanate from the encounters between Africa and Euro-Christian or Arab-Islamic cultures have provided African cinema

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<sup>18</sup> Three Narrative Movements (Manthia Diawara) quoted in African Film Slides (ibid).

<sup>19</sup> Wanjiru film (1995), weaves a social family conflict to center on attempts to destroy a sacred old tree, a tree that had stood since before the Christians arrived, because most of the villagers secretly believed the tree had magical, mythological powers.



with a lot of raw material on which to base her subject matter for films. Ali Mazrui dramatizes this triple heritage very clearly in his production series of *The Africans, A Triple Heritage* which he co-produced with the BBC.<sup>20</sup>

But David Murphy (2000) advises against film producers allowing themselves to be locked up in what he describes as reductive opposition between Western and African culture. “This argument proposes that an 'authentic' African film must not only exclude all things European or Western, but must also set itself up in opposition to them. If we follow this argument to its logical conclusion, then all African films are 'inauthentic' or 'Western' simply because cinema was first invented in the West. However, if we remove this strict opposition between the West and the rest of the world, we get a much better view of the way in which different cultures interact with and influence one another”.

There is need to safeguard against making sweeping generalizations about ‘Western’ or ‘African’ films but we should be judging each film on its own merit and instead of straight jacketing them into ‘national’ typifications, try to emphasize the ‘universal’ and the ‘local’ characteristics of each film.

The study applied the Authenticity theory as a key critical discourse especially when critiquing *Nairobi Half Life*, the most successful ‘Kenyan’ movie to date. The thesis of the study is that it is not an authentically Kenyan film because its Certificate of Origin is held by a German company. The film writing style and structure conforms more to European auteur style than to African style as I will point out in chapter Seven. The film as I will argue later was also mainly targeting the European market just like *Simba* was targeting the British and US markets in the 1950s. This theory is also applied to the critical review of *Bush Trackers* in chapter seven which was a Kenyan story created by Americans with the intention of producing movies in Kenya and marketing them to America. The storyline and the characterization in *Bush Trackers* as the study will argue is not authentically Kenyan. Other than the hero being called Kimathi which is a local name, there was little uniquely Kenyan characteristics in his behavior.

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<sup>20</sup> The Africans a Triple Heritage is a series of television documentaries produced by the BBC in collaboration with Ali Mazrui who plays the role of narrator aired by most Television networks in Africa in the 1980s but the series was refused to be aired in Kenya.

## 2.8 South Africa Film Industry

According to the Bioscope (2012), South African film history is profoundly bound up with colonialization, racial segregation and apartheid. The state enforced system of racial segregation was instituted in 1948 and ended only in 1994, but apartheid merely enshrined in statute the absolute state of privilege for the minority white population which had existed for a century or more.

Bioscope (ibid) goes on to add that South African silent cinema was a minority cinema – white-owned, white-produced, white-performed, with occasional black and colored appearances when necessary and exhibited mostly for whites only. It was also a colonial cinema on the margins, similar to the situation in Australia, where local production was constrained by distance from Europe and America, by a lack of finance, and by a paucity of talent.

The Union of South Africa was created in 1910 and film was used to cement the relationship between two antagonistic forces, the British and the Boers in a film called '*De Voortrekkers*.' The film addressed the needed reconciliation between two former enemies, the British and the Dutch and cultivated their cohesion in subjugating and trampling down on their common enemy, the Africans.

According to H. Timmins (1972), the film industry was developed to the extent that by 1911 when film as an industry globally was still in its infancy, South African could make a feature movie '*The Great Kimberley Diamond Robbery*'. But it's important to add that the cinema was for the privileged minority whites. According to Isabel Balseiro and Ntongela Masilela, 'cinema, the most popular art form to evolve during the twentieth century, behaved in South Africa as if 75 percent of the population did not exist.'<sup>21</sup>

According James Burns (2005 :82-83) South Africa investment in film was established early due to the large number of whites who had migrated and settled from Europe and the vested interests of the American multinationals to promote cinema there. According to Burns, "South Africa had the continent's largest European population, the most advanced

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted from Against the Odds: In Search of a National Cinema In South Africa <http://www.hnet.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=8906>, accessed on 21/9/2015

economy, and the most densely populated urban areas. It also had its own commercial cinema industry and theater chains with ties to the big American movie studios. Thus there were powerful multi-national corporations with a vested interest in cultivating a multi-racial audience in the Union.

After declaring her Apartheid policy, South Africa faced political isolation but American and European transnationals were doing business as usual behind the isolation facade. But after renouncing Apartheid and holding democratic elections in 1994, South Africa realized the value of film production for both economic and social political goals and invested heavily in film production. Film production ever since then has been on a growing trajectory and South African government is investing heavily in film because they know the benefits that accrue from the industry.

According to Krista Tuomi,<sup>22</sup> South African film industry has been characterized by increased levels of horizontal and vertical integration, resulting in concentration of ownership and raised entry barriers for new players.

When countries like Kenya are strategizing on improving their film growth by targeting the 150 million Swahili speakers in East and Central Africa, South Africa is targeting the 1 billion people in Africa and other Africans in the diaspora. Kevin Kriedemann,<sup>25</sup> Editor at Film & Event Publishing (The Call Sheet) explained in 2011 how South African cinema was overcoming production challenges and revealed that they had a big vision on film production targeting the entire African continent with a population of over one billion people. “Ultimately, the goal is to create a self-sustaining film industry, where we make films for less money than we receive back from their audiences.” Marketing films to the African market was however limited by the lack of distribution structures, the diversity of the continent, especially in terms of language and the challenge of piracy.

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<sup>22</sup> Film Second Paper Policy Recommendations And Interventions [https://www.westerncape.gov.za/other/2005/11/final\\_second\\_paper\\_film\\_printing.pdf](https://www.westerncape.gov.za/other/2005/11/final_second_paper_film_printing.pdf), accessed on 29/9/2015

<sup>25</sup> The Challenges of Africa’s film Industry, <http://www.balancingact-africa.com/news/broadcast/issueno97/top-story/the-challenges-for-a/bc> accessed on 18/5/2015

He added that South Africa was overcoming the challenges by co-productions like the Kenyan-SA co-productions such as *The First Grader* which attracted a wide global interest in

2006 and *Pumzi* a Kenyan short story by Wanuri Kahiu that was shot in South Africa. South Africa also co-produced with Rwanda a film called 'Africa *United*.' Durban Film festival is also growing fast and attracting strong projects from across Africa and is becoming the prime location for film festivals in Africa.

According to South Africa [southafrica.info/business/economy/sectors/film.html](http://southafrica.info/business/economy/sectors/film.html),<sup>23</sup> South Africa has a vibrant, growing film industry that is growing in reputation and is competitive internationally.

The country has diverse unique locations which local and foreign filmmakers are taking advantage of. Since 1994 when South Africa abandoned the apartheid policy, the film industry has grown steadily and has attracted a lot of the international films that would have not been shot there due to the isolation as a racist country. South Africa's attractiveness as a shooting location comes from the better rebates the government gives to foreign movie producers to encourage them to spend their money filming in South Africa. According to Andrew England (2014), filming has created more than 35,000 jobs, up from 4,000 in 1995, and contributes R3.5bn to gross domestic product.

According to England (ibid), South Africa has multiple attractions for the film world: the rand is weak; it has a diverse range of locations and a strong local skills base. But support from the government – often the focus of private sector criticism – has been critical and the growth of the industry can be traced to the introduction of improved incentives in 2008. These are the norm for the sector and are crucial to a countries' ability to lure the big filmmakers.

## 2.9 Nigeria Film Industry

According to Nairaland.com website, there's an interesting and growing linguistic phenomena sweeping Sub Sahara Africa. As a result of watching the Nigerian movies and

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<sup>23</sup> [info/business/economy/shttp://www.southafrica.info/business/economy/sectors/film.htm](http://info/business/economy/shttp://www.southafrica.info/business/economy/sectors/film.htm), accessed on 5/9/2015

listening to Nigerian music which proliferated over the region since the new millennium, ordinary people in the region have been impacted by the movies to the extent that they are adopting the popular Pidgin English as their own language in their day to day life. In Nigeria itself, Pidgin English has unified the Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo and all other Nigerian ethnic groups and there are cries for it to be adopted as the official language of Nigeria.<sup>24</sup>

According to this website, “Nigerian Pidgin English is becoming more and more popular in Ghana, South Africa and African countries in general. The popularity is growing such that, entertainers from other African countries are infusing the language to sell themselves and brands.”

In Kenya, the language has penetrated the Kenyan media to the extent that NTV, one of the leading television stations has a popular NTV comedy show that is co-hosted by two Kenyans, one who is a parody of a comical Luo and the other who imitates Nigerian Pidgin accent so perfectly that he manages to fool the audiences that he is Nigerian especially dressed in agbada costume and other ‘Nija’ paraphernalia.

There are claims that Nigerian Pidgin is being accepted in Kenya. “Some of Kenyan artistes are beginning to infuse pidgin into their songs; even in some of their soap operas you hear them say ‘wetin’ or ‘chop my money’. Some of them who speak it might not speak it fluently but they enjoy hearing it. Nigerian Pidgin is widely popular in Nairobi that it is one of the signatures used to identify a Nigerian in that city because of the accent.”

Besides the early introduction of the language by the writings of early Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, the popularity of Pidgin English in Kenya and Africa as a whole has been brought about by the Nija movies as Nollywood movies are popularly called, which are a dominant form of entertainment on broadcast television and the pirated DVDs that litter the Kenyan streets. This researcher has at times been taken for a ride by a gospel song sung in Pidgin English only for it to emerge later as a Kenyan song which combines Pidgin English with Swahili, thanks to Nija movies. Words like ‘broda’ and ‘oga’ have almost been fully accepted to be Kenyan lexicon. This could be a good sign that the wished for pan Africanism is starting to grow roots on its own.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.nairaland.com/1503806/Nigerian-Pidgin-English-Becoming-More-Popular-And-Spoken-In-African-Countries-by-Nobody>: 5:30am On Nov 04, 2013

As would be expected in a huge industry like this which didn't spring from one spot, there are varied claims as to how and who originated Nollywood. According to Augusta Okon (2010),<sup>25,26</sup> "The Yoruba Travelling Theatre Group" of the 60's and 70's can be referred to as the "Fountain Head" of movie productions in Nigeria film who recorded their performances on celluloid and took their works beyond the stage. But according to oldnaija.wordpress.com,<sup>27</sup>

The origin of Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, can be traced back to the 1960s when the first set of Nollywood movies were produced by great historical filmmakers such as Hubert Ogunde, Jab Adu, Ola Balogun, Moses Olaiya and Eddie Ugboma considered to be the first generation of Nigerian filmmakers who were mainly filming comedies. According to oldnaija.wordpress.com, in 1970, the first indigenous feature film, "*Kongi's Harvest*", was produced. The screenplay was written from the play by the Nobel Prize Laureate Wole Soyinka, and was produced in Nigeria with Soyinka himself playing Kongi, the dictatorial President. However, it was directed by an American and many of its crew members were foreigners.

According to oldnaija.wordpress.com (ibid), later, more individual Nigerians became involved in the production of indigenous films. *Living in Bondage*, a 1992 film about a businessman whose wife died due to his dealings with a money cult is said to be the first Nigerian blockbuster. Since then, thousands of blockbusters have been released. In recent times, Nollywood set its standard to meet other film industries in the world with the emergence of professional actors and actresses who have made a name for themselves like Genevieve Nnaji, Ramsey Nouah, Kunle Afolayan, Desmond Elliot and others.

According to Uchenna Onuzulike<sup>28</sup> after the adoption of video equipment to produce stories instead on relying on celluloid film, the meeting of cinema and television created a new

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<sup>25</sup> The Nigerian Movie Industry (Nollywood) - The Origin (History) Augusta Okon | Submitted On May 04,

<sup>26</sup> : <http://EzineArticles.com/4226728>, accessed on 23/9/2015

<sup>27</sup> The Origin of Nollywood, the Nigerian Film Industry <https://oldnaija.wordpress.com/2015/07/06/the-originof-nollywood-the-nigerian-film-industry/>, accessed on 20/9/2015

<sup>28</sup> Nollywood: The Influence of the Nigerian Movie Industry on African Culture, [https://www.academia.edu/2537401/Nollywood\\_The\\_Influence\\_of\\_the\\_Nigerian\\_Movie\\_Industry\\_on\\_African\\_Culture](https://www.academia.edu/2537401/Nollywood_The_Influence_of_the_Nigerian_Movie_Industry_on_African_Culture), accessed on 22/9/2015

reality called video-film which was embraced due to political, cultural, economic and security reasons.

As the term video-film implies, Haynes (2000: 1) says “they are something between television and cinema, and they do not fit comfortably within the North American structures of either”. In many ways, video-film itself stands for an example of technology that can be used for cultural explorations and representations mostly for the individuals or groups who cannot afford celluloid.

Nigerian video-films according to Onuzulike (ibid), are deeply rooted in Nigerian cultural traditions and social texts that focus on Nigerian community life. The stories are told using African idioms, proverbs, costumes, artifacts, cultural display, and the imagery of Africa. The common Nigerian video-film genres include horror, comedy, urban legend, mythic parable, love and romance, juju, witchcraft, melodrama, and historical epic. These stories have deep rooted entertainment elements such as conflict, mystery, suspense, fear and other psychological attributes that make audiences keep glued to the screen to try and witness how the riveting drama is finally resolved.

The Nigerian film industry, also known as Nollywood, produces about 50 movies per week, second only to India’s Bollywood, and more than Hollywood in the United States. Although its revenues are not on par with Bollywood’s and Hollywood’s, Nollywood still generates an impressive \$590 million annually.<sup>29</sup> Believing that if the industry is properly managed, a million more jobs could be created in the sector, the World Bank is currently assisting the Nigerian government to create a Growth and Employment in States project to support the entertainment industry, along with other industries.

According to Rebecca Moudio (2013), Chioma Nwagboso, a World Bank finance and private sector specialist, says that the Bank understands the job creation potential of the Nigerian film industry and the needs for a “fruitful export for the country.” Without initial

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<sup>29</sup> AMI-and-FEPACI-partner-on-development-of-African-film <http://www.screenafrica.com/page/news/film/1651923-AMI-and-FEPACI-partner-on-development-of-Africanfilm-initiative#.VWfG39Kqgko>, accessed on 30/5/ 2015

support from the government, Nollywood propelled itself to the position it occupies today, and a little lift could take the industry to even greater heights, she adds.

According to Jason Njoku (2012), the CEO of Iroko Partners, the world's largest distributor of African entertainment with over 6 million customers in over 178 countries, in a presentation he made in Nairobi, "Nollywood produces 2,000 films per year / 40 per week". He says that "95% of Nollywood revenue comes from VCD / DVD sales. Unlike movies in Hollywood which relies on gate collection, only 0.5% of Nollywood films get a theatre release." He goes on to add that "Hollywood generates 10% of its revenue from theatres and that annual revenue for Nollywood is estimated to be around \$590m.

He stated further that "Nollywood produces an average of 6.7 films per million habitants while other developing countries, produce 1.2 films per million inhabitants." Njoku (ibid) goes on to argue that the movie industry is the Nigeria's second-largest employer with 200,000 people working directly and 100,000,000 indirectly and that Nollywood caters for over 50% of the movies consumed in Africa currently.

Njoku (ibid) contends that 50% of Nollywood content is pirated, costing the industry hundred millions of dollars. Another interesting observation was that the Nigerian government has given no incentive of any kind to the entrepreneurs to develop the industry. Other scholars have observed that when Nollywood was in its formative stage, government functionaries were too busy looting the oil wealth to notice the off-shoot of Nollywood.

Even after it was set up in 1993, the National Film and Video Censor board which was charged with the responsibility to manage the industry only focused most of its activities on the censorship and classifications of films and video. It's noted that some people have attributed the success of the industry to this fact. One reason for Nollywood's rising popularity lies with South Africa-based pay television Multi Choice which has four 24-hour channels dedicated to African content, predominantly Nigeria productions. Two of the channels run movies in two of Nigeria's main languages, Yoruba and Hausa according to Anuraag Sanghi (2012)



In his presentation, Njoku (ibid) noted that among the main losers from the rampant film piracy were Nigerian actors who received low fee as a result of the theft. The producers also got reduced returns on investment and lost tax revenue for the government. According to Njoku, the way forward is to fight piracy and to improve on the current distribution model. This he claims could be done through reinvestments to make the industry more robust and more competitive by improving on the quality of the products, and legitimizing the industry on the world stage. To date, the industry is fragmented and has yet to change from an informal type of business. Njoku noted the challenge was to make the Nigerians respect Intellectual Property as most want the films but they do not want to pay. The other challenge of trying to do e-business with Nigerians is that most wouldn't want to disclose their credit card details for fear of digital fraud which is rampant in Nigeria. This really complicates the e-business picture because there must be e-money exchange for it to thrive. According to the Nigerian Film Industry and National Video and Film Censor board website, the total market potential of the Nigerian film industry in 2008 was estimated at a whopping US \$ 4 billion.

According to Afam Ezekude (2012), the Director General Nigerian Copyright Commission, the causes and motives for piracy are many and varied. In Nigeria, its prevalence is attributable to a number of significant contributory factors such as the scarcity and high cost of genuine products, poverty, poor distribution networks, a slow judicial system, poor cooperation in some quarters of the creative sector and inadequate funding of regulatory agencies, including the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC). These enduring problems are further compounded by the challenges posed by new digital technologies, which themselves create opportunity for illegal mass reproduction of copyright-protected works.

What is not easily explainable is why the tide that lifted the Nigerian film industry to rise and spur Nigeria to start producing its own video movies failed to lift the Kenyan industry as well. Kenya by the mid-1970s had a state of the art film production training school and laboratories to process films. The video technology which buoyed the Nigerian industry was equally available in Kenya. In chapter four, I will discuss the recoiling impact of Kenya's film industry when video knocked on its door.

As I will point out later, the Kenya government had been planning for the establishment of the industry since 1968 when the Kenya Film Corporation was established with taxpayer's money and was awarded a monopoly to distribute films in Kenya with the hope that they would generate enough revenue to start a local film industry. In 2005, with the insistence of Kenyan film makers, the Kenya Film Commission was set up again on taxpayer/s money, but there is very little to show from what they have done for the ten years.

Nigeria, without such an elaborate system had an industry started and blossoming with no government input. According to the Daily Editor (2013), what is remarkable with Nollywood is that the industry got to its present stage with no input from the government. All the moviemaking processes from concepts creation to distribution are done by the artistes with no government input. "From the set to homes, including distribution, marketing, production, publicity, were created and fine-tuned over time by private individuals."

According to Daily Editor (ibid), the absence of government involvement has allowed for greater, undiluted creative contents. Moviemakers are therefore very free to tell stories their way, which is good for a movie industry.

This scenario is mind boggling because recommending the dissolution of the film commission because it's not shown results could result in throwing the baby away with the bath water. Today, African governments are being advised to take charge of the film industry and fund them to be able to start national movie industries.

In the FEPACI film summit (2006) in South Africa made very strong recommendations on the involvement of governments in creating or strengthening of film industries. "For a fully functioning, self-reliant and sustainable film industry in Africa, is the sincere, creative, substantive and non-obtrusive participation of the state and that it is primarily the responsibility of governments and public bodies to take concrete steps towards developing conducive and enabling policy and ensuring that that funding is actually available for the production and distribution of African films."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Summary of Recommendations and Proposed Implementation. The Role of The State, Africa Film Summit Final Report, 3-6 April 2006, Tshwane, South Africa.

Ironically, Nigeria which sustains and feeds the entire Sub-Sahara Africa and the diaspora on film has done so well with minimal government support. This goes to show that there is no single solution towards creating a vibrant film industry in Africa but the determination, the passion and the innovativeness of the indigenous people must lead the way.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated how the post-colonial theory provides the overarching framework for this study, buttressed by other theoretical underpinnings such as; cultural imperialism, third cinema, national cinema, media representation, and authentic African film theory so as to discuss film using an eclectic approach. The chapter also looked at the South African film industry and the Nigerian film industry to provide a background against which the Kenyan film history can be reflected.

The theories discussed in the chapter are applied in an interdisciplinary approach to spearhead the discourse especially when it pertains to the cross-examination of policy formulation and implementation for the development of the Kenyan film industry over the entire study period in chapter four. While post-colonialism provides the tool-box with which to pry into the subject matter, the more specific issues that emerge in the discourse such as media representation, national cinema and authentic cinema are used to clarify specific aspects of the discourse. Both South Africa and Nigerian cinemas were way behind Kenyan up to the 1980s. South African cinema was shackled by the apartheid stigma and discarding apartheid in 1994 and adopting progressive policies turned the fortunes of the film industry. Nigeria unlike Kenya recognized video as an opportunity in film production while Kenya saw it as a threat. Nigerians embraced the new technology and experimented with the new technology. Nollywood emerged as a global phenomenon.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 Introduction

Research is always based on some underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes 'valid' research and which research method(s) is/are appropriate for the development of knowledge in a given study. To undertake this research, the assumption was that there was need for an evaluation and documentation of the history of film in Kenya, detailing policy changes and the establishment of institutional infrastructure from colonial times to today. This assumption was arrived at after identifying the knowledge gap and it became apparent that a document detailing the history of film in Kenya doesn't exist. The gap had to be filled. The task dictated the methodology used which was essentially qualitative, owing to the nature of the problem. This chapter discusses the methodology/ies used in this research study.

More than most arts, film for many years depended on complex technology which to an extent impeded the creative expression of ordinary film producers, but that has changed since the advent of the digital era. Cinema is also the most prestigious cultural activity in the modern world. It is for us what theatre was in the age of Shakespeare or painting was in the days of Leonardo da Vinci:<sup>31</sup> the art form with the biggest impact, the largest budgets, and the most widespread audiences. Films are deliberately created to have effects on their audiences and over the years, film has been identified as one of the best tools for social transformation (Bordwell, David, et al, 2010:1). The film industry can be a magnet that draws communities together as it translates into a platform for their social, economic and even political debate and development.

### 3.1 Qualitative Descriptive Research

As mentioned above, because there is no comprehensive publication of the history of film in Kenya that addresses policy changes and establishment of institutional frameworks, it was

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<sup>31</sup> [Utopia series: the cinema of the future | Philosophers' Mail](http://thephilosophersmail.com/utopia/utopia-series-the-cinema-of-the-future/)  
<http://thephilosophersmail.com/utopia/utopia-series-the-cinema-of-the-future/>, accessed on 6/8/2014

assumed that this would be a viable knowledge gap to fill and the study methodology adapted was dictated by this need and had to take a qualitative approach. Qualitative research “is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1-2).<sup>32</sup> The qualitative study necessitated using primary data and secondary data methodologies. Included in the secondary was a critical review of selected films. Because the researcher has been part of the film industry since the 1970s, there were instances when the research was informed by the researcher’s own experiences from productions he took part in, and which had not been documented. But this is limited to one incident of shooting a movie *Bush Trackers* in 1979. From this, there is an element of participant observation methodology in the research.

The policy documents that address the film industry ranged from the precolonial government when Kenya was under the imperial British East Africa Company and the policies that were put in place after Kenya became a colony. A lot of these documents were available online from open access of British universities. The study also used two other studies carried out in Kenya in the 1980s. There was a study by Peter Mwaura (1980) on Communications policy in Kenya, funded by UNESCO, and another study by Absalom Mutere (1988), *An Analysis of Communication Policies in Kenya*. There was an additional study by Peter Oriare Mbeke (2007), *the Media, Legal, Regulatory and Policy Environment in Kenya, A Historical Briefing*.

Although these studies addressed communication policies in Kenya in general, Mwaura’s study has a chapter on Cinema and Films, (Peter Mwaura 1980:46-53), which enriched this study greatly especially on the use of mobile cinema as a mass medium for rural Kenya. Other documents came from research journals, books and newspapers. The research also benefited greatly from the Kenya National Archives and Data Service (KNADS) where policy documents from the colonial government and the independent governments were available.

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<sup>32</sup> Rationale for Qualitative Research Chapter Two PROCEDURE, <http://emp.byui.edu/satterfieldb/dissertation/chaptertwo.pdf>, accessed 18/9/2015

Qualitative research is designed to help researchers understand people, and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. According to Patton, M. (1990:171), such studies allow the complexities and differences of worlds-under-study to be explored and represented through primary and secondary data research methods. The goal is a holistic picture and depth of understanding rather than a numerical data analysis.

Primary data collection involved interviewing key informants who are policy makers and custodians of a lot of the information related to the management and the operation of the Kenyan film industry. The respondents in the key informant interviews comprised of policy makers such as the Chief Executive Officer of Kenya Film Commission, the Executive officer of FEPACI, the regional film organization, the head of the Film Production Service at the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and the Arts, key technical operators in the industry, and senior film producers who have been in the industry for a long time. The secondary data was carried out through a rigorous desk study at the Kenya National Archives and Data Services (KNADS), local libraries and websites featuring film production in Kenya. For data on the colonial period, the research benefited greatly from data from the British Film Institute from where the researcher was able to access and preview relevant films from that era.

Because film's communicative power is in depictions and portrayals of reality on the screen and representation of Kenyan people on the screen; the study also critically analyzed films, purposively selected from three stages of the study period. The selected films included the pre-independence period when film propaganda was heavily used against the nationalist struggle; the mid-1980s when the industry was on the verge of takeoff and 2012 when the Kenyan film industry made its impact on the global screen, and had for the first time a local film nominated for the Oscar awards in the USA, which globally is recognized to be the epitome of film excellence.

### **3.2 Detailed Desk Study**

Secondary data study entails using a qualitative study methodology in which documents were identified and subjected to critical analysis to obtain crucial information related to the evolution of the film industry in Kenya and the policies and infrastructural frameworks that evolved over the study period. According to Patton, M. (1990 :169), nothing better

captures the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods than the different logics that undergird sampling approaches.

Kenya National Archives and Data Services(KNADS), libraries, and online data websites were the main data sources. The documents which were critically analysed related to the emergence of film production in Kenya and the evolution of policies and intuitional frameworks that were created to establish the industry. Some of the institutions that were under study include K.I.M.C.(Kenya Institute of Mass Communication) and K.F.C. (Kenya Film Commission) and Riverwood Academy. Some of the material studied were on video DVDs whereas there's also a lot of materials from institutional websites. The researcher too luckily had easy access to some of the data like the films under review.

The only effort so far on documenting the history of Kenyan film is on a DVD format, *One Hundred Years of Film Making in Kenya 1909-2009*, by Twaweza (2009), a local research and publication firm. Because it is narration on film media, it relies more on the power of the spoken word and cannot report data with the rigor, accuracy and permanence of the written word. The spoken word is transient and data carried through the medium is always simplified for ease of memory and the narrative structure prioritizes the dramatic tit bits over heavy data for ease of recall. So the Twaweza DVD though useful manages to give the viewer the impressions and not the hard facts. Kenya Film Commission also provided a video, '*50 years of Film in Kenya*', which highlights the films that were shot over the last fifty years. Unfortunately, over the fifty years, KFC the producers of the marketing DVD only had six Kenyan films shot between 2008 and 2012.

The desk study gave the researcher a clear grasp of the different issues and the stages which the Kenyan film went through and the challenges and opportunities at varying moments along the way. The changing socio-economic and political circumstances over the study period gave an insight that informed the in-depth interviews that were held with key-informants.

Perhaps because of the variations in technological developments by the different regions of the world, and the research dissemination modes in different parts of the world, the types of documents available varied depending on the source. Materials that relate to the colonial and precolonial period were easily accessible online from different websites because the

former colonial master Britain has attained a high level of research data sharing that makes availability of multimedia data accessible by the touch of a button. A lot of the material became easily available because of the common access policies in force in many educational institutions in the developed world.

There is a comprehensive website for colonial film that stores the history of moving images of the British Empire (<http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/>). This website holds detailed information on over 6000 films showing images of life in the British colonies. Over 150 films are available for viewing online. A researcher can browse for films by country, date, topic, or keyword. Over 350 of the most important films in the catalogue are presented with extensive critical notes written by an academic research team. The Colonial Film website features films from different institutions such as the British Film Institute, the Imperial War Museum, and the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum.<sup>33</sup>

The website has over two hundred and forty one films (241) related to Kenya; ranging from some films shot on 'White Fathers and Holy Ghost Fathers' which were shot in the 'darkest Africa' in 1920, "*The Dark Places Of The Earth*", in which there is some footage from Uganda, Congo and Kenya. The website also has films shot as recently as 1987, *The White Mischief*, a film on a famous murder case among Kenya's British colonial society set in the 1940s.

There is also a lot of material available in online journals and research papers on different aspects of Kenyan film. The open access made it possible to access many varied documents from diverse sources such as local and foreign universities.

Data collection at the Kenya National Archive and Data Service requires special mention. For any scholar studying issues related to policy in Kenya on any issue, the Kenya National Archives is an invaluable source because it is the national data collection center on matters related to policy formulation and implementation from the colonial days to the present.

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<sup>33</sup> Collonial <http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/>, accessed on 12/3/2014



The Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service was officially established by an act of parliament in 1965 (the Public Archives Act of 1965). It commenced services on 25<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1966. Its mandate is “to formulate, implement, coordinate and oversee the execution of records and archives management services and programs within the public sector. Archival institutions select, preserve, and make their records accessible for a number of reasons, including legal, financial, and administrative purposes. KNADS maintains records as evidence of the government’s policies and operations”. The data that I accessed is in institutional files as they were before they were transferred to KNADS for safe keeping. Some of the correspondences especially between the Personal Secretaries (PSs) in various ministries, who were custodians of policy, are confidential and were made available for public scrutiny after the expiry of the confidentiality time limit.

The Kenya National Archives building also houses the Murumbi Gallery which contains African artifacts that were collected in the 19th century. As the website rightfully points out,

KNADS serves as ‘the memory of the nation.’<sup>34</sup>

### **3.3 Primary Data Collection**

The logic and power of purposeful sampling research lies in selecting information-rich cases, which are subjected to in-depth study methods. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling.

Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on in depth interviews of key informants, on relatively small samples, even single cases ( $n = 1$ ), selected purposefully. Because it relies on the findings from experts, identification of the respondents is a very key factor in the entire process. I have listed the key informants identified for this study below, (3.3.1) and the rationale for their identification

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<sup>34</sup> Welcome to Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service (KNADS), <http://www.archives.go.ke/#>, accessed on 13/9/2015

### *3.3.1 Key Informant Interviews (KII)*

According to Jennifer A. Parsons (2008),<sup>key</sup> informant refers to the person with whom an interview about a particular organization, social program, problem, or interest group is conducted. Key informant interviews are in-depth interviews of a select (nonrandom) group of experts who are most knowledgeable of the organization or issue. The term “Key Informant” refers to a person who can provide detailed information and opinions on a particular subject based on his/her knowledge of this particular issue. Key informant interviews are tools that develop an in-depth understanding on qualitative issues. Key informant interviews are used to gather qualitative information used to “triangulate” the findings of other types of evaluation methods such as desk studies. Key informant interviews are also helpful to obtain suggestions and recommendations from key informant experts. In carrying out this exercise, semi-structured interviews were conducted in a face to face setting which permitted the researcher to seek new insights, ask questions, and assess phenomena in different perspectives. (See attached questionnaire, appendix 1).

As this was mainly a qualitative research interrogating the historical evolution of film policies or the absence of the same, it relied mainly on documents study supplemented by Key Informant interviews of information rich sources. Key Informant interviewees are a useful qualitative data collection technique that can be used for a variety of purposes, including needs assessment, program refinement, issue identification, and strategic planning. According to Patton M. (ibid), when one is studying people, programs, organizations, or communities, the population of interest can be fairly readily determined.

In-depth interviews with Key Informants are most appropriate for situations in which the researcher wants to ask open-ended questions that elicit depth of information from experts. The researcher personally made appointments with the experts to be interviewed some of whom had already been sensitized to the interviews earlier. After confirming the appointments, he carried out the interviews at mutually agreed on, interview locations.

During the key-informant interviews, the researcher requested and was given permission to audio record the interviews for accuracy of data recording. When permission was granted, he proceeded to record the open-ended, discovery-oriented questions, which allowed the

interviewer to deeply explore the respondents' feelings and perspectives on the subjects. This resulted in rich background information that shaped further questions relevant to the topic. The key characteristics of in-depth interviews included open-ended questions which allowed respondents to expound on the topic under discussion.

Although it was necessary to pre-plan the key questions, the interview adopted a conversational approach, with questions flowing from previous responses when there was need. The gist was seeking understanding and interpretation of the changing situations and circumstances at different times in the evolution of the film industry.

The researcher used active listening skills to reflect upon what the different interviewees were saying, interpreted what was said and sought clarity on areas and issues that were not clear. All the audio-recorded interviews were complemented with written notes (i.e. field notes) by the interviewer. These were very useful when the transcribing was being done because they helped to clarify the issues in situations of lack of clarity.

The use of Key Informant Interviews led to a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied and helped to look at issues and problems from the perspective of those being studied. The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behavior. The researcher kept records in the form of field notes and audio-taped interviews, which were later transcribed for use in data analysis. The following persons below were all interviewed and their input analyzed and helped to create the findings and recommendations of this research. Because film production is a technical area and the practitioners are few experts, the identification of the experts was done through purposeful sampling. For this research, the following people were identified: Their names are listed randomly.

- i). ***John Karanja the Technical Director of Riverwood Ensemble***, the new-look Riverwood film business which is now internationally recognized to be the epicenter of film production in Kenya. Karanja trained in film production at KIMC in the 1980s and was among the early formally trained film professionals to join the untrained traders who established the now famous Riverwood film business that was using vernacular to create deejay commentaries for foreign action sound tracks before discovering they could do their own movies. He is a film producer and entrepreneur with his own studios which

are employing a lot of young Kenyans. He has been contracted by Mnet to do various productions for them for Africa Magic 3 channel.

ii). **Lizzy Chongoti the current CEO of KFC** to highlight more the policy 2015 which is awaiting cabinet discussion before it becomes a bill. She has worked at KFC since 2008 and has ample knowledge of the film industry. Chongoti feels that Kenyan cinema ought to be woven with a common 'golden thread' to make it stand out as a uniquely Kenyan product.

iii). **Jane Murago-Munene a Veteran filmmaker and founder of CineArts Afrika.** She has been a member of FEPACI (the Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers) since the 1980s and she was successful in lobbying the Kenya government to donate US\$ 1 million for the FEPACI office to move to Nairobi for the next four years. She is also founding chairperson of the Kenya National Film Association and Eastern Africa regional secretary of FEPACI. She has excelled in documentary productions but she has also done some feature films such as *The Price of a Daughter* and *Behind Closed Doors* which were released in 2003 and 2004 respectively. She produced, *Turning Tide: Women Entrepreneurs in Africa*, a 13-part series made in 2008 in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, to showcase successful businesswomen from Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Jane Murago-Munene directed *Monica Wangu Wamwere: The Unbroken Spirit* in 2010 which went on to win the Best Documentary Production in Africa Award in 2011 at Ouagadougou. She has to date refused to release the DVD into the market citing piracy fears. She's an embodiment of the struggle to create policies for the operation of professional independent film producers in Kenya.

iv). **Wanjiru Kinyanjui**, one of the best trained local film producers who graduated with her Master's degree in Literature from Berlin University and who also pursued a course equivalent to the Higher National Diploma in the German Academy for Film & Television Berlin (DFFB), one of the best schools globally in film production training. Before coming back to Kenya, she produced several children's films in Germany while working for German Television. While in training she shot a full length movie "*Battle of the Sacred Trees*" on Celluloid which went on to win the "Erich Kästner" award in

Germany. The film has also received recognitions due to its contribution in ethnographical treatment of local issues in cinema in Africa. The film has also been a subject of study by several scholars including Dr. Rachel Dianga who used it for her studies in her PhD in local film. Wanjiru is currently the Head of Film Production Training at the Multimedia University. She is also a professional film screenwriter and a film director and one of the founders of Udada Film Festival, a local organization that is supporting young women film producers.

- v). **Dr. S.P. Otieno** is a versatile film maker best known for his passion for use of cinema for education. He helped to create the Schools and Colleges Film Festival which is likely in years to come to be the largest film festival in the region. He's a researcher in theatre performance and modern technology; Theatre for Development Practitioner and Consultant; Initiator of Film for Development in a child to child communication strategy in Kayole Primary School; National Co-ordinator of the Kenya Schools and Colleges Film festival for the Ministry of Education; Consultant for the Ministry of Education on

Drama and Film; Over fifteen years of experience in teaching drama, scripting; Director of 8 films and 16 music videos; Initiator of the very first Kenya Schools and Colleges Film festival; Digital Music producer specializing in African beats; Currently involved with Talent Empire- Kenya (An NGO) in the production of a children's show for GOR TV.

- vi). **Lenny Juma** is an embodiment of Kenya's film story since the 1970s when he acted in *Bush Trackers*. He's a veteran film actor, and film Casting Director. Lenny started his film career as a young man in Kaloleni, Nairobi and in the 1970s and 80s he used to take Kenyan dance troupes to perform in Japan art festivals. He is the unsung hero who tracked down Oliver Litondo in western Kenya to be casted as Maruge for the *First Grader* when the role was about to be given to a non-Kenyan. The film received great accolades from Litondo's authentic portrayal of Maruge. Lenny also discovered Sidede Onyulo in a small village near Lake Victoria and had him casted to play Owuor in *Nowhere in Africa* and Sidede won The Best Supporting Actor in Durban Film Festival.

Lenny Juma has an impressive filmography that includes *Bush Trackers* 1979, *Sheena Queen of the Jungle* in 1984, *The Constant Gardener* 2005, etc. He is among the most experienced film casting directors in Kenya.

- vii) **Ernest K Kerich, Head of Department, Film Production Services, Ministry of Culture,**

**Sports.** Mr. Kerich has over 33 years' experience in Public Service, starting with the Presidential Press Services and then the Department of Film Services of which he is currently the head. He holds a Diploma in Cinematography and Certificates in Strategic Leadership Development, Corporate Governance, Financial Management, Film Governance and Society and in Total Quality Management. He is responsible for licensing all films shot in Kenya both local and foreign. By the virtue of his office, he is a Kenya Film Commission member.

- viii). **Cajetan Boy**, an award winning movie producer and one of the few Kenyan producers who is focusing on producing movies and not television series. He has been involved in various activities in Kenyan film production and training such as: Guest Lecturer in Screenplay writing at Kenya Institute of Mass Communication; Creative writing instructor; Screenplay Writer; Playwright, Stage, Screen and TV Producer; Director, Editor and Movie Production Consultant; Adjudicator for drama and film in various festivals.

### 3.4 Critical Evaluation of Three Films

The study also carried out an evaluation of three films shot during critical stages in Kenya's history to trace how film was used as a medium and the purpose for which it was used. The films were analyzed critically using film analysis evaluation tools. This involved critical reviews of films produced during the colonial Mau Mau epoch; the 1980s when the industry was being established on a commercial venture; and in the contemporary epoch of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The film reviews were done through an eclectic approach because film as a multisensory medium does not render itself to a wholesome analysis using a single theory. Eclecticism as a tool of enquiry does not prescribe to rigidly using one theoretical approach when striving to derive meaning or understanding, but applies different theories and approaches. According to J D. Halloran (1983: 270), "there is no need to apologize for a multiperspective diagnosis in mass communication research; indeed, we should seek to promote eclecticism rather than try to make excuses for it."

The tools of analysis of the films included scrutinizing the characterization of the main characters, the plot of the story, the language use, outstanding symbolism, a thematic analysis and the technical aspects of the production. The critical evaluations of the films were also informed by the Post-colonialist theory, Third Cinema, and theory of Representation. The application of these theories helped to scrutinize the extent to which Kenyan cinema has risen to the values of asserting a self-identity of Kenyans as a people, in an effort to counter the prejudiced representation by the colonial cinema and movies produced in the modern era, but lacking the wisdom to look for the humanity within individual beings other than be blinded by the colour of the skin.

Literary reviews of movies normally use the auteur theory which focuses on the special skills, style, techniques, and philosophy of the director. Other critiques use a genre approach which judges a film in terms of how it relates to a body of "formula" films. There's also a technical achievement approach which focuses on how the director uses the potential of the medium to communicate, not on what he communicates or why. The study used the eclectic approach because it brings applicable aspects of all other approaches, depending on the individual film being examined.

Because film contributes to culture and society as a whole by creating impressions using film art and techniques, studying the particular films along critical periods in Kenya's history was important. It was important to show how the representation of the Kenyan people was done and critically evaluate what has changed in the representation. Three films were selected which were shot at different times in Kenya's historical past including *Simba* (1954) a Mau Mau propaganda film; *The Bush Trackers*, 1980 a film shot by Americans who had come to create Nairobi as Hollywood of Africa; *Nairobi Half Life* (2012), the most successful Kenyan film so far and a film that was nominated to represent Kenya as a foreign movie entry in the 2012 Oscar awards and which according to some experts isn't qualified to represent Kenya because its 'Certificate of Origin' is held by Germans.

According to the International Chamber of Commerce,<sup>37</sup> Certificate of Origin (CO) is an important international trade document attesting that goods in a particular export shipment are wholly obtained, produced, manufactured or processed in a particular country. COs also constitute a declaration by the exporter. Virtually every country in the world considers the origin of imported goods when determining what duty will be assessed on the goods or, in some cases, whether the goods may be legally imported at all.

#### *3.4.1 Elements Used in Analysis of Selected Films.*

Watching movies in a cinema is fun but critiquing movies for analysis is a more technical and more demanding endeavor. Because the main gist of the evaluation was not necessarily the technical excellence of the film but much more the manner in which films represented Kenyans in the films put on the big screen, the researcher choose specific elements such as characterization, plot or arrangement of the story from the initial incident of a story to its resolution; language use; how symbolism is employed; thematic analysis of the film; the outstanding technical aspects of the films and the extent to which the movies conformed to postcolonial theory principles.

The evaluation was looking more critically at how meaning is brought out through. The decision for the eclectic approach was based on the fact that film is a complex mix of the



visual and the audio, tempered with many seemingly innocuous adjustments of light, camera angles and so on, but with subtle implications to visual lexicography and meaning making.

The critical analysis involved discussing both the thematic, dramatic (storytelling), and stylistic aspects of the movies. Except for occasional mention when it was deemed extremely essential, the technical elements such as lighting, sound, and other camera or editing qualities were not discussed in detail. But they were brought out when it became expedient to point out certain key features.

Because story tellers have a purpose or theme of featuring certain stories over others, it was essential to critically examine the theme of the movies under discussion. Megan S. Conklin (2004) observes that films are created to serve certain purposes and a review must first come to terms with the purpose for which the film was created. Was the film produced for entertainment purposes or were there other ulterior motives? The theme of a film can sometimes be discovered by asking "what was the central point the director was trying to make with this film?" What was the central goal of the film? The analysis involved a critical evaluation of following elements: background of the film in relation to the Kenyan situation; the plot of the story; characterization; language use; symbolism; technical cinematic effects; and looking at the film through post-colonial lenses.

### **3.5 Sample and sampling technique**

According to Paton M. (1990:169), there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources. In Patton's view (ibid), all types of sampling in qualitative research may be encompassed under the broad term of 'purposeful sampling.'

He states that 'qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully' Patton M. (1990: 182) describes 15 different strategies for purposefully selecting information-rich cases which may be listed as: extreme or deviant case sampling; intensity sampling; maximum variation sampling; homogeneous samples; typical case sampling; stratified purposeful sampling; critical case sampling;

snowball or chain sampling; criterion sampling; theory-based or operational construct sampling; confirming and disconfirming cases; opportunistic sampling; purposeful random sampling; sampling politically important cases and finally convenience sampling; what this illustrates is the complexity of sampling in qualitative research.

The importance of selecting information-rich cases, that is, cases that are selected purposefully to fit the study, in this case experienced practitioners in the film industry in Kenya. The purposeful samples were judged on the basis of the purpose and rationale of the study and the sampling strategy used to achieve the study's purpose.

The researcher adopted a non-probability sampling technique in which decisions were made depending on the experiences of the individuals included in the sample. The selection criteria included specialist knowledge of the research issue in film production experience and policy formulation, and capacity and willingness to participate in the research. This broad category of purposive sampling also called “expert sampling” is extreme or deviant case sampling, which is also known as “outlier sampling,” because it involves selecting cases near the “ends” of the distribution of cases of interest (Charles Teddlie et al. 2007 :79 ). It involved selecting those cases that are the most outstanding successes or failures related to some topic of interest. Such extreme successes or failures are expected to yield especially valuable information about the topic of interest. The researcher was looking for individuals who have particular expertise that is most likely to reveal new information for policy changes as Kenya tries to embrace film industry as a solution to youth unemployment and a wealth creation venture in the vision 2030 for development.

### **3.6 Data Processing and Analysis**

According to Seidel John (1988:10) data analysis is “breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units with facts broken down into manageable pieces.” He adds that analyzing qualitative data (QDA) is essentially a simple process which consists of three parts: Noticing, Collecting, and Thinking about interesting things.

After collecting the field data and transcribing it, the researcher went through the analysis process finding out the extent to which several stakeholders were making complimentary observations and the extent to which they raised unrelated issues. Any areas of diverse views were corroborated using field notes and follow up phone interviews. The researcher made decisions to determine what is more important and less important in the data based on the original research objectives.

According to Professor Denis McLaughlin (2012), data analysis is an eclectic process which occurs simultaneously and iterative with data collection, data interpretation and report writing. Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of information collected. It involves examining what has been collected and making deductions and inferences before writing and publishing the findings.

The data that had been gathered and written out during the desk study and which had guided the design of the Key Informants study was analysed viz a viz the findings from the interviews. The triangulation helped to confirm a number of issues especially regarding the development of policies and insitutions in post independent Kenya from the 1980s onwards where respondents were in a position to express their experiences. During the analysis, the field notes that the researcher had written during the interviews were very useful in clarifying different phenomena. Some of the respondents were using different terminologies for the same thing and reference to the notes helped to draw conclusions from their statements. The analysis and synthesis contributed to the writing of chapter four, five, six, seven and eight which follow.

The critical questions related to the evolution of the film industry in Kenya, the policies and institutional frameworks created for the industry from precolonial times to the present day. The research also sought to find out the plans under way to revamp the movie industry for future growth. The other area of interest was to evaluate whether Kenyan movies had corrected the negative representation of the Kenyan people that had for many years been created and perpetuated by a racist colonial cinema.

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability**

Assessing the validity and reliability of study findings requires researchers to evaluate and make critical judgments about the ‘soundness’ of the research design in relation to the application and appropriateness of the methods undertaken and the integrity of the final conclusions. D. J. Cohen (2008), identifies several safeguards that must be applied to assure for the validity and reliability of research. These include; design and methodology, sampling, instrumentation, timing, data collection and data analysis and data reporting. Cohen (ibid) offers a strategic approach to ensure for validity and reliability of the findings arrived at from a qualitative research method. His recommendations include; prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, triangulation, and respondent validation, weighing the evidence, checking for representativeness, researcher effects, theoretical sampling and using extreme cases.

This research identified the following guidelines to assure for validity and reliability of the findings of the study: design and methodology, sampling, data collection and data analysis and data reporting. In addition, the research looked at weighing the evidence, checking for representativeness, purpose for sampling, prolonged engagement in the field, among other aspects.

The desk study which was based on a critical analysis of mostly official archival government of Kenya documents at the KNADS, what is popularly known as ‘the memory of the nation’ lasted over one year. This prolonged engagement in the field was useful in giving the scholar an opportunity to go through the documents and compare documents, letters among others and identify critical historical information necessary for the research.

This work in the archives allowed the scholar to fully appreciate through putting together bits and pieces of information, the heavy colonial influence on the film industry and to identify information on how specific Kenyans struggle to give a different representation of Kenya outside the world. The documents critically studied in the research stretch back from the colonial period to the present. These include official files containing official correspondence between government functionaries dealing with film issues, between the government and all other organizations including the Kenyan embassies abroad in both the colonial government and the independent Kenya governments. Other print documents included newspaper articles, peer reviewed research journals and dissertations and thesis from local and foreign universities.

The primary research data was designed to tap the knowledge and expertise of the most experienced local producers and the custodians of policy in government departments. These individuals were purposely identified because of their experiences and role in government institutions. They included: CEO of KFC, Director of KFS, among others. The research also benefited from the experiences and knowledge of the CEO of FEPACI, Jane, Munene who was among the first lot of producers to be trained at KIMC and the founder and first chair of Kenya National Film Association. The research also tapped into the experiences and the vision of Dr S. P. Otieno the founder of the Schools, Colleges and Universities Film Festival, technical Director of Riverwood industry, among other experts. The reliance on the 'expert' or 'outlier' samples ensured for getting the data from the best possible sources. In a further effort to triangulate and apply an eclectic approach, the research did a critical review of three purposefully selected films from the colonial period, post-colonial and present time. For the colonial epoch, the film *Simba*, a top British film of the 1950s based on the Mau Mau uprising which lasted between 1952 and 1960 was reviewed. The Mau Mau uprising was a top international news story of the period. For the postcolonial epoch, the film *Bush Trackers*, Kenya's most prominent film of the 1980 was reviewed. The film was a collaboration between Kenya and US in launching a film industry in Kenya which intended to turn Nairobi into the Hollywood of Africa. The third film from the contemporary era Nairobi *Half Life* was critically reviewed.

Because the researcher has been part of the film industry since the 1970s, there were instances when the research was informed by the researcher's own experiences from productions he took part in, and which had not been documented. The researcher therefore to an extent is influenced by his own recollections and personal experiences. Because he wasn't keeping notes as the strict ethnographical participant methodologies stipulate, this does not qualify to be a participant observer methodology but it nonetheless sheds light on a number of aspects especially at the films review.

Given the historical studies from the archives, the interviews of those with experience both in policy development and institutional management as well as those in the film industry, the researcher was able to ensure validity of the information that creates this study.

### **3.8 Ethical Concerns**

There is always need to be aware of ethical issues surrounding gathering data from human subjects. There's a framework with three ethical principles to guide human research (called the Belmont Report) produced in 1974 by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects.<sup>35</sup> The principles include: respect for persons; beneficence; and justice which are also relevant for assessment and evaluation of activities that involve gathering data from people through surveys, interviews, or focus groups.

In respect for persons, the researcher is expected to respect people's autonomy, particularly their ability to make independent decisions and act on those decisions. This is implemented through informed consent which calls for giving people the information they need to make an informed and independent decision about whether to participate in a study or not. The researcher made efforts to explain the goal of the research to all the key informants and they participated in giving the information through their own free will. The informants were made aware that the interviews would be audio recorded and they had no objections at all because they empathized with the researcher on the need to do this study and the need for audio recording it for more accurate data processing.

In regard to beneficence, the respondents were made fully aware that their participation did not expose them to any risks of harm whatsoever because the subject matter was not controversial and the research was to serve an academic need. The respondents were not exposed to any physical, psychological or emotional threats. The archival studies were carried out with full authority and permission of the relevant department in the National archives.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

As detailed above, the qualitative research relied on a rigorous desk study for secondary data which helped to define the research context. This included: an outline of the history of film in Kenya and how they were impinged upon by technological changes; the policy changes over time and the institutional frameworks created over the study period. This

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<sup>35</sup> key informant interview handbook - University of Washington [courses.washington.edu/](http://courses.washington.edu/), accessed on 10/11/2015

process informed the design of the questions to be asked and the appropriate respondents. The qualitative research used primary data collection methods where policy makers and experts in film production went through Key Informant interviews. The data collected helped to triangulate the secondary data in the analysis and report writing.

When the films for critical analysis were selected, one of the criteria for selection was their common theme so that they became unified by a common thread. For the three films under study, use of violence for one reason or another became the common unifying thread. The other important criterion was that the films would have made a mark as a movie of the period it was produced. The analysis of the movies and their representation of Kenyans is detailed in chapter seven. The overriding finding is that the representation of the Kenyan has not improved significantly due perhaps to reliance on non-Kenyans to exercise creative control in shaping and representing our image.

**4.0 Introduction**

This chapter explores the historical development of the Kenyan film industry from its early beginnings and discusses the evolution of the policies and institutional frameworks created to establish the Kenyan film industry. It discusses how those policies were created, the purposes they were meant to serve and how they were modified over time, especially to cope with the realities of the technological changes as film changed from celluloid to video. It also discusses how Kenyan cinema adopted innovative production techniques so as to cope with changing technological trends which were complicated by changing political circumstances. The chapter addresses the following issues: historical growth of the industry, the evolution of policies with changing times and the creation of institutional frameworks related to the industry which needed to be provided in order to establish cinema in the country.

**4.1 Historical Development of a Film Industry in Kenya.**

The origin of film technology is long and winding, but film as a novel technology established itself in Europe around the 1880s. According to Manthia Diawara (1987), this coincided with the “discovery” of Africa by Europe and the exploration of the so-called ‘dark continent.’ Film became a convenient tool to take back to Europe as evidence of the darkness, the wildness, and the savagery of Africa. Available documentation indicates that the earliest recorded use of a film shot in Kenya was of former US President Teddy Roosevelt’s visit to Kenya, recorded by Cherry Keaton, a British wildlife photographer in 1909.<sup>39</sup>

The resultant film, *TR in Africa* was screened in 1910 and 1911 in both London and New York where it showcased Kenya’s potential as a beautiful filming location, especially due to its abundant wildlife and a wide and varied scenic beauty.



Even though *TR in Africa* was supposed to be a true documentation of reality, it has some glaring inconsistencies which might have come about due to the haphazard way that it was shot without any pre-production research by people who didn't know the difference between Kenya and South Africa, coupled with the editor's ignorance of details in the area in which the documentary was shot. There was an assumption that all Africans who were captured by the lens were Zulus. The Kikuyu women featured in some of the scenes are said to be Zulu. So are the Maasai morans whose homes are also called "kraals," and not "manyattas" which are their actual name. And even the Kikuyu warriors who appear in several scenes are labelled Zulu.

Nevertheless, the film is a fascinating look at "native primitive" life in the early 1900s. The average British and American viewer of the era would never have questioned the greatness and the superiority of the white man (mzungu) as compared to the tribal peoples in the film, especially in scenes where Roosevelt is shown mounting the shoulders of his black couriers and being carried across streams to spare him the ignominy of wetting his shod feet.

The documentation of the visit was shot with some very encumbering black and white cameras at a time when the film medium was really in its infancy. Theatres were just beginning to pop up and artistes were just learning how to use the medium to tell stories. At that time, film had only been discovered 16 years earlier.

After the publicity and the fame that accrued from the success of the *TR in Africa* film, Cherry Keaton established himself as an authority in filming Kenyan wildlife and he made many wildlife filming expeditions up until 1940 when he died outside BBC studios in London.<sup>36</sup> In the 1920s and the 1930s, the country started teeming with hordes of wildlife photographers and others who were recording the visits of early missionaries and colonial administrators. There are many documentary films available on websites filmed around this time especially at Colonial Film Database.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Data on films shot in Kenya between 1910 and 2009 given to this researcher by Lizzie Chongoti the KFC CEO Indicates that Cherry Keaton had shot 8 wildlife films between 1910-1928. The document unfortunately is unauthenticated and my attempts to search for its author with KFC the originator of the document failed. <sup>42</sup> Colonial Film, Moving Images of the British Empire, <http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/>, accessed on 4/7/2014

#### 4.1.1 Colonial Kenya as a Destination for Travelogue Films between 1895 and 1952

The colonial era was marked by British and Hollywood filmmakers making travelogues and game hunting films based on a fascination with Kenya's fauna and flora which provided an amazingly wide variety of scenery. According to Jean Hartley (2010), at about the same time as Cherry Keaton was filming Roosevelt, Carl Akeley was filming wildlife films around Kenya. Roosevelt's film, which was shown in London and Washington in 1911, sparked a lot of film interest in Kenya as a location with its "exotic" peoples and animals. Hollywood films shot in Kenya were reasonably regular between the 1920s and 1940s. But essentially this was the colonizer's story and not our story. The films made when Kenya was initially a colony and then a protectorate viewed the so-called "natives" through the same lens as the fauna and the flora. The natives were only useful in crowd scenes when the conquerors were shooting their adventures and their romances in the jungle.

And while the films in this era were being shot, the natives along with the bullocks and donkeys were also useful in transporting the luggage of the film crews through the hostile jungle. In any case, the attitude and philosophy of the white man of that era was that Africans weren't fully human. It was the perspective espoused in Rudyard Kipling's poem 'White Man's Burden'<sup>37</sup> which tells of a people who were "half devil, half child." The "half child" thesis was taken up by the British colonialists, as they endeavored in their 'benevolence' to educate, train and civilize these children so that they might ideally become men someday.

Kipling wrote:

*"Take up the White Man's  
Burden Send Forth the best ye  
breed Go bind your sons to  
exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,*

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<sup>37</sup> The White Man's Burden by Rudyard Kipling

<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/teachers/curriculum/m7b/burden.php>, accessed on 23/5/15

*Half-devil and half-child.”*

#### *4.1.2 Cinema and Colonization*

Cinema as a tool or medium of communication evolved at a time when the colonialists were subdividing Africa during the Berlin conference of 1884. According to Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2014: 67-80), for the empires, the cinematic icon came at a time when colonialists as well as literary and journalistic voices were already painting Africa in the darkest of colors. Henry Morton Stanley who combined the roles of journalist, Christian emissary and trader had set the tone of a tradition with such sensational titles as *In Darkest Africa*. Cinema then as a visual medium became a very convenient tool to paint this darkness of Africa on the silver screen.

According to Ngugi (ibid), because “cinema has more surface realism, the cinematic image could outdo the journalistic and the literary voices in the depiction of the barbarity, savagery, infantilism, docility and all the dark otherness that made white civilization more luminous. Whiteness became more visibly splendid juxtaposed against blackness.” Ngugi asserts that cinematic icons could conclusively give visual credence to the racist assertions of the voice, oral or literary, that preceded it.

In any case, the power of the cinema is in its visual appeal, and not so much in the audio as has been said over the years. Sarah Kozloff (2000: 33) argues that “since the birth of the cinema, we’ve chanted a mantra that ‘Film is a Visual Medium’ and she contends that films must tell their stories visually using devices created to enhance use of visual story telling such as editing, deep focus, lighting, camera movement and nifty special effects. Other elements such as dialogue on the other hand are just something film consumers have to put up with, according to Kozloff. When film tells its story and reveals its characters in a series of simple, beautiful, active pictures, and does it with as little talk as possible, then the motion picture medium is being used to its fullest advantage and is claimed to be more effective as a narrative devise. This becomes a very effective communication tool to convey ideas, especially to communities who may not understand foreign languages such as the European languages used to colonize Africa. And so film was the perfect medium to bring back to Europe the evidence of primitivism and the gory backwardness in vivid black and white detail.

#### 4.1.3 Colonial Era and the 'Moral Obligation'. (1895-1962)

Europe justified its colonization of Africa on grounds that it was its moral duty to “uplift” Africans from their primitive state. This is very much in line with the Post-colonialism which identifies this as a false justification to invade weaker communities and conquer them by force of arms.

According to David Lertis Matson (2014: 186), there’s ample evidence suggesting that all European powers did not think much of Africans or African culture and history during the colonization of Africa. Writings by Europeans who visited Africa before the actual colonization show views of individuals determined to look at Africa through their own Western cultural prisms and conclude that Africans were backward and uncivilized, and Europeans had a moral duty to occupy and civilize Africa for “her own sake.”

In 1884, the European countries met in Berlin for the so-called "Scramble of Africa." According to Manthia Diawara (1987), to justify themselves morally, they argued that they had a duty to civilize Africans. In fact, most of the pioneers who introduced film production to Africa used the same argument. They believed that distributing commercial films, such as those by Charlie Chaplin, would harmfully introduce Africans to film's powerful means of persuasion. Such films were held to be technically too sophisticated for African minds and also damaging because they depicted negative aspects of European and North American lives. In this light, Notcutt, L.A. (1937: 23), founder of the Bantu Educational Film Experiment, argued the following:

"With backward peoples unable to distinguish between truth and falsehood, it is surely in our wisdom, if not our obvious duty, to prevent as far as possible the dissemination of wrong ideas. Should we stand by and see a distorted presentation of the white race's life accepted by millions of Africans when we have it in our power to show them the truth?"

The TR in Africa film mentioned earlier heralded a colonial period where films were mainly hunting, travelogue films and fictional films like *Mogambo*, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, *Trader Horn* and others in the 1930 and 1940s. Other films showcased the conflict of Europeans battling with dangerous elements of nature and a new culture in Africa while at

the same time loving the breathtaking scenery and warm-hearted people. During this period the featured stories were white men's tales shot in the African jungle, and if any Africans appeared in shot, they were just extras, porters or featured as primitive tribesmen. The trend of representation of Kenyans in a negative light continued even in stories that were shot in the 1980s, like Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*, but whose setting was Kenya of the 1930s.

In a UNESCO roundtable discussion on the state of cinema in Africa in 1961, Rouch (1962) made a surprising observation that, in spite of cinema having been used extensively in tropical Africa for over 50 years, that tropical Africa was the world's most underdeveloped part of the world in terms of film projection and the most backward in film production. She claimed that whilst Asia, South America and Indonesia have been making films for years, tropical Africa has yet to turn out its first full-length movie. "In 1960, sixty-five years after the invention of the camera, not a single genuinely African feature film has, to my knowledge, as yet been produced; by that I mean acted, written, photographed, directed, edited etc. by Africans and of course in an African language."

Over all this period, films in Africa had been used extensively by colonizers who had denied the African the power to represent himself on the screen. There had been a tug of war over this entire period between American filmmakers and European filmmakers in different parts of Africa which was seen as a potential market for foreign films.

#### *4.1.4 The Establishment of Mobile Cinema*

The Kenyan colonial government established a mobile cinema as an experimental educational enterprise with the natives during the BEKE experiment in the mid-1930s. First, there were governmental and non-governmental agencies sponsoring non-commercial cinema, which treated the medium as a vehicle for popular instruction.

The introduction of cinema as a free commodity offered through mobile vans at night in the rural villages could have created an impression that films were free products, but they could easily have worked at attempts to introduce commercial cinema in later years. According to a study carried out by Peter Mwaura, (1980: 46-53), after radio, the mobile cinemas in Kenya in the 1980s had the highest audience numbers in the country which included the semi-urban and rural people who comprised the backbone of the country's economy. Then,

there were three major organizations in the country that operated mobile cinemas: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Factual Films Ltd and the Film Corporation of Kenya.

These establishments had a deep-rooted history that stretched back to the colonial days. According to Mwaura (ibid), during the Second World War the British colonial government in Kenya, introduced mobile cinema shows for the African population. At that time, the cinema was a novelty to Africans and according to Mwaura (ibid), the colonial government was quick to realize the effectiveness of using it to boost the morale of the people. Mwaura explains (ibid), the first mobile cinema shows in Kenya during the 1940s were mainly concerned with war propaganda and pacifying the African population during a crucial time in the history of British rule in Kenya. Later, the mobile cinema shows were increasingly used for general mobilization and education of the people; thus films on such topics as better farming methods or hygiene and civic affairs were shown from time to time.

Mwaura (ibid) continues to argue that during the 1950s, when Kenya was plunged into a new era of nationalist struggle against British colonial rule, the mobile cinema shows were used once again, mainly for propaganda purposes, and these were concentrated in the Central Province, the hotbed of the Mau Mau nationalist uprising. The mobile Cinema unit was however disbanded in 1959-60 when the state of emergency in the country was formally ended. Ministry officials who had been deployed to work with the mobile cinema units were redeployed to other sections of the ministry.

The mobile cinema was reintroduced in 1966, three years after Kenya achieved independence according to Mwaura (ibid). A film-making unit within the ministry was reorganized and absorbed into the Documentary Film Unit to produce films to be used in the mobile cinemas.

That unit still exists today as the Department of Film Services of the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts, which licenses all films in Kenya. By 1980, the ministry had fifteen mobile cinema vans. It had also acquired the technical facilities needed to make, process, print and dub films for its mobile cinema vans and all that was required was an injection of capital into the project and the training of skilled personnel to make the unit fully

operational. But unfortunately, the production equipment went for many years unutilized because adequate resources and facilitation was not provided.

#### *4.1.5 Lack of Films to Market Kenya Internationally after Independence.*

After having ignored the potential of film to address both domestic development needs and foreign policy imaging needs, the government of independent Kenya was woken up to the gap through embarrassing experiences in diplomatic circles immediately after independence. Prior to independence, the films that were shot by the colonial government on Kenya depicted Africans negatively and derisively as second-class citizens or as servants to the white man. According to Manthia Diawara (2010), the Hollywood movies shot in the 1930s and 1940s had images of African caricatures poking fun at their primitivism. The representation of Africans by the white film makers was informed by the use of cinema to make the African appear weak, small and an insignificant servant to the white boss. At best, black Kenyans were represented as spectators in another man's show.

After independence, when films were required in diplomatic circles such as trade fairs or exhibitions to promote Kenya as an investment or tourist destination, the films available in the local archives portrayed the Africans in very embarrassing light. The Kenyan ambassadors abroad are the ones who faced the embarrassment whenever they were called upon to screen a film to showcase Kenya.

Nine years after independence, the Kenyan High Commissioner to India, Kimalel S.K. (1972), wrote the Permanent Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting decrying the embarrassment he faced while trying to look for films that could show the achievements of black Africans and 'depict the progress and development of our nation.' He had recently received a film on fishing along the coast of East Africa "which was made before independence and naturally was dominated by Europeans and was therefore inappropriate for publicizing an independent nation."

The Kenyan Ambassador to Washington L.O. Kibinge (1972) was facing similar embarrassments in 1972. In a letter to the PS for Information and Broadcasting, he stated that there was "a pressing need in the U.S.A. for documentary films on Kenya as it really is;

her people, culture, history, modern and traditional activities, and aspects of achievement since the attainment of independence.”

Kibinge contended that the people of Kenya and the nation should be the prime point of promotion. The best film available he stated entitled ‘Safari to Kenya ‘was primarily for tourism promotion. Although it was of good technical quality he noted, it showed Kenya’s tourist splendor but depicted the locals in a very bad light. It showed the whites as the masters and the Africans as servants. Nine years after independence, Kibinge (ibid) argued “there was no justification why there were no blacks in swimming pools or in the national parks.” The ambassador noted that although the film was appealing to white Americans, the black Americans found it obnoxious. He noted in his scathing letter that “if we are to move away from the widespread white-hunter led safaris of the Hemmingway novels and image of wild, naked, dancing natives shown in most Hollywood films, we must always include in government promotional movies a short cross-section view of Kenya.” He recommended that the cross- section view of Kenya be a guiding factor while “formulating policy and conditions that private and commercial TV and movie crews should adhere to while shooting wild life and Maasai, their favorite subjects.

Ambassador Kibinge (ibid) recommended that before a license to shoot a second movie in Kenya was issued; the crews would need to be evaluated on the previous film they had shot in Kenya to verify the extent to which they were promoting Kenya abroad positively. Unfortunately, there’s no evidence that this recommendation was implemented.

Similar disappointment with Kenyan films by Kenyans who needed to showcase their nation internationally were the same everywhere and the new government didn’t seem to recognize the potency of the image in marketing the newly independent nation. There was need to disabuse the negative stereotypes and make movies that reversed the propaganda that had been heaped onto Kenya over the years about the ineptitude of the African as a person.

Mwangi, A.C. (1964), President of the Kenya African Students Union at Sofia State University, made an impassioned case to the Mayor of Nairobi in 1964, asking to be sent a copy of a film showing the city of Nairobi in independent Kenya. He hoped that such a film would help to correct the negative image of Kenya projected by imperialists.



“I am sure you will agree with me that for the past years, the imperialists and the colonialists have deliberately misrepresented the African people to the ignorant nations who have not been able to visit Africa, and see for themselves what African Culture, Art, and Labour are like there are still some people who still think that Africans are still living in caves, holes, and in the old style huts which existed hundreds of years ago it is high time that an African worked hard to turn down and disapprove all this imperialist propaganda and inhuman created stories which have been intended to discredit the African Culture, Art, Labour, and the struggle against white domination”.

Mwangi (ibid), like the ambassadors referred to earlier was in a desperate need of film footage that would provide evidence that Kenyans as an independent people were moving in the right direction and were masters of their destiny, contrary to imperialist propaganda which was still undermining all efforts to prove that they had come out of the shackles of colonialism.

When the request was delivered to a D.M. Diment, an expatriate training officer acting for PS Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, in July 1964, he poured cold water on the enthusiastic request by regretting that the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism “no longer controls a film library as this was disbanded three years ago, and our stocks of films were dispersed to various ‘interested’ Government departments.” This would mean that the film library was disbanded in 1961, two years before independence.

Other records show that the colonial government went through a systematic destruction of films made in Kenya during the colonial era. An ‘Adviser for Kenya, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar Students in North America,’ Duke K.D. (1964), writing from the British Embassy in Washington D.C. wrote in 1964, referring to a letter INF.20/127 dated 19<sup>th</sup> January 1963. He noted that a request had been made to him “to withdraw all the Kenya films that had been in circulation up to that time, and to either hold them in store for later destruction or destroy them immediately.” He confirms that he had held fourteen films until March 12<sup>th</sup> 1964 when the office “was relocating to New York which he considered was the most appropriate time to destroy the films.”

Mr. Diment's other excuse why he couldn't provide a film is that "this problem of recently made movies is a recurrent one as far as students abroad are concerned, [namely] the general lack of up-to-date films has been a constant thorn in our side from a publicity point of view." He adds nothing more on what his ministry is doing to address this problem. He notes however that "there is an official film made to commemorate Kenya's independence, 'Kenya Becomes a Nation' which he hopes "will soon become available for public viewing, but until that happens, there isn't a great deal I can do." This is a clear indication that the British expatriate advising and spearheading policy in the transition years did more to cripple the film enterprise than to improve anything.

Torberg Marrieta (1965), invited Kenya to enter a film "on the life and activities of her people in the coming Vienna Festival of Film from developing countries," by the Vienna Institute for Development. The government was requested to explain whether it was willing and able to participate and should the government not have a film production department, provide the names of private companies or independent producers who could work with the festival organizers to feature Kenya in the programme. In his response to the request, the PS "welcomes the idea in principle," but regrets to inform the writer of the letter that "this Ministry is now planning to start a project on film-making and will therefore not be ready to supply the type of film you require in this year's Film Festival. It is hoped that Kenya will participate in the Vienna Film Festival in future years."<sup>44</sup> Ironically 50 years down the line, Kenya is yet to honor this diplomatic commitment.

The government of the day's attitude to film as an industry, or as a tool of communication can be summarized as 'indifference.' Despite the potential power of film to provide the visual proof in showing leaders how their subjects were performing, there appears to have been no people in government who saw the need for the government to invest in basic film projectors for use by its officials.

According to Rowdon L. (1969) the Kenyatta government was at one time in need of a film projector to watch a film on the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games, donated by Mohamed Amin that he had shot on the glorious performances by emerging athletics giants like Kipchoge Keino who was smashing records everywhere he ran. Surprisingly six years after

independence, the Kenyan cabinet had no projector to watch a film and they had to stoop so low as to 'beg' for film projection equipment from the former colonial master Britain, so that the President of the Republic of Kenya and his cabinet could watch a film on how Kenya performed during the games. Rowdon L. (ibid) writing from the British High Commission had to ask 'London' if they would issue 'approval' to provide not just one projector but include a changeover unit to facilitate projection from two projectors. In his reply letter to the Kenya government dated 29<sup>th</sup> August 1969, the British High Commissioner educated the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism on how films are projected more professionally by use of "dual projection equipment to avoid lapses when transferring from one reel to another." Instead of donating one projector as requested, the embassy in their magnanimity offered to double the aid, provided the Kenya government gave duty exemption to the importation of the equipment. The projector is a consumerist tool of cinema and it would serve British interests well if the Kenyan cabinet used it more often to consume British films, especially as Kenyans weren't making any films for themselves as yet.

#### *4.1.6 Private Efforts in Starting the Film Industry after Independence.*

Many efforts to start a Kenyan film industry as a business enterprise are on record, some initiated by locals, some by foreigners and others by a combination of both. Their start-up failures as the records show is due to both government bureaucracy and apathy.

According to Stanic F. P. (1964), in 1964, barely a year after independence, a proposal for investing in film production was presented by Stanic Film Productions of Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A, to the newly independent government. The proposal, addressed to the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, was suggesting to put at the disposal of the Kenya government, film production experts who would be producing documentary films "designed specifically to the needs of Kenya as prescribed by officials of government." They identified many developmental issues in diverse areas such as health and agriculture where such films would be needed. These included making films on such concepts as How "contour farming" is done; how to drive a tractor; elementary hygiene; national objectives; why leaders must be followed and why there must be unity and so on."

The proposal went on to suggest a distribution network using the mobile cinema vans so as to show the films to the masses of Kenyans who were cut off from the formal mass media such as radio, newspapers and TV. According to the proposal, use of film would overcome a major development challenge as film was a most cost effective media with high impact compared to the other media. Unfortunately, this proposal was never taken up notwithstanding the great need for production of films in diverse development areas. If government had taken good advice, it would have spared its ambassadors the embarrassing moment they went through when called upon to demonstrate how independent Kenya was changing using film.

The attempted start-ups of a Kenyan film industry that are on record at the Kenya National Archives indicate that there was a lot of interest from many quarters. When the Kenya government sought assistance from foreign governments, such as West Germany, to help set up a film industry (ref MIB/12/4/13/115), someone who read the request saw an opportunity to entrench himself within a young government desperate for expertise in film production.

A Mr. Raoul Bunlinger of Stanberg, West Germany, made attempts to be hired as an expert by the Kenya government to help start the industry. In a letter dated 21st July 1965, he suggests that he gets invited by the government “to speak to all the ministries involved” upon which he would be able to advise government on the costs of setting up the industry. How one single individual can be the fulcrum to launch an industry isn’t clear but the German expert states that he “would gladly come to Kenya and establish the whole industry on the lines I have explained.....if they would wish to have an industry, they would have to offer me a job within government and with a salary according to my knowledge and what I have to offer.”

Other curious correspondences involve renowned names like Ezekiel Mphahlele of the novel *Down Second Avenue* fame, who was involved in theatrical productions, art, music and writing when he was in exile from the Apartheid regime in Nairobi in 1965.

In a letter he had written to Mr. Richard Kaplan of Spring Valley, New York, Mr. Mphahlele who was writing on behalf of ChemChemi, an African Creative Center in Nairobi which was handling art, writing, theatre, music and seminars expresses his interest and that of the

center to be involved in a proposed film production by the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism.

ChemChemi appears to have had a Pan Africanist agenda because they were featuring African published stories such as J.P. Clark's *Song of a Goat* and a play *Oganda's Journey* which Mphalele had adopted from a story by Grace Ogot, and there weren't many such enterprises at the time. "We are naturally very interested in the project, particularly because it will be the first time [the] Kenya scene is exploited for a film of the 'healthy type'. We work on plays with an African theme and therefore consider we are fulfilling a function that not only has entertainment but also an educational value." Unfortunately, this ambitious project also came to nothing and Mphalele's letter didn't appear to have been replied to.

#### *4.1.7 Government Refusal to License a Local Mau Film in the 1970s.*

According a memo dated 14<sup>th</sup> February 1972 from Arthur Ruben,<sup>38</sup> Senior Information Officer in the Ministry of Information and Tourism to the Permanent Secretary of same ministry, he advised against licensing a Mau film which was the most ambitious filming project in Kenya at the time and for which, three years of elaborate planning and costly expenditures were thrown down the drain by the stroke of a pen by one bureaucrat. The proposal had come from Standard Films Ltd., a Public Limited Company By Shares Incorporated in Kenya, registered on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1970 with capital of £30,000 (600,000/=), which was a reasonable amount of money for local entrepreneurs at that time. The company directors included some of the top people in the media, such as Boaz Omori, the Editor in Chief in the Daily Nation, Mr. Mark Sila Mshilla of Voice of Kenya fame, Medech Adagala, B. Shankardass among other African and Indian entrepreneurs. Their production plans were to involve a multiracial cast of 7,000 people.

The company Standard Films Limited was to produce two pictures in the first year, three in the second year and four in the third year, by engaging top-class film directors from abroad. They were hoping to rely on external expertise as there were no fully qualified feature film directors locally.

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<sup>38</sup> KNA/MIB/12/4/13/163

According to this memo, they had a proposal to produce a “Mau” movie in English and Kiswahili as their first project. They then targeted production of Asian pictures which would be produced in Eastman Color to fetch a minimum of K£ 50,000 after releasing to all parts of the world. They also had plans to dub the same pictures in Kiswahili. As from the second year, the company envisaged producing the films in Kiswahili and other Asian languages. They were hoping to work closely with experts from Bollywood which was already a flourishing movie industry.

Their business plan which is detailed in the memo, included selling shares to shopkeepers, farmers, businessmen, clerks, teachers, labourers, school teachers, and others in any part of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. They were promising a 15% per annum interest to all investors. Apart from producing full-length pictures, they had plans to procure buildings, cinemas etc. Their business projection was that they would grow from a K£30,000 in the first year to K£150,000 in the second year. It’s interesting to note their regional approach to the business plan because if they had succeeded, they would have been able to harness East Africa as a single cinema market.

Their proposal was to produce films regularly in Kenya starting with a film called *Mau Mau*. They had nurtured the idea since 1969, when they made the proposal to the Vice-President of the Republic of Kenya according to the memo. The company went ahead with the grand plans to organize for the fundraising and scripting of the film, hoping for government support. Their assumption was that the government would be interested in telling the Mau Mau story from the perspective of the Kenyan people, especially given the fact that Jomo Kenyatta, the current President, had emerged a hero in the pursuit for independence from the colonialists.

The gist of the production besides making money was to “show our people as heroes against colonialism.” This would have been very much in line with what postcolonial theorists advocate for. The proposal argued that books had been written by several authors on Mau Mau and similar films had been made about struggles of freedom in countries like the USA and Algeria. Bearing this in mind, the production company wanted to “show the world how

Kenyans conquered colonialism.” This proposal ties in with the theoretical suggestions advanced to African film producers by FEPACI (1969) to confront the colonial conflicts with dramatized feature stories as a beginning point for African states to launch their film industries.

Given the international controversies surrounding the Mau Mau war and the heinous atrocities that Britain committed in violation of international law, the producers were aware of the sensitivity of the story, both in local and international circles, and they were ready to subject the script for approval by a professional critic. They were also willing to censor the film “not to include scenes which would anger our good government.” They were ready as the memo suggests to change the title of the film if the government was not comfortable with the proposed *Mau Mau* title because it still had negative or threatening connotations to some people.

In spite of the government receiving the script for its scrutiny and generally agreeing to the script’s content, it still put road blocks in the way to frustrate the production of the film. Why a national government would obstruct the creation of a film that wanted to celebrate the birth of the nation is incomprehensible given that President Jomo Kenyatta had played a key role in the struggle for liberation and his contribution to nation-building was well featured in the script.

In their response to the proposal, a note from the P.S. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting states “All in all, the introduction is fair and reasonable.” But the shocking thing is the questions he raised and the statements he made. “But for whom is the film aimed? Who is the target audience? In Kenya, we have been told to forget the past. If the Kenya government wanted a chronological record of Mau Mau activities, it is in a much better position to produce such a film.”

As if this is not enough, Ruben beats about the bush searching for other excuses to block this venture. “Directors of ‘Hollywood in Africa’ are Asians and Africans. Mr. Mshila says he’s paid nothing for being a Chairman. One might as well assume that the African names are merely there for window dressing,” the memo notes. Hunting around for more justification to block this enterprise, he goes on, “I further notice that Standard Films Limited have hired the services of a European Film-maker from the U.K. Why could they

not use local talents such as Charles Powiss of Subukia Valley who produced Safari to Kenya Film? Anyway this is a high policy matter since we are the Government Licensing Agents.”

After the matter was discussed in policy-making circles for some time, the final nail to the coffin of the project is a hand written comment from the P.S to the Senior Information Officer Mr. Arthur Reuben who was in charge of issuing licenses and signed by the P.S Mr. Ithau. “No filming license should be issued until this is cleared.”

This was the most ambitious film production venture in Kenya at the time, and it had taken years to plan, coordinate and mobilize resources for. It was a venture that would have launched the local movie industry. As Absalom Mutere’s research had pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, reliance on powerful bureaucratic individuals for policy formulation can yield disastrous results. By the stroke of a pen, Arthur Ruben destroyed an enterprise that could have established a thriving movie industry early on and would have placed Kenya ahead of Nigeria and South Africa in African film production. As Absalom Mutere’s (1988: 1-16) research in policy had observed, leaving important decisions to the prejudices of bureaucrats can indeed be counter-productive.

#### *4.1.8 Potency of Mau Mau story in Kenyan Films*

There is no doubt that the Mau Mau story is the number one theme in Kenyan cinema even today more than sixty years after the holocaust. Most of the successful Hollywood films, although not directly hinged on the Mau Mau battle-front assaults, always have a Mau Mau sub-theme that spices up the story.

*The First Grader* film, shot as a coproduction with South Africa in 2006, would never have been shot if Maruge had not been a Mau Mau warrior. The spicy bit in the story that sold the project was Maruge’s CV. “He’s an old veteran in his eighties who wants to learn to read at this late stage of his life. He fought for the liberation of his country and now feels he must have an education so long denied<sup>39</sup>.” The Mau Mau bit of the story is the element that

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<sup>39</sup> Gold Crest Films *The First Grader* Production Notes Written By Ann Peacock, Produced by Justin Chadwick



keeps the story going with constant flashbacks of some of Maruge's experiences at the hands of the British.

At one time in class when Maruge is scolded for not sharpening his pencil, this evokes bitter memories of an incident, when a sharp pencil was thrust into his ears as torture by the British. This is dramatized in another flashback. Mau Mau is used as the thread that weaves together the incredible story of an octogenarian who has become a first grader.

Although the situation has changed since the end of the Moi era, several efforts to produce movies and even construct theatres highlighting the theme of liberation were anathema during the eras of Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was forced into exile for his involvement in the Kamiirithu Theatre that had delved into the 'sacred' area of Mau Mau and made peasants remember and sing the songs of sorrows and victories from that time. Wanjiru Kinyanjui (2015), one of the internationally recognized Kenyan movie producers, tried to produce a film related to the Mau Mau period and was made to give up the project because of the road blocks that were put in her way.

The Kenya government was still paying lip service to creating a film industry while at the same time frustrating entrepreneurs who endeavored to establish the same. In May 1969, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in his speech while opening a cinema theatre in Nairobi made a statement to the effect that the government was keen to launch a local film industry.

An already established local company enthusiastically responded to this pledge with an open letter to the minister pledging their support for the venture, and "congratulating him for his foresightedness." Mr. J.M. Mponda, the Managing Director of Kenya Pictures, a locally- registered company, stated in his congratulatory letter to the minister that "It is an open secret that this industry has brought fabulous wealth to foreigners who have manipulated our natural beauty and wealth for their own advantage through which we have lost a lot of wealth into the hands of foreigners."

In his ambitious venture, Mr. Mponda presented a proposal to embark on the production of a Kiswahili film with "sound financial support from government." Because the Kenyan

people were hungry for their own stories to be told in their languages, Mponda was certain that the venture would be a financial success. After the launch of the first film, he envisaged that more local productions would follow and the business would grow to such an extent that it would correct the trade imbalance between Kenya and overseas countries in the film business. The government for unexplained reasons didn't back this grandiose venture and it unfortunately didn't take off.

Even as government was talking of launching a movie industry, other Kenyans were engaged in actualizing the dream of real local stories featuring local actors, local situations and produced using Kiswahili, the declared national language.

#### *4.1.9 First Local Kiswahili Film “Mlevi”*

In 1968, a Kenyan of Indian extraction, Ragbir Singh, in collaboration with Kuljeet Pal produced the first Kenyan Kiswahili film, *Mlevi*,<sup>40</sup> starring the then popular television personalities Athumani Kipanga and Mzee Pembe. The two actors were the radio stars of those days and they were in every way an embodiment of the Kenyan performing artists.

Among them were younger men like Oliver Litondo<sup>41</sup> who was to emerge later as a Kenyan film star on the international cinema scene. The film itself aroused a lot of interest but curiously it didn't seem to get the backing and support it needed to break through in a nascent Kenyan movie industry.

According to the then Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Hon. Onyonka, the government assisted the private film company 'African Productions' in dubbing the film and providing other technical facilities.<sup>42</sup> When matters concerning poor remuneration of Kenyan actors in the film were raised in parliament, the minister claimed that there was nothing the government could do to safeguard the rights of the local actors.<sup>43</sup> “We were not concerned with the actors, actresses or their remuneration, let alone the ultimate sum fetched from the film. It is not possible for me to say therefore who participated in the film,

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<sup>40</sup> century-of-cinema-in-kenya <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000011893/>, accessed on 23/4/14

<sup>41</sup> Litondo-returns-with-international-accolades <http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/> accessed on 23/4/14

<sup>42</sup> Kenya National Assembly Official Record (Hansard) Nov 17 - Dec 18, 1970, accessed on 9/3/2015

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

what was their reward or whether that reward was adequate. There is nothing the ministry can do to ensure that these people who acted in the film are adequately rewarded in view of the above explanation.”

Ragbir, the producer of this movie was born in Kisumu and had worked in KBC as a cameraman. He followed up *Mlevi* with a Hindi feature, *Visna*, but he unfortunately died in a tragic road accident when he was on the verge of producing another Swahili feature, *Mrembo*. His death witnessed the burial of the only real local enterprise so far that had made a bold attempt to produce local content in Kiswahili for local consumption. With his death, what also died was the dream of a Kenyan film industry based on authentic local stories and one that could have also tapped into the Bollywood industry and market which were growing steadily at the time.

The matter of the exploitation of local artists during *Mlevi's* production would not be wished away because the same issue of remuneration was raised again in Parliament as question no. 1038<sup>44</sup> by a parliamentarian who wanted it put on record exactly how much money the movie *Mlevi* made, how much money the Kenya Film Corporation made and how much was paid to the actors and artists. Government again was adamant that they did not interfere with operations of private companies to find out how much they made and how much they paid out. Government insisted that if they revealed the payment to Kenya Film Corporation, they could jeopardize KFC's future negotiations because KFC was paid a commission on a case by-case basis and the figures could vary from 30%, 40%, or even 50%.

“These figures were kept secret by the Kenya Film Corporation, so that any deal concluded does not become a matter of public knowledge.”

This was an open admission that there were no structures in place to protect the interests of local artistes and crew who were engaged in local productions. For this matter to have come up severally over a one-year period in Parliament made it obvious that the local actors in this production must have been highly aggrieved from underpayment from a production that made money at the box office. It appears that so long as government had feathered its own

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<sup>44</sup> Kenya National Assembly Official Record (Hansard) Oct 26 - Dec 10, 1971,

nest through KFCp, they were not concerned with the interests of local artisans. If government had been keen they'd have advised on appointing a negotiating agent, or recommended that the actors create an actors' guild to undertake negotiations on their behalf as it happens in other countries. Yet this is the same government that was claiming to be on the frontline of starting a Kenyan movie industry. This lack of structures protecting the interests of local artists, accompanied by obdurate lethargy in the local film industry persisted for many years. When a survey was carried out in 2008 to find out how much film contributed to the Kenyan economy, "the survey found that documentation of information on the film industry in Kenya as a whole has not been done in a consistent manner."<sup>45</sup>

In hindsight, it would seem that the local Kenyan film started off impressively. Very few African countries had launched film productions in local languages. But Ragbir had proved to Kenyans that film-making was feasible as a business and there was a lot of local interest in well produced local content.

According to Lenny Juma who has been in the movie industry since the 1970s, failure to protect local artistes from overt exploitation by foreign and local movie makers has never been addressed and local artists have continued to languish in poverty even when they have glittering CVs of Hollywood movie appearances. Yet the same celebrated stars can't put food on the table. A case in point is the late Joseph Olita who died a pauper in 2014, in spite of him being the lead performer in *The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin*, a biographical film produced in 1981 on Idi Amin directed by Sharad Patel. *The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* detailed the controversial actions and atrocities blamed on the former dictator of Uganda after his violent rise to power in 1971 up until his overthrow in 1979. The film won five awards at the Las

Vegas International Film Festival, including the Best Actor award.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4.1.10 Kenyan Film between 1980s and 1990s.

The term 'film' after the entry of video filming became enveloped in ambiguity. Prior to the entry of video in Kenya in the 1980s, all types of movies, be they short films,

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<sup>45</sup> [http://s3.amazonaws.com/zanran\\_storage/www.kenyafilmcommission.com/ContentPages/2439382878.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/zanran_storage/www.kenyafilmcommission.com/ContentPages/2439382878.pdf), accessed on 5/3/2015

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.travelhemispheres.com/tours/idi-amin-dada-actor-succumbs-to-death-in-the-rise-and-fall-of-idi-amin-film.html>

documentaries or full-length feature films, were shot on celluloid which was technically very demanding, slow and expensive compared to video which is much cheaper and which opened the doors for people who could not afford to film on celluloid but wanted to become film-makers anyway. According to Devin Forbes (2013), it would cost you \$36,000 to shoot 100 minutes on 35mm film stock but for a production using a digital video camera that records onto full-sized DV tape, a production following the same shooting ratio would need a tape stock budget of \$240. The costs are incomparable especially in a business set up. The other advantage with video is the instantaneity of the results. While with film stock you have to wait for laboratory results to view your rushes, video gives you the image instantaneously as you shoot.

It is ironic that after Kenya having laid out the film laboratory infrastructures and the human resource base for a local film industry to take off, the Kenyan film scene got dimmer. The Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC) had, from the mid-1970s, started to train producers who were establishing themselves in the market and the coveted film processing labs had been created and equipped with German aid, but the country was still far from ready to launch a film industry.

It's instructive to note that the film laboratories were being established at KIMC when the celluloid film market was already under threat by the cheaper video technology. Although there's no evidence to accuse the Germans of dumping obsolete technology in Kenya, it was nonetheless quite common between North and South with the advent of the digital age. The Kenya government should have sought better advice on the sustainability of the celluloid investment at the time, since the technology was already starting to be phased out elsewhere. Ironically, most of the producers and editors, who as film students at KIMC had shot their training films in celluloid, could not afford to shoot their first films as independent producers on celluloid. They had to learn video skills after training while operating in the market.

According to Wanjiru Ciira (1985: 13), in the early 1980s there was a raging debate on whether Kenya was ready to go into film production or not. It appears that in less than two decades, the impact of *Mlevi* had been completely forgotten. The debate on the feasibility of a local film industry started during the third Kenya Film Exhibitors Conference in Nairobi in August 1985 which discussed among other things the challenges of local film

production and the impact of importation of video film on Kenya's film industry. Some of the statements were quite startling because members of the same government were contradicting each other. It's amazing that they couldn't see that the video they were worried about could have provided the solution to the problem they were discussing. The literature review of the Nigerian industry in chapter two showed how quickly and effectively video was embraced in Nigeria to provide a solution to the challenges of basing a local film industry on the cumbersome celluloid film format.

Nyoike Njoroge (1985), the General Manager of Kenya Film Corporation had stated that "Kenya is not ready to make films." Noah Katana Ngala, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, contradicted Nyoike and asserted that, "Like other African countries, we have to break into this area of the film industry." This was a rather baffling motivation. 'Kenya must start producing films not because they were ready' and really wanted to, but because Government was influenced by the herd instinct, not wanting to be left behind by other African countries. Meanwhile, no one bothered to reflect back to the 1968 success of *Mlevi* which was an unfortunate oversight.

In August 1985, Sharad Patel, producer/director of the Film Corporation of Kenya stated, "Film is a very risky and very costly business, and presently, all the odds are against the industry....in any case, cinemas in Kenya are very few, (no more than 40) today to justify the production of Swahili or for that matter, English films with local themes." No sooner had he said this than he was contradicted by Sao Gamba, production manager at Kenya Film Corporation in August 1985 who said, "It is therefore proper that Kenya should pull up its socks and enter into cinema production."

The same Arthur Ruben who in 1969 blocked Standard Film Ltd from producing a Mau Mau film, claiming the Kenyatta government was better placed to produce the film, was by this time chairman of the Kenya Film Corporation and wondering "...-why the corporation had lagged behind in film production!" The Sao Gamba and Arthur Ruben team were drumming up support so that they could be cleared to produce the first government sponsored production, *Kolormask*, which they finally did against all the advice, and it was a box office disaster. It was such a big box office flop that it was the first and last government-sponsored production by Kenya Film Corporation.

The Kenya of 1985 had changed tremendously from the Kenya of the 1960s and 70s. A cloud of political rumblings had settled over Kenya in late 1978 with the death of Jomo Kenyatta and the coming to power of Daniel arap Moi. For the next 24 years, there was very little that could be done in the creative industries.

The creative people, including some university professors, were turned into court poets, choreographing songs for Moi and praising him as a new deity. The cloud didn't dissipate until after December 2002 when Mwai Kibaki won the national election and took over the reins of government after the unforgettable 24 years of Moi's rule.

It is ironic that during this dark political period, Hollywood films set in Kenya literally stole the show internationally. In terms of Hollywood movies shot in Kenya, the 1980s stand out as by far the most successful period for Kenya cinema made by foreign crews. Among the successes, *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle* won great acclaim in the 1980s and was one of the first foreign movies to be shot entirely on location in Kenya. According to the KFC website,<sup>47</sup> the highly acclaimed films set (and shot) in Kenya include Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*

(1985), starring Robert Redford and Meryl Streep and directed by Sidney Pollack; *Flame trees of Thika* (1981); *In the Shadow of Kilimanjaro* (1986); *White Mischief* (1987), and *The Happy Valley* (1987) among a galaxy of highly profitable movies shot in Kenya. In 1989, Kenya hosted the filming Bob Rafelson's historical drama *Mountains of the Moon*. This is the epic story of the expedition of Richard Burton's and Lt. John Speke when they 'discovered' the source of the Nile. The film tells the story of their meeting and friendship that emerged amidst hardship, but then dissolved after their journey. The film which was shot in diverse locations, including Hell's Gate, Lamu, and Lake Turkana showed Kenya at its best. After the film, Kenya received frequent visits for its epic location from several Hollywood film-makers who produced blockbuster hits based in part on the beautiful backdrops that Kenya provided.

The 1980s were also a very eventful time in Kenyan cinema history and there was heightened interest to invest and shoot in Kenya by divergent interest groups. The most fascinating and most successful of the stories shot locally was the *Rise and Fall of Idi Amin*

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<sup>47</sup> Kenya Film Commission website, <http://www.kenyafilmcommission.com/>, accessed on 5/7/2015

by Sharad Patel in 1981. The film was a biographical account of Amin's life directed by Sharad Patel and starring Joseph Olita in the title role.<sup>48</sup>

While Idi Amin Dada terrorized Uganda with his barbaric, eight-year despotic rule, he portrayed himself to the world at large as a fat buffoon dressed up in military garb. A horrifying historical docudrama featuring Amin's rise to power through a military coup as well as his killing of close to half a million people which he then fed to the river Nile crocodiles was an equally shocking and disturbing film.

Amin's despotic rule comes to an end as abruptly as he got into it. In 1979, in one of his comical rejoinders, he tells the international press in a live feed that Tanzanian soldiers are threatening to invade Uganda to reinstall Milton Obote to power. He endeavors to move his soldiers to the Tanzanian border to deter the invasion. But this turns out to be the goof of his life and the turning point in the pulsating narrative. To Amin's shock and utter disbelief, Tanzania sends a highly efficient army that literally overruns Amin's ragtag militia and Amin scampers into hiding in Saudi Arabia to escape further humiliation, and Uganda, in almost 'Deus ex machina' fashion is rid of the world's most notorious dictator.

According to Rachel Dianga (2013: 5), the films made in Kenya before 1980 had very little impact on local audiences since they were not publicly shown in local movie theatres. The production and release of *Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* opened a new chapter in Kenyan film culture.

Very few indigenous Kenyans benefited from this enterprise except for the minor support roles for which Kenyan artists were hired and paid a pittance just the same way it had happened in 1968 with *Mlevi*,<sup>49</sup> when local stars followed up the theft of their fees by unscrupulous producers for year without success. The government by the early 1970s had yet to create a policy to address the remuneration issue.

The beneficiaries of the foreign productions in Kenya include naturalized expatriates like Charles Simpson, one of the pioneers who lays claim to helping found the Kenya film

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<sup>48</sup> This researcher played a role a minister in Idi Amin's government but the scene in which he appeared didn't make it to the final edit and release copy.

<sup>49</sup> brief-history-of-film-in-kenya.html <http://filmkenya.blogspot.co.ke/2011/10/>, accessed 18/9/2015



industry and is the founder of Film Studios Kenya. According to Filmbiz Africa (Jan. 2012: 26-27), Simpson who was born in Scotland came to Kenya in 1956 as a young engineer and was hired to work for the colonial government. He was among the lot that set up the Kenya Broadcasting Service which was established in 1959, which later changed its name to Kenya Broadcasting Corporation after independence in 1963.

Charles Simpson quit formal employment and founded Film Studios Kenya Ltd., which has been involved in hundreds of local and international films ever since. For nearly 30 years Film Studios have provided lights, cameras, stages, grips and studios for international and Kenyan films, TV productions, commercials and game shows for the domestic and international markets. According to Film Biz Africa Magazine (2011:26), Film Studios have collectively been involved in productions in Kenya, which have won a staggering 12 Academy Awards, more than all the African countries put together. Film Studios have been providing technical assistance to all film producers; it's also been associated with all the movies shot in Kenya that have been nominated for academy awards. But the films that Film Studios boast about most are those that tell the story of the colonizer and not the story of the indigenous Kenyan.

#### **4.2 Rationale for Policy Formulation**

For any formal business enterprise to be established and grow, there must be established policies and institutional structures that enable to monitor its growth from start up all the way to its maturity. According to Mayer & Thompson (1982: 2), "A policy is a declaration that defines the intention of a community, organization or government's goals and priorities. Policies outline the role, rules and procedures. They create a framework within which the administration and staff can perform their assigned duties." Public policies are utilitarian and are aimed at the whole population or at specific, targeted groups, and can be created by all levels of government. Policies can also be created by institutions such as media houses, media owners' associations, professional groups of media workers etc. Public policies are made through a process involving citizens, government officials and elected officials who ideally work together to set an agenda for the common good.

According to Mayer & Thompson (ibid p.2) policies have some important functions which are fundamental to the establishment and operationalization of organizations. They reflect

the ideology and values of an organization or institution. They also act as the principles that guide action and they are planning tools for goal setting and service delivery. Policies also according to Mayer & Thompson (ibid), provide the terms of reference for setting programme priorities and guiding programme development. They help set roles and delimit or define areas within the organization's role. Another crucial characteristic is that they house the rules and regulations and provide guidance for routine, unique and controversial decisions. Another crucial role is that policies provide the justification for and the sanctioning of resource allocations (e.g., budget, staff time). They also provide a tool to assist in evaluating progress and in providing accountability to all beneficiaries of their formulation.

According to D. Linda Garcia (2001) in the case of communication policy in developed countries, the effects are likely to be especially far reaching, because communication is the basis for all interactions, and one of the means for organizing society. Given the central role of communications, policy making in this area is generally coupled to other important policy areas. For example, political concerns about freedom of speech and the free flow of information may easily come into conflict with defense related concerns as is often the case globally. On the other hand, in cases involving pornography or violent media content, concerns about cultural norms and values must be balanced against first amendment rights.

Garcia goes on to argue that in crafting communication policy, decision-makers must also be sensitive to the importance of three interrelated sectors of the economy—transportation, communication, and information. Mirroring the role of communications in society, these industries are significant not just because of their contribution to trade and gross national product but to other national needs as well.

Consideration needs to be given not only to the impact of policy on these key industry sectors, but also on the competitive relationships among communication and information related industries. When industry players are able to translate their economic power into political leverage—as is often the case—the problem of sorting out these relationships is greatly compounded. Because political leverage is often distributed unevenly, some industry players are likely to be favored over others, with little regard for broader public policy goals.

According to Garcia (ibid), technology also complicates matters greatly. Because communication is both dependent on, as well as mediated by, a technology-based infrastructure, decision-makers have to create communication policies with technologies and their distinct characteristics and capabilities in mind lest they come to be hit by technological obsolescence or related technological mishaps. Technologies, however, are very difficult to fathom. Not only are technologies highly complex; they are constantly changing. Crafting sound communication policies, therefore, requires considerable vision as well as technical expertise. This awareness about care in formulation of policies on communication don't appear to obtain especially when one looks at how policy decisions were made in Kenya in both the colonial and the post-colonial epochs. In the mid-1970s for example when video as a technology had already indicated signs that it would rival celluloid as a technology to produce movies, the Kenya government went on to push for an investment in celluloid laboratories to process films at KIMC which before too long became impossible to sustain and they became obsolete.

#### *4.2.1 Past Studies of Communication Policies in Kenya.*

The first study on Communication policy in Kenya was carried out by Peter Mwaura (1980) sponsored by UNESCO. The study in its historical overview observes that the initial contacts between the British and African tribes were peaceful or governed by, according to Peter Mwaura 1980:11-16), 'treaties of friendship' or policies of live and let live. Mwaura (ibid) notes that the British later resorted to drastic measures to subjugate the African people in what was euphemistically called 'wars of pacification' in which the British gun was pitted against the African arrows and spears.<sup>50</sup> With the British victory, the treaties of friendship changed to *Pax Britannica*, and Kenya became a colony in 1920.

With the colony came a more formalized structured administration through a colonial governor at the top, district officers, chiefs and headmen at the local level. The relationship

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<sup>50</sup> As I will point out later, the same gun was pitted against the Kenyan freedom fighters in 1952, when they couldn't stand colonial domination any more. The British resorted to the most brutish repression ever experienced in a liberation struggle.

changed to a 'ruler and ruled', master and servant relationship, in which communication was often a one-way affair. With the coming of more white settlers and missionaries in to the country, Kenya became for all practical purposes, 'a white man's country.' According to Mwaura (ibid), a third dimension was introduced into the country's communications systems as it was used to propagate British values and culture. According to this study, the Africans were left to their own devices and the country's communication media were used for the information and entertainment of the increasing white settler community. With time however, the Africans and Asians started agitating for their political rights using the same media that the settler communities were using.

Another study carried out by Absalom Mutere (1988: 48-54), claims that communication policies were not seen as a priority by the Kenyan government. Mutere's observation is disturbing because communication is the oil that should lubricate the government machinery in all its operations and failure to prioritize communication translates to failing to create effective development strategies.

Mutere goes on to reveal that, "the only mention of communications as a public policy issue in Kenya's current five year National Development Plan relates to the establishment of basic infrastructural facilities throughout the country. This approach to the communications issue also typifies previous development plans and suggests problems inherent in the way the country has chosen to only address one dimension of a multifaceted area of national development. Relatively speaking, the communication issue is at present hardly anywhere to be seen on the institutional agenda. As such the first prerequisite for communication policy making is yet to be met." Looking at communication policies basically as need to provide infrastructure is indicative of how limited the governments focus was as it relates to both the role of communication in development and need for elaborate policies to drive the same.

Another study carried out 20 years later in 2008 reveals the impact of the neglect to create a policy regime that can address communication problems adequately. The study by Peter Mbeke Oriare (2007) notes that "The growth and development of the mass media and communication has been slow, stunted, haphazard and often inconsistent with public and investor expectations over the years because of the disabling legal and policy environment."

#### *4.2.2 Challenges to Effective Policy Formulation*

Absalom Mutere's study on communication policy-making (ibid), identified some of the key challenges in effective policy formulation. One of them relates to the fact that "official policy makers are legislators, executives, administrators and the judiciary." According to different political systems, they will have different levels of influence. In Kenya, the executive is the decisive policy maker. It may be questioned however whether communication policy making can be taken seriously if left to one powerful figure and his interests. In the case of setting up the Kenyan film industry in one of the biggest investment ventures of the time, an enterprise to set up an elaborately designed film company was stopped by a single individual who didn't bother to consider the economic, cultural and political consequences of his action.

Mutere (ibid), in this research also observes that where the administrative agencies initiate policy, usually institutional, sectoral and bureaucratic interests determine this policy more than substantive considerations. He further notes that most lawmakers are poorly equipped to deal meaningfully with communication questions, since these are inherently interdisciplinary, technically complex and socially sensitive. This is an important point to note when interrogating policies because then one needs to also pay close attention to who was behind the policy making other than just looking at the policy and its effects.

Kenya's policy-making has also been prone to international influence which at times puts obstacles in the way if the interests of benefactors are threatened by local policies. Powerful donor countries such as USA and UK and institutions such as the World Bank and IMF wield a lot of power in policy formulations in countries dependent on their donor funds for development.

In Kenya cinema's growth for example, M.P.E.A.A., America's biggest cinema lobby group determined to a large extent whether Kenya's cinema operating policies would work or not when Kenya was dependent on their movies in the 1960s and wanted to establish its own local production capacity. For over one year, the Kenyanisation policy of the movie industry was held at abeyance by the might of the American movie industry.

Other studies have observed a glaring error in policy formulation of lumping film alongside other information-gathering media under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which went on for over 50 years from 1963 independence to 2013. During the colonial era, colonial governments deliberately put film in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for the sole purpose of film being used merely as a tool for information dissemination rather than as a tool for cultural revival. After independence the Kenyan government in their shallow outlook on film failed to recognize film as a tool of cultural resuscitation which could conserve local traditions and culture and help restore the African dignity that was eroded by the years of colonialism.

Effective policy changes may also be brought about by policy makers reacting too slowly to global trends and technological innovations which dictate in the long run how an industry will work. Some trends like digital migration are dictated from the broader global environment and failure to adopt the policies or a slow uptake will be detrimental to the local industry players.

#### *4.2.3 Legal and Policy Frameworks during the Colonial Era*

The legal, regulatory and policy framework governing media during the colonial era was closely tied to the political and economic interests of the colonial government and white settler communities. Peter Mwaura's study (1980) corroborates this.

Even though the British colonialists who ruled over Kenya after it was declared a colony in 1920 were masquerading as benefactors who were on a noble mission to civilize the savage Africans, their main motive was to exploit all the resources they could within the shortest possible time and repatriate the same to their motherland even as they destroyed the cultural roots of the Africans.

This intent to plunder informed the legal, regulatory and policy framework governing media during the colonial era because it was closely tied to the political and economic interests of the colonial government and white settler communities.<sup>51</sup> Later government policies as we

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<sup>51</sup> Oriare Mbeke, *ibid.*

will learn also created policies to serve the interests of the powers that be and not necessarily the public interest.

After the East Africa protectorate became a colony in the 1920s, operational policies had to change now that permanent settlement was inevitable. The Kenyan colonization as in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) was complicated by a desire of the colonialist not just to conquer for exploitation of resources on the short term, but to take over the land as their own for the foreseeable future. The settlements in these three countries were significantly different from other British colonies in Africa according to Caroline Elkin (2005). The whites were to provide the economic backbone to provide wealth that would repay earlier investments like the building of the railways and other infrastructure.

Radio is said to have been established as a broadcast medium in both Europe and USA in 1922. According to Peter Mwaura (ibid), five years down the line, Kenya had a transmission station in 1927 with advent of the East African Broadcasting Corporation (EABC) which relayed BBC news to the white settlers and by so doing kept them in constant contact with home. The Broadcasts targeted the white settlers who monitored news from home and other parts of the world to feel connected to their motherland. The establishment of this broadcast facility was to encourage more settlement as the settlers would feel connected to the UK.

The first radio broadcasts targeting Africans came during the World War II to inform parents and relatives of African soldiers what was happening at the war front. English broadcasts continued until the beginning of the war when Asian and African programmes were introduced. In 1953, the first broadcast service was created for Africans. African Broadcasting Services (ABS) carried programmes in Swahili, Dholuo, Kikuyu, Kinandi, Kiluhya, Kikamba and Arabic

In 1954 a commission was set up by the colonial government to look into the future of broadcasting in Kenya. As a result of the recommendations of that commission, Kenya Broadcasting Services (KBS) was established in 1959 and regional stations were set up in Mombasa (Sauti ya Mvita), Nyeri (Mount Kenya Station) and Kisumu Station in Nyanza (at the time comprising the current Western Province and Kericho Districts.)

#### *4.2.4 Moral Panic over Shielding White Images of Impropriety from Black Viewers*

After cinema started being shown in the colonies through mobile cinema, the empire was struck by moral panic due to what the films were revealing about the white society. A moral panic is “an intense feeling expressed in a population about an issue deemed to be a shocking display of impropriety.” A moral panic is partly caused by the media, especially when media exposes portrayals which are deemed injurious to a carefully crafted public image. According to Rob Skinner (2001), following a virtual halt in British film production in late 1924, an ‘Alliance of Patriots, Producers and the Federation of British Industry’ began to press the British government to intervene to protect the film industry from the Hollywood onslaught which was threatening to swallow up the British cinema.

As part of their campaign, the ‘films question’ was placed on the agenda of the 1926 Imperial Conference which was the seventh Imperial Conference, and brought together prime ministers of the dominions of the British Empire and held in London from 19 October to 22 November 1926. The cinema, it was argued on the eve of the conference, affected the British empire in various ways.

As a ‘medium possessing a psychological mission,’ the cinema had promoted American products through a form of ‘unconscious’ propaganda. The potential of the imperial market for the British film industry could not be ignored given its wide expanse, and the Conference needed to construct a policy that would ‘shake off or relax the American stranglehold’ and ‘supply British pictures for British people which will win a market on their merits within the Empire and secure a share of foreign policy.

Although the economic aspects of cinema and film distribution were the main concerns of the debate, two ‘subsidiary points’ also emerged. First, ‘instructional’ films could be a powerful method of spreading knowledge of the ‘conditions and resources’ of empire. Secondly and more urgently, film was exposing to the colonial natives to some unsavory aspects of the white communities which was undesirable for them to see. Film censorship became a most urgent concern over films ‘of such a nature as to give the native races very unfavorable impressions as to the characteristics and habits of the white races.’



As Rosalind Smyth notes, concerns over commercial domination and projection of an ‘unsavory’ image of Europeans were combined in what ‘was seen as a threat to the British imperium,’ a threat that was most vociferously proclaimed by Sir Hesketh Bell, ex-governor in Northern Nigeria and Uganda.

A ‘moral panic’ from ‘revealing’ films became a major concern. The British colonialists were quite unhappy with films which were exposing their debauchery and unmasking the masquerade of the British being paragons of virtue.

Films in the Western cinema auteur tradition thrived by showing man at his worst moments and exposing lewd and unbecoming behavior, especially sexual behavior, and the British missionaries couldn’t stand the naked truth being shown to the Africans. In a letter published in the Times of London in October 1926, Bell deplored films showing ‘incidents of the most sensational nature, in which crime of every category, performed by white actors were depicted, which he thought provoked ‘disrespect’ among colonized peoples.”

There was, however, a greater danger, “The deplorable antics of white women in a state of almost complete nudity and general immodesty are all calculated to have a shocking and dangerous effect on colored youths and men in the earliest stages of culture who have hitherto been led to consider the white man’s wife and daughters as patterns of purity and virtue.” Crime was bad enough, but what cut to the core was the challenge presented by a sexualized white female to the ‘natural’ order of colonial society.

What was good for the goose was definitely not good for the gander. Film was unmasking the veneer mythology of white virtue that the colonial administration with the help of the church was propagating. Film was revealing to the colonized that after all, the white man wasn’t the angel he was pretending to be. This revelation had to be stopped.

What was required according to Bell was strict censorship, one that took account of the difference between what he called the ‘strong meat’ deemed palatable for white cinema audiences and the special sensitivities of ‘primitive people of colour.’ Bell recommended creating two versions of films, one suitable for Western audiences, and another one for colonial audiences. How this barrier was going to be sustained isn’t clear.

Bell went as far as noting the suitability and differences between British films and 'foreign,' US films. According to Russell (ibid), censorship in the colonies, grounded as it was in racial assumptions and couched in terms of white 'responsibility,' was also a way of providing a "much-needed degree of encouragement and protection to the fledgling British film industry. The broad consensus of opinion among leading church and missionary figures seemed to be in agreement with Bell's position, that a 'very great watchfulness' over films shown to African audiences was required to avert the dangers they posed to the susceptibilities of the native people."

So as to come up with a broad policy applicable to all the colonies, some colonial administrations advocated segregation, not only in terms of cinema exhibition, but also with regard to censorship of film content.

According to Russell (ibid), a dual standard of censorship was suggested by the Kenyan Government's Select Committee on Film Censorship, which concluded in its report not only that "a clear division should be instituted between the presentation of films to Africans and to members of other races", but that Africans were not "in a position to understand or appreciate the European or American environment depicted in films." European children, however, were believed to be able to understand such scenes, which meant that it was possible for European children to "attend the exhibition of a film not readily intelligible to an African adult."

The committee came to the remarkable conclusion that, although it proposed a special certificate for films suitable for African audiences, a separate certificate for European children was unnecessary because most went to the cinema with their parents, who were "therefore in the best position to judge the fitness of a film." This policy somehow was in conflict with how the film business itself is run.

Film becomes profitable by maximizing on the greatest number of viewers at one box office. The profits soar with the number of audiences who can view from one screening. Business zeal does not discriminate whether the profits come from black or white audiences, but political interests in this case interfered with business rationale. But the morality of the cinema industry is the financial bottom-line not spiritual morality. In the urbanized settings where huge investments had to be made in constructing cinema theatres

complete with comfortable seats, air conditioning, and sound proofing, barring audiences from racial considerations and failing to fill theatres to their capacities were a huge price to pay for political bigotry's sake. Segregating audiences meant that the same films or altered versions of the same film had to be shown twice resulting in doubling the projection cost for no economic gain. Projecting the film twice also meant wearing down both the projector and the film reel sprockets which are very prone to wear and tear from repeated playing.

#### *4.2.5 Propaganda Policy to Quell Mau Mau Uprising*

The Mau Mau war that erupted in 1952 forced the British government towards the inevitable commitment to grant Kenya its independence, but it also influenced colonial laws and policy towards the media in Kenya. According to David Makali (2004), the authoritarian colonial government's dominant perception of the Press was always that of a necessary evil that deserved close supervision and control, especially in matters pertaining to the Africans.

The breakout of the Mau Mau war and the Declaration of Emergency in 1952 gave the colonial government the excuse to ban all indigenous publications and to intensify propaganda against the nationalist movement. The colonial government strictly controlled and censored radio transmission which had started in Limuru in 1927.

The fairness doctrine, which entails looking at contentious issues from the two combatants' point of view meant nothing to the state-sponsored radio station as it heightened propaganda against the Mau Mau. The radio trivialized the nationalist ideas while closing their eyes to human rights abuses by the colonial state.

According to Karimi Joseph E. (2013: 75), the Mau Mau insurgency that erupted in 1952 had been simmering for some time without the colonial government's knowledge and in their ignorance, the British colonial government assumed that it was just a small matter that would be dealt with quickly. They realized too late that they had been sleeping on the job and had not fully realized the aversion and resentment the Kenyans, and especially the Kikuyus, had to denial of their rights, their freedom and the stealing of their ancestral land. Quelling the uprising was a gigantic embarrassment for the might of the British Empire, pitted against determined but poorly armed peasants who waged a war for over five years

instead of the assumed three months. Besides bringing in reinforcements of troops from Britain and hordes of bombing artillery from the Royal Air Force which had performed quite gallantly in the Second World War, the British had to use all available means, especially local and international propaganda to quell the uprising.

Faced by an insurgency that proved impossible to stamp out in a hurry, propaganda became a key strategy both internally, between the fighters and their supporters so as to break the backs of the rebels and dislodge them from the collaborators, and externally to hoodwink the international community about what was really going on in the colony and which was proving a great international embarrassment to the Queen and the British Empire as a whole. Cinema became an invaluable tool in this enterprise in a propaganda technique referred to by experts as *Ad hominem*.<sup>52</sup>

There have been several researches done in this area and there's general consensus that the British colonial government's use of propaganda played a key role in its suppression of the Mau Mau rebellion. The government used propaganda to justify the repression that was being used against the Mau Mau and turn national and international attention away from other political issues. One of the key studies was David Anderson's *Feature: Film and History in*

*Africa, Mau Mau at the Movies: Contemporary Representations of an Anti-Colonial War*.<sup>53</sup>

Governor Evelyn Baring and his administration established the 'African Information Service'<sup>54</sup> that was in charge of developing and distributing the propaganda through film, print, and radio mediums. The propaganda onslaught was critically important locally and internationally to salvage and win Britain's bitterest and potentially most humiliating decolonization war.

Locally, the colonial government was anxious to put a wedge between the Mau Mau and the communities that had succumbed to their rule. More importantly, they had to isolate the

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<sup>52</sup> A Latin phrase that has come to mean attacking one's opponent, as opposed to attacking their arguments.

<sup>53</sup> *Film And History In Africa, Mau Mau at the Movies: Contemporary Representations of an Anti-Colonial War* South African Historical Journal, Volume 48, Issue 1, 2003 pages 71-89, Published online: 14 Jan 2009, accessed on 13/6/2014

<sup>54</sup> *The Role of Propaganda in the British Response to the Mau Mau Rebellion* <http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/urc/2014/internationalstudies/9/>, accessed on 8/9/2014

Kikuyu from the other tribes who were seen as having no opposition to colonial rule. This was done through mobile cinema vans that circulated throughout the country. If they didn't isolate the Kikuyus soon enough, the entire country would have been ungovernable.

Internationally, it was necessary to cover up the gross violations of human rights and the crimes against humanity that Britain was committing in Kenya even before the ink that had been used to sign the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights had dried. Many of the articles of the declaration were being grossly violated including Article One which categorically stated, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."<sup>55</sup> Britain, coming from winning the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War against fascism alongside the USA was posing as an exemplary world leader, and she took a leading role in solemnizing the General Assembly of the United Nations to proclaim the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society recognize the role of inalienable human rights.

Only four years down the line, none of the thirty articles of the lofty 'inalienable human rights' was being upheld in colonial Kenya as Britain desperately tried to use all means possible to stifle the Kenyans' fight for their rights, their land and their freedom. An interesting point to observe is that as the world was adopting these humanitarian principles, it closed its eyes when South Africa chose to close its doors to the rest of the world and establish apartheid which was a gross violation of human rights and a declaration that she was headed towards the direction the rest of the world was coming from.

In Kenya, the atrocities that Britain was committing were illegal at the time under British and colonial law<sup>56</sup> and even more importantly under international law. In Kenya and Malaysia, the government went to great lengths to conceal the truth about how the liberation conflicts were being fought.

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<sup>55</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

[http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf), accessed on 18/9/2015

<sup>56</sup> A Witness to Britain War Crimes in Kenya, <http://ciceromagazine.com/interviews/huw-bennett-on-the-britishcoin-experience-in-kenya/> September 11, 2014, accessed on 23/6/2015

According to Michael Paris (2002), given the close connections that had always existed between British governments and the film industry, films produced at this time “offered contemporary audiences a more or less officially-sanctioned view of decolonization and a channel through which audiences could negotiate the loss of empire.”

Resorting to film for propaganda wasn't a new venture. According to Michael Paris (ibid), even in the early days of its existence, British cinema had been a significant channel for the propaganda of empire. Many of the earliest empire films were ‘simplistic adventure stories reflecting heroic moments in the empire story.’ These apparently innocuous stories, together with newsreels celebrating all manner of imperial occasions, “promoted the imperial idea, glorified the qualities of colonial administrators and soldiers, and emphasized the benefits of British rule for subject peoples.”

Paris argues that while these films emerged spontaneously from the deeply held imperialist convictions of the filmmakers, the First World War ensured that such material became “part of a government sponsored propaganda campaign. And because the British war effort depended so heavily upon the dominions and colonies, the cinema of empire became even more pervasive.” According to Paris (ibid), The First World War had considerable impact on the film industry and convinced filmmakers that patriotism was profitable, and government that the cinema was a powerful ally that would help shape public opinion. ‘The Great War’ as it is sometimes called was the first to be fought before the motion picture camera. According to Stuart Klawans (2000), during the war in the field, reconnaissance became airborne and cinematic while at home, propaganda leapt from the page to the screen.

#### *4.2.6 Films Reinforce Official Policy*

Until the 1960s, British films both represented and reinforced official policy. According to Paris (ibid), the ‘empire genre’ was popular in the inter-war period and reached its climax with the successful lavish epics of Alexander Korda like ‘Sanders of the River,’ (in which the first President of Kenya Jomo Kenyatta played a non-speaking role of a tribal chief). According to David Anderson (ibid), prior to resorting to film use to quell the Mau Mau

rebellion in Kenya, the British had just done a similar job in Malaysia only a few years earlier where the tactics had worked, and the memories were still fresh in their mind

Although an unpalatable reality of the inevitable was sinking in that the British Dominion would one day finally crumble, the African colonies were a different matter altogether. According to Paris (ibid), it was generally assumed that it would be many years before the “children” would be ready to assume responsibility for their own affairs. The British still had many decades, if not centuries, of “moral duty” to nurture the children into maturity. Otherwise, it was unthinkable to grant such a dangerous thing as self-rule to malformed beings.

Nevertheless, the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War had introduced new attitudes to the Africans who had been on the frontline in Burma and elsewhere, and the ‘notion of colonial rule as a partnership between governor and governed’ began to be reflected in the way in which Africa was represented in British cinema, according to Paris (ibid). In any case, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been signed after the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war and the world had set itself on a new trajectory. Most cinematic representations of colonial Africa were concerned to justify the British presence – to make clear that Britons were in Africa as ‘benefactors’ and not ‘exploiters.’ “The Colonial Film Unit was created and given the mandate to perpetuate this mythical perception. This was a subtle and well thought out move and it used film to exploit its persuasive power to address an emerging dilemma. This is reminiscent of the environmental adaptations of the chameleon which changes colour with a new environment.”

Besides perpetuating the myth of British benevolence, another even more demanding problem arose with the Mau Mau uprising and more propaganda became inevitable. According to David Anderson (ibid), some of the propaganda emanated from the office of Information in Nairobi. Mau Mau was portrayed ‘not as the product of frustrated legitimate nationalist aspiration against colonial oppression, but as an atavistic, barbaric, anti-European and anti-Christian sect, which used anarchic terror and intimidation to halt the Christianization and modernization of Kenyan society. Mau Mau was made to be “backward looking, primitive and savage, and the brutality of Mau Mau attacks was presented as evidence of this assumption.”

Films created for this purpose achieved the representation very vividly, especially in the three movies that were produced in Britain and Hollywood for this purpose that include “*Simba*” (1955),” “*Safari (1956)*” and “*Something of Value (1957)*.” The greatest black film actors of those days including Sidney Poitier came to act in Kenya. Sidney Poitier later on went on to win an Oscar. I will review ‘*Simba*’ fully from a postcolonial theory perspective to critically examine the issues, the production style and the representation that was done in the movie to prejudice the world against the evils of Mau Mau.

According to the available documents at Kenya National Archives and Data Services (KNADS),<sup>57</sup> the propaganda machinery had been very strategically designed incorporating all manner of media including specially designed films and leaflets which were circulated and dropped on the population by planes in Central Kenya, radio announcements and vernacular papers with propaganda stories. There were also constant speeches from the Minister for Broadcast Affairs from which other messages would be made and distributed. Joseph Karimi (2013: 251), makes an incredible submission that Dedan Kimathi was finally arrested the morning after he had attended a film showing the previous night that depicted the Mau Mau in very negative light. “In the film the Mau Mau are presented as evil, treacherous and bloodthirsty hooligans who were waging a misguided war. That was purposely meant to play on the psyche of the audience to support the government efforts to end the war and harness the peace.”

Although this was meant to tarnish the image of the freedom fighters and put a wedge between them and the villagers, according to Karimi J. (ibid) the films always had a boomerang effect and made the people deride the colonial government even more and add to the admiration of the freedom fighters. According to Karimi (ibid), Kimathi used to make his way to the villages at night to watch the movies and make his way into the Aberdares forest before the morning light.

According to David Anderson (ibid), like most wars, Mau Mau was as much about propaganda as it was about reality. The Colonial Office used very strong language to describe the Mau Mau as “dark,” “evil,” “foul,” “secretive,” and “terrorists.” The colonial

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Article on file no. KNA, WC/CM/1/4, Surrender Propaganda Campaign 2 June 1955



forces, as opposed to Mau Mau, were "white" and "enlightened." It was a clear case of good versus evil, black and white, and light versus darkness scenario. These descriptions spilled over into the Kenyan and British press, where the sensationalist accounts juxtaposed white heroism with African, or Mau Mau terrorism and savagery.

Because the Mau Mau story was a leading news story internationally in the early 1950s, in the United States, the contrived depiction had pro-British images and avid audiences watched motion pictures on the subject such as the 1955 *Simba*, where the Mau Mau were depicted as murderous hordes or betrayers who murdered their white masters, friends, and children in their beds, according to Herbert Friedman (2006).

According to David Anderson (ibid) making films about a conflict when it is in the process is not usual. "...independent feature films about wars have rarely been made in the midst of conflict, least of all when that conflict is an anti-colonial struggle by poorly armed rebels against the might of an empire. It is therefore remarkable that no fewer than three full-length, independent feature films should have been made between 1954 and 1957 about Kenya's Mau Mau rebellion, *Simba* (1955), *Safari* (1956) and *Something of Value* (1957)." Each of these three films was shot on location in Kenya while the British campaign against the rebels was still in progress. Each center their stories on the conflict between the freedom fighters (referred to as terrorists) and the Colonial government soldiers and they take the state of emergency in the colony and the rise of African anti-colonial nationalism as essential elements of the plot.

According to Anderson (ibid), none of the three films shot during the Mau Mau war was shown to the Kenyan public during the period of the emergency (1952 to 1960). The target audience were the Europeans and Americans who flocked to the cinema theatres during the 1950s, and not the African audiences who most often viewed film in outdoor auditoriums, projected by mobile films units. As much as they used the outbreak of the Mau Mau war to make sensational stories that could attract huge audiences to the movie theatres, the British made movies especially had a propagandist agenda to mislead audiences about the real cause of the uprising. Yet, to try to create credibility and authenticity, some of the stories were filmed using a multilingual approach as I will point out when critiquing *Simba*.

The Producer of the film *Simba*, while attempting to be liberal, tries to cover different points of view, except that of the Mau Mau, who clearly believed that only through violence could they achieve their goals. But the story never explains those goals except depicting the Africans' irrationality and brutality and mindless bloodthirstiness. Where there was a freedom fighter, the cameras saw a blood thirsty terrorist.

#### *4.2.7 Deadlock between MPEAA and Kenya Government over Kenyanisation of Cinema Policy*

According to Nyoike Njoroge (1967), after Kenya became independent and had a growing population of a middle class going to the cinema, a policy was created to entrench Kenyan Africans into the movie business because the industry was under Indians and Europeans and the Kenyatta government had created a Kenyanisation policy which was meant to entrench the Africans into all spheres of business. But the global film monopoly, the Motion Picture Exporting Association of America (MPEAA) which virtually controlled over 80% of the global cinema business, could hear none of it.

The monopolistic tendencies have persisted elsewhere in Africa according to Manthia Diawara (1987 p. 61-65). He observes that "not only film production but also distribution in Africa has faced a ruthless and monopolistic exploitation by American, European, and the Indian distribution companies." According to K.S.N. Matiba (1967), a Permanent Secretary in the Kenya government, a confidential letter from the Permanent Secretary (PS) in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry addressed to the Minister for Commerce and Industry and Minister for Information and Broadcasting, a meeting had been held on 13/ 2/ 1968 with the Vice-president of MPEAA Mr. Griffith Johnson in Nairobi to resolve the cinema closure crisis. Mr. Johnson stated openly that he "did not understand why the Kenya government chose distribution as the first point of attack in the movie industry." He contended that film "distribution was a sensitive and not a lucrative business." He had the audacity to tell government that KFCp was "not capable of handling film." He stated that the American film companies on the other hand could not accept to deal with "citizen only companies," should there be any besides KFCp.

The Americans were openly defying government policy and stating that they were not going to allow locals benefitting from the film distribution enterprise. There was a clear stalemate

as the Kenya government was applying a Kenyanization policy across all business fronts in an effort to entrench the citizens in business enterprises which prior to independence were controlled by foreigners.

The Americans' excuse was that their right to choose who to trade with was being interfered with. To try to break the stalemate in the negotiation, the Kenya government suggested to MPEAA that one of the American film companies could partner with KFCp, provided that partner was ready to put up a film laboratory and go into feature film production business. Mr. Johnson expressed the fear that none of MPEAA members would be interested in such a venture.

The Kenya government felt that its authority was being undermined and decided to put their foot down. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Group was given an ultimatum to reopen their cinemas by the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1968, failure to which "those cinemas would be seized and given to groups who were willing to collaborate with KFC."

As open nationalization would create negative publicity for a government that was also trying to attract foreign investments, discreet strategies were needed to arm-twist the stubborn Americans. One strategy was to declare all the expatriate staff of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox persona non grata especially a Mr. Boxhall<sup>58</sup> who was seen as "extremely difficult and defiant." The other option according to the Matiba letter (ibid), was to use the Commissioner of Lands to withdraw the rights to the use of the cinema premises. If those two options didn't work, the government would have to resort to nationalization which would be a last resort if all else failed.

According to Gachathi P.J. (1968), the Kenya government was aware that the 20th Century Fox organization was South Africa based and they "had a whole franchise for the African market and Kenya was getting film supplies through South Africa." The Anglo-American Co. (Kenya) operating from Nairobi was also South African owned and controlled. The South Africans were running the importation/distribution on their own just like KFCp was seeking to do and so MPEAA was not justified in refusing to deal with KFCp.

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<sup>58</sup> He was frustrating KFC because he was representing the interests of an Anglo-American South African company which was supplying films to Kenya through MPEAA.

The Kenya government was determined to “negotiate with MPEAA to break the South African control and ask the Americans to give KFCp franchise not only for East Africa but for the rest of English and French speaking Africa excluding South Africa and Rhodesia”<sup>59</sup> which internationally were recognized as pariah regimes due to the apartheid and racism. Kenya was confident that this was negotiable and Kenya would stand to gain £1 ½ million per year from importing and distributing American films to the African market except South Africa and Rhodesia according to Matiba. Although the stalemate ended and the closed cinemas were opened, the Kenya government never managed to get the African franchise from MPEAA.

#### *4.2.8 Evolution of Kenya Copyright Law*

The Kenyan film industry has suffered through pirated movies in a country that is governed under the rule of law and where copyright law isn’t just recognized but it’s enforced. A copyright is a right given to creators for their literary and artistic works such as books, music, paintings and sculptures, films and technology-based works such as computer programs and electronic databases. The bitter truth about copyright violation is put succinctly by Jon Lewis (2006), quoting Jack Valenti of MPAA: “If you can’t protect what you own, then you don’t own anything.”

According to Ben Shihanya (2008 :1), Kenya’s copyright law is borrowed from the former colonial master Britain. “In Kenya, copyright law is largely a 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon, beginning with the declaration of Kenya as a British Protectorate on 15 June 1895 and a colony in 1920. Kenya’s copyright law evolved from the 1842 United Kingdom (UK) Copyright Act through to the 1911 and 1956 UK Copyright Acts. These statutes were applied together with the English common law by virtue of the reception clause under the English East African-Order-in-Council 1897 (which applied to Kenya the substance of the English common law, the doctrines of equity and the statutes of general application in force in England as at that date)”

According to Shihanya (ibid), today copyright issues are handled under cap 130, 2001 revised in 2009, under the laws of Kenya. The Kenya Copyright Board (KECOBO) is a

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<sup>59</sup> ibid

State Corporation established under section 3 of the Copyright Act No. 12 of 2001 to administer and enforce Copyright and Related Rights protection in Kenya. The first Board was appointed by Hon. Attorney General in May 2003 with members from various sectors within the copyright industry and representatives from the relevant government institutions such as the Ministries of Finance, Information, Culture and the Kenya Police.

Although KECOBO clearly spells out how a copyright should be recorded with them for purposes of legislation, film producers locally have failed to take advantage of this.

It was shocking to learn that the producer of the most successful local production so far, *Nairobi Half Life* did not register his copyright at the Kenyan Copyright Board offices<sup>60</sup> and this opened lacunae for copyright abuse and in the process, a lot of money went to the pirates.

Copyright administration and enforcement is key to ensuring the growth and development of copyright-based industries in Kenya such as the music, film, software, book publishing, visual arts, and theatrical performances among others. Over the last six years, the Kenya Copyright Board has been instrumental in enforcement of copyright and related rights in Kenya in collaboration with the various rights holders within the industry.

In the last one year, 102 cases have been investigated and 108 prosecuted and determined. It is however important to note that the main responsibility rests on the rights holders while the government through the Kenya Copyright Board, Police, Judiciary and other enforcement agencies facilitate the process of enforcement.

According to Kenya Copyright News (2011), piracy is a big problem in Kenya. And although it permeates the entire copyright sector, the music industry, with a piracy rate of 98%, is by far the most affected. Music pirates are fierce and aggressive. It is alleged that in certain instances they release pirated copies even before the genuine product hits the market. The causes and motives for piracy are many and varied. In Nigeria, for example, its prevalence is attributable to a number of significant contributory factors - the scarcity and high cost of genuine products, poverty, poor distribution networks, a slow judicial system,

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<sup>60</sup> This was revealed in a discussion at Kenyatta International Conference Center in an AITEC Conference 2013 which this researcher attended and posed the question of pirate copies of the movie in the market.

poor cooperation in some quarters of the creative sector and inadequate funding of regulatory agencies, including the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC). These enduring problems are further compounded by the challenges posed by new digital technologies, which themselves create opportunities for illegal mass reproduction of copyright-protected works.

In Kenya, according to Copyright News (ibid), factors that contribute to piracy include lack of awareness of copyright issues on the part of pirates, consumers and law enforcement officers; lack of distribution channels for original works; poor coordination between existing enforcement agencies and advancement of digital technology which makes it very easy to download files from the internet and to a certain extent the high cost of legitimate products.

Locally, there are various categories of piracy located mostly on River Road,<sup>61</sup> the music piracy capital of Kenya. According to Copyright News (2012)<sup>62</sup> magazine, piracy affects the author, the economy and the consumer. The filmmakers in the developed world often rely first on box office earnings where there is a culture of cinema going, after which the movies are marketed through DVD and online distribution channels. Any sale made through piracy decreases the filmmaker's revenue and reduces the amount of investment into the next film. But this mode of piracy is not as inimical to the investor as the one in which the investor expects to make direct returns from DVD sales without recouping costs from the box office.

This affects the quality of future productions as the producer will have lesser revenue. Piracy also creates a scenario where local films are not easily accessible as producers hesitate releasing them for fear that they will be pirated.<sup>63</sup> Reduced income to film producers leads to low quality productions which cannot compete at the international level. This ultimately leads to limiting the market.

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<sup>61</sup> Piracy of music in River road was the precursor to the Riverwood film industry. See Chapter 5.

<sup>62</sup> Copyright awareness creation, <http://www.copyright.go.ke/awareness-creation.html>, accessed on 3/9/2015

<sup>63</sup> In one of the Key Informant Interviews, Jane Murago-Munene disclosed that she has refused five years later to release *The Unbroken Spirit*, the Winning documentary in 2011 FEPACI festival due to fear of piracy.

In addition to denying the government revenue, piracy has harmful consequences for the consumer as well. Counterfeit software is often vulnerable to computer viruses, malware and hackers leaving consumers and businesses unprotected against data loss and identity theft. The materials used by pirates such as CD/DVD/VCD are of very low quality and besides being hazardous to health; they can cause damage to equipment. The main types of piracy are counterfeit cassettes and CD's, which earlier were finding their way into the Kenyan market, especially from Dubai, Singapore and East Asia where they are recorded in bulk. Nairobi today is at an equal footing on piracy with these former suppliers. Piracy of both music and movies in Kenya is done on River Road in Nairobi. According to Nyutho/John Karanja (2015) , the local pirates are well known but apparently nothing is done to stop their illegal trade.

The Kenya Copyright Board (2012) in a press release dated 15-02-2012 claims that “high levels of piracy in Kenya are an impediment to the growth and development of the creative industries in Kenya as the pirates live off other people's intellectual property and curtail the development of the industry.” The board in this press release claims that the levels of piracy in the music and film industry “are estimated at over 98%.” This is a highly alarming figure as it is almost double that of Nollywood whose piracy figures are stated at 50%. If these figures are correct, it means that the creative industry proprietors gain only 2% to 5 % while the rest goes into the pockets of the criminals. This is nothing short of anarchical plunder which should not be tolerated in a country governed by the rule of law.

One Kenyan film producer, Alexandros Konstantaras,<sup>64</sup> who founded a company called Jitu Films claims, “All DVD shops in Kenya, except the Media stores and a couple of shops like them are either pirates or are selling pirated movies. He contends that Kenyans have “embraced piracy as a culture and they have approved these illegal shops because that is how they have learnt to buy DVDs all these years.” They therefore would be highly inconvenienced if they woke up one day to find the shops gone, “as there are not many options for them”. He claims that, “one would have to be crazy to open a shop to sell legal wares and pay ridiculous money to pay for the license, movies, stickers etc, while all he needs is a laptop and some blank DVDs, rent a tiny shop and sell pirated DVDs illegally with no problems.”

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<sup>64</sup> Secrets of Piracy Revealed by Director, Jitu Films Director, [www.actors.co.ke/en/mer/articledetail/127](http://www.actors.co.ke/en/mer/articledetail/127), accessed on 13/9/2015

Another observation on the impact of piracy is that “pirates affect local producers by refusing to sell original Kenyan movies.” Since hawking as a business model outstrips by far formal shops and supermarkets in most Kenyan towns, the pirates who sell their wares by hawking are far more efficient than the supermarkets as a distribution channel for DVD movies. The supermarket distribution that Jitu started could only reach a few customers and so a producer who wants to market his product through this channel will have to invest heavily in marketing promotion above all other production costs. “This makes the distribution of the original Kenyan movies very limited and even Kenyans wanting to find original DVDs will struggle to find them.”

The price of the product is another critical issue. According to Konstantaras (ibid), the price of a pirated DVD whether it is American, Chinese, Nigerian etc. is 50/= (fifty Kenya shillings). In 2008, Jitu tried to come close to this price by reducing the price of their DVD movies from 200/= (two hundred) to 60/= (sixty shillings) so as to undercut the pirates by lowering the price, but it was of no use. Even though their sales increased slightly, the earnings were not significant enough to offset their break-even costs. The company has been hovering on the brink of closing since then. Konstantaras (ibid) laments that the pirates pay nothing to produce the movie, nothing to market the movie, they pay no taxes to anyone, they incur no costs for certificates from the censor board and they don't feel the pinch of import duties...nothing.” Yet, they make easy free money without breaking a sweat!

The revelations from this article are a big indictment of both the laxity within our legal enforcement mechanisms, the policy makers and the society at large as well as also the scholars who have a duty to address and find solutions to such a social malaise.

The article closes with poignant and bitterly sarcastic observations. Konstantaras reckons that unless someone in authority was to wake up one day and close down all the illegal video shops and replace them with legal businesses which sell Kenyan DVDs alongside foreign ones, trying to produce local content is an exercise in futility. “Unless a Kenyan producer can go and sell and a Kenyan buyer can go and buy under legal terms and conditions, this business will NEVER take off the ground...If in Kenya we know already



that selling the movie is almost impossible, then why bother doing it in the first place?" he asks.

When one reverts to the cultural imperialism discourse, you clearly see the manifestations of a new culture of both citizens and their rulers displaying an amazing indifference to the shackles of neocolonialism. According to Movious (ibid), these are clear symptoms of cultural imperialism that have succeeded in promoting "ideologies of consumption, instant gratification, and individualism." Where these tendencies become manifest within the entire social strata, plans to draft policies to protect local contents gather dust in policy makers' shelves.

The local TV stations according to Konstantaras (ibid), have tended to underrate local productions. "The local TV stations pay peanuts for Kenyan movies." He also hits at Kenyan audiences because they do not go to the movies unless they reap certain rewards. "Kenyans hardly go to the cinemas to watch a Kenyan movie [unless it's for free and includes free booze]."

According to Konstantaras (ibid), the local film industry suffers because we appear to have legitimized piracy of foreign movies and that seems to have killed our local productions with the government taking no action at all.

According to Nyutho/John Karanja (2015), one of the best strategies is to incorporate the pirates into the production business. Karanja claims the movies and music piracy industry is so entrenched in Kenya, that it is like a dragon with a million heads. The small men on the streets hawking the DVDs are the small fish that are visible. The kingpins however are well endowed people who have created a mafia type empire which is hard to contend with. Most of them are well known and are protected by the corruption in government bureaucracy.

#### *4.2.9 Opportunities for Better Policies in Africa*

According to African ViewPoint (2015), Africa's film industry is far from realizing its full potential. African film producers are aware that the most limiting factor is capital to fund the industry and improve production expertise which in turn would improve the quality of the products. The world over, governments have created policies to aid their local film

production because they are aware of their film industry's strategic importance. The US government, for example, even if it doesn't directly fund Hollywood, works alongside Hollywood in making sure that global policies are created to enhance Hollywood's penetration and continued hegemony over the global scene. According to Linda Garcia (2001), this is why the US was in the frontline in advocating for deregulation of communication policies globally so as to pave a way for its media products to flood global markets unimpeded.

According to Teresa Hoefert de Turégano (2002), the French government on the other hand has been directly involved in funding of French film productions in order to enhance the spread of French influence, language and culture in the world. The African film industry has up to 2014 benefited more from French support than from African governments and has lobbied for "cultural exceptions" in World Trade Organisation policy. In 1990, as this study has pointed out elsewhere, the French government donated space at the French Cultural Center and directed financial funding to the Kenya National Film Association to launch the Cine Week which provided the first opportunity to open up local productions to public viewership.

But in the global arena, whether the French will be able to weather the American storm over "cultural exceptions" in global cinema policy remains to be seen, according to Sophie des Beauvais (2014). The two industries failed to agree over America's attempt to stream films thru Netflix and other US companies throughout Europe in free trade negotiations that went between US and Europe in July 2013. Most African governments have failed to recognize the strategic importance of funding film production directly from government coffers although the reality is slowly starting to sink in, that without government intervention, the local film industry will be obliterated.

From the practice globally, only direct funding can enhance a film quality that is acceptable across global markets. To compete effectively, African governments must invest in funding their nationals in producing films.

There have been impassioned appeals for the revamping and reinvigorating of the film industry in Africa. According to Desmond Orjiako (2011: 9), one such appeal was made in Nairobi by Professor Wole Soyinka when he was a guest speaker at the Kenya International

Film Festival. Prof Soyinka appealed to the African Union to create an African film fund. He emphasized the power of the film industry in society and the need to see it as a viable investment opportunity. Prof Soyinka's call rhymes with the African Union's interest to establish an African Audio Visual and Cinema Commission and the establishment of a Cinema Fund. The African Film Summit in 2006 in South Africa affirmed this. "If this is to be the African century we aspire to, that aspiration must be undergirded by our willingness to encourage, affirm and support Africa's creative artists." The summit appears to have made a strong enough case for African governments to support the film industry going by the resolutions made at the summit. The delegates agreed that a significant part of the conditions required for a fully-functioning, self-reliant and sustainable film industry in Africa is the sincere, creative, substantive and non-obtrusive participation of the state and that it is primarily the responsibility of governments and public bodies to take concrete steps towards developing conducive and enabling policy and ensuring there's funding available for the production and distribution of African films and television programs. They stressed the importance of clear cultural policy at a national and continental level and also the way that such policy provisions provide an enabling framework for sectors like film and audiovisual.

According to Houlin Zhao (2007), as a result of the changes that have taken place after the digital convergence and the changing playing field in service provision between telecommunication and broadcasting, many countries have yet to formulate comprehensive communication or media policies to govern the new paradigm shift. ITU has identified several of these challenges which range from institutional, regulatory and legislative to industrial. Some of these include the convergence of ministries, regulators, telecom spectrum, IT/ICT, and broadcasting, which are often political issues. Others relate to the difficulties in correlating technological innovation and convergence with appropriate laws and regulations. The industrial issues include the balance between creating new employment and redundancy as well as converting from legacy networks and technologies to the converged ones which involve huge costs, especially for the developing countries.

Kenya is still in the middle of this quagmire as was demonstrated with the impasse between government and local television companies which shut down for close to three weeks in protest against the government's insistence on digital migration. Three of the leading TV stations Citizen NTV and KTN closed down their stations in protest, claiming they were

being forced by government to migrate onto a digital platform they claimed was foreign owned. According to a Business Daily reporter (2015), although the TV stations finally reopened the closed down stations on their own, when they started to feel the pinch of the lost advertising revenue, the matter is still pending acceptable arbitration between the media owners and government.

With the digital convergence policies not yet fully streamlined, it is not surprising when the ICT board issues policy statements related to film production alongside KFC. The KFC strictly speaking is mandated to deal directly with film policy issues. But according to Milton L. Mueller (1999), as a result of digital convergence, films are being consumed more on phone modems and fiber optic cables globally. Policy formulation to streamline this conflict is long overdue.

#### *4.2.10 New Film Policy and Incentives*

According to the KPMG (2015) budget brief, the 2015/16 budgetary estimates that were presented to the Kenya Parliament in mid-June 2015 created unparalleled incentives within the Kenya film industry and are a clear indicator that the government is serious about revamping the industry. The film industry's potential to be a major employer of the youth was realized in the 1980s and has awaited implementation since then. The Treasury Cabinet Secretary during the June 2015 budget speech also exempted payments made by foreign film producers to actors and crew members related to withholding tax.

There were also budgetary incentives to remove duty on filming equipment. This will be a big incentive for the Riverwood film industry which has lobbied for this for a long time. According to the KPMG budget brief, withholding tax on payments to actors and crew members was applicable at 20% previously. The Cabinet Secretary also proposed to set up a fund for rebate of expenses by producers in the film industry. This has worked very well in South Africa to persuade film producers to go and spend their production revenue in a set-up that will reward them financially. This is a step in the right direction that is likely to bring in more Hollywood dollars to the Kenyan economy.

According to Call Sheet (2015), the National Film Policy was due for parliamentary debate in August 2015 before it was published as a bill aimed at bolstering the proposed incentives into law which would encourage the local film industry and foreign film producers to shoot more in Kenya in the foreseeable future. According to Cathy Mpathia (2015), there are other incentives in place to boost the sector including regulation reforms, institutional development, capacity- building and marketing.

There has also been much optimism emanating from how the current President and his Deputy who have embraced the issue of film as a solution to youth empowerment. The President himself was going to engage Hollywood producers directly in May 2015, but his trip was cancelled due to technical flight hitches. According to Katherine Muigai (2015), government has created direct funding to youth groups through the Youth Empowerment Development Fund (YEDF) for loans for film production; it has also set aside 300 million shillings to start the project off.

According to Kenya: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2010), the current Kenya government sees the immense potential of cinema as an avenue for employment creation and a feasible way to fight poverty. This was evidenced by Kenya government's donation of one million dollars to FEPACI and the setting up of the headquarters in Nairobi. According to Margaretta wa Gacheru (2015), the Kenya government has made a financial commitment for the next four years. FEPACI's location in Nairobi would not have been thought possible a few years ago because government support and financial commitment was needed for the hosting. But as the result of consistent local lobbying, the Kenya government is now leading by example by following the resolutions passed at the African Film Summit in 2006 in South Africa.

The winning by Kenyan actress Lupita Nyong'o of an Oscar Award for Best Supporting Actress in *12 Years a Slave* on 2nd March 2014 also inspired and invigorated Kenyan cinema producers and performers with the confidence that they too can measure up to the best in the world.

Before she moved to Hollywood, Lupita was part of the cast of the popular Mnet TV series *Shugga*.<sup>65</sup> Her win has helped to demystify stardom and success in the performing arts at the highest global level. Lupita's success also needs to be followed up by Kenya Film Commission and local film producers to sell Kenya by producing products that will attract studio executives, writers, actors and film producers from around the world before the Oscar buzz burns out. According to The Star online (2015), Lupita is already shooting a Ugandan story, *Queen of Katwe* which is due for release in 2016, based on an inspiring true life of Phiona Mutesi, an uneducated teenage chess prodigy from the Kampala slums in Uganda, who was trained to play chess and against all odds became a chess grand master.

### 4.3 Institutional Framework

For policies to operate effectively they need to be housed within institutional frameworks and certain infrastructural investments for their operations are required. For a film industry to be established, various institutions also need to be established. There is need for training institutions to meet technical manpower needs; laboratories for processing films during the celluloid era; distributions networks for getting the products to consumers; exhibiting infrastructure such as film festivals; fiber optic cables for production and post production; regulatory institutions; theatres for audiences and film archives for national access among other needs.

The need to establish an infrastructure to help launch and sustain a healthy Kenyan film industry was the pursuit of independent Kenya's first government and they fought gallantly to set up facilities for the foundation of the industry. But as this research has already established, a film industry cannot flourish in a vacuum. Above all, there must be an atmosphere of freedom of expression which will spur and invigorate creative expression without fear of censorship. A film producer who is curtailed from creative expression is a non-functional being. From the colonial era, Kenya has been under authoritarian regimes that do not respect freedom of expression. The situation necessitated the enshrining of those freedoms in the bill of rights in the Kenya Constitution 2010 as a way of making sure the transgression against freedom of expression never happen again.

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<sup>65</sup> Lupita Nyong'o IMDb, [www.imdb.com/name/nm2143282/](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2143282/), accessed on 9/5/2015.

#### 4.3.1 British Film Institute and Censorship Boards for Colonies Established

The final recommendations of the Colonial Films Committee which first met in early 1929 marked a distinct change in emphasis in colonial film policy. It reiterated that colonial governments should begin experimenting with the use of film in education. Although it noted that “careful handling” was required in order to avoid “a slipshod method of acquiring ill-digested information,” it recommended for Education Department staff to be trained in the use of film equipment, schools equipped with film projectors and mobile cinema vans provided. This helped to establish the mobile cinema vans that became a hallmark of cinema in colonial Kenya in the 1940s and thereafter.

Russell<sup>66</sup> concludes that in terms of censorship, colonial governments were advised to establish censorship boards (as the Gold Coast had already done), while consideration would be given to establish a central Board of Censors in London, to deal specifically with the suitability of films for colonial distribution.

The discussions set in motion by the Colonial Office provided an important contribution to the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, who reproduced large parts of the Colonial Committee’s report in their own 1932 report, *The Film in National Life*. Leading to the establishment of the British Film Institute in 1933. The report marks the emergence of a lobby concerned with the ‘cultural’ dimension of films, and paid a great deal of attention to educational films. Furthermore, the Commission’s Secretary was none other than J. Russell Orr who was a very influential figure in film issues of the day.

According to Rob Skinner (2001) with the establishment of the British Film Institute, the forum for debate on colonial cinema was broadened, particularly after the setting-up of the BFI’s Dominions, India, and Colonies Panel in 1934. The panel’s remit was “to ascertain what education and cultural films are available both for the Dominions and Colonies, and to consider how these might be classified for recommendation to different parts of the Empire.” The Panel also considered, given the support of the Colonial Development Fund, “the possibility of conducting one or more experiments in various colonies, to ascertain the

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<sup>66</sup> ibid

psychological effects of different types of film.” One such experiment had already been conducted on behalf of the Colonial Office’s Advisory Committee on Native Education by Julian Huxley when he travelled to East and Central Africa in 1929. In his account of the journey, Huxley described how he tested the responses of African schoolchildren to three films that he had obtained from the Empire Marketing Board (EMB). The films were designed to test the children’s ability to understand films of different levels of ‘difficulty.’ After successfully exhibiting the films in Tanganyika and Uganda, Huxley came to the conclusion that education was the ‘intellectual hormone’ that could stimulate the development of Africa, and the cinema was one of the central media of this process.

Skinner (ibid) argued that Julian Huxley claimed that “the African enjoys the film with an almost childlike delight; he will come to see a film where he would not attend a lecture; and in the present state of his development, what he can see on a film makes a much stronger impression upon him than what he can hear there is no aspect of native welfare which could not quite legitimately be encouraged by them in this way”. Huxley emphasized how impressionable the African was and recommended wider use of film for education and propaganda.

#### 4.3.2 *Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE)*

In spite of the recommendations in 1930, the implementations of BEKE didn’t take off immediately. However, the colonies were recognized as a potential of British goods including films. According to Rob Skinner<sup>67</sup>, one result of the report was to promote a number of proposals for the establishment of organized experiments in the production of educational films for African audiences. One such proposal was authored by Geoffrey Barkas who suggested that the establishment of a small official bureau to make films for dependencies would ensure a “constant supply of films calculated to suit their specific requirement.”

Another proposal worthy of note was that of J. Russell Orr, ex-Director of Education in Kenya. He proposed the establishment of a chain of cinema houses “for the advancement of

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<sup>67</sup> ibid



adults and children of native races in subjects relating to general information, education and science, methods of industry and commerce, and general entertainment of good quality.” His scheme required colonial governments to provide no financial assistance, but merely a “suitable site of 200 x 120 ft. for the erection of a Cinema House in a well-populated native area of a selected township.” According to his proposal, the cinemas would eventually be handed over to local cooperatives, which would show programs comprising news and magazine reels; education and science films; health propaganda; agricultural improvement; and the development of imperial trade. Although this proposal wasn’t adopted immediately, it could have informed the policy of the mobile cinemas that became a feature of the BEKE Kinema later.

When it started, the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE) according to Notcutt et al (1937), was a project of the International Missionary Council in coordination with the Carnegie Corporation of New York and British colonial governments of Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in the mid-1930s. The project aimed to produce and distribute by mobile vans educational films for the education of the black ("bantu") people. About 35 such films on 16mm were produced between 1935 and 1937 when the project's Carnegie grant expired.

According to Notcutt et al (ibid), the films produced were 16mm silent, low quality films with naive plots that usually involved a "wise guy" (giving the good example) prevailing over a "stupid guy" (impersonating bad habits). While some actors were black, everything else in the production was British, building on a stereotypical representation of Africa and Africans. The main teachings conveyed by the films were about hygienic rules, methods of cash crop cultivation and cooperative marketing, and "prestige films" that highlighted the institutions of British rule. This production strategy was informed by the colonial philosophy of the times about the “limited intelligence of the African and their limited knowledge to comprehend images displayed on the screen.”

#### *4.3.3 Institutions during Post-Independence Era*

Kenya gained her independence after the brutal Mau Mau struggle, on December 12 1963, in the midst of a utopian euphoric independence celebration. Although Kenya gained her political independence and got a President, a coat of arms and all other trimmings that went

along with it, culturally, and especially in the area of cinema, Kenya was far from being free. Because the world had entered into the Marshal McLuhan's global village and she had no production capability for her cultural programming needs, Kenya was now entering into what is popularly called the post-colonial theory era, including electronic colonialism, cultural or media imperialism. It's an era where subtle cultural domination and mental colonization takes place not by force of arms but by packaging media to attract large audiences for advertisers around the globe through film, television and online media driven mostly by Western multinational companies.

Emilee Rauschenberg's (2003) perspective on cultural imperialism (discussed earlier in chapter 2) refers to the worldwide spread and dominance of western, and especially American consumer culture and products, which erodes the local cultural traditions and values of many nations. Further, it represents a form of global cultural regulation. The issue of cultural imperialism calls into question both issues of cultural identity and government policy.

One of the ironies of Jomo Kenyatta's government is that despite the bitter suffering Kenya went through to cut the shackles of colonialism, the new government made no efforts to correct the misrepresentation that had been done in film over all the colonial era. Kenyatta as a founder president of Kenya had many accolades and he established a legacy that will spurn many generations. Amongst other things, Kenyatta was an acknowledged intellectual, freedom fighter, film actor, renowned cultural activist, Pan Africanist, visionary leader and acclaimed the world over as a true son of Africa. His government unfortunately didn't pay due regard to the need to create policies to redeem the image that had been tarnished by the colonialist. Why Kenyatta behaved this way after he had shown so much promise when he published his anthropological book 'Facing Mount Kenya' in London in 1938 is hard to understand.

#### *4.3.4 Broadcasting Institutions Rooted in Cultural Imperialism*

Prior to the granting of independence, the colonial masters had put in place structures to ensure the cultural dependence on film in matters to do with cinema. By 1960, it became evident, that independence was inevitable. The colonial government having used radio to

suppress the nationalist movement did not want this important mass media organ to pass on to the African government on attainment of independence. This led to the formation of Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) to take over from the government controlled Kenya Broadcasting Services.

In 1962, Television service was introduced in Kenya. The first transmitting station was set on a farmhouse in Limuru and transmitted a radius of 15 miles. The transmitted footage even when shot on film locally, it had to be airlifted to London for post-production services and airlifted back as no such facilities existed locally. If this set up by the colonial government was to shackle Kenya onto the neocolonial bandwagon, the leadership of the newly independent nation played into their hands.

According to Nixon Kareithi (2003), Kenyan television is a classic example of an industry whose good chances for development have been consistently frustrated by government political interference. The medium's history is marked by stunted growth due to excessive government regulation, and extensive abuse by the dominant political forces.

In 1959 the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation a replica of the BBC had been established by the British colonial administration with the objective of providing radio and television broadcasting. The proposal for the formation of a public corporation had been submitted by a commission appointed earlier in the year to report on the advantages and disadvantages of a television service for Kenya, and the impact of such a service on radio broadcasting. According to Kareithi (ibid), the 1959 Proud Commission rejected earlier findings by another commission in 1954 that television was "economically impracticable in Kenya" and concluded that the new medium was likely to be financially self-reliant if it was set up as a fully-fledged commercial outfit.

Between 1959 and 1961, and in keeping with the Proud Commission's recommendations, the colonial administration contracted a consortium of eight companies to build and operate a television service. The eight firms, seven of which were from Europe and North America, formed Television Network Ltd. which was charged with the responsibility of setting up the national television broadcasting system. The consortium, cognizant of the irreversible

developments towards Kenya's political independence, created the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation as an autonomous public organization. The idea was to have the corporation wield as much independence as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). By the end of 1962, a transmission station and recording studio had been set up, and television was officially launched the following year.

#### *4.3.5 Government Controlled Broadcasting after Independence 1963- 1980s*

The structures of KBC were that it was to draw most of its programming from the former colonial master. In any case, there was transmission infrastructure but very little production facilities by design. According to Nixon Kareithi (2003), KBC drew its revenue from advertising, annual license fees on receiver sets, and government subventions.

The vision of financially self-sustaining television service was however misplaced, especially since the new medium failed to attract as much advertising as the older and more popular radio broadcasting service. Within the first full financial year of television broadcasting--July 1963 to June 1964--the corporation posted a loss of nearly \$1 million, and had to resort to government loans and supplementary appropriations to remain afloat.

Coincidentally, Kenya had gained independence and the new government, worried about the threat to national sovereignty posed by the foreign ownership of the broadcasting apparatus, decided to nationalize the corporation in June 1964. According to Kareithi (ibid), after the takeover, the corporation was renamed Voice of Kenya (VoK) and was converted to a department under the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism (later renamed Ministry of Information and Broadcasting). Its new role, as the government mouthpiece, was to provide information, education and entertainment. And while the government adopted a capitalist approach to economic development which embraced private sector participation in all areas of the economy and even welcomed participation in a number of electronic broadcasting activities, private ownership of broadcasting concerns was disallowed. Having been baptized through fire during the propaganda onslaught against the Mau Mau, the new government knew well that information was power and its control was absolutely essential. Under Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi, broadcasting control was highly autocratic. Film was used for propaganda purposes especially in making

documentaries around his nation building activities. It didn't seem to occur to the government of the day that cinema was better suited in the culture ministry than information and broadcasting. Cinema works better as a carrier of cultural products than as an informational tool.

For twenty six years between 1964 and the fall of the Berlin wall in 1990, television and radio in Kenya were owned and controlled by the state, and the two media exercised great caution in reporting politically-sensitive news. According to Kareithi (ibid), the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting replaced annual license fees with a one-time permit fee, and the drive for commercial self-sustenance was replaced by a politically-inspired initiative for increased local content and a sharper nationalistic outlook.

According to Kareithi (ibid), the objective was not met but VoK television was only able to achieve a 40% local programming content by the mid-1980s against the target of 70% local content. Television also failed to become an authoritative national medium: studies in 1985 showed that only 17% of electronic media audience regarded television as the best source of information, compared to 86% who rated radio as their prime news source.

Several reasons were advanced for poor performance of television. Besides being a preserve of the educated minority in the country, the spread of ownership of television sets was severely curtailed by the poor penetration of the national electrical power grid. Even worse is the poor transmission the country received from the 55 small transmission and booster stations, whose weak signals generally cover small areas or are constrained by the country's rugged topography. As such, household audiences grew mainly within the major urban areas, or near large rural centers served by electricity and near booster stations.

Dr. Faith Nguru (2014), in her study on Foreign TV Shows and Kenyan Youth has identified many social problems created by television programming in Kenya which to an extent relies heavily on foreign programming as discussed earlier. Nguru's study asserts that studies done on television programming in Africa come to the uncontested conclusion that the bulk of the air time is taken up by foreign programmes and a marked absence of indigenous programmes.

She states that Mativo's study (1989)<sup>68</sup> of Kenya's programming showed that:

“Of the 2,220 minutes of TV time per week; entertainment claimed 995, general information 775, and education 90. Furthermore, 925 minutes of the 995 allocated to entertainment were imported programmes, mainly feature films. This comes to 93% of foreign television programmes, leaving only 7% for local productions. (p.441).” Mativo's study was done before the introduction of the second TV station, KTN, whose introduction helped to increase foreign programmes.

I have dwelt so much on the history of Kenya's televisions' failure because there is a symbiotic relationship between television and film. These two industries operate like a hand inside a glove and where television has thrived, film has also flourished. The two industries, so to speak, feed on common fodder.

#### *4.3.6 Mobile Cinema Planned for Independent Kenya*

By the time it was built in 1962, KBC Television was designed to get most of its entertainment footage from London. The studio facility created was adequate for continuity programming and limited talk show programmes. The production infrastructure for the huge demands of television broadcasting was never catered for. After attaining independence in Dec 1963, little was done to change the production realities besides the political christening of KBC to Voice of Kenya (VOK) in 1964. But the government control ensured that it contained control of the news and current affairs programming that was critical in agenda setting for political consciousness and debate.

Prior to the granting of the independence and with the full knowledge that Kenya was headed to liberation; frantic efforts were put in place to strengthen the mobile cinema use after it had been abused as a propaganda tool against Mau Mau. The Mobile cinema was borrowing from the BEKE Kinema experience of the colonial era discussed earlier. Why the outgoing colonial government deemed it necessary to strengthen and expand the mobile cinema raises several questions.

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<sup>68</sup> Mativo K 1989, Traditional Communication systems and their role in the development process in Africa: a cross disciplinary analysis with comparative cases of Europe and Japan, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.

The mobile cinema units had been started in Kenya in 1941 under an administrative officer A.M. Champion<sup>76</sup> and the rural African crowds then were indigenous, impressionable chaps, easily amused and thrilled by the mere novelty of the cinema. The policy of the time was that “cinema had to teach the Africans something all the time”. According to W.J. Lyall (1960), this” had the effect of making cinema quite indigestible. Far too frequently, shows consisted of a medical film, a health film, an agriculture film, a film on better living or animal husbandry, a British newsreel, and a short comedy to make the whole package palatable.” Lyall who was creating much needed reforms to policy prior to independence made an argument that there was need for a fresh approach in the post Mau Mau Kenya.

“With the rapid expansion of education, information and allied services, over the years, the Africans had become quite sophisticated.” Lyall goes on to add that “their political consciousness had been awakened and they possessed many grievances, real and imagined.”

Lyall argued that most people in Britain go to the cinema to be entertained and amused and to seek respite from the many troubles and trials of life and the many Africans in Kenya “who mattered to the colonial administrators had already reached that point.” It is instructive to note here the insinuation that there were people in the colony who didn’t matter to the colonizer perhaps because they didn’t put any tangible benefits on his table. He notes that “cinema in Kenya is suspect as a propaganda vehicle, because it had been heavily overplayed in this respect for several years, but as an entertainment unit, it is always certain of a warm welcome, and we should cash in on this now.” He continued to state that Kenya required ‘tranquility’ and the most peaceful way of doing that was to make the people happy by the widespread use of humor and entertainment through cinema shows.

As some of the content was to be produced locally, there was need to upgrade local production facilities. The recommended menu comprised 75% comedy and entertainment and 25% didactic matter. The argument was that “a cheerful audience carries away a more lasting impression than a dull one’ and the new menu had a better chance of embedding itself in the public mind. For the advertised messages to sink in, the mind of the viewers had to be prepared to be open and receptive to the amenable atmosphere mobile cinema

created to the captive crowds. This was the fluid transformation from direct colonialism into the cultural imperialism realm.

To entrench cinema fully into local pastimes, a total of 21 mobile cinema vans were recommended to serve on 5 circuits with 5 copies of each film. It was recommended that of the nine reels composing a programme, six had to be made locally. The information, campaign reels and entertainment films had to be made locally. The policy document recommended four new film producers posts be created and advertised overseas for Europeans who would have to be paid highly to attract them to an 'unsavory' country. Curiously, the post of Cameraman was to be a highly paid African post.<sup>69</sup> Whether such a person existed or not isn't clear.

#### *4.3.7 Kenya Film Corporation (KFCp)*

The film industry comprises basically of production and exhibition. Production is further divisible into several other stages from preproduction, location shooting, developing, printing, editing, and master copying for exhibition. By the time Kenya became independent in 1963, there were no Africans of Kenyan origin involved in the film production or distribution industry. According to Nyoike F. Njoroge the General Manager of Kenya Film Corporation (1967), the entire local cinema scene was dominated by mostly English language and Hindi films and the production and exhibition staff came from the two communities. All the filming was done exclusively by overseas companies even as late as 1967, according to a background research document done by Nyoike F. Njoroge (1967).

According to Nyoike, most of the films shown in East Africa were in English and one of the main Indian languages. According to George Ithau et al (1968) the East African market constituted then 30% of the world's market of Hindi films. The languages spoken in the communities where these films were shown and the facilities and the abilities to produce these films dictated the sources of the supply. English being the official language and the major world language attracted film producers especially from the USA and Britain. India had no competition in producing Indian films for the large number of Indians who settled in East Africa as traders after building the East African railway.

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<sup>69</sup> *ibid*



There were also a few low budgets English Language films imported from the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and France. From the latter three, English language was dubbed before importation into Kenya. According to Nyoike, these films played a big role because they kept the theatres open when there were no big features around.

According to Gachathi P.J (1968), only a paltry 30% of Africans in Kenya and Tanzania were attending theatres to watch films. The main cinema goers were Asians and Europeans who comprised 70% of the market and were distributed as shown below:

	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Europeans</i>
<b>Kenya</b>	<i>190,000</i>	<i>84,000</i>
<b>Tanzania</b>	<i>43,000</i>	<i>15,000</i>

It was hoped however that with spread of education and a growing economy, more Africans in the region would take up the cinema going culture especially to offset the large number of Asians who were migrating away from East Africa to Europe and Canada.

According to the Gachathi memo (ibid), as of 1967 when an idea of the Kenyan government venturing into the film business set in, all the feature films seen in Kenya had to be imported by the 8 main importer/distributors who were all unfortunately non-Africans. The films were then distributed to the 80 theatres (cinema houses) in East Africa which were owned by nonAfricans, mostly Asians. The distributing companies were all owned by non-Africans. In a nut shell, the industry was totally controlled by non-African foreigners.

According to Gachathi PJ (ibid), the Kenya Film Corporation (KFCp) was established under this atmosphere on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1967 as a limited company wholly owned by the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation, (ICDC). The company had been given exclusive rights to import and distribute 35 MM theatrical films throughout Kenya. Immediately after formation, it was felt that the company needed some operational capital to put it on its feet and ICDC the mother company advanced a loan worth Sterling Pounds, £ 40,000.

After its creation, Nyoike F. Njoroge (1967) wrote a letter to the President of Motion Pictures Exporters Association explaining the circumstances under which the Kenyan

government had found it expedient to create the company. He stated that “at present the production of films, the distribution of films and ownership of theaters in the country are all controlled by noncitizens. This unhealthy situation came into being due to the fact that there was a lot of injustice practiced before independence. Africans were not given equal opportunities.” He went on to add that the majority of people in this country cannot be “kept indefinitely out of participation in commercial fields,” and hence the setting up of the company. Contrary to his expectations, this provoked a very adverse reaction from MPEAA, the global cinema monopoly.

For KFCp to operate efficiently, it was felt that it needed a film library of its own, as all the films circulating in the market then belonged to the eight major distributing companies. As government had granted it the monopoly to import and distribute films, getting the library was assumed would be a walk in the park. KFCp tried to negotiate for a ‘distribution percentage’ as there was no other way to gauge the value of the films in circulation at the time. KFCp would get the libraries to distribute the films and it would retain a percentage agreed by all concerned and the rest of the earnings would go to the distributors. According to Gachathi (ibid), KFCp and ICDC assumed that a 30% figure would be reasonable. From their calculation from the film distribution market at the time, they anticipated they’d make approximately KShs 4,000,000 million within a 3 year period, the period within which new films normally have earning power. Little did they know that the foreign stranglehold in both India and the US didn’t wish the introduction of a regulator or a competitor in profit-sharing in the cinema business.

The American film business is structured as a vertically integrated business. Vertical integration relates to the ownership of the means of production, distribution and exhibition by the same company which in a way provides a monopoly over the goods produced.

According to Nyoike (ibid), films coming to Kenya from the US are distributed by either, representatives appointed by the studios in America or distributing companies owned by the studios. For example, Oscar Films distribute Paramount Studios films while MGM Studios have their own distributing company here in Kenya.

While a representative distributes the films, he does so on a percentage basis i.e., films are supplied to him by the studios and he retains a percentage of the box office and sends the rest to the film supplier.<sup>70</sup> This distribution system locks out outside companies like KFCp. For KFCp to access the same films, they would need to pay advance royalties before the films are dispatched. This of course is a big gamble because there is no guarantee in the movie business whatsoever that a film will be a box office success. Even films with big stars fail at the box office. The only safe way of making returns is to peg ones earnings on the percentages of the gate returns.

According to David Fisher (2007) American movie studios have dominated the world through Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEAA) that controls all US film exports. The creation in the USA of the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), set up in 1908 by Thomas Edison and others to exercise control by means of patent enforcement was clearly in the interests of producers/distributors to show films first in cinemas that they themselves owned, or at least to exclude competitors' films as far as possible According to Nyoike (ibid), American film studios have a reputation to be ruthless even to small organisations like KFCp because they “want to bake the cake, ice it and eat it, all by themselves.”

Unlike the US market, Asian films were purchased on an outright basis. The Indian studios don't have a central body like the MPEAA that controls sales as such. The market is open and competitive sometimes leading to very high fees being paid for some films. In some cases, part of the money is paid in advance even before the film is completed to ensure that the film will be completed and that no one else gets it. According to Nyoike's study (ibid), some companies in India buy 'world rights' outside India for a film, and if other distributors like KFCp want rights to show it in Kenya or East Africa, they'd have to purchase 'East Africa rights' from the company that has 'world rights.'

As KFCp was being formed, they made several assumptions as regards competition of the business in Kenya and East Africa. The first one was that as they had a local monopoly as a distributor in East Africa that would cut down the costs of the film bids from the sellers by at least 30%. As they were setting up, a lot of Asians were migrating from East Africa to

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<sup>70</sup> ibid

other parts of the world. It was hoped that this trend would be offset by the rising number of African film goers as the local economies grew and an African middle class was expanding. There was also hope that bilateral negotiations with MPEAA would be fruitful and a mutually beneficial deal would be struck in regards to the earnings from the gate collection fees.

The government also hoped that KFCp participation in the business would also save at least 20% of the foreign exchange that was being shipped out of the country by the US foreign film distributors. They also hoped to save 30% of the foreign exchange being paid for Indian films. The moneys so earned would be reinvested in production of educational films and setting up of a processing laboratory.

According to Nyoike , once KFCp was on its feet on importation and distribution, production of local films would follow. It was envisaged that local production capacity was adequate to produce educational documentaries but feature films would be done as co-productions with overseas companies using local actors for both local and international distribution. Because a processing laboratory was also deemed essential for local film production take-off, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was tasked to identify feasible options.

Perhaps this was KFCp's biggest goof. According to Lucia Saks (2011), "the idea of moviemaking was strongly linked to the identity of a nation and when countries were inventing and using motion pictures, they needed an image of themselves." Kenya had a clearly marketable story of the Mau Mau forest fight against the British which was a launching platform for Kenyan cinema but the government of the day did not like it for undisclosed reasons.

It appears that there was no element of introspection on the part of the Kenyan government on the kind of movies they'd make. As movies quite often are rooted in history and culture, whose history would Kenyan cinema base her stories on? Would Kenyan cinema delve into local cultures and oral traditions (which any way had been condemned and disparaged by the Christian missionaries)?

In some areas of Kenya like central province where the Kikuyus lived, virtually all cultural traditions had been condemned, and born again Christians were hostile to many of the customs which had survived. The born again Christians were still very averse to what they had been indoctrinated to believe were pagan or heathen traditions and rites.<sup>71</sup> Would cinema stories be structured along the colonial conflict between black and white, the colonizer and the colonized or would Kenya cinema follow Jomo Kenyatta's idea of forgetting the past?<sup>72</sup> Why would a world renowned anthropologist want to forget the past of a historic national struggle in which he played a leading role? Couldn't cinema have used this to galvanize and unite the Kenyan communities together in their victory against imperialism? What national image would Kenyan cinema cultivate if Mau Mau the most topical story wasn't good enough?

#### *4.3.8 Local Cinema Houses Close Down*

According to Nyoike F. Njoroge (1967), the reaction of the foreign owners to the establishment of KFCp as the sole importer and distributor of both English films from US and Hindi films from India was totally unexpected and it threw the film industry into a big crisis leading to a closure of cinema houses over a period. The cinema owners boycotted the films imported by KFCp and opted to close down their cinemas. The local work force in all the cinemas was rendered jobless and the trade union movement representing the workers was up in arms fighting for their re-engagement.

The Indian part of the Kenyan film industry wasn't any better. Indian businessmen owned most of the theatres in the region and the Indian films had larger audiences because of the larger populations. The Permanent Secretary Information and Broadcasting Mr. P.J. Gachathi (1968), in a secret memo briefing his counterpart in Commerce and Industry Mr. Matiba laments that the Indians own most of the film theatres and they were "extremely uncooperative and provocative in dealing with KFCp and severe action was being contemplated against them."

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<sup>71</sup> Wanjiru Kinyanjui explores this conflict hilariously in the *Battle of the Sacred Tree* a student film she produced as a student at Berlin University.

<sup>72</sup> Jomo Kenyatta had established his reputation internationally as a reputed anthropologist and had been a student of a leading Russian Anthropologist Branislow Malinowski, before the publication of his *Facing Mt. Kenya*.

To defeat the KFCp distribution initiative, the Indian cinema owners closed down most of their theatres and surrendered their film libraries to a Tanzanian film distributor NDC which would show the same films in the Kenyan, theatres which remained open under a 'reciprocal' trade arrangement between Tanzania and Kenya. This denied KFCp revenue from the lucrative Indian movie business. The owners of the closed businesses then started clamoring for compensation from the Kenya government claiming that their businesses had been nationalized and the operating ones ruined. Because of the dual citizenship that they had acquired from Britain with the granting of independence, they claimed to be Kenyan businessmen when it was convenient for them as they made sure they kept the door shut between KFCp and the Indian film industry.

Another even more difficult challenge was a demand from Globe, Liberty, Tivoli, and Vedesh cinemas which claimed they were trading at a loss after they started using the KFCp films. The lawyer to the companies Veljee Devshi & Bakrania (1968), claimed that the Globe cinema expenditure was KShs44, 000 per month and they would seek an indemnity equal to that amount to protect them against losses imposed on them, otherwise the closure of the cinema would be "an economic necessity, to avoid losses and bankruptcy." To demonstrate their sincerity, they challenged the government to express an interest in buying, leasing or giving the theatre an indemnity against losses.

The nature of film business is such that no one has a guarantee that a film will make money or run at a loss no matter who the director or the stars are. The test of a film's success is always at the box office and therefore asking for an indemnity was nothing short of business cum political mischief.

The cinema closure which was intended to blackmail the government ended up a complete failure and the government had the last laugh. All the cinemas that had closed down reopened except for the three owned by the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox that is Twentieth Century, Kenya Cinema, and Thika Drive-In. They all were ready finally to receive their supplies from the KFCp. The government also started enquiries to find companies owned by Africans and citizen Asians to take over running of cinemas that may decide to close down indefinitely.

Mr. P.J. Gachathi,(1968), the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Commerce and Industry in a memo briefing to the ministers of Commerce and Industry and Minister of Information and Broadcasting observed that the so called 'crisis' had been nothing but a trial of strength between the Kenya Government and a private sector dominated by foreign interests . "The ability of the government to stand firm and enforce its decisions to Africanize the industry had withstood a very severe test." He observed that throughout the crisis, it had been widely believed that the government would go back on its word. "On no account should government give any indication that it is reconsidering its decision as the repercussions of such a decision could be very grave indeed. It would create a precedent by which powerful commercial groups can gang up together to deliberately obstruct government policies especially in the programme of Africanisation." But if government had shown such mettle in safeguarding her newly acquired film distribution monopoly, there was still much to do in jump-starting a local film industry.

Even as the local feature film industry was stuck in a rut, the 1970s stand out in the documentary film production. Allan Roots, who was born in England and migrated to Kenya, and is a world renown and Kenya's leading wildlife film photographer shot several documentaries which kept Kenyan films in the map at the international level. Roots started off with *Seafari* in 1970, a documentary featuring the Kenyan coastline and the marine life which is often ignored. He followed this up with "*Baobab The Portrait of a Tree*" in 1973 which got international acclaim and In 1974, he shot *The Year of the Wildebeest* "which provides a breathtakingly dramatic view of the wildebeestes' immense, epic journey from the Maasai Mara to the Serengeti in a captivating, action packed, electrifying film. It is one of the most acclaimed wildlife documentaries and it's noted as "a memorable and majestic portrait of one of greatest wildlife spectacles on Earth."<sup>73</sup> He used ingenious camera techniques like putting the camera protected by a tortoise shell under the hoofs of the speeding animals, to capture them thundering above at a spectacular speed. He and the wife have over the years shot highly successful documentary movies.

#### 4.3.9 KIMC Dream Comes True

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<sup>73</sup> <http://www.wildfilmhistory.org/film/104/The+Year+of+the+Wildebeest.html>

According to Nyoike F. Njoroge (1967), the Kenya government had soon after independence set a goal of establishing film processing laboratories with the assumption that this constituted the most critical part to the creation of a film industry, leading to the establishment of KFCp as discussed above. With the assistance of the German government, film processing laboratories were established at the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication in the 1970s which had been established as a broadcasting engineering training school in 1961. The establishment of the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC) was aimed at training professionals who would make movies that portray the right image of an independent country as they also filled the job vacancies in the broadcasting industry which previously were held by expatriates. Unfortunately, despite locally trained film makers being available, this didn't spark off the anticipated flourish of a local film industry. Unlike the government thinking of the day, film production required a lot more than film laboratories and qualified technicians.

Although trained to shoot and edit film in celluloid at the leading regional film production training facility KIMC in the late 1970s, when they graduated in the early 1980s, they had to adopt to work in video because celluloid colour film production was unaffordable for new entrants into the market. Among the early trainees were Jane Munene who is now the President of FEPACI and Dommie Yambo Odotte who was the first indigenous Kenyan to open up a film production company Zebralink,<sup>74</sup> Albert Wandago, Ingolo wa Keya among others. All these producers made their contributions in establishing a local film industry in their divergent ways.

One of the challenges they encountered was establishing themselves as 'independent' movie producers. In the first place, film as an industry was still a vague term in the market place. The only institutions that could claim to produce films were a broadcast station like Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) or the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) which had well established studio infrastructures and production traditions.

There were also Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which were commissioning and producing mostly documentary films in their areas of operation. Although these recently

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<sup>74</sup> Disrupting Binary Divisions: Representation of Identity in Saikati and Battle of the Sacred Tree, Wanjiku Beatrice Mukora Graduate Program in Communications McGill university, Montreal July, 1999 [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk1/tape7/PQDD\\_0016/MQ55002.pdf](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk1/tape7/PQDD_0016/MQ55002.pdf)



graduated producers were commissioned to produce stories for the Kenyan consumers based on the agendas of the commissioning NGOs, the frustration for some was the limited freedom to produce stories of their choice, in a style of their choice. Most of the documentary film productions produced in the 1980s by local producers were servicing the needs and the agendas of the NGOs.

According to James E. Genova (2013), using film to pass across serious social development messages had been mooted as a viable channel of communication for development in several African forums from the early 1960s but this didn't happen until the 1970s. The establishment of the Kenya Film Corporation in 1967, the first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa also created some film consciousness so that by the 1980s despite the challenges it encountered against MPEAA while trying to wrench film distribution control in Kenya from their stranglehold, the Kenyan society was ready for, and expecting local productions.

According to Rachel Dianga (2011), the first local feature to be fully funded by government was *Kolormask* by Sao Gamba. By then, Sao was the Director of Kenya Film Corporation and also the film's script writer and director. Having lived in Europe for over seven years, studying film directing, he was inspired to make a film relating to the cultural encounters between Western and African lifestyles. Being one of a few people with the film production exposure at the international level, he failed to consult widely enough and ended up producing a film that failed to resonate with local audiences for whom it had been targeted.

Cinema had been used by the colonialists to belittle Africans and African cinema makers were united in recommending the use of cinema to disabuse the Africans and create cinema that represented them from a local perspective. There had been several forums by African film makers that had called for a common approach to film making.

According to David Murphy<sup>75</sup> from the early 1970s, African filmmakers and other prominent cineastes sought to build a common approach to African filmmaking especially due the negative representations that had been done of Africans during the colonial and the

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<sup>75</sup> Africans Filming Africa: Questioning Theories of an Authentic African Cinema Author(s): David Murphy

Reviewed work(s): Source: Journal of African Cultural Studies, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Dec., 2000), pp. 239-249

postcolonial eras. A number of meetings had been convened in various venues to discuss this among other developmental issues.

One such meeting occurred in Algiers, Algeria between 11th and 13th December 1973. At the meeting, Third World filmmakers deliberated on the possible use of 'Third World cinema,' as a popular tool of remaking history. Cinema was seen as a means of seeking cultural liberation and could create the needed progress. Co-productions among the third world countries were also recommended as a means by which the countries would express "anti-imperialist solidarity."

According to Ruth Dianga (ibid), another meeting making similar recommendations on production of African films was held from March 1st - 4th 1982 in Niamey, Niger. Its participants, drawn from different areas of cinema, observed that African cinema needed a commitment for it to assert the cultural identity of the Africans. It also recommended that governments should support national film industries in terms of policies, financial assistance and distribution of films in particular countries. The governments were also to establish national film corporations to centralize all matters pertaining to cinema in their countries. Perhaps in answer to these demands, the first government sponsored local film to address this need *Kolormask* by Sao Gamba (1985), was commissioned in 1986 by Levinson Nguru who was heading the Kenya Film Corporation.

It is curious that the first government sponsored local film could be based on such a frivolous, if not peripheral storyline based on marital tensions between a black Kenyan man and a white woman, especially when the target audience was still much unsophisticated. The film opened to a very enthusiastic audience of eager Kenyans anxious to finally see their story on the big screen. But the enthusiasm soon dissipated as most early viewers could not relate directly to the black and white love story. The theme of the movie appears to have been targeting the upper middle class who could resonate with the issues relating to interracial family conflicts.

The box office of the enterprise was a financial disaster.

The ordinary man in the street felt that this was not their story. *Kolormask* was a far cry from *Love Brewed in an African Pot*, a Ghanaian film which had earlier mesmerized the Kenyans and broke the box office attendance records in Kenya. The story telling technique

in this film used the traditional African tone and it created great expectations of how film can be a tool of culture and entertainment. Kenyans were expecting a similar treat from their first public funded and locally produced film. But the taste of the film, to borrow imagery from Ngugi wa Thiong'o's 'The River Between', "was like warm water in the mouth of a thirsty man."

But the failure of *Kolormask* at the box office should not have been the last nail on the coffin of the Kenyan film industry. During the Third Kenyan Film Exhibitor's Conference in 1985, Hilary Ng'weno (1985) had forewarned anyone who would listen... "A country cannot be a film producing country if it produces films infrequently. A film industry cannot be based on the production of one or two feature films, once in a while. A film industry is made up of activities which produce many films. Some of them will be hits; the majority will not. The important thing is that for the industry to be alive, there must be enough hits to offset the financial failures, and that means a proliferation of films in the country." Hilary Ng'weno gave an example of two recent box office hits, *Love Brewed in an African Pot* and the *Rise and Fall of Idi Amin*. They had succeeded because their stories resonated with Kenyan audiences. Sao Gamba, who had lately returned from Europe where he had studied film, reckoned he knew better and produced *Kolormask* which ended up as a box office disaster. The failure of *Kolormask* however should not have ended up as tragically as the story of the proverbial child who died from starvation, after having been served a toad for breakfast. He won't touch food again.

The film format production alternatives are crucial in determining whether a film production enterprise will break even or not. Hilary Ng'weno educated the 1985 Kenyan conference attendants on the available choices of film formats and their financial implications. In his presentation, he stated that Kenya did not have processing labs for 35mm colour films. Neither were there available 35mm colour cameras except for some antiquated equipment in the Kenya Newsreel crew. So, 35mm as a format was discouraged "because it would entail so many outside inputs that to all intents and purposes, the final product would only be local only in name." He recommended filming using 16mm camera equipment.

Although 16mm is inferior to 35mm in quality and film screen size, Ngweno's advice to Kenya was to cut her cloth according to her pocket. "At the KIMC, we already have a 16mm colour film lab that can turn out a feature film to the final release print stage, 16 mm cameras and editing facilities, including a wide range of production gear exist in the country. And what's more, there are competent crewmen who can handle the equipment, the proof of this being that overseas production teams often use these local crewmen on their production when they shoot in Kenya.....16mm production not only because of the reduced lab costs, but also because of flexibility in production strategies due to the portability of the equipment- ends up being sometimes less than a third of the costs of mounting an equivalent production in 35mm. We are talking of productions in the range of 3-5 million Kenya shillings per feature film in 16mm as compared with sums of a much higher magnitude in 35mm."

For film distribution purposes, Ng'weno suggested that 16mm would still work well through distribution in schools, social centers and open air circuits. Although most cinema owners prefer 35m because they had invested heavily in the facilities, he told them that due to the diminishing cinema audiences in Europe and America, theatre owners there were partitioning their 35mm cinema to smaller theatres with 16mm screens, sitting smaller audiences as 35mm operation costs had become prohibitive. It had become more cost effective to run two or three 16mm movies at the same time instead of a one 35mm film. The 16mm prints cost a lot less, so do the projection equipment.

Ng'weno's concluding recommendation was that there was a wide scope for 16mm projection in the Kenyan market. Many halls could be converted into comfortable cinemas for 16mm projection for a fraction of what it would take to build a 35mm projection cinema. In any case, the 16mm gauge was the only way the cinema was going to reach the small urban centers in the rural areas. Ng'weno's observed that there was a huge potential for a local film industry shot on 16mm cameras utilizing relevant stories which appeal to the average Kenyan. When local movies were not available, American features with black actors could be screened because Kenyans showed a great interest in African features.

But as KFCp the government corporation handling film was ignoring sound advice and sponsoring stories that didn't resonate with the ordinary Kenyans, the 1980s in Kenya are more memorable for the political repression that came immediately after the 1982 failed

coup after which there was a big clamp down against artists, journalists, and all campaigners of freedom of expression.

The going away into exile of creative people like Ngugi wa Thiong'o among other prominent

Kenyan scholars is almost a replica of Chinua Achebe's story of Okonkwo's banishment to Mbaino in 'Things Fall Apart', which coincided with the white missionaries invading Umuofia unimpeded and where they started desecrating the land by imposing the Christian faith and beliefs over a hapless broken Umuofian people. Unlike Kenya, the 1980s in West Africa is when the renaissance of African cinema spearheaded by the likes of Sembene Ousmane and FESPACO was at its peak, telling the African story. The Kenyan landscape on the other hand had become the playground and the canvas of the colonizer to retell the story of his triumph over a broken people.

Looking back on the happenings of the 1980s, it becomes understandable how the film industry could not thrive because the political environment was hostile to all manner of creative expression. According to Nyutho/Munene (2015), a film culture cannot be established easily under a dictatorial culture because, "Film makers have the power to communicate with masses, and the lack of the democratic space killed the creative drive that had started in the 60s and 70s." Munene fails to see the rationale of establishing a glamorous production training facility like KIMC, if the same government fails to grant the trainees the power to exercise their creative potential. "Why start a film school that will not train people to think freely, creatively and critically? I think the crackdown on the freedom of expression greatly undermined the takeoff of the film industry under Moi's repressive regime."

A similar sentiment was expressed by Nyutho/Wanjiru Kinyanjui, (2015) who says that Kenya has lagged behind Nigeria and South Africa because of political reasons. Because the government got scared of the artistic and creative people, it killed the artistic and what she calls 'the creative spirit' during Moi's 24 year dictatorial regime which stifled the beginning of the movie industry. "When Ngugi wa Thiong'o went into exile and there was a repression on the intellectuals, this impacted negatively on the birth of the industry."

On his part, before being bundled into exile, Ngugi wa Thiongo had established performance of theatre by the local communities using indigenous languages at Kamiirithu rural village in a Kikuyu play called *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, (I will Marry When I Want). The communal participation appears to have upset the Moi government.

It's ironic that the start of Moi's repressive regime would coincide with the coming of a highly successful African American producer Gordon Parks Jr., who chose this period to come to 'Transform Nairobi into the Hollywood of Africa' with Sex and Violence genre movies, with the do-gooder belief that he was being benevolent to the motherland. Unfortunately, he didn't live long enough to see the end of his production *Bush Trackers*, which I will critique in chapter seven. But the end of the Moi era in December 2002 coincided with the opening up of institutions which could articulate the plight and the needs of local budding film makers.

#### *4.3.10 Formation of Kenya National Film Association*

When the wind of change came after the fall of the Berlin wall, and the repeal of section 2A in the Kenyan constitution after 1990, the opening of free expression opened opportunities for local film producers to express their plight and their needs. According to Nyutho/Munene (2015) a group of producers including herself, Dommie Yambo Odote, Albert Wandago, Ingolo wa Keya decided to approach government for the setting up of structures that would enable them to operate as independent film producers. The producers most of whom had trained together at KIMC and who were producing own films and documentaries used to visit each other in their houses to view and critic their work and they needed facilitation to do this in a formal, more professional setting.

According to Nyutho/Munene, (ibid), "If I did a documentary, I would invite the four other producers to my house and they would watch and give me feedback. And that is how we decided to form an association that could allow us to have a common voice and engage the government. That's how Kenya Film Association was started." Jane Munene the initiator of the idea became the first chairlady of the association.

One of the greatest motivations of this small group of producers was to establish themselves as independent producers in the professional sense. Even though they all had their companies and they had their portfolio of clients most of who were NGOs, they still were not free to create their own stories and tell those stories the way they wanted to. They were acting as ‘voices for other people,’ which was frustrating even though it helped to pay the bills according to Munene (ibid).

Film globally is produced either as a studio film or by an independent producer. Although the definitions between independent and studio productions are getting blurred in the digital error,<sup>76</sup> studio comprises of a large vertically integrated company and independent producers generate their own concepts, write them and pitch to a financier and have the creative license to produce the film the way they want once they win the finance.

When they were commissioned by the NGOs and other clients, local producers normally conformed to the style and the portrayals as demanded by the client and didn’t have the free hand to tell the stories their own way. According to Nyutho/Munene (ibid), this is highly limiting if your intention is to set up your own film production company. “I am building my own company coz you know, I don’t want to keep on citing the films that I had done for the government or for other clients such as NGOs, and I wanted to have my very own track record. And on this other hand is to join with the other few independent film makers to actually start engaging and build the Kenyan Film Industry. So I would say for me that was the first challenge that I faced as an independent film maker.” The film association grew into a strong lobby group which was able to attract sympathy from the French Embassy. They were able to impress on government to create a commission to deal with film and Kenya Film Commission was created in 2005.

#### *4.3.11 Kenya Cine-Week Created at French Cultural Centre*

The quest for the producers to get a venue where they could meet was answered by the French Cultural Center and a Kenya Cine Week was created. The cine week which fell during September/October provided an annual opportunity for the local producers to exhibit their films for free to the local audiences. The FCC also financed the operations and

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<sup>76</sup> How Does One Define "Independent Film" Now? <http://www.producersguild.org/news/219032/>

expenditures of the local film producers during this period. According to Jane Munene (ibid), the sponsorship was done on an equal partnership with no strings attached. This forum widened in scope to accommodate other association of television producers (KFTPA). The expanded group which included independent film producers started to engage the Kibaki government in 2003, after the end of Moi era in December 2002.

In between 2002 and 2005, a series of meetings were held sponsored by the French Embassy to structure the Kenya Film Commission. According to Ogova Ondego (2013),<sup>77</sup> studies were done on the formation and operation of film commissions in countries like Namibia, Australia, South Africa, and France to see what worked and what didn't to avoid having to reinvent the wheel in Kenya. The minister in charge of Information and Broadcasting Raphael Tuju was himself a media personality who was thoroughly acquainted with the challenges of film production in Kenya. He was committed to change the broadcast policy to force media owners to broadcast 60% local content but he found heated resistance from media owners who were more interested in feathering their own nests using cheaper foreign content than to celebrate the pride of Kenyans viewing their own content.

#### *4.3.12 Formation of Kenya Film Commission*

The Kenya Film Commission (KFC) was established in 2005 by the Kenyan government after close to 10 years of lobbying by independent producers. It however didn't come into operation until mid-2006. It is currently under the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the arts. The mandate of the commission includes: advise the Government and other relevant stakeholders on matters relating to development, coordination, regulation and promotion of the film industry in Kenya; To facilitate the provision of content development, funding and investment for film projects; To market Kenya as a Film destination; To facilitate proper systems of film archives in Kenya; To facilitate investment in the development of infrastructure in the film industry.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ogova Ondego (2013) HOW KFC WAS FORMED Firul Maithya Published October 29, 2013

<http://artmatters.info/film/2013/10/how-and-why-kenya-film-commission-was-created/>, accessed on 24/9/2015

<sup>78</sup> KFC Website, <http://www.kenyafilmcommission.com/index.php/about-us/2014-11-17-17-25-23/what-wedo>, accessed on 4/2/2015



According to Ogova Ondego (ibid), the lobby team that lobbied government for the setting up of the commission wanted a film fund from which local practitioners could access production funding through a competitive and transparent process. The lobby group also wanted to equip practitioners with relevant skills through internships, workshops and seminars and even training through formal audio-visual media training schools abroad. The team according to Ondego (ibid), envisaged a body that could assist in handling the distribution of films done in Kenya by Kenyans. The priority was to market Kenya as a production hub, and not market it as a film location for foreign films. Ogova claims that originally Kenya being a production hub for local content was emphasized but it somehow didn't happen. Ogova adds that, "In the long term we wanted this body to come up with a commission that would create a film school in Kenya."

According to Ogova Ondego (ibid), to hasten the setting up and operationalization of the commission, instead of the Information minister taking a bill to parliament to await a long and tedious debate process before it became law, Raphael Tuju the Minister for Information and Broadcasting took the proposal straight to President Kibaki who set up KFC under an executive order in December 2005. For KFC to be anchored more securely into the law, a bill still has to be debated by parliament that can provide security of tenure to the commission. As it is, the current commission was created by what is popularly called a roadside declaration and it could be disbanded as easily.

Kenya Film Commission after it started its operations in 2006 appears to have created a completely new mandate for itself significantly different from those envisaged by the team that consulted to set it up. Although a film fund was established, the funding it dispensed is said to be too little to fund and meaningful productions. According to Nyutho/Cajetan Boy (2015) a local film producer, he was granted Kenya shillings 150,000/= to produce a movie by KFC which was far from meeting his budgetary needs especially for the movie launch which generates publicity so that audiences come to view. When he approached KFC for funding the launch they declined. But KFC was happy enough to spend Shillings 150,000/= to host a cocktail party for *Nairobi Half Life* the film that was fully funded by a German company 'One Fine Day Films.' This is proof that KFC have wrong priorities.

The goal of setting up KFC was to promote the Kenyan film industry locally first before any international promotion, but according to Nyutho/Munene (2015), KFC never seemed to realize what their mandate was. They didn't seem to do much between 2006 and 2010. Jane contends that they appeared to think that their job was to tour the world attending international film festivals with no local films to show but distributing brochures to market Kenya as a filming destination. For the international community looking to film in Kenya, the Commission offers detailed information on locations; offer liaison services on behalf of the government; advise on recce's, film licensing and immigration; as well as facilitate the filming process for film makers. But the crucial job of film distribution has completely been forgotten. There currently isn't a single record of locally produced films and where they are available in Kenya. The Kenya Film Commission falls under the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts.

It is clear that since 2005 when KFC was created, it has not been successful to fulfil this mandate. This has put it at loggerheads with some critics who find that there is no viable explanation why no firm action appears to have been put on the ground to create a vibrant film industry. One such critic is a website known as The KENYAN ARTIVIST which poses poignant questions to the policy maker. Some of the questions include the following:

- i. How has the commission advised both the government and other relevant stakeholders on matters of importance to the Kenya Film Industry?
- ii. What has the commission achieved with the advice and how has the mandate been actualized?
- iii. Can the commission tell the stakeholders what they have done for the realization of their second mandate to facilitate the provision of content development, funding and investment for film projects?

The commission is faced with a barrage of accusations, some of which are supposed to come from industry players. It is accused of having failed to market Kenya as a filming destination and failure to create a film distribution network and ensure all local productions are available.

The aim of a film policy should be to promote efficient, effective and economical management of the film industry. The policy should seek to provide a foundation to enable a complete and profitable turn around for the film industry and make it an investment sector of choice for both local and international investors. The film policy should aim at promoting local films and enabling the industry to self-regulate itself with essential support from the government where necessary.

#### *4.3.13 Kalasha Awards under (KFC)*

Besides being lambasted by some detractors, KFC launched the Kalasha awards in 2010 and they celebrated the 5th Edition in November 2014. The Kalasha Film & TV Awards which is Kenya's local version of the Oscar Awards is a brain-child of Kenya Film Commission which creates a platform for Kenyans to celebrate their cultural diversity through film. It has encouraged local filmmakers towards production of quality films and television content. The Kalasha Film Awards provide an opportunity to celebrate different varieties of films under the umbrella of the Kenya Film Commission once a year. It also provides a platform for film producers, directors, and other technical experts to meet the audiences, the actors and actresses and the corporate world under one roof.

There are such awards elsewhere in the world and the setting up of the Kalasha Awards is a clear indication the KFC has a clear vision for the industry. But not all producers agree on how the event is managed.

According to Nyutho/Munene (ibid), asking producers to make copies of their copyrighted materials for the judgement at the awards creates loopholes for copyright abuse. Jane has consistently refused to submit any of her films for Kalasha Awards because the organizers have failed to guarantee to her that her intellectual property is safe. "They ask for your film and they tell you they have the right to a copy of your film and they'd go and give it to the judges and the jury. These judges are human beings and they can be compromised. And so instead of the government looking for ways to protect me as a producer or the film maker, they actually are opening more ways for my film to be exposed to copyright abuse, and I can tell you that's the reason I have never entered anything of mine in Kalasha awards.

Because the organizers have failed to guarantee that my films are secure from copyright abuse once I release them.”

Cajetan Boy (ibid), feels strongly that KFC have lost sight of their mission and their mandate and they're strictly supposed to deal with the promotion of movies production, They should desist from venturing so much into broadcast television beyond the dramatic content. He claims that judging discussion programmes, talk shows, television news presentation should be left to other organizations such as the Media Council of Kenya.

These are some of the teething problems the film organizers have to cope with as they try to make the Kalasha awards festival even more robust and more beneficial to all stakeholders. According to Nyutho/Lizzie Chongoti (2015), KFC is revamping the Kalasha award to make it a one-stop shop market place for the producers and consumers of film content.

“We realized that we have a big marketing event in the South African region, we have a big marketing event in the West African region, yet when you come to East Africa you find that we are the only country with a film commission, we are the only country with a copyright board, so in terms of intellectual property we are quite involved. We are also very advanced in mobile telephony which is one of the biggest content platforms. Even Safaricom has gone into content now. So we felt that we needed to make Kenya the place to go to. And then with the digital migration, we are not just going to have a film and TV festival, but a broader based market so that it becomes a one-stop shop for people in this industry. So it will also be a business opportunity across the whole spectrum, so it will give a chance to film makers to come and pitch content for consumers to come and buy content; a place for equipment manufacturers to show case their products, so that you know the various equipment that are available... Then we will have film workshops and master classes. So it's going to be like a one-stop shop. That's what we are planning for later this year.”

If KFC is able to do this, they will be able to attract film producers and consumers from Durban to Nairobi. Nairobi has an advantage of being a more central hub and with proper marketing and co-ordination; they will be able to pull the carpet from under Durban's feet. Durban has been strategically placing and marketing itself as the center of cinema in Africa and Nairobi could provide formidable competition with proper planning.

#### *4.3.14 Kenya Schools and Colleges Film Festival.*

The year 2012 stands out in Kenya's movie history. It was the year that *Nairobi half Life*, the most successful local film so far was launched. But more importantly, in 2012, the film industry got a surprise gift with the birth of The Schools and Colleges Film Festival under the umbrella of the Kenya National Drama Festival, a local creative performing arts event that has been running every April since 1959.

The drama festival is billed as the largest celebration of art in Africa by young thespians.<sup>79</sup> The festival provides a platform for the creative expression of Kenyan school children and youth from all corners of Kenya. The festival brings together young thespians from early childhood centers, primary schools, secondary schools, universities and tertiary institutions. Apart from plays which premiered the festival in 1959 when it was launched, other performed genres include; dramatized solo and choral verses, traditional dances, stand up comedies and lately films.

The innovative thing about the films is that the teachers and students have the liberty to script, shoot and edit stories of their choices using their own skills or with technical backup from experts in the school's neighborhood. This has opened up a great opportunity for exposing film production skills to the Kenyan children at a very young age. This provides the spring board from which future producers will hone their skills at an opportune age. Without this opportunity, the chances of the children from some of the remote schools to appear on the silver screen would have been very remote indeed. The festival is in a way providing a platform for the talented children to showcase their talents irrespective of where they come from.

The festival has grown by leaps and bounds over the last three years. According to the festival coordinator Dr. S.P. Otieno, (Nyutho/Otieno 2015), when the festival was started in 2012, the organizers were expecting eight films, at least one each from the eight Kenyan regions but during the screening at Kakamega High School in April 2012, thirty-seven films were screened to the surprise of the organizers.

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<sup>79</sup> Patrick Khaemba, Executive Secretary, Kenya National Drama Festival in Drama Festival billed as the largest celebration of art in Africa, Schools Films 2012/2013 in The EduFilmer 1<sup>st</sup> edition Apr-Sep 2014

Although some institutions presented films of low artistic standards, the overall quality was outstanding and the top four films were of very high quality.<sup>80</sup> The overall winning film 'Time,' is a hallowing allegory of the Kenyan 2007/2008 post-election violence. The plot of the story can match the ingenuity of the best in the world. The setting is a story that transpires overnight, but spans events that affect an entire nation in a five-year electoral cycle.

#### *4.3.15 Film Distribution Infrastructure Challenges*

One of the challenges to the Kenyan film industry is the absence of a repository and a distribution system. This not only exists at the national level but also at the newly created Schools Film Festival level. According to Nyutho/ Otieno (ibid), over the last four years of the film festivals, they have produced well over 100 hours of high quality films which are waiting to be released, but there's fear that the rampant film piracy will rob the producers off their potential earnings once the digital copies hit the market."

The films which are said to be of very high quality are locked up until the organization appoints a trustworthy marketing manager who will be able to oversee the distribution and marketing of the same in a way that will undercut piracy and deliver the proceeds to the rightful owners. According to Nyutho/Otieno (ibid), when the films are released, they should be readily available over the entire region where they are in demand, and in low enough prices to discourage pirated copies. When pushed to explain why the films cannot be marketed on line instead of the old DVD marketing strategy, Dr. Otieno stated that the marketing manager once appointed would be the one to implement the best strategies for marketing and distribution of the films.

When asked to explain how a new film production venture can be established and flourish so fast, Dr. Otieno explains that the University of Nairobi has worked closely with the Ministry of Education and the Kenya Film Commission (KFC) to facilitate basic training workshops to the highly motivated teacher producers who are more than eager to learn the art and the skills and who then venture into production. According to Dr. SP Otieno (2013), several training workshops have been held that include training in; camera operations,

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<sup>80</sup> This researcher was an adjudicator at this festival alongside Rachel Dianga another Scholar and Lecturer in Film at Kenyatta University.

sound operations, video editing, DVD authoring, quality control and distribution. The Executive Secretary of the festival Mr. Khaemba Sirengo acknowledges that the development “is aimed at preparing talented students for possible future careers in acting and cinematography.”

According to Mr. S. Khaemba (2014), the most outstanding films would be made available to the public through local television stations. The release into open broadcast will come after the producers have recouped return on their investments, through DVD sales and possibly online distribution modes. The festival has grown by leaps and bounds and threatens to spiral outside the scope of the organization.

In 2012, instead of the 8 expected films to launch the ceremony, there were 37 in total. By 2013, number of films rose to 79. In 2014, the number rose to 114 and by April 2015, the number of films rose to 161. As Dr. S.P. Otieno (ibid) noted, the increase in number of new films has also created proliferation of low quality films because there are many entrants who produce without adequate training. Some of the new entrants are hiring the technical services of untrained videographers who operate videos to record weddings and funerals in lengthy continuous shots without any cinematography considerations in shot and sound composition in similar fashion to Riverwood of yester years. This drawback is being addressed by film production training sessions conducted by the Department of Literature, University of Nairobi.

Among the many challenges that have been observed in the new production platform is the dire need for training both in scripting and technical productions. Although the University of Nairobi with financial assistance from the Kenya Film Commission has given some basic film production training in the past, this is but a drop in the ocean. So much more needs to be done to cover the entire country. According to Dr. Otieno (2013), training for this venture requires to be structured and a sponsor with adequate resources identified.

The trainees are given the basics in film production including script writing, cinematography, screenplay, editing, distribution and marketing. How effective these short trainings are waits to be evaluated in future.

The public schools where the bulk of the Kenyan school children attend do not have enough financial resources for film production and lack of resources translates into poor quality productions. Innovative money generating ventures to invest into film production need to be devised and the marketing and sales of the films and paying the moneys earned back to the producers will create a foundation of trust which is lacking in the enterprise so far, Nyutho/Otieno (ibid) noted that lack of financial accountability from people entrusted with the sale of *The Edufilmer*, a magazine launched for the organization has been observed and people identified to handle financial resources of the organization must have financial integrity.

Distribution of movies in Kenya is one of the most nagging problems in the industry. In doing business, it is incomprehensible to create a production line without an outlet to your customers. The best example of the benefits of film marketing and distribution is the "Hollywood Blockbuster" phenomenon. There is a very well-choreographed process that starts to build up immediately the script has been written, and production crew and cast hired. All conceivable media are employed in the promotion including internet, radio, newspaper/magazine, television, etc. According to [filmkenya.blogspot.com](http://filmkenya.blogspot.com),<sup>81</sup> the hype precedes upcoming films by up to a year at times as studios build anticipation for an 'inproduction' film. Previews and trailers, marketed online and through other media and featured on television and sometimes radio. This intensifies in the lead-up to the release date and usually much publicized premiere almost guaranteeing a decent box office debut. The Kenyan film needs to know how to create the hype especially through the added advantages of social media which when properly handled works faster and with more impact than the conventional media.

#### *4.3.16 Cinema in the Counties of Devolved Government*

The Kenya Constitution 2010 is impacting cinema in an unprecedented way. In the devolved two tier government system, some of the county governments have gone ahead to map out strategies of how to embrace cinema production to fight unemployment and to generate wealth. Others do not have adequate knowledge to embrace cinema as a solution to

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<sup>81</sup> [filmkenya.blogspot.com](http://filmkenya.blogspot.com)



some of their problems. The KFC CEO Lizzie Chongoti, in Nyutho/Chongoti KII (2015) identifies this disparity as a major challenge in KFC's effort to try to create a common approach to film making in the devolved government structure: "The counties are quite new and they're grappling with many issues, like culture and tourism...we educate them and share with them the work of the KFC and the opportunities in the industry and they're quite excited to work with us to make the film industry grow."

The other challenge is to create a common approach in the fees charged by the various counties. "We are also trying to ensure we educate them on how to harmonize charging the filming fees. Besides the filming license by DFS, they levy various fees in the counties. Some of them levy very heavy fees because they don't realize that the benefit of film in the county isn't at the entry level but at the jobs and the expenditure of the film crews as they spend their money procuring goods and services from the counties. It creates jobs for mama githeri in the food kiosks, they will hire cars, they will spend in the hotels"

Machakos County whose governor is a well-established film maker is far ahead of the other counties. In 2013 for example, Machakos County set up Machakos Entertainment Center for

Film, Media, Music and the Arts (*Machawood*), which already has a marketing logo, *City of Dreams*.

According to Governor Dr. Alfred Mutua (2014)<sup>82</sup> the enterprise was expected to generate over "30,000 jobs and 500 Million Kenya Shillings (equal to about US\$ 5.2Million), to Machakos County in the next one year". Dr Mutua himself is an accomplished film producer and media personality with tremendous experience and formidable drive.

Besides making money, Machawood has a lofty goal of making Machakos County the premier location for African entertainment. Already construction is underway for a modern amphitheatre where film launches and festivals will be hosted. The board of Machawood is made up of highly experienced entertainment and media professionals<sup>83</sup> headed by Peter

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<sup>82</sup> LAUNCH OF MACHAWOOD <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.240017546147861>

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.240017546147861.1073741911.191873030962313&type=1>

Mutie the immediate former CEO of Kenya Film Commission, Daniel Ndambuki aka Churchill, Kentice Tikolo, Caroline Mutoko etc.

The first movie to be launched in Machawood even before finalizing the studios which are under construction is a story shot partly in Kenya and partly in the US. The film titled *Love and Deceit*<sup>84</sup>, tells a tale about two Kenyan friends and their ‘fortunes and misfortunes’ in their homeland and in America. The movie is featuring actors from across Africa including Liberia, Tanzania, Nigeria and Kenya.

Machawood have created strategies to attract local and international producers to film in Machakos County without paying any fees. On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Governor Alfred Mutua launched the Machakos Fest<sup>85</sup> film competition with very high rewards for the winners. The overall winner will take home one million Kenya shillings and will also be sponsored in film production training. The runner up will win half that amount. According to Lizzie Chongoti, Machawood has already been able to attract American investments to the county and a sweets and candy factory will be built in Machakos town. Safaricom has also pledged to construct a Mall in Machawood. “People want to be associated with success. When you look like you know what you are doing, the support comes. It’s a good thing; the more counties put up film centers, the more festivals we will have at the grassroots.”

Machakos county has thrown the gauntlet down and the cinema industry is already up and running because they have visionary leadership and a crop of highly experienced experts in the media and the entertainment industry. According to Lizzie Chongoti, Nyutho-Chongoti (2015), the county of Nakuru whose governor also is conversant with film as an industry intends to visit Machawood for bench marking. Governor Mutua himself has told the counties in no uncertain terms that they aren’t playing in the same league. “Machakos will not be competing with other counties in Kenya; we will be competing with other successful regions in the world.” The other counties have the bar set for them. Across the counties, one can envisage a big disparity in how cinema is going to be embraced as an investment opportunity. The challenge is open for KFC to devolve film production services in line with devolved governance structures in the 2010 constitution

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<sup>84</sup> <http://nairobiwire.com/2014/05/machawood-lands-first-big-budget-film-launch.html#sthash.SSrO8nGS.dpuf>

## 4.4 Technological Change in the Film Industry

Technological evolutions when they happen sometimes impact the world and people's lives immensely. The evolution of video technology affected the film industry immensely. The development of digital video which translated the analogue video into electronic bits changed the film industry from production to the consumer's homes.

### 4.4.1 Video Knocks on Film's Door

The entry of the video cassette recorder into the Kenyan market rattled the film industry. Both mechanical and digital innovations have influenced everything from equipment to distribution, changing how films are made and the manner in which we consume them.<sup>86</sup> The proliferation of the video home systems cassettes (VHS) in the 1980s shook the cinema industry's foundation to the roots. Cinema had been the global premier family entertainment for close to a century. The entry of video gave families a platform to consume films of their choice without going to the cinema house. Cinema attendances globally declined followed by many closures of cinema houses.

In the US the situation wasn't any better than Kenya. According to Jake Rossen (2013), Jack Valenti, a former president of the Motion Picture Association of America, had warned that the new video distribution might kill his industry. He feared that video would empty theaters and drain studio coffers. His argument was that no one would venture out to multiplexes when films could be disseminated virtually free and viewed in the convenience of one's own home. Valenti feared that the videocassette recorders rolling out of Japanese factories in the 1980s that could make or play copies of movies at minimal cost were going to overrun the movie industry. He called them a "parasitical instrument" and told Congress in 1982: "The VCR is to the American film producer and the American public as the *Boston Strangler* (using an example of an epic movie of the period), is to the woman home alone." According to Rossen (ibid), the scare was exacerbated because the filmmakers heeded him. Steven Spielberg one of the most acclaimed Hollywood directors refused to release *E.T.* to the home video market for six years. The debate was so fierce that it took a Supreme Court ruling to guarantee a consumer's right to record someone else's intellectual property.

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<sup>86</sup> <http://memeburn.com/2013/02/9-tech-innovations-that-changed-the-film-industry-through-the-ages/>

But the fears proved unfounded in the long run. According to Rossen (ibid), despite Hollywood's nervousness, box office revenue rose in the decade of the VCR from \$2.7 billion in 1980 to over \$5 billion in 1990, an increase of over 16 percent. Years later, DVD the successors to videocassettes would account for roughly 50 percent of studios' overall profits.

In Kenya, the scare of the video cassette was equally dramatic. Cinema owners launched a major advertising campaign to combat the video onslaught. According to Kaleb Njama, (1985) cinema owners would buy a full page in the newspapers extolling the virtues of cinema. They also invented gimmicks to launch and sell new movies. Before *Breakdance* got a premier in Nairobi, a breakdancing competition was staged outside Kenya cinema where the film would be shown. For the show of *Woman in Red*, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox gave free tickets to all women dressed in red. And for a *Passage to India*, a free ticket to Bombay was offered to a lucky viewer.

The cinema owners petitioned government to legislate on the use of video in an effort to stem its proliferation and the damage it was inflicting to cinema attendance. In August of 1985, the heated video debate reached a new peak with the gazetting of Video Act 1985 after receiving presidential assent. It was good news for cinema owners who had borne the brunt of video's assault on cinema entertainment market. The decline in attendances had started in 1978 and film distributors blamed it on the illegal importation of video cassettes.

In a film distributor's conference in Nairobi in August 1985, it was estimated that there were over 20,000 illegal video tapes in the country. The conference asked government to increase video libraries license fees from 20,000/= to 100,000/= in an effort to discourage opening up of more video outlets.

According to Njama's report (ibid), figures presented at the August Distributors Conference by general manager of Kenya Film Corporation Mr. Simeon Macharia, attendance in English films climbed from 3,472,878 in 1972 to a peak of 5,119,537 in 1980. With the advent of video, they declined to 3,527,231 in 1983 but there was a slight pick-up in 1984 to 3,536,556. Asian films performed even worse. Since 1972, there was a huge decline in attendance from 2,225,917 people who attended Indian movies to 665,092 in 1984. In the

light of this decline in audiences, cinemas, especially the ones showing Indian movies closed down.

In Nairobi, Globe was forced to close down while the Belle-Vue Drive-in started showing English-language movies except on Sundays in the case of Embassy. In Mombasa the Naaz and the only drive-in closed down. With their backs to the wall, film distributors came out fighting. Mr. Arthur Reuben the chairman of KFC led the onslaught against illegal videos flooding the market and customs officers started raiding video libraries. In one video library in the city center, customs officers nabbed tapes worth over 100,000/= and owners couldn't provide importation documents on the spot. According to Kaleb Njama (ibid), nothing further was heard of this case but a customs official said such operations would continue if the goods were "prohibited, restricted or un-customed."

This video tax didn't change the trend because the video libraries loaded the tax charge on to the video hire costs. According to the Kenya Gazette Supplement no. 58 (Act No.7) of August 30, a person who contravenes the section on taxation will be guilty of an offence and will be liable to a fine not exceeding Shs20,000 or a year's jail sentence. The law continued to warn that no video tape can be hired without a ticket or receipt "stamped in such a manner as may be prescribed denoting that the video tax has been paid."

The KFC saw an opportunity to pursue to have the rights to distribute and censor videotapes. Although video libraries tried to oppose the KFC control, they weren't successful because KFCp had the backing of parliament and the churches which wanted pornographic materials to be prevented from reaching the homes because of the corrupting influences this would have on children. Mr Macharia argued that video movies importation would follow the same procedures and restrictions as film which were censored and graded for adults only e.t.c. He argued strongly that videos were shown in homes where the family audience is unrestricted.

Children get access to the tapes with or without the knowledge of their parents.

Citing procedures followed in other countries, Macharia gave the example of Singapore Censor Board which worked with the police to ensure that each videotape had a censorship stamp. Illegal dealers were subject to a US\$ 100,000 and their licenses were liable to be

cancelled. Given the concern for the morals of the Kenyan children, strong censorship laws were recommended.

Ironically, while video technology was threatening to destabilize, if not destroy the film industry in Kenya, it had the very opposite effect in Nigeria and Nollywood rode on the crest of the new technology to launch their now flourishing cinema industry. According to Gary Kafer (2012), Nollywood started out as a mistake. He claims that in 1992, an Igbo electronics dealer based in Lagos found himself with an overstock of blank cassettes imported from Taiwan and he decided to sell them with a movie as an added bonus. With a shoe string budget and non-professional actors, he produced an Igbo-language and English subtitled film about a greedy man who kills his wife in a ritual sacrifice in order to earn great wealth, only to be haunted by her ghost. Distributed on VHS, the film was wildly successful, selling over 950,000 copies, and effectively announcing the emergence of Nollywood.<sup>87</sup>

#### *4.4.2 Setting up of Video Kiosks in Slums and Towns*

The progressive slump of the Kenyan economy in the 1980s and 90s due to the mismanagement imposed by a corrupt political regime led to the closure of several cinema houses as the dwindling middle class couldn't sustain luxurious lifestyles. This led to the springing up of informal video film theatres in the slums, the estates and shopping centers in the main towns. According to a study by Gabriel Kimani et al (2014), "The Kenyan film scene experienced a descending trajectory characterized by dwindling fortunes in cinema theatres, leading to closure of famed theatres like Odeon cinema, Nairobi cinema, Fox drivein cinemas, and Globe cinema, among others, in Nairobi and other major towns in Kenya.

Another interesting trend of the 1990s is noted by Margareta wa Gacheru who has been writing on the arts and culture since the mid-1970s. She notes that in the 1990s, foreign movie productions in Kenya dwindled because "the political climate became harsh and corrupt, and government placed too many restrictions and taxes on film companies such that few of them wanted to come to film in Kenya."

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<sup>87</sup> Gary Kafer, Introduction to Nollywood Cinema, <http://nollywood.arcadia.edu/introduction/>, accessed on 7/4/2014

As the cinemas auditoriums were succumbing to the culture of indifference to theatre-going in the 1990s, estate and village video shows proliferated in the densely populated low-income urban and peri-urban areas in Kenya.” According Kimani Gabriel et al (2014) Hollywood movies and Hong Kong action movies which were very popular with the young audiences in these makeshift theatres had deejay commentators in Kiswahili to translate the dialogue and make it available to the audiences who could not follow it in English. This concept of live commentary was similar to the commentaries of the silent cinema era between 1890s and 1930s. During this era, cinema had universality because the visuals came without sound and the locals had the freedom to inject their vernacular languages into the story. The creation of sound on film killed this freedom because it subjected audiences to have to listen to the sound track which was predominantly English. The innovative silencing of the original soundtrack and replacing it with local languages gave film attendance a new impetus. This created the foundation to the rise of the Riverwood film business.

One of the local efforts to produce a story on celluloid that made a mark in the 1990s was Catherine Muigai’s production of Saikati which was directed by Anne Mungai. This is the story of a young Maasai girl who in the traditional setting is totally voiceless. She is forbidden to continue her education as her father has married her off in the traditional way to a chief’s son. She has no other way out but to flee her home in search of an education and her independence. She becomes disillusioned in Nairobi when she finds herself being forced to put up with a white man. She opts to return to the same home she had tried to run away from.

The despondency that had crept into the arts due to the climate of political dictatorship, repression and harassment of artists continued into the early 1990s under the Moi regime. For the independent film producers, there were no new openings in the industry to facilitate the growth of their profession.

According to Nyutho/Munene (ibid), there was no established industry at all. Producers who ventured to pitch film production ideas were frustrated by the pervasive lack of awareness in society as a whole. When pitching an idea for example, the people the idea was being pitched to couldn’t understand how an individual Kenyan, and more so a woman could talk of producing a film on her own, without doing it with institutions such as KBC, the only

broadcaster in the country. There was dire need to change this mentality if the industry was to go anywhere.

#### *4.4.3 Impact of Digital Technologies on Kenyan Film Industry*

As this thesis has pointed out, the entry of video technology locally and globally created immense change in the film production industry to the consumers. The evolution of video into digital video was a critical turning point in the Kenyan film industry and it made possible the establishment of the Kenyan informal film industry known as Riverwood which is discussed in the following chapter.

### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has established how the current film scenario was established from the colonial days to the present. During the colonial period Kenya was a landscape for white man's movies before the onset of Mau Mau turned film into a propaganda tool to fight the uprising. Some interesting findings from the 1980s reveal that a film industry is established through a multiplicity of factors other than just provision of technological infrastructure and training. A successful film industry is defined by localized networks or linkages that integrate policies, institutions, knowledge resources, a highly skilled workforce so that, collectively, these various elements constitute a sustainable critical mass. But they need to be covered under a political climate that appreciates free and creative expression and buttressed by government support for the industry to take root.

The chapter established how policy custodians without good reason blocked establishment of a film industry by a multiracial group in the 1960s even as government was paying lip service to starting the film industry. The chapter has captured the steps leading to the establishment of institutions such as KIMC, KFC, the Schools' Film Festival and the devolution of film to the counties.

The chapter has detailed how out of declining economic fortunes video viewing shacks were created which became incubation chambers for the setting up of Riverwood industry.



The chapter has also identified the need to address piracy as it is a major challenge to film business in the digital era. Much more importantly, government needs to create an enabling policy that will encourage Kenyans to produce own content that addresses their own agenda and creates a better national identity even as they conserve and perpetuate local culture and traditions.

## 5 RIVERWOOD, THE NATIONAL CINEMA?

### 5.0 Introduction

The success of Hollywood cinema is not only measurable by the huge amount of money they rake in from the box office globally but also by having impacted the industry to such an extent that cinema producers all over the world try to associate themselves with Hollywood by adjoining the name 'wood' to their cinema production sites and sometimes even aping Hollywood cinema production genres and styles. Indian cinema became Bollywood as it flourished using their folklore, dance, traditional costumes and language as a genre of their storytelling. Nigerian cinema became Nollywood and they popularized witchcraft and magic and Nollywood climbed the podium to share the limelight with Hollywood and Bollywood.

Locally, video film producers who were producing local simple comedy movies in Nairobi's River Road using VHS equipment adopted the name Riverwood as their brand name in the early 1990s. Most of the early operatives in River Road started the business after failing to secure formal employment and started hawking music audio CDs dubbed for mass distribution on River road. Little did they know that they were on the verge of creating an informal industry that would eventually receive global attention; and that would blossom into a model to be copied by others. Riverwood as a brand has grown to such an extent that films from Kenya are referred to as Riverwood films. This is notwithstanding the fact that the elite Kenyan film producers most of who are associated with the corporate world and foreign movie companies have no connections whatsoever with Riverwood, and they feel miffed when they're associated with a brand that is famous for unprofessionalism and poor quality productions. It's therefore important to note that even though Riverwood is well known globally, it has not been fully accepted as a bona fide institution or symbol that represents Kenyan cinema. Nevertheless, any Kenyan who enters their films for festivals outside Kenya must bear the brunt of the association because film from Kenya is now globally associated with the brand Riverwood.

The Riverwood definition of film is very different from the conventional film definition. What is called film from the Riverwood perspective is any form of packaged entertainment on DVDs and VCDs whether it is stand-up comedy, music video, a recording of a live event, a short skit or a full length movie so long as it has been commodified for the market. It's imperative to understand that, to be able to appreciate the figures quoted about the number of films produced per day and the business returns per day. In the same breath, one has to understand the Riverwood definition of a film producer as any person who video records, packages and sells the product mostly on DVD or VCD whether he is trained or not.

### **5.1 Rise and Rise of Riverwood**

The name Riverwood is created from River road, a backyard street behind the Nairobi CBD where the first batch of young music video pirates operated from. 'Wood,' following in the traditions of Bollywood and Nollywood was a convenient appendage to their street, not to mount the rostrum of fame but to attract local attention to 'home brewed cinema.' Charles Asiba, the founder and director of the Kenya International Film Festival (KIFF) claims to have been the one to have used the name in a setting that attracted media attention.

In a self-written profile published by Filmbiz Africa (2013), Asiba, who for many years worked for Union of Radio and Television Networks in Africa (URTNA), explains how in an attempt to distinguish between local Kenyan productions from Nollywood productions in a Map TV exhibition in Nairobi, he labelled Nigerian productions 'Nollywood', and the Kenyan productions 'Riverwood' because he knew Kenyan media were referring to Kenyan films as Riverwood films, and 'voila' somehow the name stuck, he says. Because marketers need brand names, Riverwood became a convenient brand name for Kenyan films. The Riverwood operators themselves can't explain how their name originated and therefore the Asiba version of the story is the only claim of authorship.

### **5.2 From Riverwood to Riverwood Ensemble.**

Even though River Road is an insignificant backstreet behind the Nairobi metropolis, it is the business center of anything entertainment for mass market distribution in East Africa.

According to the, 'About Us' information on the Riverwood website, "All music, films and even books emanate from this distribution hub reaching all corners of Kenya and to some extent East Africa. Entertainers are therefore based here and spend most of their time in this business area."

Riverwood continued to be used as a label by the media after its casual creation, without any formal registration for some years. As it gained global recognition and attention, the Riverwood label expanded to represent the East African films notwithstanding that films from Dar are called Darwood and Uganda films, Ugawood.

### **5.3 Innovative Deejaying Injected into Foreign Action Movies**

According to John Karanja the Technical Director of Riverwood, in Nyutho/Karanja (2015), the now thriving industry was started by traders who were selling music originally. The Kenyan music boom started with the popularity of local music in the sixties but the wave that created massive dubbing in River road is associated with the popularity of Joseph Kamaru music who is the undisputed King of Kikuyu music. According to Ketebul Music (2010: 25), Kamaru is said to have "over 3,000 compositions performed in at least 3 languages and in an array of styles and genres." According to Rita Njoroge (ibid), other popular musicians who contributed to the buildup of the industry at the beginning included Sam Muraya and Queen Jane in the 1990s. The growth and popularity of audio CDs grew into the new millennium but music was joined by video entertainment dubbed on VHS video cassettes. The video movies had been produced by popular DJs dubbing their own soundtracks on popular Kung Fu movies. According to John Karanja (ibid), the innovators who started this trend made some good business. "Today most of them are actually people with a lot of money and they had made their money selling pirated music. So, when the opportunity came for them to do movies, they found a way of putting Deejaying into them to break down the language barrier and reach illiterate audiences.

Although most of the uneducated people used to enjoy watching movies, their interest would wane when they didn't understand English language. So a way was found to dub 'Voice Overs' which were very funny, comical and humorous. Even those people who could not understand English would be able to relate to the film." Some talented young people set up even live deejaying where they would charge customers twenty shillings to

enter their makeshift movie dens where they would run live commentaries as the movies played.

A DJ nicknamed DJ Bishop popularized dubbing vernacular soundtracks for films which became quite popular with school audiences. He is said to have become popular because of his ability to “localize” the plot by giving the actors indigenous names, such as “Kegotho, Mwangi or Onyango.” And as business increased, a new demand came up. An idea came from some of the customers who could not afford to come for the daily live commentaries that the materials get recorded on video and then sold or rented to them to view at their own time.

This led to the improvisation of localized soundtracks to play with foreign action movies and that innovative gesture precipitated the onset of the Riverwood film business, without the innovators being remotely aware that their innovative gesture would lead to the establishment of a booming local movie business. Their original goal was to make foreign movie soundtracks accessible to illiterate audiences and make a little money in the process.

A research on this phenomenon carried out by Gabriel Kimani et. al (2014 ) explains of a declining trajectory of film theatre attendances in the early 1990s matched by a proliferation of video viewing joints in highly populated urban and rural areas. According to this research, dwindling theatre attendances led to the closure of many cinema houses. “As the cinemas auditoriums were succumbing to the culture of indifference to theatre-going in the 1990s, estate and village video shows proliferated in the densely populated low-income urban and peri-urban areas in Kenya. Typified by screenings of popular Hollywood and Hong Kong action films, the video shows filled their benches by featuring commentators, popularly known as video-show deejays.”

#### **5.4 Evolution of Local Movies Niche**

According to Karanja , when the recordings were done and they became popular and business began to grow, people realized there was a niche that was waiting to be exploited. “They reckoned that if they did their own stories instead of imitating or putting voice overs in what was coming from Hong Kong or Hollywood, they could be able to create their own

movies!” Karanja explains further that the entry of professionally trained film makers was literally hopping into a moving train when it had already left the station. But the new comers too had a contribution to make. “By the time people like us who were trained came on board, we realized that the first thing we needed to do was to combine technology, the professional understanding with the business that already existed because the initiators of Riverwood are great business men. In fact, we call them traders because for them it is a product which needs to be sold and the quality is never usually an issue. It is a question of packaging and it’s a question of how it is going to be distributed.” Some of the problems that required immediate attention were the technical aspects because the stories were being shot by untrained artisans who had no training in any aspect of cinematography. “The most interesting bit is that they used to get untrained videographers who specialize in shooting weddings and funerals. Those were the first camera men who came into making of films,” Karanja adds.

### **5.5 Entry of Trained Producers into Riverwood**

The entry of trained film professionals transformed the business. The current Riverwood Ensemble is a fusion of the informal untrained, self-made film producers who established themselves on River road pirating music in the 1980s and who later reformed to escape the arm of the law; being joined by some of the formally trained professionals.

The Riverwood informal producers made stories without relying on the encumbrances of formal film technical knowledge. Whatever their amateur cameras could capture whether it was well lit, had good quality sound or not, didn’t matter. What mattered was to record and sell the story irrespective of quality. The synergy of the informal entrepreneur matched with professional cinematic techniques of the formally trained, has resulted in a hybrid cinema product that appears to be producing results.

Their limited auteur exposure was sufficient to establish what a thriving business is by any standards. According to Kang’ethe Mungai (2014), Chairman of Riverwood Ensemble, “Riverwood has brought with it a revolution in film-making and marketing in Kenya’s film industry, in that one can produce and distribute audio-visual material for public consumption without the risk of return on investment. If you can make a one-hour movie of

professionally acceptable quality with a production and distribution cost of less than Sh. 80,000, there's nothing to stop the film industry from blossoming.”

The business model that has driven Riverwood operates on the same principles as the economies of conglomeration model. This has led to the growth of interrelated businesses, ranging from the retail of filming equipment including handy cams, DVDs and CDs, filming, editing, packaging and mass distribution services coming to operate together under one roof and collaborating to service the film industry needs. Riverwood has evolved as an audiovisual content generator with a mix of industry players, some trained on the job, while others have impressive academic and professional credentials, all of whom employ the business model of mass marketing for maximum returns.

According to Rita Njoroge (2014), the distribution model has been instrumental in the development of quality content and exposure for local talent. There are executive producers who put in money to cover the production and distribution costs and own the final output. There are also producers who sell to distributors with rights that revert to the producer following a pre-defined period of time, as is the case for direct-to-video distribution, leaving television, theatre and stalls rights to the producer.

## **5.6 Proliferation of Local Productions**

According to John Karanja (2014), there are currently over four hundred independent producers and they are producing more than thirty movies a month. And for the first time, the industry is formally “registered by the government of Kenya to undertake its film promotions, productions and marketing initiatives.” The bulk of these producers have little film production training but they none the less make a decent living off their very entertaining and local stories. Karanja argues that “because they are mainly community based film groups, their authenticity and home grown stories resonate with the mass market.”

Riverwood Ensemble is providing these entrepreneurs with the basic film production training, without the pedantic auteur theories of cinema and they are good to go.

## 5.7 Films in Local Languages.

There are arguments that creation of films in vernacular languages lowers the viewership numbers, and operates contrary to the film industry's growth ethic, which operates by maximizing audience numbers. Nollywood and Bollywood expanded fast because of their large audience base from the huge population's demographics in both countries.

The proponents of an East African film industry are also arguing about pooling the populations of the East African countries together and producing films for them in Kiswahili. This would add up to 150 million people, larger than the Nigerian population estimated at 120 million people. This tendency would defeat the noble duty of protecting local vernacular languages which require protection to preserve cultural diversity.

Pursuing large audiences would be looking at film from a Hollywood commercial perspective of chasing commerce at the expense of art or culture. For audiences to fully enjoy movies, they need to develop a sense of ownership and one of the best root to this is through vernacular languages. But Riverwood operators believe that pooling as many of these language speakers as possible together and subtitling in Kiswahili and English is offering real solutions to their film business and is also enabling larger audiences to enjoy the diversity of local cultural products most of which had no other channel of expression. Although the monetary returns may not be abundant, Riverwood has realized that vernacular films are sustainable and even profitable in the long run when sub-titling and dubbing other languages is done. John Karanja argues that, when the ensemble was formed, "The main idea was to assist these film makers access training, better equipment and as such create better productions through collective bargaining and to expand the market for their productions as well as better revenues."

The identification of the stories to film is done through an innovative process. Many of the stories have been tried as stage presentations in local clubs and community events and recording them on video is a way of making proven enjoyable stories available to more people. Some of the producers have become highly successful and their acquired celebrity status has endeared them to F.M. radio stations who hire them as hosts during the peak time morning and evening shows...



According to Grace Kerongo (2014) there is a new effort recently to celebrate community based filmmakers who in the past have received little attention in film festivals. The Riverwood Academy Awards wants to recognize film producers who get little media coverage yet they are the backbone of Kenyan film. According to Kegoro (ibid), Andrew Owuor the marketing manager of Riverwood Academy is organizing to expose these talent who are the unsung heroes of the industry to the public. "I'm hoping we can make the world know who the authentic and homegrown film makers of Kenya are. The ones who make productions without sponsors, grants, loans or big cash. The ones who make a story and give it out mainly for the passion."

Riverwood Ensemble, the organizers of the event consist of producers whose mandate is to assist these filmmakers access training, better equipment and as such create better productions through collective bargaining and to expand the market for their productions as well as well as better revenues.

The popularity of the films and the widening fan base is improving the bottom-line for the more disciplined and more creative producers such as Kihenjo, Machangi, Githingithia, Warigia, Wandahuhu, Nimu, Penge, JaCity and Kimondolo according to Rita Njoroge (ibid).

### **5.8 Riverwood Strategy to Fight Piracy**

One of the best things to have happened to Riverwood is the conversion of the original music pirates into movie producers and making them earn money legitimately. Because they invest their own money and are privy to the challenges of digital piracy, they undertake marketing of their movies at a very brisk pace.

According to Stefanie Dresch (2013), who carried out a study in the industry, the films have to be finished and sold quickly in order to make money before pirated copies conquer the market. In contrast to festival films, this is clearly more a business than an artistic venture. When the Riverwood films are released there are no ceremonies, "there is no premiere, no press release or marketing campaign. There's no time – nor is it necessary."

Karanja in, Nyutho/ Karanja (ibid) interview corroborates this fact. He explained that when releasing a CD or DVD, “It has to be released all over Kenya simultaneously to be able to fight the piracy. Mark you, some of the producers were once pirates and so they understand the business of how other pirates do it. So, to beat the competition, I don't even disclose when I'll be releasing the VCD. But I'll make sure that two days to the release of the VCD, its available all over the country so that the only thing I'm gonna do is to tell people where they're available.” It's the pragmatic principle of sending a thief to catch a thief.

A gender and cinema study done in 2011 specifically on Riverwood Cinema by Addams Mututa, “From the Perspective of Native Filmmaker's Participation in the Enterprise,” points out that the industry is “fragmented and without a united focus.” Like other studies have observed, ‘it operates on shoe-string budget and paced out technological tools.’ Although this study was published only four years ago, Riverwood has changed tremendously and it appears to be attracting a lot of local and international attention.

One of the major impediments to Riverwood's competitiveness has been that traders are only interested in making enough money for their livelihoods, with international growth for the industry not a priority. Besides the current effort by industry beneficiaries to foster professionalism through training, government support will be essential in Riverwood's growth, especially in fighting piracy which has stunted the growth of the industry. According to Southern Innovator,<sup>88</sup> Riverwood filmmakers have come up with some ingenious solutions of fighting piracy. Each production company has a rubber stamp that is placed on the sleeve of every DVD. The stamps are not easily forged and producers ensure that all the DVDs they are releasing into the market are stamped. It may not be foolproof security against piracy, but it's a deterrent against opportunistic hurried dubbing and resale.

## **5.9 Riverwood: Art of the Masses**

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<sup>88</sup> Riverwood: Kenyan Super-fast, Super-cheap Filmmaking Issue 2 - Youth & Entrepreneurship <http://www.southerninnovator.org/index.php/home/1-creative-econ/7-riverwood-kenyan-super-fast-super-cheapfilmmaking>, accessed on 6/10/2015

South African film producers, who in 2013 studied the production processes and conditions, observe that despite Riverwood's constraints in studio space, production budget, and limitations of many professional production utilities, the final output is highly commendable and is taking Kenyan film somewhere. Surprisingly, they conclude that South Africa could have a lot to learn by adopting the Riverwood model. "South African filmmakers can learn from the Riverwood model. Kenyan filmmaking has become the art of the masses, and is more than just a form of entertainment. It also creates jobs, records oral history, of the literate and illiterate alike, and is a tool of communication for Kenya's 48 tribal groups."

They go on to observe that in comparison, filmmaking in South Africa is extremely expensive as films are made mostly for cinema theatres. The 'big screen' makes the production process long and very expensive. Big budgets mean very few movies see the light. Home movies are technically not good enough to fill a cinema screen. The Riverwood producers have little film production training but they make a decent living off their very entertaining and local stories. Because they are mainly community based film groups, their authenticity and home grown stories resonate with the mass market. Mostly the films are in vernacular from different ethnic groups across Kenya.

### **5.10 How the Riverwood Model Works**

According to Karanja, in the Nyutho/Karanja (2015) interview, the Riverwood model is practiced by thousands of people in Kenya. The major towns like Nairobi where Riverwood is situated, has distribution and marketing points which deal with transactions which can range from 10 to 20M Shillings every day. Karanja claims there are more than 50 shops in Nairobi and hundreds more are distributed all over the major towns in Kenya. The network engages more than 15,000 people who operate the shops distributing and selling the products.

The business ranges from the hire of equipment, DVD and VCD printing, where they are parked in boxes for distribution all over the country. Major distributors have their own subdistributors who in turn have their own retailers and street vendors. These can range from a few hundred in a town to a thousand or more in a county according to Karanja (ibid).

Officially, 10 good movies are released per day and about 300 to 3000 copies are sold depending on how popular a title is. The going rate per movie is 100 shillings at the retail price. Most producers however produce a master at a maximum of 100,000/= which is handed to a distributor who in turn pays a cover sleeve charge of 20 shillings for a given number of copies. - The most successful story is Kihenjo who is said to have sold over two million copies of VCD (excluding the pirated ones).

### **5.11 Riverwood Academy**

John Karanja (2014), the Technical Manager, Riverwood Academy Awards, in a presentation he made at the Task Force to operationalize the Kenya Film School at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and the Arts, on 5th November 2014, at the Kenya Commercial Bank Hq, explained the film production training principles of the academy. “The first step to success is to understand customers’ needs and to drive towards fulfilling them,” he noted. He expounded further that Kenyan audiences are always eager to look for ‘what’s new and what’s trending.’ He stated that “Kenyan audiences need film to escape the drabness of everyday life and the stress of life in hostile cities like Nairobi, and film therefore is like a religion to them.”

The second principle is to take movie making as a business first and apply business management principles to operationalize it. Thirdly, research is crucial to success, and Riverwood Academy is always looking out to find out what’s going to work best in the future.

According to the academy, “the movie world is hostile and doesn’t respect academic degrees.” The movie business only respects what the trainees can package into a DVD. And because Riverwood producers know that people buy into controversies especially with the proliferation of social media, the academy encourages their trainees to create stories around the contentious issues which can generate ‘people talk’. Where there’s controversy in the public, there’s Riverwood business.

Using these principles, Riverwood according to Karanja has been able to create a business that is providing employment for many young people and is making more than 20 million shillings daily- equal to US \$ 0.22 million daily. In an economy where most people survive

under a dollar a day, this is transformative business. The academy, unlike the local universities gives more emphasis to practical skills and knowledge than to the theories of film. It operates on the principle of connecting directly with the industry.

The training methods are as unconventional as their mode of operation. According to Karanja,<sup>89</sup> on the first day, new students are trained on how to operate the filming equipment. On the second day, they discuss possible film ideas. On the third day, the same students are sent out in groups to shoot stories applying acquired knowledge. When they are back in the studios, they use their own footage to critique themselves and identify how they could have done better. This approach has helped to transform film production training to the extent that instead of the trainees requiring fees from their poor parents, the trainees are taking money home from the sales of their stories.

Aware that most film production training in Kenyan universities has little hands-on training, Karanja scoffs at their approach. “After university students have wasted their money and time acquiring knowledge based on theories and rhetoric, they end up at Riverwood academy to get the real life skills,” he says. The Riverwood curriculum includes hands-on operations and basics of preproduction training. They focus on how to identify filmable and marketable stories from their immediate environment that can make an instant hit. Even if the plots are to be based on fallacious but popular local rumors, so be it.

Riverwood has demystified movie concepts to the extent that the streets and the villages are perceived as a *mis-en-scene*. “There are worthwhile stories everywhere if only we learn to identify them,” Karanja emphasizes. The trainees learn to make high quality, low budget films produced in Kenyan local languages. This makes a lot of sense when one considers the conservation of cultural diversity which is under the threat of being submerged by the deluge of pirated Hollywood films, whose philosophy appears to be based on the notion ‘one size fits all’, which flood the Kenyan market.

According to Kangethe Mungai (2014), as Riverwood continues to nurture local talent and churn out local content, many of the producers involved are joining technical colleges and universities for formal training in business management and production, shedding the

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<sup>89</sup> KII with Karanja,  
ibid

informal image that has long been associated with the traders. This, by effect has played a crucial role in the improvement of both qualities in content and business acumen. And it is helping to change the image of Riverwood which has in the past been associated with low quality production.

“We can see an increase in professionalism in business in Riverwood, with the various players seeking to augment their skill levels and better manage their operations for longevity, a major boost to an industry that aims at competing effectively with foreign productions,” said Mr. Kangethe Mungai (ibid).

As the world globalizes, digital migration is opening up opportunities for diversified local content production. In fact, this is one of the recommended strategies for coping with the negative impacts of globalization, referred to as glocalization. The creators of the concept glocalization argue that in a global market, a product or service is more likely to succeed when it is customized for the locality or culture in which it is sold.

Riverwood sees the digital migration as a business expansion opportunity because there's great demand for local content from the new television stations who do not have the capacity to generate own content. There's also speculation that government could raise the threshold for broadcaster to 60% local content in the film policy that's waiting to be launched.

The entry of formally trained cinema producers into River road to create the Riverwood Ensemble is an indication that Kenyan cinema is finally coming of age. Riverwood Ensemble has transformed the film business pragmatically and has created innovative marketing ideas to cope with the piracy challenges and is exploring other options besides the VCD and the DVD as distribution alternatives.

Using the social media such as Facebook and Twitter where they have opened accounts, they have embarked on new and innovative marketing techniques to capture the box office that Riverwood had never paid attention to before. In what is being marketed as an exclusive night of Kenyan cinema, they have created a bouquet of four local films in one-night charging 1000/= (equivalent to about \$10 US) at Planet Media Cinemas. The Riverwood movie which wasn't designed originally for the big screen appears to be making

its way there. These developments would appear to suggest that the cows are finally coming home to roost.

### **5.12 Riverwood as National Cinema**

As discussed in chapter two under the Theoretical Framework, issues related to National Cinema imply identification of creative products to a geographic entity. National cinema encompasses basing stories on local experiences, using local talent for technical and artistic needs, which in the long run encourages plurality of cultural expressions globally, as opposed to consuming films from dominant nations such as USA.

Despite the criticism of Riverwood producing low quality films, Mark Kaiyare (2011), the narratives of the stories are told in the vernaculars of the Kenyan people and they resonate with the Kenyan consumers. If Kenyan audiences are buying and consuming the content, that means the critics are imposing their own elitist yardsticks in the evaluation, because they are used to the technical standards of the 'First Cinema' while the ordinary Kenyan consumer is quite at home with lower technical standards but is ready to trade off, with the relevance and the close identification with the story. There is an erroneous correlation which most people adopt, equating low cost cinema to low quality. This isn't always accurate because after the commodification of art, cost is determined by different variables including the expected profit margin.

According to Rita Njoroge (ibid), currently, Riverwood has over 10,000 hours of brand new television content in various genres ready for distribution. In terms of sales, quality movies are able to sustain sales of up to 600 copies a day for 3 months, which is impressive given the high level of piracy in Kenya. Riverwood too is producing a lot of locally produced television content and more is likely to come when the policy of local TV content is put at 60% once the new film policy is implemented. What most Kenyans who associate Riverwood with poor quality don't know is that the bulk of television entertainment that is locally produced and which they relish is produced at Riverwood.

Mwaniki Mageria (2014), Executive Director of Balozi Productions and Secretary General Riverwood Ensemble sums up the prospects appropriately. "Riverwood is a major brand at the forefront of Kenya's rapid growth in film to attain internationally acceptable standards.

Our actors are capable of being the stars that can walk into any airport around the world and receiving media attention while enjoying red carpet treatment and our business model will be to thank for that.”

### **5.13 Riverwood Outlook to the Future**

The opening up of Kiswahili channels on DSTV such as Africa Magic has created opportunities for local producers, actors and crew who were wasting away without work getting a reliable employer to produce Kiswahili films and TV series. According to John Karanja, Nyutho/Karanja (2015), the entry of Mnet into the Kenyan market and especially the opening of the Africa Magic channels is the best thing to have happened in the Kenyan film industry for years. “I think that Mnet has been a breath of fresh air as far as I am concerned as a content creator, because they have created a market for my content. And there is opportunity for more being created. And they are very friendly when it comes to business because they know their niche, they know what they want. So for me, the blame is on the local media houses because they are very busy fighting for signal distribution and they have no value for content generation. South Africans are very interested in developing content production and they’ve realized they have to work with local producers. That is why you find that they’re leading the market as far as content production is concerned. They are buying from us more content than all the other local media houses combined. That is the most fascinating thing.”

Karanja touches a raw nerve as regards T.V. broadcasting in Kenya. Television broadcasting and film production are two sides of the same coin. Globally, where a broadcast policy has emphasized a high threshold for local content, the independent film producers are spurred to produce content to satisfy the higher demand for local content. Because for many years Kenyan audiences have been subjected to viewing foreign content especially Mexican and Nollywood soap operas and drama serials during peak time hours, our independent film producers have languished without work. The local media owners are more interested in the bottom-line than in promoting national culture or creating employment locally. According to Karanja,<sup>90</sup> when they are making their annual returns,

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<sup>90</sup> *ibid*



media houses such as Citizen, NTV and KTN declare very huge earnings and they seem to be next to the banks in profitability but they are injecting very little of these huge earnings back into the local film production industry. Their fiduciary interests override by far any cultural or national interests.

The current migration to digital TV is opening more television channels, and with the entry of more players into the market, there's increased demand for locally produced content. Instead of the local companies harnessing the opportunity to open up and invest in more content production, they took to engaging the government in a show of might and opted to close down their TV stations other than get their signals distributed by a company that has Chinese majority ownership. According to Karanja,<sup>91</sup> local companies are lacking in vision and are being beaten in their home turf by Mnet as a result. "Mnet had foreseen the business opportunities years before, and they set up studios in Nairobi to strategically place themselves to enter into the East African market. They're investing because they can see the future. They foresaw the digital migration 8 years before it actually started. That's why Mnet came into Nairobi so that they can step into other areas of East Africa." Besides producing films and TV serials for own subsidiaries, the Nairobi Mnet studios infrastructure will be providing independent producers and broadcasters quality studio facilities for hire.

In 2014, the government had given a directive that limited local TV content to 40 per cent of all content airing in television stations in the country. The matter became even better for local artistes when in April 2014; President Uhuru Kenyatta revised the threshold upwards to 60 per cent to create more job opportunities for the Kenyan youth in arts and film industries. Unfortunately, this presidential pronouncement has yet to be anchored into law. It only becomes legally mandatory when the bill is passed through parliament, gets presidential assent before it becomes law. According to Lizzie Chongoti' CEO KFC in Nyutho/Chongoti (2015), the film policy requirement was 40% but it is projected to be 60% by 2018. But the Communication Authority of Kenya (CAK) is requesting broadcasters to share all their weekly schedule in advanced so the CAK so that they can monitor even more closely that local content and news was not part of declared local content.

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<sup>91</sup> ibid

Although at the end of the day Kenyans will benefit from the enterprise, Kenyans would be more proud of themselves if they were fully self-sustaining in producing their own content but under the globalizing world and with giants like South Africa towering above Kenya, it will be hard to get rid of South Africa image from the Kenyan frame.

Ironically, South African Supersport has no shame pronouncing in Kenya, “We nurture local talent with purposeful intent because we believe that a nation that is able to tell its own stories is a nation that is proud to embrace its identity. We are excited about the contribution our studios will make to the advancement of quality television programming, not only on the continent but also throughout the world.” This is the tone of one talking from within his homestead. And with the globalizing world and global leaders calling for unification and more collaboration, there soon will be no barrier over the Zambezi River.

Zuku, a local pay TV company owned by Wananchi group is now threatening to take the regulator CCK to court over DSTV’s monopoly of content in Kenya. Another player in the Kenyan media field Chinese pay TV provider Star Times has also appealed to the government to compel its competitor, DStv, to re-sell some of its exclusive content like the English Premier League matches. But in a recent interview, Multichoice Africa executive chairman Nolo Letele said the company had no plans to sell any of its content to other players.

#### **5.14 Conclusion**

Riverwood as an industry started from pirates who learnt to dub vernacular sound tracks onto karate movies to make them appealing. Later they realized that they could create their own video and audio and they started their own stories which proved even more popular than the Korean Kung fu movies. Making local movies and other forms of entertainment available in vernacular languages is filling a void that has been identified and addressed by even the African Union and FEPACI (2006), and African government are being urged to provide resources to expand to provide local film content in African languages.

As the industry continues to professionalize and improve the quality of their products, piracy requires to be curbed so that the young and innovative entrepreneurs may get their returns on investment. As the government ventures to open the long awaited film academy and launch the awaited film policy, they have lessons to learn from Riverwood especially about vernacular films and an effective and proven marketing and a distribution model.

This chapter has confirmed that the research that has been done in Kenya about local content preferences by local audiences is true. (Consumer Survey done by KFC in 2011). Riverwood has demystified film production and proved that cultural diversity can be enhanced at no great cost while celebrating local identity and our Kenyan nationality.

The Riverwood film industry has evolved through many challenges and survived by use of innovative techniques to create appealing content to their audiences using local languages. This niche market had not been catered for before their entry into the market and as Riverwood Ensemble grows, the professional quality of products from Riverwood will continue to be uplifted.

## **6 KENYAN CINEMA BEHIND SOUTH AFRICAN SHADOW.**

### **6.0 Introduction**

When I set out to carry out this research, I knew that South African cinema was a force to reckon with in Africa but little did I know the extent to which South Africa has dominated and even controlled cinema in Kenya. Although the control and domination has intensified within the last two decades after the end of apartheid, this study has established that it is as old as the film industry in Africa.

This chapter will explore how South Africa cinema has expanded in Kenya to the extent that it now upstages Kenya for Hollywood films shot in Africa, scooping Kenyan stories and producing them as co-productions and through Mnet DSTV, producing more Kenyan movies than the Kenyan Television companies put together.

### **6.1 Colonial Connection**

Even though Nollywood is Africa's most dominant movie producer and floods the Kenyan market with pirated products that litter the streets and that clog most of local television channels, Kenyan movie industry's nemesis has always been South Africa. The connection between Kenyan and South African cinema is intertwined with the twisted colonial umbilical cord. Out of the former British Empire, white colonial settlements were only established in Kenya, South Africa and Rhodesia, current Zimbabwe which had been identifies as areas for permanent white settlement. Kenya was lucky to have the Mau Mau uprising in 1952 which precipitated the granting of independence in 1963. Otherwise there were no intentions to hand over independence to Kenyan leadership any time in the foreseeable future. Zimbabwe had to wage an equally bitter struggle to cut the shackles of colonialism more than thirty years later. So as to exploit the vast mineral resources undeterred, South Africa declared the 'Apartheid' policy in 1948, slammed the door in the face of the civilized world and became the world's pariah state. This was a curious event

because the rest of the world was embracing the lofty libertarianism that was brought about by end of fascism and the Declaration of Human Rights.

## 6.2 Apartheid Regime and Cinema

Apartheid, an Afrikaans word meaning “apartness,” describes an ideology of racial segregation that served as the basis for white domination over the black majority. It lasted in South African state from 1948 to 1994. Apartheid was the codification of the racial segregation that had been practiced in South Africa from the time of the Cape Colony’s founding by the Dutch East India Company in 1652<sup>92</sup>. Its emergence in 1948 was antithetical to the decolonization process begun in sub-Saharan Africa after World War II. Widely perceived internationally as one of the most abhorrent human rights issues from the 1970s to the 1990s, apartheid conjured up images of white privilege and black marginalization implemented by a police state that strictly enforced black subordination. Its demise was precipitated by the fall of the Berlin wall in 1990 while the official racial segregation was removed from Kenyan laws after 1948.

The hypocrisy of capitalist west is such that they’d condemn apartheid by day and strike business deals by night. Cinema being the business of the blue eyed white race, Hollywood had no qualms dealing with the racist South African regime to handle their lucrative cinema distribution business across the entire African continent and in the process, subject African customers to the condescending superiority and disdain rooted in apartheid.

The white colonists who had settled in Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa were supposed to form the economic backbone of the colonies to generate business and help to offset some of the capital investment costs that Britain undertook to provide such services as the railway infrastructure. The South African colonists appeared to have established themselves as movie producers much faster than anywhere else in Africa and indeed were far ahead of many nations in the world in cinema business.

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<sup>92</sup> <http://sites.library.northwestern.edu/southafrica/chapter-1/Chapter 1: Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa>

According to Gerhard Uys,<sup>93</sup> once upon a time South African film industry was actually more successful than Hollywood. Both South Africa and US industries were on a par in 1916 when two of the greatest epic movies of the time were produced: *Intolerance* in America and *De Voortrekkers* in South Africa. The defining theme in *De Voortrekkers* in South Africa was the reconciliation between the English and the Boers in the nation building of a white minority-rule state with the dual interest of subjugating, suppressing and exploiting the Africans. Out of a political union between two former enemies the Boers and the British, in their common interests of white power, a ‘conceptualization of nation, citizen, and cinema,’ was arrived at according to Lucia Saks.<sup>94</sup> Even more astoundingly, by 1909 when Roosevelt was being filmed touring Kenya and creating what we are told was the first movie shot in Kenya, the movie industry in South Africa was up and running and according to James Burns (2006) there was even a cinema house for black audiences. “The first cinema for ‘nonwhite’ audiences opened in 1909 in Durban, South Africa.”<sup>95</sup>

When Kenyans waged a war to fight for their independence, South Africa played a key role in spearheading the propaganda against the freedom struggle of the so-called Mau Mau. It’s interesting to note that after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War; a lot of the settlers who moved into Kenya came from South Africa. The same happened when more settlers were brought in after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. South Africa it’d seem had as much to lose as the British, if not more, if Kenya became independent. Both South Africa and Britain were united by their rapacious greed to plunder and oppress the Africans. The South African migrants into Kenya, who Caroline Elkins<sup>96</sup> describes as poorer than the migrants from Europe, always treated the native Kenyans they found with more brutality and disdain than European settlers did.

They would migrate into Kenya after failing to make ends meet in South Africa despite the enormous privileges they had over the local populations. Due to their lugubriousness and the brutal way in which they treated the Kenyans, they inadvertently spurred the rebellion that erupted into the Mau Mau war of liberation. According to Elkins, “Less affluent white immigrants largely from South Africa were among the first to arrive. They brought

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<sup>93</sup> Gerhard Uys State of the SA Film Industry by Gerhard Uys, <http://www.safilm.org.za/news/article.php?uid=979>

<sup>94</sup> A Tale of Two Nations: South Africa, De Voortrekkers and Come See the Bioscope Lucia Saks University of Cape Town/University of Michigan, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2011n61p137>

<sup>95</sup> James Burns The African Bioscope – Movie House Culture in British Colonial Africa 2006/1 (vol. 5) [http://www.cairn.info/zen.php?ID\\_ARTICLE=AFHI\\_005\\_](http://www.cairn.info/zen.php?ID_ARTICLE=AFHI_005_)

<sup>96</sup> Caroline Elkin, The British Archipelgo

hardened social attitudes and racist views of so called native rights that had been honed in Britain's colonies south of the Zambezi River. Hardly ideal contributors to Kenya's burgeoning economy, they were often undercapitalized. Their maltreatment of the local Kenyans precipitated the worsening of the race relations and the growing determination by the local Kenyans to eject the colonialists out of the country." It is curious to note that South African film producers are the ones who the Kenya colonial government commissioned to produce the propaganda films to obfuscate the reality of the freedom struggle that had arisen in Kenya.

I dared to discuss South African cinema in relation to Kenya because I realized that since the entry of cinema into Africa in the 1880s, the Kenyan cinema industry was under the wings of South Africa. For a more informed understanding of South African cinema, the most authoritative study so far that am aware of is Keyan G. Tomaselli's book, *The Cinema of Apartheid*. According to Femi Okiremuete Shaka (1994),<sup>97</sup> it deals principally with the period of the apartheid regime. To understand South African film, there is the need to bridge the three historical eras of pre-apartheid, apartheid, and post-apartheid South African cinema. Shaka (ibid) observes that "South Africa is an example of a country where the dogma of racial theories has been taken to extremes and institutionalised into an apartheid regime which for many years deprived Black South Africans of their social rights and human dignity. The South African situation is therefore a classic example of where the dogmatism of racial theories can lead a country. The repercussions of such a scenario will not thaw off for generations and homogenizing the issues between the two extreme ends will take time. Ntongela Masilela (1991),<sup>97</sup> gives a good insight of film and its entanglement with mining and the South African economy.

### **6.3 South African Monopoly in Cinema Distribution in Africa.**

As we observed earlier in this study, film distribution in Africa from the USA was a monopoly of Anglo-American company, a South African company that had sole distribution rights throughout Africa and was the one spearheading curtailing the

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<sup>97</sup> Ntongela Masilela (1991), *Jump Cut*, no. 36, May 1991, pp. 61-65 copyright *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 1991, 2006

establishment of KFCp. According to a confidential memo from KSN Matiba (1968),<sup>98</sup> to the Minister of Commerce and Industry and the Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, “In Kenya, the American films were being distributed by the Anglo-American Film Distributors- who are a subsidiary of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. This is a major American company which has strong connections with South Africa. We therefore know why they have opposed Kenyan moves- not only here but also within M.P.E.A.A. because they are very influential within that organization. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century owns the Kenya Cinema, 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Thika Road Drive in.” According to Matiba, the American films were raking in more than 1¼ million Sterling Pounds annually contributing to a huge loss of foreign exchange to a young government which was trying all ways of entrenching the Africans who had been kept out of formal business during the colonial era into the business culture through a Kenyanisation policy.

One of the most incredible ironies on the issue is that the US cinema industry was openly doing business with the apartheid racist regime companies and they were unwilling to deal directly with a company set up by a democratically elected Kenya government. This is despite a United Nations ‘Condemnation of Apartheid on November 6 1962,’ when the UN General Assembly Resolution 1761 implored member nations to halt all diplomatic, military, and economic relations with South Africa, stating that the country’s racial policy “seriously endangers international peace and security.”<sup>99</sup> Despite the lofty resolution, during the apartheid era 1948-1994, there were close to 200 U.S. corporations doing business in South Africa, cinema being a key player. The UN condemnation was nothing but empty rhetoric.

Another irony about cinema and South Africa is that though it was more racially segregated than other African colonies, by around 1930s, “cinema houses showed basically the same motion pictures to all black, colored and white audiences. In the African townships of Johannesburg, black audiences saw American ‘film noir’ movies, which gave rise to the urban ‘Tsotsi’, or ‘gangster’ culture which many White settlers found menacing<sup>100</sup>.” In

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<sup>98</sup> KNA file no. C&I.31/3.A/201

<sup>99</sup> Chapter 1: Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa <http://sites.library.northwestern.edu/southafrica/chapter-1/>

<sup>100</sup> James Burns *The African Bioscope* 2006/1 (vol. 5) – Movie House Culture in British Colonial Africa  
[http://www.cairn.info/zen.php?ID\\_ARTICLE=AFHI\\_005\\_80](http://www.cairn.info/zen.php?ID_ARTICLE=AFHI_005_80)



other towns such as Cape Town, coloured audiences saw the same films as white audiences, but several months after the films had been shown at segregated theaters.

James Burns (2006)<sup>101</sup>, argues that this relatively “laissez faire” approach to censorship was brought about by the economic power of cinema industry in South Africa. Burns argues that “South Africa had the continent’s largest European population, the most advanced economy, and the most densely populated urban areas. It also had its own commercial cinema industry and theater chains with ties to the big American movie studios. Thus there were powerful multi-national corporations with a vested interest in cultivating a multi-racial audience in the Union.”

In other colonies where the pools of black cinema goers was much smaller, they would not be allowed to watch the same films black audiences were watching in South Africa and the smaller number of viewers made control of cinema segregation easier. But the astounding thing to note is that films that were regularly shown to all audiences in Cape Town and Johannesburg were forbidden to African audiences in the Rhodesias.

In Kenya where there were no theatres for Africans, it means the films could not be seen by locals because the mobile cinema vans which were the only option, were exhibiting propaganda and didactic cinema only created for that purpose to captive native viewers. Until the late 1950s, virtually the only films screened for Africans in these colonies were heavily edited American ‘western’ genre films.

#### **6.4 South African Blockade of Formation of Kenya Film Corporation**

In independent Kenya of late 1960s, because the Kenyan cinema houses which were all foreign owned had closed their cinemas to protest against being forced to be supplied movies by KFCp, Matiba went on to recommend that the 20<sup>th</sup> Century be given an ultimatum to open up by 1<sup>st</sup> March 1968, failure to which “those cinemas should be seized and given to other groups who were willing to open them by getting films from supplies from KFCp.” Matiba also recommended that all “expatriate staff be declared persona non

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<sup>101</sup> ibid

grata<sup>102</sup>, especially Mr. Boxhall who has been extremely difficult and defiant.”Mr. Boxhall, a South African, was the Managing Director of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and was the leader of the boycott to ensure that the East African franchise he had established with MPEAA was not challenged. When challenged to state why they could not deal with KFC, MPEAA had the nerve to state that KFC ‘did not have the capacity to handle film.’ Where and how the capacity was lacking, they did not want to elaborate.

Mr Gachathi, the P.S. Commerce and Industry put the issues clearly in a memo to the Cabinet which was meeting to describe the crisis. “It must be remembered that member companies of MPEAA notably the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox organization are at present South African based and they have the whole Franchise for Africa Market, Kenya has in fact been getting her films supplied through South Africa. The Anglo-American Co.(Kenya) is South African owned and controlled<sup>103</sup>. South Africans also run the distribution/importation business on their own. So, MPEAA are not fully justified in refusing to deal with KFCp but if the South African influence were eliminated, they would be willing to negotiate.

The Kenya Governments aim should be to break the South African control and ask the Americans to give KFCp franchise not only for East Africa but for the rest of the English and French speaking Africa<sup>104</sup>. If this could be successfully negotiated, and there is no reason why it should not be, even if resort were to be made to political pressure, Kenya would stand to gain at least £1 ½ million a year from importing and distributing American films for the African Market excluding South Africa and Rhodesia.”<sup>105</sup>

In spite of the Kenya government winning the film distribution war by arm twisting the cinema owners to receive their films from KFC from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1968, the intentions of establishing a film processing laboratory in Nairobi wasn’t realized. The film processing laboratory was seen as an incentive to stimulate both local and foreign movie producers to shoot their films locally. The Kenya government’s insistence on building a film processing laboratory as the main condition for the takeoff of the movie industry was perhaps ill

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<sup>102</sup> Underlining as from source.

<sup>103</sup> Underlining as from from source

<sup>104</sup> PJ Gachathi, PS Commerce and Industry, in a memo to advise cabinet meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1968, file no. INF.20/1/C, KNA the underlining is as per the original.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid*

advised because in spite of getting one built by the mid-1970s, it still didn't spark off the start of a film industry although it sparked off the needed training of skilled man power for the industry. It somehow by 1979 attracted Gordon Parks and Garry Strieker to come and set up

Nairobi as the Hollywood of Africa.<sup>106</sup>

## 6.5 South African Cinema Capitalizes on “Out of Africa”

Kenya however continued to host foreign movie productions and most of Hollywood's award winning movies shot in Africa were shot in Kenyan locations. The greatest of them all is *'Out of Africa,'* the story of Karen Blixen shot in 1985 in Kenya, directed and produced by Sydney Pollack and starring Robert Redford and Meryl Streep. This film received 32 awards and 25 nominations<sup>107</sup> globally including seven Academy Awards and it was literally the film of the 1980s. It swept top awards in all film festivals wherever it was entered, and no other film shot in Africa has ever come anywhere close to it.

It aroused South Africa to the reality that they had a formidable competitor across the Zambezi and provoked her zeal for film business dominance in the region. But then, there were limited by apartheid and they were still a pariah state.

Although Kenya may have basked in the glory of the *Out of Africa* epic movie, the main beneficiaries in the long run are South Africans who saw a great marketing opportunity for this title, and registered 'Out of Africa Entertainment', a company that has marketed itself globally and basked in the glory of the title, especially online and which continues to reap the benefits of this classic film to this day. From the way the website is advertised and how it markets itself, few would believe that it has no association whatsoever with Karen Blixen's film. But since the title wasn't patented, they are within their legal rights to create what they call a “combination of skills and resources - in conjunction with access to

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<sup>106</sup> I have discussed this more on chapter seven.

<sup>107</sup> Out of Africa 1985 Awards. [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0089755/awards?ref\\_=tt\\_awd](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0089755/awards?ref_=tt_awd)

financing that makes Out of Africa one of the leading and most progressive film production companies in Africa.<sup>108</sup>”

This is just a small glimpse of how South African film companies have upstaged Kenya in tapping international film business in Hollywood and Europe. The South African film policy is designed with competing markets in mind and is also created to woo movie makers into South Africa. Kenya on the other hand has always had the approach that she has such beautiful and unrivalled locations such that foreigners must pay heavily to be allowed to shoot in ‘magical’ Kenya. According to Christopher Vouarlias<sup>118</sup>, South Africa offers aggressive incentives, including a 35% rebate on the first 6 million rands (\$700,000) of qualifying South African spend and 25% on the remainder. As film as a business always looks at the bottom-line, and given the high risk of investment in film as an industry, this incentive goes a long way in persuading producers to opt for South Africa instead of Kenya as a filming location. South Africa’s fund for foreign productions also offers 20% on qualifying spend and a recent additional 5% for post-production work done in South Africa. The South African government plays a strong supporting role in supporting the movie industry through supportive policies. A recently introduced post-production incentive is a shot in the arm for visual-effects houses which provide the sparkling magic in cinema production. And with the government support, the private sector investments into film production are taking cinema in South Africa to the next level. According to Christopher Vouarlias<sup>109</sup> a US \$40 million complex, located a short drive from Cape Town has been built and is the first Hollywood-style studio on the continent.

After shedding off the cloak of apartheid, South-Africa, established itself as the financial and technological “super-power” of Africa in the final years of the 1990s, having overcome prior restrictions imposed on international access and production. In cinema, South Africa produced the first African film to win an Academy Award for Foreign Language Film *Tsotsi* (2006).<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Out Of Africa

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<http://variety.com/2012/film/markets-festivals/tax-rebates-new-studios-pull-production-south1118056181/>

<sup>109</sup> Scout & About: South Africa 2012 Christopher Vouarlias [variety.com/2012/film/markets-festivals/tax-rebatesnew-studios-pull-production-south-1118056181/](http://variety.com/2012/film/markets-festivals/tax-rebatesnew-studios-pull-production-south-1118056181/)

<sup>110</sup> [http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/experienceafrica/index.php?en\\_annual-african-film-festival-2013\\_african-](http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/experienceafrica/index.php?en_annual-african-film-festival-2013_african-)

South African film industry braced itself to create a self-sustaining film industry even as it got generous funding and support from the government. According to Kevin Kriedemann<sup>121</sup>, the industry set a goal to create a self-sustaining film industry, where they made films for less money than they were receiving back from their audiences in 2010 and within no time, it started to pay off with better box office returns. The other positive achievement was to lower film production budgets without compromising quality of the film. Another strategy was to cast their nets further afield and look for internationally marketable stories within the globalizing world and forge co-productions. *The First Grader*, the story of Maruge, an 84-year-old man going to school in Kenya came from this enterprise. In Rwanda, they also did another co-production called *Pumzi*<sup>111</sup>. Even though South Africa had covertly dominated film distribution during the apartheid regime as we discussed earlier, her dominance over the Kenya media landscape became even more pronounced after South Africa shed off the apartheid cloak in 1994, and became an acceptable player to dine on the African table with clean hands.

## 6.6 South African Investments in Kenya

The South African multinationals immediately after shedding off the apartheid cloak made a bold onslaught into Kenya to expand their business empire. Their line of attack included beer brewing and the entertainment industry. Kenya Breweries had to wage a mighty war to protect her territory from Castle Brewery from South Africa. Kenya Breweries emerged victorious after a brutal, bruising, beer brewing battle where the two brewers traded punch for punch. Castle breweries staggered back across the Zambezi punch drunk, with a bruised ego. South Africa had to swallow a bitter pill of selling off the brewery infrastructure they had put up on the Thika superhighway near Thika town.

Other industries weren't so lucky. "In a span of only four years," says Richard Ouma, a marketing consultant, "South African companies have infiltrated all spheres of life in

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film-industry <sup>121</sup> The challenges for Africa's film industry – getting financially sustainable as all about changes <http://www.balancingact-africa.com/news/broadcast/issue-no97/top-story/the-challenges-for-a/bc> [Issue No 97 3 February 2011](#)

<sup>111</sup> ibid

Kenya, and this is causing worry among local companies.” Take, for instance, the media and entertainment industry. Today, Kenyans have literally been taken captive by Multichoice, a South African pay-television service provider. The Kenyan cinema industry is highly undercapitalized while the South African industry has adequate resources and the backing of a government which is aware of the value of cinema not just for gate profit but as a cultural tool to project the mythology about a country’s socio-political-economic potential as an ideal investment hub. Multichoice has become a monopoly in both local film production and closed circuit TV viewing not just in Kenya but in the region.

In 2013, MultiChoice Africa, the owners of DStv, launched a Sh1 billion film studio in Nairobi, putting the Kenyan capital at par with South Africa and Nigeria where it runs similar studios.<sup>112</sup> The report indicates that MultiChoice subsidiaries, SuperSport and M-Net Africa, will use the facility to generate content that is relevant to the company’s East African audience. The sophisticated studios, which are a refurbishment of the Kenya Film Studios that have serviced all quality films shot in Kenya in the past are stated to rank among the most advanced film and television production facilities in Africa and are targeting to expand the South African production capability to service East African region and beyond.

This is literally a South African takeover of the privately owned Kenyan film production business infrastructure. According to Okuttah Mark,<sup>113</sup> the move follows a recent announcement by the Kenya government that it intends to increase local content quotient for broadcasters to 60 per cent from the current 40 per cent. Ironically, South Africans are so alive to film investment needs that they monitor the Kenyan’s plans and they beat us to it in our own turf. Mnet have also established a film production academy to train producers in their bid to improve local production capacity.

Although there are detractors who will disparage Mnets entry into the Kenyan market as a new phase of external domination in a critical cultural industry, Kenyan independent film

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<sup>112</sup> <http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/Corporate-News/Film-studio-changes-Kenya-s-broadcast-scene-landscape/-/539550/1981490/-/91kl7/-/index.html>

<sup>113</sup> Okuttah Mark Posted Thursday, September 5 2013 at 20: <http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/CorporateNews/Film-studio-changes-Kenya-s-broadcast-scene-landscape/-/539550/1981490/-/91kl7/-/index.html>

producers are fully appreciative of the Mnet's entry into the Kenyan market has provided work and employment after they languished for many years in an industry without any serious local or foreign investors.

### **6.7 South African Re-Launch Cinema Investments in Kenya**

Although South African cinemas ended up being bought out after the standoff with the Kenya government after the 1968 cinema closure showdown, South African investments in cinema houses reopened with the setting up of the Nu Metro cinema houses in Nairobi. Nu Metro, a South African entertainment company is causing a revolution in the East African country's entertainment industry. Despite being relatively new in the Kenya market, having opened shop in 2013, Nu Metro has managed to attract a huge chunk of cinema-goers from cinema companies like Kenya Cinema, 20th Century and Nairobi Cinema. "Kenya has proved to be a sober market for us. We are recording increased numbers of people visiting our cinema halls," says Nu Metro GM Andries Basson. Their strategy has worked well because they have been targeting opening up cinemas in the new big shopping complexes where big numbers of middle class families go for their shopping and leisure. They have also started targeting the young upmarket middleclass who will not feel the pinch when movie tickets go up to compensate for upgrading of movie theatres with the constantly changing technologies.

Kenya is an attractive investment area for South Africans for strategic reasons. Kenya is the economic powerhouse of the region. Thus, by claiming a stake in the Kenyan market, the South African companies are also placing themselves strategically to exploit other prospective markets in the region, such as southern Sudan, according to Okuttah Mark.<sup>114</sup>

Besides issues related to race and history, the reality is that South Africa has always approached film as a viable big business and South African governments over the years have invested heavily in film as a business. The Kenyan film production scenario is a pale shadow compared to the clearly focused South African film production approach. South

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<sup>114</sup> Film studio changes Kenya's broadcast scene landscape  
<http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/Corporate-News/Film-studio-changes-Kenya-s-broadcast-scene-landscape/-/539550/1981490/-/91kl7/-/index.html>

African has created a strategy to attract foreign production companies to spend their money filming in the country after which they get back hefty rebates. As film production business is driven mostly by the bottom-line, film producers have been attracted more towards South Africa whose policies are more attractive as compared to Kenya which has been accused of many unnecessary bureaucracies and punitive license fees.

The film production technical support infrastructure is by far more developed in South Africa than in Kenya. The essential services of support technical crew for grips and lighting, film laboratories and even digital editing are also better established in South Africa. This is beside the better laid out infrastructure of roads, airports, cities, beaches, game parks etc.

Investment policies for local content production and vision for future growth are also not comparable. South Africa is investing heavily to upstage Kenya's competition and be the destination of choice for global big budget movies. She is also producing films for the entire African region and the diaspora while Kenya's film policy is still on the drawing board ten years after the Kenya Film Commission (KFC) was created in 2005. And these investments and aggressive marketing is paying off. According to Kevin Oyugi, "the Kenyan Block buster light is dimming while South Africa and Morocco brighten."<sup>115</sup> As far as film is concerned, Oyugi claims that South Africa has had a consistent and stellar past 5 years, further cementing its position as the "stereotypical depiction and setting of 'Africa' in international large budget films."

Johannesburg had the pleasure of being the shooting location of at least two huge Box Office Films in 2015 while Kenya has not had a large budget movie for the last 10 years.

South African media are also on the frontline researching for new concepts for them to fund and new movies from independent producers for them to commission and air. Wanjiru Kinyanjui the director of *Battle of the Sacred Tree* explained to this researcher that her acclaimed film had never been shown by a Kenyan TV station until she was alerted that it was playing on K24 TV.<sup>127</sup> When she investigated, she found that the signal to K24 was

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<sup>115</sup> KEVIN OYUGI, JUNE 10, 2015 Kenya's Blockbuster Limelight Dimming as South Africa, Morocco Bask <http://oygkmagazine.com/v1/2015/06/10/kenyas-blockbuster-limelight-dimming-as-south-africa-morocco-bask/>

<sup>127</sup>Wanjiru Kinyanjui the Director of *Battle of the Sacred Tree* in an IDI at the University of Nairobi on 29-52015



coming from a South African link that had made a deal with her German producer<sup>116</sup> to show the film across their networks. This raises questions of apparent apathy to Kenya's image and culture by owners of the local television networks and their managers.

Kenyan media owners are content to procure and fill the channels with Mexican and Nigerian soap operas but have no time for local films. When local producers have a film they'd want shown to Kenyans, regrettably the practice is for local media houses to demand to be paid for air time use or to demand for sponsorship or advertising revenue to pay for the transmission which often discourage local producers from sharing their art.

Judy Kibinge,<sup>117</sup> a Kenyan producer who in 2002, produced *Dangerous Affairs* and showed that quality local movies were feasible, summarizes the situation well by emphasizing how a film commission with a vision can transform the industry; "South Africa has shown us all how a strong film commission is vital to the health of a strong film industry. Their mandate includes funding and training and South African filmmakers have multiple opportunities open to them thanks to a commission and industry that has lobbied government and I believe also private sector banks to look at films as investments with possibilities of huge returns."<sup>118</sup>,

## 6.8 New Kenyan Efforts on Protecting her Turf

The Kenyan clout and resolve in protecting her cinema turf is on a critical test with one of Kenya's biggest stories 'Africa,' the story of Richard Leakey and his wildlife conservation efforts on the verge of being grabbed by South Africa as they did with the Maruge Story. This is a big budget film expected to cost US\$ 110 million with prominent Hollywood stars such as Angeline Jolie. The publicity to be generated from such a story is enormous besides of course the impact of such a high budget would have on the economy. Kenya's attractiveness as a popular film location is undergoing its biggest test ever as the country attempts to secure location rights for the Richard Leakey film. South Africa is among the major contenders and is said to be waging a major campaign to secure the project. Four

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<sup>116</sup> Battle of the Sacred Tree was a training film and so, the Creative License lies with the trainer not the trainee.

<sup>117</sup> <http://africanwords.com/2013/11/08/qa-judy-kibinge-writer-director-and-film-maker/>

<sup>118</sup> Judy Kibinge: African Filmmakers Don't Have to Be Followers, We Can Be

Leaders!<http://belindaotas.com/?p=10557>

other countries are in contention for the project which film industry experts say may be the biggest wildlife-based film ever. Already actress Angelina Jolie (Tomb Raider) is assigned to direct the film which is expected to attract a major Hollywood cast.<sup>119</sup> Titled *Africa*, the film is based on Leakey's efforts to save the elephant which culminated in the torching of ivory in the 1980s.

But this time round, Kenya appears set to protect her turf. According to <sup>120</sup>a media report, President Uhuru Kenyatta is directly involved in ensuring that this story is shot in Kenya. As reported by Chris Wamalwa,<sup>121</sup> Kenya's ambassador to the US disclosed in a meeting he addressed on behalf of the President that "recently, Dr Richard Leakey, Mr Chris Foot and Mr Hassan Wario, Cabinet Secretary for Sports, Culture and the Arts, met with President Kenyatta to discuss the likelihood of the Leaky film being shot in South Africa. Following the meeting, the President gave an executive order on several of the outstanding issues that stood in the way of creating an attractive incentive package for the Kenyan film industry," the ambassador stated.

On May 5<sup>th</sup> 2015, President Kenyatta was bound to attend the Milken Institute's 2015 Global Conference to give assurances to the US film industry that Kenya is indeed the place to go to for filming when there are stories that require African settings.<sup>122</sup> The meeting he was to attend was to include top government officials, Hollywood producers and other film industry executives. The issues for discussion ranged from security guarantees to filming crews especially now that Kenya is on the spotlight due to frequent terrorist attacks, waiver of government-related fees, and temporary importation permits and insurances that have been cited in the past as an impediment to foreign crews filming in Kenya. Even though he didn't personally make it to Los Angeles, the Kenyan ambassador to the US Robinson Githae represented the President. The function, "Filming Kenya" was organized by the Kenya Film Commission, the Kenya Embassy in Washington DC, and Hollywood Boutique Public Relations Firm Ballantines PR (BPR). It was held to discuss Kenya's viability as a filming location in Africa.

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<sup>119</sup> Angelina Jolie Film Tests Kenya's Appeal as Shooting Location

<sup>120</sup> February, 2015 - 08:47 <http://www.filmcontact.com/news/south-africa/angelina-jolie-film-tests-kenyasappeal-shooting-location>

<sup>121</sup> Chris Wamalwa, Kenya moves to lure big-budget Hollywood producers SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2015

<sup>122</sup> SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2015 Kenya moves to lure big-budget Hollywood producers By CHRIS WAMALWA

Hollywood has always been lured to South Africa by the rebates and other incentive structures that producers get when they shoot movies in South Africa. The current insecurity in Kenya however is being used as the main justification why Kenya isn't a suitable location for the shooting of her own conservation story. If President Uhuru Kenyatta's personal intervention guarantees security to the production crew, South Africa will have to fish for another excuse in deeper waters.

But for once, the Kenya government appears to be coming out of her deep slumber and can now recognize the need to nurture the nascent film industry not only for creating employment but for taking advantage of films shot in Kenya to project a positive image of Kenya internationally. Cinema as we noted earlier is a powerful medium in projecting positive images that are invaluable in positioning a country's positive image internationally. Since the proliferation of international broadcasting and cinema, the world is predominantly shaped by the powerful representations in newspapers, televisions and films whether in cinema halls or hand held devices. The world is realizing now that cinema has become, or has always been, a potent form of political communication.

Something worthy of note in the South African cinema is that like Hollywood and all 'First Cinema', it produces for the big screen viewing after which they sell the films online or on DVDs. This is a great contrast to Kenya where the undercapitalized independent producers release their films straight to DVD which of course has limited returns because the movie pirates cash in on popular stories. Perhaps the biggest difference observed by Marike Bekker et al is the huge difference between Kenyan and South African film content. "Kenyan films include themes such as domestic violence, the supernatural and religion, reflected in a realistic and honest way. It's the kind of topics we in South Africa don't touch, because our movies are mostly made for cinema, and cinema is predominantly white."

South African film is so elitist that even the production of local stories like *Tsotsi* the 2006, Oscar Awards winner for the foreign film entry has been criticized to be too Hollywood in production style. Philmatton (2005) argues that South African cinema tries too hard to appeal to the outside world so as to 'look good.' He says that there is a tendency for South

African cinema to want to see itself through the eyes of the world. As a result, most cinema from South Africa is often very limited in its artistic ambitions and storytelling usually takes second place to making sure South Africa "looks good" on the screen so that "people overseas" will see "our beautiful country." This tendency shifts the creative control from the script writer and shifts it to the cinematographer to make sceneries dominate over the narrative.

Marike Bekker et al (2013) says that "a Riverwood film might not win an Oscar next year, but it is a remarkable model – despite self-funding, shared actors, sweltering heat and gridlock traffic, corruption and a dire lack of resources. Move over Hollywood and Nollywood. Riverwood is the place to watch."

## 6.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the relationship between Kenya and South Africa as it relates to film. South Africa right from the colonial days had an unfair advantage because they had direct links to Hollywood and they had a franchise of marketing MPEAA films throughout Africa. Kenya in 1968 managed to wrench distribution of all movies shown in Kenya from South African control. After stopping apartheid in 1994, South Africa became Kenya's worthy competitor as a location for foreign productions in African locations. Ever since South Africa has continued to upstage Kenya in 'Hollywood for Africa' business because they have very attractive rebates. South Africa too has invested heavily in films in Kenya and is targeting to capture African market and the diaspora. They already have a lot of infrastructure such as Mnet which has Africa magic movie channels. The Kenya government is involved in a tough competition for the shooting of *Africa*, the Richard Leaky conservation of the elephant story. There is a marked difference between South African film which tries to use the Hollywood model and Riverwood which is using simple down to earth storylines and affordable budget lines.

**7.0 Introduction.**

This chapter will review three films, set and shot in Kenya by different producers at different times; each representing a different epoch, but they retain Kenya as the setting. Each of the purposively sampled films was produced to attain specific goals such as propaganda, commercial interests and Oscar Awards nomination. But the films portrayal of Kenyan characters is an unchangeable testament of representation of Kenyan people and the issues found most apt to build stories on at those different situations. Using an eclectic approach, the study evaluated the films using several elements including the following: Background of the film, plot of the story, characterization, language use, symbolism, outstanding technical qualities and assessment of the story through postcolonial lenses.

The films under review include *Simba* shot during the Mau Mau insurgency in (1955) representing the colonial epoch; *Bush Trackers* shot in 1980 representing the post-colonial epoch when foreign movies production in Kenya was at its highest peak; and finally *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) representing the contemporary epoch. *Nairobi Half Life* is the most successful box office local story but it is dogged by a controversy that deceit and conman ship were used to make it qualify as a Kenyan movie, in order for it to make it qualify for an Oscar Award nomination, while the certificate of origin for the movie is held by a German company.

**7.1 Representation of Kenyan Films under a Postcolonial Setting**

In the digital era, the visual image representation is becoming ubiquitous. For the term representation to hold water as discussed under literature review, the assumption is that something was there already before the media represented it to an audience. The term representation has a semiotic meaning that something is standing for something else. Representations come in various forms: films, television, photograph, painting, adverts, and other forms of popular culture. According to Robert Keller (1999: 177), “film is not a reality. What is seen on the screen is a mediation, a representation, an image or series of images that have been made for specific economic and cultural reasons and are interpreted by different people in specific ways. These images represent ideas, ways of seeing and doing and feeling. They represent culture and not reality.” They are created, distributed for specific purposes and the receivers of these images quite often take the images at their face value especially where they are intended to reinforce stereotypes. According to E.Emelobe (2009) over the years, representation of an under-represented group is often over-charged with allegorical significance.

The western world’s view of Africa is often marginalized and subjective. According Emelobe (ibid), the work of postcolonial writers and artists attest to the continual attempts to counter all colonial subversions engendered during the colonization or in the postcolonial era. Soyinka (1976), in *Myth, Literature and the African World*, elaborates clearly that Africa is a cultural entity, a world of itself with its history, its social neurosis, and its value system. The notion that the colonialists had that Africa existed in a milieu of cultural vacuum is misguided and myopic. Similarly, Achebe as quoted in G. Killam (1973: 8) rightly observes that;

*“African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans they had poetry and above all, they had dignity the (postcolonial) writer’s duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, when they lost.”*

Representations more often than not are not a replica of reality. Often representations are in a sense ideological tools that can serve to re-in force systems of inequality and subordination.

They can help sustain colonialist or neo-colonialist projects. According to Emeka (ibid), Hollywood's representations of Africa are largely misguided and intended to denigrate and trample upon African dignity. Their movies and literature place Africa at a one-dimensional stereotype based on their preconceived notions. According to Emelobe (ibid), these notions, are mostly negative, primordial, biased and unbalanced.

For centuries, the colonialists forced their values on their African hosts. Within that time, they inculcated their world view, their culture, language, dress, religion, foods and all other forms of material culture and technology on the colonized Africans. In the postcolonial decolonization process, the challenge is to deconstruct the notions and the perceptions of inferiority that were imparted on the mind of the Kenyans during the colonial process and which are still ongoing in the postcolonial contemporary era. In other words, it is an attempt (or series of attempts) to regain what Fanon labeled "a veritable creation of new men" (28). As generations had lived under the oppression of imperialism, they had been forced to adopt western foreign cultural values and mannerisms.

The challenge therefore is to find indigenous ways of inscribing their different identities. Postcolonial criticism is therefore a process of utilizing the power of language to identify the damage done to the local cultures and mend the fractured structures. There is no need to use force in fighting the past. Language and the media are intellectual means by which postcolonial communication and reflection take place.

This is essentially important as most colonial powers tend to integrate their language and other media in indigenous societies. In more specific terms, a lot of African books and works of art that can be attached to the era of post colonialism, for instance, are done in English or French. The movies that were shot in Kenya during the three epochs colonial, post-colonial and contemporary era are also in English. Thus, the cross-border exchange of thought and technology from both the colonized and the colonizer is supported by the use of a shared medium of communication.

The critical evaluation adopted an eclectic approach because film is a mixture of visuals and sound that also uses many effects to compose images and create meaning. The thematic approach in a movie analyzes a film in terms of its unifying central concerns and the

director's intentions. The eclectic approach to film criticism acknowledges that all critical approaches have some validity and increasing the approaches could be a way of enhancing the opportunity for a better understanding of the representations. Eclecticism also tries to analyze films in a composite style which incorporates elements of other approaches, rather than stick to a singular theoretical framework. The ultimate purpose of the three reviews is to give any scholar who reads this thesis a better understanding and a keener appreciation of how representation of Kenyan people in films shot in Kenya has evolved through the three different historical epochs.

## **7.2 *Simba* (1955) Evaluation**

### *7.2.1 Background*

One of the challenges of *Simba* is that it is a politically instigated movie which was to create a situation of ambivalence so as to obfuscate what was really going on in Kenya after the Mau Mau uprising and the state of emergency was declared in Kenya in 1952. As discussed in chapter four, the British government had no intentions whatsoever of granting independence to Kenya which they had identified as ideal for white settlement due to its attractive climate. The Mau Mau uprising was going to be put down at whatever cost and in the shortest time and by all means possible because if the uprising succeeded, it was going to pluck a most coveted jewel off the crown of the empire. The greatest challenge was managing the situation in such a way that the world doesn't get to know what was really going on because as discussed in chapter four, human rights and universal suffrage was a global phenomenon and Britain, of all nations wouldn't have wanted to be seen violating the rights she led the world in 1948 to craft, declare and adopt.

Propaganda, as the research established in chapter four became an essential weapon to defeat the Mau Mau. *Simba* was one of three feature movies to serve this purpose. The others according to David Anderson (2003) included *Safari* (1956) and *Something of Value* (1957). In *something of Value*, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill himself gave a prologue to the film so as to emphasize its importance.



According to Herbert A Friedman (2006), in the United States, the propaganda images were all pro-British and avid audiences watched motion pictures on the subject such as the 1955 *Simba*, “where the Mau Mau were depicted as murderous hordes or betrayers who murdered their white masters, friends, and children in their beds.” The bestselling novel *Something of Value*, by Robert Ruark, reinforced this official version of black savagery.

*Simba* which translated in Swahili means lion is the first of a trilogy of movies shot during the Mau Mau uprising and it is still classified online among the top 140 British movies worth watching. It is available for free live streaming online which means that it continues to spread the same prejudices today that it was created to spread in 1955. As would be expected of cinema of this nature whose intension is to fire up people’s emotion without necessarily enlightening them, the drama is parked with violence and tension.

The film succeeds in creating an incoherent picture of why there was a big uprising against the British in Kenya. From the start, the viewer is left in no doubt about the way in which what transpires should be judged. It is significant to note that Peter De Sarigny the Producer was South African<sup>123</sup> who had moved to England in 1936. As a film produced for the purpose of propaganda and to make profit from a sensationalized story, *Simba’s* approach to the issues and the representation of Kenyans wasn’t unexpected.

Shot in collaboration with the Colonial government in Kenya, the script was written by John Baines and Robin Estridge, based on an original story by Anthony Perry, and Charles Njonjo<sup>124</sup> is said to have been the local story consultant.

### 7.2.2 Plot of the Story

The plot of the film starts with a cliché of the mindless brutality and blood thirstiness of the Kikuyus which establishes a prejudice against the ‘blood thirsty hounds.’ The point of view of the story is made with the opening credits. Set against the majestic background of Mt. Kenya in the serenity of a new dawn, a young African man rides a glimmering new bicycle

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<sup>123</sup> Peter De Sarigny - IMDb, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0211496/>, accessed on 21/5/2015

<sup>124</sup> <http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/245624%7C0/Simba.html>, accessed on 21/5/2015. Charles Njonjo, a son of Colonial Senior Chief Josiah Njonjo rose to be the Attorney General in independent Kenya in 1963.

as he croons a vernacular song. The singing which is juxtaposed with the chirping birds is interrupted by a muffled cry for help which ruffles the bliss and unsettles the young cyclist. He traces where the cry of help is coming from and notices a white man, whom we later come to know as David Howard drenched in blood as he desperately cries for help.

The young man dismounts from the bicycle and walks towards the helpless victim. He carefully looks around to check if anyone has spotted him and squats close to the white man and gives him a nonchalant look. He pulls off his machete, waves it high as he's delivering the lethal blow to chop off the helpless man's neck. Just like that. The killer shows no trace of emotion of anger, hatred or malignity. After he delivers his one mighty fatal blow, he mounts his bicycle and rides briskly away. The motiveless killing of a helpless victim leaves the viewer questioning the sanity of the killer and it instantly establishes a prejudice against him and his ilk. Other senseless killings almost in similar fashion follow in several other scenes in the movie.

The murder scene is followed by the airport arrival of the brother of the murdered man Allan Howard (Dirk Bogarde) who was visiting his brother David who had settled in Kenya as a farmer. Allan is shocked by the gruesome details of his brother's murder and he's aggrieved so much that he develops an instant revulsion of the Africans who murdered his brother. This establishes the central conflict of the hero's hatred of the Africans especially the ebullient Dr. Karanja, ( Earl Cameron) a local medical doctor who is in charge of a local clinic. The conflict is made worse by Allan falling in love with a white nurse Mary Crawford (Virginia Mackena) who works in the clinic under Dr. Karanja. The political conflict of white versus black is sugar coated with a romance in the jungle to spice up the story for the white audiences watching the film in summer of 1955. The plot of the story thickens when Allan becomes determined to track down and kill his brother's murderers. The final climax is the sacrificial shooting of Dr Karanja by the Mau Mau. Dr. Karanja the only progressive Kenyan who had fully adopted the white man's lifestyle is killed by his own people while protecting white people against the Mau Mau.

The producer, for propaganda's sake downplays the cruelties of colonial rule in Africa, which motivated the insurgency in the first place. The story is told from the white colonialists' point of view and there's no attempt whatsoever to bring in opposing voices. Africans do not express any grievances or even show any feelings when they're insulted.

It appears that the conflict 'has flared up in a vacuum.'<sup>125</sup> Because the Mau Mau's callous attacks are not well motivated, the story fails to convince the viewers that the whites were the victims of a genuine situation and this undermines the poignancy of the plot. Consequently, by taking sides with the whites, the producer fails to create a believable cinematic representation of the Mau Mau insurgency. The producer was undoubtedly more interested in sensationalism and political propaganda to spice up the box office and to also hide the gory details of why the Mau Mau took to arms in the first place.

A British critic Wendy Webster observes in her book 'Imagining Home', that "Domesticity and family are established from the outset as images of white civilization which the Mau Mau is intent on destroying." She further observes that there is no portrayal of black family relationships in the film. Apart from Peter and the 'houseboys', black men are shown either alone, as sinister figures with criminal or murderous intent, or as a rampaging mob." The film also presents a limited and condescending view of the black Kenyan population: "Here two versions of primitive are at issue, with 'houseboys' produced as evidence that blacks are like children – 'one of the family' as Mary's mother describes them – who can be tamed through their relationship to a white family. The Mau Mau evokes a different version of primitive as savage."

### *7.2.3 Characterization*

Other than the murderous cyclist who introduces the story, the first significant African character in the story is Kimani, the 'house boy' of the murdered white man. The killing of his boss appears to have put him in a daze and when we see him he struts around zombie like. David Howard who was attacked by Mau Mau the previous night had single handedly fought off a whole gang, killed three and would have survived to tell the story if the right kind of help had come that fateful morning.

After Howard's senseless killing, we get the opinions of the white settlers as they discuss their workers and their shocking murderous nature which, up to this juncture could never have been suspected. As the African men, (who were called boys) serve dinner to the

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<sup>125</sup> <http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/245624%7C0/Simba.html>

Crawfords and their newly arrived guest later, the servants are subjected to a gauntlet of taunting insults about their own backwardness and the primitivism of their ancestors.

“You can’t get inside the head of a Kiyuk, no matter what you do,” Mr. Crawford a veteran white farmer says. The elderly colonial settler with patronizing conservative views terrorizes the overtly intimidated natives. “Sixty years ago when the first white men came here, these Africans were still swinging from trees. How can they be rational human beings? They are children,” he says. Allan, the visitor who had arrived from Britain the same morning to find his brother killed asks why his brother David could have been killed. Crawford educates him on the ‘unreasoning nature of the African.’ “Why, doesn’t apply to the African any more than it applies to a backward child...they operate entirely on instinct.”

His wife, Mrs. Crawford offers a theory on why David was killed and her reasoning is equally warped... “David was killed because he was kind...because the Africans liked him and the Mau Mau wouldn’t want a liked white man.”

The cajoling and ridiculing of the servants which persists for so long is so annoying that the viewer sympathizes with the humiliation the grown men, called boys, are going through. Mr. Crawford who all the time is holding a pistol turns to one of them and taunts him, by asking him if he wants to play with the toy (pistol), and the terrified servant scampers away.

When Mr. Crawford is killed later from a Mau Mau night attack, we learn that the same servant he had taunted with the gun earlier is the one who actually killed him. One gets a sense of dejavu! ‘A Daniel come to judgement!’ The sense of the dramatic irony in Crawford’s killing overrides any sense of remorse for his demise. Instead one gets tickled to find that the ‘boy’ could indeed use the ‘toy’ and was just play-acting. In *Simba*, one of the qualities that makes the story tick is the distinct difference between black versus white, especially through the protagonist Allan Howard and the antagonist Dr. Karanja. Both are believable and interesting beings. Creating interesting, realistic characters is an art in itself. Representation of the African characters creates a motif of their senseless brutality, and their stolid inferiority. Except for Dr. Karanja, the only educated African in the movie; other native characters are deliberately underdeveloped, appearing as mere sketches of people rather than real people. All the lead African roles are played by foreign black actors.

Kimani, the 'house boy' of the Mau Mau victim is played by Ben Johnson a British actor. Even though he is a full grown man in his thirties or forties, Kimani is portrayed as a timid servant who crouches, cringes and sheepishly looks down when talking to his white masters. Dressed in a white Kanzu and a white cap as befitted all Kitchen Totos, he portrays the picture of a stupid oaf who gives a wide stupid grin even when he is insulted to his face.

Even though he understands and speaks English, his demeanor betrays no feelings of annoyance at all even when under extreme provocation. One is persuaded to perceive him as subhuman. In his first encounter with the brother of the slain man, he is shouted at and treated with disdainful disregard and he dutifully scampers away when he's ordered to get lost. In his character development, we do not see his displeasure through speech, feelings, thoughts or actions even when his interlocutors are away. When assessed through the five indirect methods of characterization; Kimani emerges as a buffoon who deserves the treatment he gets although he earns sympathy when he manages to rush and call for help when his (*bwana*) master is under attack from one of the house boys. It's the only time he shows any elements of emotion.

As one of the intentions of the British propaganda was to prove that the Kikuyu had mentally regressed and 'had fallen so sick' that they needed treatment during the period of emergency, graphic detail of the derangement had to be visually provided in a gory and hideous oath taking ceremony.

The dramatic sequence of the Mau Mau oath opens with a view of the natives heeding the call of the drums, summoning them to the ritual towards Mount Kirinyaga, which can be seen in the background. The scene is artificially created in a studio in London using technical visual effects to create an aura of mysticism, with the Mau Mau procession, in a puppet-like fashion.

The men sheepishly follow each other unquestioningly like dummies and disappear into the unknown. Their machine-like body-posture (leaning forwards obstinately) coupled with their silence enforces their thoughtless and rigid mindsets, thereby highlighting their unwavering resolve to take the oath and propagate the Mau Mau cause.

Dr. Karanja played by Earl Cameron,<sup>126</sup> a British black actor of Bermudan extraction is a rare portrayal of an African in a white movie. Cameron renders a powerful performance as Dr. Peter Karanja, a doctor split between two antagonistic worlds, trying to reconcile his admiration for Western civilization with his Kikuyu heritage. Through his dignified poise, his eloquence and sonorous deep voice, Earl Cameron successfully challenges the prevailing image of the Africans as savages and incapable of learning, despite that the entire movie is bent on demeaning the Africans, by portraying them as animals.

Cameron's role as Dr. Karanja enables him to rise above the dominant cliché of the so-called "noble savage." As Howard's antagonist, he ably stands up to him eyeball to eyeball without flinching and Howard finally offers his apologies when it dawns on him that all along he was misinterpreting Dr. Karanja's genuine intentions. The doctor's tragic killing signals the intransigence between the two opposing sides.

#### 7.2.4 Language of Dialogue

The target audience of this film was the British and American audiences and the main language of dialogue was English. Most of the dialogue involving the Africans in the film is Kikuyu and Kiswahili to underline their primitivism and lack of sophistication. There are instances when the chief of police is giving orders in Kiswahili to inject a sense of authority and demonstrate that he is actually in charge and his feet are on the ground. Although the multilingual dialogue gives him feigned authenticity, the Kiswahili which is unfamiliar with the audiences is also holding back vital information from the British and American audiences, for whom the film was made.

The film fails to provide sub-titles for the non-English dialogue. But perhaps the director consoles himself with the notion that film uses other subtle forms of film language and therefore, while the audience reacts to a film's semantic intent they still get the gist of the story without following every dialogue between the characters. A language, by definition, is "a semiotic process through which thought may be conveyed, but a language system (or linguistic system) enables a response to that thought using the degrees and kinds of signs

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<sup>126</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl\\_Cameron\\_%28actor%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl_Cameron_%28actor%29) **Earl Cameron**, CBE (born 8 August 1917) is a Bermudian actor. He is known as one of the first black actors to break the "colour bar" in the United Kingdom. In 1955, he also played a role in another Mau Mau film *Safari*.

and signifiers produced by the language.”<sup>127</sup> Film uses not only words, but also different kinds of shots, angles and speeds to drive the message home.

Be that as it may, crucial elements of characterization and even plot in *Simba* are completely lost to the audiences who do not understand Kikuyu dialogue. During a meeting called for screening the villagers in an effort to root out Mau Mau sympathizers, Orlando Martins who plays the role of Headman moves from one suspect to the other, asking them if they had taken the Mau Mau oath in some barely comprehensible Kikuyu, with the Police Inspector who doesn't understand the language following keenly in tow, listening attentively to the translations. “Ni unyuite muma wa Mau Mau?” (*Have you taken the Mau Mau oath, the headman asks in Kikuyu?*)

When the respondents answer, it becomes clear to those who understand Kikuyu that the headman is a devious double dealer because he is cooking up answers and he is feeding the white Inspector Drummond with ‘white’ lies. Those who understand Kikuyu begin to wonder how the new conflict is going to be resolved.

For how long will the local headman, who is the one helping root out the Mau Mau, fool the ‘Mzungu?’ It becomes doubly ironic that the man the colonial government is relying on so much to exterminate the Mau Mau is misleading them. This is crucial knowledge of both characterization and plot that is denied to those who cannot understand Kikuyu. Understanding the headman as a double dealer creates the suspense as one wonders how long it will take before the double dealing is finally discovered and the culprit brought to book. Failing to know the language withholds suspense and the story fails to grip varied audience same way.

### 7.2.5 Use of Symbolism

The entire movie narrative is rife with symbolism. The contrast of black versus white portrays the good versus evil. Black Africans represent evil, while white characters represent virtue, piety, civilization, modernity, and they are godly beings exposed to the

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<sup>127</sup> [http://www.sebsteph.com/Professional/sebsportfolio/journals/film\\_semiotics.htm](http://www.sebsteph.com/Professional/sebsportfolio/journals/film_semiotics.htm)

perils of satanic machinations of brutal attacks in the middle of the night by murderous black terrorists who have no justifiable excuse to kill, leave alone attack the white angels.

Towards the end of the movie, Dr Karanja becomes the sacrificial lamb to protect his white friends from a Mau Mau attack. To underline the symbolic fusion of black and white in one character, Dr. Karanja is dressed in a white doctors jacket right through the movie symbolizing modernity, sophistication and western inclination. Karanja is a symbol of a Kenya that must harmonize the past with the present to be able to face the future. Unfortunately, he is killed towards the end of the film, not by white colonialists but by his own relatives, reinforcing the representation of their savagery. The killing of Dr Karanja by his own people is the symbolic destruction of progress and choice of primitivism, the propaganda that the British wanted to spread.

The title of the film *Simba* which in Kiswahili means 'lion,' is derived from an inscription that the Mau Mau painted using human blood in all the homes they raided and murdered victims. The inscription especially when still streaming with wet blood struck fear, horror and terror to those who saw it. This was the Mau Mau strategy of creating terror and despondency in the white community. This shows the Mau Mau's malevolence and it is dripping evidence of the bloodthirsty primitive terrorists. They had terrified the white settlers to an extent that they slept with guns under their pillows and carried them everywhere they went. Yet, the whites had come as missionaries to civilize the thankless terrorists. Mr. Crawford with all his bravado about the superiority of the white races and the backwardness of the Kikuyu opened his doors for his servants to serve dinner, gun in hand ready to fire. This is a clear indication of the unsettling nervousness the white community was in, over fear of Mau Mau attacks.

#### *7.2.6 Technical observations*

The setting of the oath scene, which is artificially created in a studio rear projection screens and sets in London<sup>128</sup>, is cluttered with chilling images and symbols, and a wide assortment of weird paraphernalia such as skulls, feathers and beads, while the actors themselves are

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<sup>128</sup> <http://www.tcm.com/this-month/article/245624%7C0/Simba.html>



dressed in traditional Agikuyu regalia, all of which reinforce the mysteriousness if not 'sacredness' of the ritual. The oath givers are dressed in traditional costume made of skins, beads and feathers, and their faces are decorated with white paint, thereby making them look more menacing and frightening to reinforce the 'otherness' which the film emphasizes. Furthermore, the stern-faced men brandishing their blood-stained machetes make for a more chilling image of the horrors of the Mau Mau.

The effect of lighting and shadows have also been used effectively in this film to highlight the hideousness of the Mau Mau oath and ritual ceremony; the use of low key light and other chiaroscuro lighting techniques gives the characters a chilling look while the shadows emphasize the malevolence of the primitive ritual. To the British and American audiences for whom the film was made, this was indeed the epitome of a heathen, evil and devilish cult.

#### *7.2.7 Assessment of the Film through Postcolonial Lenses*

This movie provides the visual proof of the thesis the early colonists had propounded right from the 1880s about a continent rife with darkness and primitivism. *Simba* indeed presents visual evidence in the court of public opinion of civilized society, so that they may see with their own eyes and judge for themselves the savagery and the mindless brutality of the natives who are instigating an unprovoked revolt against civilization.

The British government, in collusion with the colonial government as this thesis has stressed, had to manufacture excuses to justify imposing a state of emergency for over six years and cram hundreds of thousands of people into detention camps. The dislocation of over one and a half million people from their farms into guarded villages required a justification, and this was it. The bestial night attacks under the cover of darkness spared neither black nor white.

This is what Paris (2002: 2) calls "Propaganda of Empire."<sup>129</sup> According to Paris, "Given the close connections that had always existed between British governments and the film

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<sup>129</sup> First International African Film and History Conference University of Cape Town, July 2002 We Really Shouldn't Be Here, But... Africa in Post-1945 British Cinema. Michael Paris Reader in Modern History University of Central Lancashire, UK

industry, these films offered contemporary audiences a more or less officially sanctioned view of decolonization and a channel through which audiences could negotiate the loss of empire.” In this particular case, Simba was making a point why this particular colony couldn’t be abandoned. Britain would be failing in her noble duty to spread civilization to the stubborn and ungodly Mau Mau who were trying to stand in the way of enlightenment and who were intent to drag Kenya backwards towards darkness and death.

### **7.3 Review of The “*Bush Trackers*” shot in Kenya in 1979-1980**

#### *7.3.1 Background*

In 1979, Nairobi received sensational news that one of the most successful African American film directors had come to settle in Nairobi and was going to turn Nairobi into the Hollywood of Africa.<sup>130</sup>

Gordon Parks Jr., an African-American who settled in Nairobi in 1979 was imbued with benevolent patriotism to give back to mother Africa the knowledge and skills in cinema production which she so desperately needed. Gordon Parks Junior had made a big name for himself after a successful production of ‘*Super Fly*’ series of movies shot in the inner city New York ghettos in the late 1970s. The movies which incorporated Curtis Mayfield’s music were a great success in the US and the diaspora. Any young man in Nairobi of the early 1980s who had not seen *Super Fly* movie and couldn’t croon in accompaniment to Curtis Mayfield’s music was considered to be a wimp.

After the success of the movies which grew into a series, Gordon Parks Jr. wanted to break out from the NY inner city crime scene into a more serene open space where he could cut a niche for himself and he found himself on a mission to transform Nairobi into the Hollywood of Africa. KIMC film school had just been established and the infrastructure for

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<sup>130</sup> Nairobi to Become Hollywood of Africa, On the Carpet, interview with Gary Stricker, of Panther Film Ltd, Sunday Nation, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1979.

film making was in place. His vision was to give back to Africa “the film production knowledge and skills that Africa so badly needed.<sup>131</sup>” He was following in the footsteps of his father Gordon Parks Sr. who was a prolific, African-American world-renowned photographer, writer, composer and filmmaker known for his work on projects like *Shaft* and *The Learning Tree*. Gordon Parks Jr unfortunately died with three members of his production crew in a plane crash at Wilson Airport as they travelled to film in Masai Mara one fateful morning. According to Roland S. Jefferson (1984) most of the two days’ footage that Gordon Parks had filmed was also destroyed after the plane caught fire and so there was little of Gordons’ touch in the final movie. Our local film star Oliver Litondo survived the crash because he was late to catch the flight. One wonders how the Kenya film industry would have turned out had it not been for the tragic plane crash.

According to Richard S Jefferson,<sup>132</sup> *Bush Trakkers* by Cobra films is the first indigenous film/novel to come out of Africa with an eye to appeal to the U.S/ western culture in contrast to other films produced by the likes of Sembene Ousmane who were producing stories that resonated with Africa first, before they appealed to the world. Sembene was on the frontline in leading Africa’s ideological commitment to disabuse herself through use of cinema using the post-colonial framework. Sembene was a committed Third Cinema producer. On the other hand, Gordon Parks Jr., the benevolent returned son from the diaspora with the best intentions in the world was on the verge of creating a Kenya film industry premised on a ‘First Cinema’ style that based most of their stories on sex and violence. Kenya was on the verge of producing ‘violence brewed in an African pot for American palates.’

### 7.3.2 Plot of the Story

The plot of the *Bush Trakkers* revolves around Jonny Kimathi, a game ranger who decides to abandon the serenity of the game park where he was protecting wildlife, to move to the impersonal concrete jungle that is Nairobi to get married and try his luck at running a small

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<sup>131</sup> My recollections from my discussion with Gordon Parks at the New Stanley Hotel in March 1979 , after he had auditioned me to take the lead role in his first movie *Bush Trakkers*.

<sup>132</sup> Reviewed in *The Black Scholar*, vol 15 no. 6. Nov/Dec 1984

general store business. This is a case of one abandoning protecting a national heritage to pursue petty capitalist interests in a hostile territory. Just as soon as Kimathi is settling down to love, and living with his beautiful wife, as fate would have it, a mafia style gang that rules the city accosts him and demands that he must start paying protection money. Kimathi can't pay protection money to thugs. This is a prelude to a disaster as Johnny Kimathi is a fighting machine with a lot of training and skills in combat. He comes to the city to seek serenity in marriage and business, but the city welcomes him to terror! Do they know who they are dealing with? They will see. He reckons.

Kimathi who had been toughened in the park protecting wildlife against shifta poachers isn't a man to push around. But little does he know the cold ruthlessness of the city thugs who rule the concrete jungle with an iron fist. After he refuses to pay protection money, his store is wrecked, his loving wife who is already pregnant is butchered alongside his business partner in a brutal and blood chilling mafia style execution. Kimathi is horrified by this heinous attack and from then on, he is blinded by hateful vengeance as he sets out on a suspenseful murderous mission in which he tracks and executes the gang members who killed his wife, one by one. He becomes an efficient, ruthless, mean killing machine of the kind Hollywood is famous for. A one-man army. Rambo.

Other than the jungle where he was a veteran fighter against poachers, he has to adapt to the hostile city which is depicted as an impersonal, morbid, crime infested concrete jungle. Johnny Kimathi learns too late after the tragic circumstances of his wife's murder that the city isn't his type of abode. After unleashing his vengeance on his wife's killers, he withdraws back to where he'd come from.

### *7.3.3 Characterization of Kimathi a Love-sick Naive Hero*

Johnny Kimathi the protagonist in *Bush Trackers* is created as a decent and committed game ranger who's putting his own life in peril to protect wildlife in the world's eighth greatest wonder of the world, Masai Mara National Park a location where other great films such as *Out of Africa* have been filmed. After serving for a while and feeling the need to break out and start life in which he can build a home and a family, he leaves the park to

settle with his wife in Nairobi as a business man. Because life in the city is controlled by thugs, he becomes utterly frustrated and wants to find how he can change all this.

Characterization in the film as a whole is wanting because most of the characters are not fully developed. Even Johnny Kimathi is just a shallow fighting machine who doesn't seem able to analyze situations beyond how easily he can eliminate the enemy. In the film, Kimathi doesn't see himself trapped by a corrupt political system where criminals rule the city and which required a total system overhaul. In his naive outlook, violence and crime is part of city life, like poaching was part of the jungle. When a man like him encounters problems, he faces them head on. His anger is portrayed early, as a man who likes to fight and brawl, yet at times there's no justification to this behavioral element. There are moments when the fighting is artificially injected into the story to embellish the action without which the story would fall flat on its face.

Kimathi's failed attempt to settle in Nairobi city later makes a statement on the futility of the unsophisticated trying to settle into the urbanized petty capitalism, without the social skills to survive in their new environment. It also makes a statement on how western culture imposed on a local people miserably fails.

For Johnny Kimathi for instance, it is not enough to tantalize audiences with his vengeful prowess as he annihilates his wife's murderers but the socio-cultural political system that facilitates existence of such gangs requires to be challenged if not obliterated. Our hero does neither of this. It is not enough to wow audiences with violence, but violence if used must be only to uproot terror and restore social justice.

To quote Daodu in Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, "let it be realized that pain may only be endured only in the process of fighting pain and ending terror."<sup>133</sup> "

Although it's only on the screen for a fleeting while, the best part of the film is the romance and love affair between Kimathi and Nancy, which is rare to see in black cinema. We see Kimathi, the former frustrated game ranger finally at peace with the love of his life Nancy, played by American actress Joyce Thorn with a tenderness and sensitivity that is so intense

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<sup>133</sup> Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, Daodu making his address, before Kongi the dictator is served with a human head of a man he'd killed, instead of the new yam he's expecting.

that when she is murdered by the rapacious mafia type gang, audiences feel like screaming due to the pain and heartlessness of the massacre.

#### *7.3.4 Use of Language in Bush Trackers*

Because action has a universal message, action films are very attractive to make and action heroes don't have to be encumbered by the rigors of finesse in diction, which is a must in drama movies. The snappy crash of karate kicks, the loud thud and yell in a boxing movie and the loud explosion and smoke in the firing of a gun or a bomb explosion speaks volumes to an audience who are drawn by the movie to sit on the edge of their chairs. In *Bush Trackers*, there's little fascinating thing to say about language use in the movie apart from the overt use of swear words and the hiss and grunts that spice the action. The hallmark of action movies is the 'action-speak.' The saying that action speaks louder than words might as well have been created to describe the action movie scenario.

For Johnny Kimathi the hero in *Bush Trackers*, his kicks and round house punches speak louder than his swear words. In one of the action scenes where this researcher was involved, the antagonist of the movie, Kuria the leader of the criminals, played by Lenny Juma, action and power of destruction is the main message. Kuria's hollow loud laughter especially when he is on the verge of destroying anyone who stands in his way is more memorable than his words.

Lenny Juma who played Kuria the criminal gang leader and whom I interviewed in the Key Informant Interviews has in his 40 years long acting career been type casted in several tough action movies for Hollywood films shot in Kenya. His mean looking face, his muscular huge body frame and loud guttural laughter endears him to where action and cruelty is needed. In the scene referred to above, he was able to jack this researcher up with one hand, toss him into the back of a city council waste crusher lorry with the assistance of his accomplices and shout to a henchman on the driver's seat to switch the waste crusher on. As the loud noise of the lorry increases with the revolving exterior turning fast, the bloody remains of the victim are spewed out as rubbish in the national park, to be consumed as minced meat by the carrion of the wild. As this happens, Kuria lets out a loud sickening laughter that thunders across the plains as it underlines his blood thirstiness. When an action

film really works, the star becomes the special effect, and everything else feels secondary.<sup>134</sup>

Action movies aren't really about violence. Rather than being about violence, they're actually about physical expression of emotions. Anger turns into killing; love and lust turn immediately into sex scenes, a little disagreement turns into a huge messy physical brawl, where furniture, properties and human beings are broken. According to Physical Language of Action movies website,<sup>135</sup> characters in action flicks yell and laugh louder than we do, because a big laugh or a loud yell are fundamentally physical acts.

### 7.3.5 Symbolism in “*Bush Trackers*”

In film language, as much as a seemingly “quiet rainy night” or a “calm summer day” may be taken to set a mood, there is usually a deeper meaning hidden beneath the weather. Movies themselves are metaphors for how humans experience life on a deeper level.<sup>136</sup> Creating a unique language of metaphors and symbols for a film is the essence of being a visual storyteller. Symbolic images help us to understand abstract concepts that cannot always be translated into words. The symbols, motifs, and leit motifs which screenplay writers use are the building blocks in film narrative style.

The symbols and images range from words used in the dialogue between characters, the music used, the season of the year, the props the actors are using to the colour of the costumes worn by different cast, the setting that the movies are located and to all aspects of material culture in the movie. Essentially everything in the movies’ mise-en-scene is placed there for a purpose.

The main criticism in *Bush Trackers* is the over use of violence. The violence drives the story and it’s the main ‘action.’ The film begins with violence, and impending conflicts continue to drive the story. In this type of stories, the hero is never safe. Danger is always just around the corner. As the story unfolds, outbreaks of violence against people and

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<sup>134</sup> <http://www.popmatters.com/column/185449-michelle-yeoh-action-cinemas-first-lady/>

<sup>135</sup> The Physical Language of Action Movies <http://igwilliams.blogspot.co.ke/2015/05/the-physical-language-ofaction-movies.html>

<sup>136</sup> Using Metaphors and Symbols to Tell Stories

<http://www.peachpit.com/articles/article.aspx?p=174318&seqNum=3>

property make sure that viewers stay in their seats. In *Bush Trackers*, the movie opens with violence against the poachers and ends with violence against those who killed Kimathi's wife. Most of the violence is gratuitous and is clearly directed at exploiting the westerners' preoccupation with same. But above all, violence is a symbol of power.

The city itself has turned into a more dangerous concrete jungle than the bush Kimathi was protecting wild animals in. In this city, there are creatures that prowl the night worse the lions and other predators that Kimathi was used to. In Nairobi, might is right. It is not a city for the weak or faint hearted. In this city you can be killed at any time anywhere without anyone's help. Barbra Osborne<sup>137</sup> has observed that, the most chilling aspect of the media's portrayal of violence in most occasions is that when people are killed, they simply disappear. No one mourns their death. Their lives are unimportant.

The killers in the *Bush Trackers* who are represented by Kuria and his gang wear dark ominous clothing and they attack after darkness has set in. In the dark city, the dark streets and the long shadows are symbols of ominous danger that can spring up at any moment. There are many symbols of potential danger that is looming out there, waiting to strike at any moment.

### 7.3.6 Technical Observations

*Bush Tracker* movie credits show strong collaboration between US and Kenya and was going to be a precedent of many films to follow had Gordon Parks not been involved in a fatal crash. This was Gordon Park's first of many films that he was to produce in Nairobi where he had come to found a Hollywood but he unfortunately died two days into the shooting of the film.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Barbra Osborne, Violence Formula: Analyzing TV, Video and Movies <http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/violence-formula-analyzing-tv-video-and-movies>

<sup>138</sup> [Parks, Gordon, Jr. \(7 Dec. 1934 - 3 Apr. 1979\), Hutchins Center for African and African American Research](http://hutchinscenter.fas.harvard.edu/parks-gordon-jr-7-dec-1934-3-apr-1979-filmmaker-was-born)



The most outstanding aspects of *Bush Trackers* was the excellence of the cinematography and excellent sound track that are normally not associated with local productions. Because the production was well funded, the production could afford to hire the best expatriate technical expertise in Nairobi and the German technical trainers who were training students at the newly created KIMC film school provided the needed technical support. Indirectly, creation of KIMC as had been anticipated was starting to bear fruit because the American movie producers were relocating to Nairobi without the expensive baggage of technical paraphernalia which accounts for a huge part of the film budget. The confidence of starting Hollywood of Africa in Nairobi wasn't farfetched except for the plane crash which killed Gordon Parks.

### *7.3.7 Bush Tracker through Post-Colonialism Lenses*

The subject matter and production style in *Bush Trackers* is geared towards action and violence and it makes the film provocative, controversial and disturbing. This is cinematically speaking a 'First Cinema' movie. Solanas and Getino's manifesto considers 'First Cinema' to be the Hollywood production model "that promulgates bourgeois values to a passive audience through escapist spectacle and individual characters according to David Bordwell et al (2003). According to Kim Dodge (ibid), unlike Hollywood cinema which uses cinema for entertainment and enriching themselves or Second Cinema which celebrates art, Third Cinema challenges viewers to reflect on the experience of poverty and subordination by showing how it is 'lived', not how it is 'imagined.'

Looking at it in hind sight, we realize that if Garry Strieker and Gordon Parks Jr. plans of settling in Nairobi and turning it into the Hollywood of Africa had succeeded, they would have supplanted the western 'sex and violence' debauchery into Nairobi and they would have changed Kenyan cinema and perhaps east African cinema irreversibly.

Even though in the globalizing world nothing stays the same, doing Hollywood type sex and violence films from Nairobi at the heart of Africa would have created an unsavory hybrid movie culture. The bigger fear is that they would have inculcated this production ethic across the region because they had the money to invest and the marketing knowhow.

The film scores very poorly under post-colonial evaluation. Kimathi the hero is politically unsophisticated and appears very naïve about social order and how to change it. Kimathi is a parochial hero because he has no agenda except his own. Creating a hero like Kimathi in the Kenya of 1980s is a parody because politically, the country was at the height of political dictatorship under Moi, and Kenya was crying out for a liberator. Using the name of Kimathi, the Mau Mau General, and the embodiment of Kenya's freedom struggle was a travesty of justice.<sup>139</sup> But because a name is not copyrightable, it was up for grabs for those who wanted to make capital out of its use.

Because Third Cinema's goal is to attack the historical injustices and expose them on the screen, creating a rogue hero with the name Kimathi was going to compromise Kenya's nationalist political history if it ever came to be portrayed on the screen. There would be an ambiguity about Kimathi the freedom fighter and Kimathi, the film hero. Kimathi the film hero saw the justice and the political system around him as impotent and unable to extract retribution. This is the greatest fallacy about the movie. African approaches to social problems are community based and the physical prowess of a single warrior cannot provide a lasting solution.

If violence is going to be resorted to, it must be done in consultation with the community like Kimathi wa Waciuri did by forming the Land and Freedom Army which fought the British out of Kenya. But having a one-man army in *Bush Trackers* enhances the conflict cinematically and the cathartic effect of witnessing a one-man army defeat a huge terror squad is spectacular. This is Hollywood cinema per excellence as opposed to Third Cinema which seeks answers to social and political injustice.

One of the key issues of postcolonial discourse is 'otherness' and that is precisely what motivated Gordon Parks and his partner Garry Strieker to move to settle in Nairobi. According to Mwaura Peter (ibid), Garry Strieker explained in a feature article published under 'On the Carpet' on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April 1979, that their intention was to come to Nairobi and make films for an international audience that would be different from the

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<sup>139</sup> This researcher personally differed with Gordon Parks Jr. at the Stanley Hotel after he had been casted to play the role of Kimathi. Gordon did not think that there was any harm to Kenya's history to create a film hero who has no political ambition of any sort and literally identify him with Kenya's leading political hero, who according to Nelson Mandela when he visited Kenya went as far as inspiring the resistance movement in South Africa.

representation of Africans that had been done by other films. He claimed that most films done in Kenya had represented Africans as stereotypes in Tarzan like films that had been done earlier. But Panther films were going to be different. Instead of Kenyan actors being shown in support roles in 'the great white hunter movies', he stressed that ... "We are getting away from all that. ... We are establishing each of our films in an environment of real life, modern day Africa. Our heroes are Africans and not just people in the background."

The biggest irony of the situation is that the African characters were only African by the colour of their skin but beyond that, Johnny Kimathi was another action movie hero like Yul Brynner, Jackie Chan or Chuck Norris. Looking at characterization from just the colour of the skin was missing the point. Post colonialism concerns itself with more fundamental issues that American producers black or white weren't going to be able to address. One of the issues in Post colonialism is to "articulate the lost identity of the African and reclaim the past in the face of that past's inevitable otherness." Post colonialism deals with ways in which literature in colonizing countries appropriates the "language, images, scenes, traditions and so forth of colonized countries." Garry Strieker as a white American producer was not capable of understanding this cultural need because he was not indigenous and had never been colonized. If anything, he was part of the "other" and he was only interested in using the great cinematic potential of the game parks that Hollywood had used since the 1920s. Instead of having white hunters in the story, he would exploit the exotic scenery with stories of "black-white men," which he was going to export as commodities to the diaspora.

The indigenous languages, the traditions, the authentic identity of the Kenyan people were going to be sacrificed on the altar of replacing the white skin with a black skin. Everything else would remain as set by the colonialist.

In an attempt to sanitize the story to give it an element of originality and Kenyanize it, Meja Mwangi a well-known Kenyan author who had won the Jomo Kenyatta literature prize twice, was approached and he developed a novel from the script. It normally works the other way round; when novels are adapted into screenplays but for purposes of marketing to especially the American market which was the main target market, an authentic novel would sell the movie and the movie would later also sell the novel, like the chicken and egg

fable. In the end, the marketing design was a hybrid montage which combined a powerful image of fusion of talent of North and South, Black and White.

Reviewed Works: *THE BUSHTRACKERS* by Meja Mwangi; *THE BUSHTRACKERS* by Gerard Strieker, Sylus Santole, Rex Stewart, Oliver Litondo, Peter Mann-Jones, Joyce Thom, Leonard Juma, Ed Tankersley, Paul Onsongo, Rolf Schmid<sup>140</sup>

Unfortunately, this hybrid somehow didn't manage to sell the movie perhaps because the movie lost its luster with the death of the charismatic director Gordon Parks Jr.

The plot of *The Bush Trackers* fails miserably when judged from the post-colonialism perspective. Post-colonialism professes cinema that deals with challenges in life that have been created by colonialism from a more pragmatic point of view and seeking solutions to socio-political problems and not just reveling in the gratuitous violence. Post-colonialism challenges viewers to reflect on their experiences such as poverty and subordination by showing how to challenge such encumbrances. For those facing cultural and political subordination, post colonialism aims to illustrate the historical and social processes that have brought about their oppression and create the change that is required not whine about it.

#### **7.4 Review of “Nairobi Half Life”.**

As this thesis has argued, this film is shrouded with ambiguity about its authenticity because the Certificate of Origin is held by a German company and yet it is said to be a Kenyan film. Even though issues related to geographic space is used to define a movie by nationality, the subtlest element is the one who has the ‘creative control.’ The person with artistic control and who has the authority to decide how the final product will appear in the movie is more important than the country he is doing it in. In this case, the creative control was with the German team who were training Kenyans on movie production.

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<sup>140</sup> : Roland S. Jefferson, The Black Scholar Vol. 15, No. 6, CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA (November/December 1984), pp. 61-63Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41067127>, accessed on 25/8/2015

#### 7.4.1 Background.

Since the release of *Nairobi Half Life* in 2012, the story of Kenyan cinema has changed. No other Kenyan feature movie has made as much impact locally and globally. It is the first 'local' effort in recent times to make a box office success. During its premier weekend, it is said to have grossed over seven million Kenya shillings, (US\$ 100,000) a significant amount in a culture where going to watch movies is rare. The film is produced by One Fine Day Films a German company who got finance from the German government to train Kenyan in movie making. The director Tosh Gitonga was a trainee director under a German film director trainer, Tom Twyker, best known for his film *Run Lola Run*.

*Nairobi Half Life* has been a resounding success in local and international cinemas. When it was screened in Nairobi, it was watched by over 20,000 viewers, a huge audience by Nairobi's standards.<sup>141</sup> In the US, it was screened at the 2012 AFI Fest Audience Awards, where the audiences were asked to vote for a choice of films that could be rescreened by popular demand. If more than 51% of the audiences voted yes, the film would return.

For *Nairobi Half Life*, there was overwhelming demand for the film to be screened again showing that it resonated very well with the American audiences. "And at each one of those theaters, the crowd was asked to vote on the fate of the film. If more than 51 percent of the audiences voted yes, then the cinema would bring the film back. We are pleased to announce that nearly 100 percent of the audiences voted a resounding yes!"<sup>142</sup>

#### 7.4.2 Plot Based on *Chaotic City, Rife with Crime*

An affable young boy, Mwas, played by Joseph Wairimu decides to leave the village to venture into Nairobi city and look for opportunities in acting in a theatre which is his life's dream. As a plot of escaping to the city to pursue a dream, this plot is an overused cliché but the story springs to life immediately Mwas gets into Nairobi. It is exactly the same cliché used in Kimathi's abandoning the game park to seek a better life as a family man in the city, in the *Bush Trackers* discussed earlier. A few minutes after he steps out of the matatu that drops him in Nairobi, Mwas goes through baptism by fire. As he walks and

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<sup>141</sup> <http://www.kenyabuzz.com/lifestyle/nairobi-half-life-competition-reviews>

<sup>142</sup> [https://www.kenyaembassy.com/pdfs/Nairobi-Half-Life\\_Back\\_By\\_Popular\\_Demand.pdf](https://www.kenyaembassy.com/pdfs/Nairobi-Half-Life_Back_By_Popular_Demand.pdf)

mingles with the city crowd, he's surrounded by a six-man gang that lifts him up with a swooping stranglehold, empties every coin from his pockets and drops him down. Mwas is dazed beyond words as the gang melts into the city crowd taking off with everything he'd brought from the village.

Before he fully recovers from this trauma and is walking around the city dazed, he's arrested alongside city hawkers and imprisoned. In Prison he meets Oti who connects him to crime life when both are released from prison. Otis's small crew specializes in ripping bumpers and all removable car body parts which they sell to other criminals. Mwas later gets to be introduced to drugs, booze and girls. He graduates into carjacking as the pulsating pace of the movie and the tension builds up. In the middle of all this, Mwas is able to attend an audition and be casted in a play. He starts to lead a double life, actor by day and criminal by night. As often happens in crime movies, a time comes when the gang loses its luck and they're cornered by the police in a dilapidated building down town where the entire gang is killed in a chilling gang execution reminiscent of mafia crime movies.

Mwas survives by the skin of his teeth and is able to escape and run the entire length of the city into the phoenix players to find a bewildered cast, who are opening the play, and they're stranded because no one knows where Mwas is and there's no standby for his part. He joins the production just in time and miraculously plays his heart out to a standing ovation. If only the other actors and the audience knew what he'd been through! The play ends on a cliff hanger. But despite the mess, the risks and the deaths, the final message is of hope after so much despondency.

#### *7.4.3 Characterization in Nairobi Half Life*

Mwas is a naive, sincere and a very affable character, who is very well developed and a well-rounded character. Mwas' naiveté is established early in the film when he loses all his savings to a conman who had promised to connect him to a theatre group at the National Theatre. At the outset, the lean boy with a frail looking frame Mwas played by (Joseph Wairimu) hawks DVDs around his rural village and he's very fond of mesmerizing people in the village by reciting and dramatizing some Spartan story he'd watched in a DVD movie.

He's determined to pursue his career as an actor at any cost. After the criminal gang steals from him after he arrived in the city and after he was put in jail having committed no crime, he resolves to adapt to the city for his own survival. His main crisis point is in the toilet at the police station when he's forced to clean up the most nauseating toilets you could ever see. He is revolted by the sludge that he throws up and collapses on the ankle deep filth. He resolves while in that crisis that he can't give up. If you can't beat them, join them. He cleans up the entire filth with a smile on his face. After he settles down a criminal, he shows his cunning and his wit and he starts to negotiate better deals for the stolen spare parts than even Oti the gang leader. He proves his mettle to the gang when he literally goes through the jaws of death by feigning insanity while hauling a hand cart (mkokoteni) full of stolen car spare parts past a police patrol car with the trigger happy police men all eyeing him. Towards the end, he survives the Nairobi ordeal and escapes from the jaws of death to the refuge of a live theatre where he ends up performing to a standing ovation.

#### 7.4.4 Language of Dialogue

The production adopts a multilingual approach. Kikuyu, Sheng and English are used when situations for every language occur. When Mwas is in the village, his parents speak to him in Kikuyu. When he is hawking his DVDs in the village, he easily switches to Sheng and he continues with Sheng with the gang in Nairobi. When he gets into Phoenix players, he uses English, although his mastery of the language is wanting which at times creates comic relief.

He says at the beginning of the film that he'd *rike* to go to Nairobi.

For the sake of the international audiences, subtitles are used over the Sheng dialogue. Sheng is the dominant language in the film because it is the language of the underworld and the ghettos where the film is set. Sheng was coined from the two words Swahili and English. Although it originally borrowed from those two languages, it has borrowed from all vernaculars and the language keeps on gaining new words. Sheng is now commonly spoken among matatu drivers/touts across the region, and in the popular media. There are currently Sheng radio stations which transmit all their programming in Sheng. Most of the Sheng words are introduced in various communities and schools and given wide exposure by music artists who include them in their lyrics, hence the rapid growth. It can be assumed

to be the first language of many Kenyans in urban areas.<sup>143</sup> Like all slang, Sheng is mainly used by the youth and is part of popular culture in Kenya. It also evolves rapidly, as words are moved into and out of slang use.

The language use in the movie is very idiomatic and even picturesque. When his mother warns Mwas against going to Nairobi, she tells him that “that’s where poverty, disease and the devil live.” His drunken, ineffectual father warns him that , “the whole society is as rotten as Babylon.”

#### 7.4.5 Symbolism

Metaphors and symbols are used to develop plot, theme, and character in deeper ways visually. *Nairobi Half Life* is full of unique metaphorical language. The title of the film itself is a metaphor. Why a half-life? How do people live a half-life?

According to Jeremy J. Dicker,<sup>144</sup> ‘Nai-robbery,’ Kenya’s capital uncoils to strike with all the injustice, indignity and indecency it can muster. This allusion to a scorpion or a serpent lying in wait for its prey is frightening. Mwas had been warned by his mother that this is where the devil lives. Every aspect of Nairobi we are shown in the movie is decadent and abhorrent. The toilet in the police station where Mwas is detained after his arrest in the city is the filthiest toilet in cinema history that I have seen, (except perhaps the one the main star fell into in *The Slumdog Millionaire*). The toilet which is shared by the male and female criminals is littered with urine, vomit, and blobs of feaces everywhere and Mwas is forced to clean all this filth barefoot with his feet ankle deep in the sludge. The toilet is a symbol of Nairobi’s depravity. It summarizes everything in the story, the corruption, the mismanagement, the drunkenness, the decadence, the criminality, all the mess is reflected symbolically in that toilet. Society cannot sink any lower.

Mwas’ traumatic indecision in that toilet is a symbolic statement of a trial of his determination to overcome circumstances and survive. If he can clean up that mess, there’s no mountain in life that he can’t climb. His vomiting while crouching on all fours in the

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<sup>143</sup> Street Talk How the urban slang of Nairobi slums is becoming the language of the people.

By LauraDean [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/roads/2013/11/](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/roads/2013/11/), accessed on 28/9/2015

<sup>144</sup> <http://www.kenyabuzz.com/lifestyle/nairobi-half-life-competition-reviews>



sludge underlines his being at the lowest point in his life. From here the next is death. If he can get up and get out of this, then that's it. This is his first turning point in the story. He learns that life is a ball of shit. You eat it or you starve. From then on, he cleans the filth like a man possessed, without wincing, as if he'd done it all his life.

The entire story is full of symbols of one kind or another. The city has different territories. There are the roads where ordinary Kenyans walk and there are the alley ways. Entry to an alley is the symbolic entryway into the underworld where civilians dare not go. Even police would do it at their own peril. The story has too many menacing policemen and the city is sprawling with thuggery. Machine guns of the policemen and pistols from gun members pop out every now and again. Guns are a symbol of danger and death. If there was a society living on the edge of the precipice, this is it. There's no order. The criminals survive by buying their way out by bribing the police.

The overarching motif in the film is a grey darkness which symbolizes a morbid lack of life and vivacity. If we are not in the dirty slums we are in the dark alleys or in the police cells or with the prostitutes or with the carjackers. Nai-robbery doesn't appear to have one bright spot. This helps to drive home the message the producer is making of a city full of despair, disaster and death.

The execution of the criminals by the police in the dingy, dimly lit, dungeon towards the end of the story is a haunting allegory of a failed state where the ruthlessness of the police machine gun is the order of the day. The massacre of the criminals; when it starts, is cold blooded, calculating and frightening. This is overuse of gratuitous violence to horrify the audience and imbue them with fear for entertainments' sake. But it also paints policing in Kenya as brutish, and it is undertaken by maniacal, trigger happy dunderheads, who are utterly merciless and senseless.

The issue of criminality is a central motif in the film and in the huge crowds along the streets; you can't distinguish who is a pick pocket, a thief or a prostitute. The failure to create contrasting characterization paints a shadowy grey between the police and the criminals and anyone else.

According to Jane Munene<sup>145</sup>, no matter how successful *Nairobi Half Life* may be at the box office, it fails to show sensitivity to the image it creates of Kenya locally and internationally. This consideration for a producer is necessary given the power of films to influence the minds and opinions of audiences. Cinema, though fiction, is also a window of reality and it is an ideological apparatus of tremendous power. Painting a picture of gloom and doom can have deep repercussions to how the city is perceived internationally

#### 7.4.6 Technical Observations

*Nairobi Half Life* is the first 'local' movie to have been entered for the Best Foreign Language Oscars at the 85th Academy Awards, but somehow it did not make the final shortlist. At the 33rd Durban International Film Festival, Joseph Wairimu playing 'Mwas' won the best actor award. At the Africa Magic Viewer's Choice Awards, on March 8, 2014 at the Eko Hotel and Suites, Victoria Island, Lagos Nigeria,<sup>146</sup> it won several awards including Best Make-up Artist; Best Lightning Designer; Best Art Director; Best Cinematographer; Best Indigenous Language (Swahili); The director Tosh Gitonga was 2<sup>nd</sup> runner up as Best Director.

The film's domination of the technical awards in a festival in Nigeria speaks volumes about the contrast between the two industries. Nollywood films with ordinary technical qualities win audiences across the entire African continent and the diaspora. The Kenyan film with technical excellence through German aid featured nowhere in the humanistic elements of the competition such as originality of the story or appropriateness of content. The film got no mention in the content elements such as story originality, script/story creativity, coherence etc. Compared between content and technical qualities, content is king.

According to Todd McCarthy (2012) Gitonga impressively pulls off the film's most intense suspense scene, in which Mwas and his inner circle are captured and await execution by a rival faction; at the same time, he nicely underplays the sweet relationship, the sexually innocent Mwas develops with Oti's prostitute girlfriend (the lively Nancy Wanjiku

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<sup>145</sup> Kill with Jane Munene in her office

<sup>146</sup> <http://africamagic.dstv.com/2013/12/06/2014-amvca-nominees-announced/>

Karanja). Tod McCarthy who is well acquainted with the trainer director Twyker's other films observes that "there are so many shots of Mwas dashing from one place to another that one can't help but think of Tykwer's *Run Lola Run* and speculate on the kind of advice the German veteran might have given to his debuting protege."

This qualifies an allegation by the film's local critiques that Tosh Gitonga as a director was just a rubberstamp and that this indeed was a Twyker and a German film. According to Cajetan Boy<sup>147</sup> who has worked with the German group before, "It is a Kenyan story but a German film. Half the technical consultants in that movie are Germans the Kenyan Director's name is just a rubber stamp. Everything else is being decided by the white German folk. But for me the bigger thing is that it is a Kenyan story but told by the Germans. They make it very clear that they are targeting the European audience." And perhaps that explains the technical superiority of the film above other African films at the Nigerian festival discussed earlier. The point about Gitonga's name being used as a rubber stamp was also made by Jane Munene, Executive Director FEPACI, in a KII and also by Wanjiru Kinyanjui. Wanjiru also made her first movie under German training at the Berlin film school affirms that Gitonga's contribution in creative control of *Nairobi Half Life* was negligible.

#### 7.4.7 Looked at through Postcolonial Lenses

When judged from the yardstick of Post colonialism, which tries to promote and redeem the negative representation Africans were subjected to by cinema for over 100 years, *Nairobi Half Life* fails miserably. Even though all producers have the liberty to adopt an auteur philosophy and a story of their choice, it's essential to weigh up the consequences of certain visual representations given the fact that we are aware that graphic visual images have very high impact.

*Nairobi Half Life's* hidden German representation of Kenya is worse than *The Bush Tracker's* open American portrayal in 1980 which tried to use indulgent gratuitous violence but at least doesn't paint such a grim picture of utter hopelessness that *Nairobi Half Life*

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<sup>147</sup> KII with Cajetan Boy in my office at UON on 24/9/2015

does. It somehow rekindles the representation of Africa in the post-colonial discourse of a continent with people who were inept to the extreme.

This becomes especially more so when we recognize that the producers of this film are really Germans and not Kenyans. To the foreigner, the cynical CNN view of 'Nai-roberry' is their poking fun at a people who can't manage crime, leave alone manage a modern city.

In cinema it is the visual form and not the narrative content that gives film its power. In this case, it is not so much about the legitimacy of the representation but the discourse behind it. If this film had been created by a local cast and crew, it would be a totally different matter. Although the story was written by Kenyans, it was tweaked to suit the stereotypical levels to tickle audiences. It is the pedagogical value and not so much the truth-value of the information conveyed that concerns film language. If film is to act as a mirror of society, the Kenyans need to hold the mirror to their face to reflect on their stench and their debauchery. When a German hand holds the mirror, it completely changes the discourse especially looking back at the use of cinema to paint Africa in the 'darkest of colours.' So, when foreigners help to paint such a picture of failure, despondency and hopelessness, one is easily reminded of the same old representation that came with the colonizer as they introduced film to Africa, more than one hundred and twenty years ago.

The most prominent Kenyan in the production is Tosh Gitonga, a trainee director. Movie directors do the bidding of producers. A trainee director literally is under the control of the trainer and is therefore not expected to push policy or to put their foot down on any manner whatsoever. He is there to learn. And so despite *Nairobi Half Life* being registered as a Kenya/German production, the Kenyan input is guided and directed by the Germans. The Germans own the certificate of origin. According to Sarika Hemi Lakhani, the production manager and producer of One Fine Day Films, there are no systems in place for a coproduction in Kenya.<sup>148</sup>

Nairobi Half Life is produced by two German owned companies 'One Fine Day Films' and 'Ginger Ink.' The Kenyan cast and crew came in as trainees and therefore according to Jane

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<sup>148</sup> <http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/How--Nairobi-Half-Life--producer-builds-Kenyan-film-talent//539444/2448222/-/tyq6f7/-/index.html>

Munene<sup>149</sup>, the film should never have been nominated as a Kenyan film in any festival. She claims that her attempt to block the nomination at the Kenya Film Commission was overruled. Wanjiru Kinyanjui a German trained movie producer and the Chair of Film Production Training at Multimedia University concurs with Jane that Nairobi Half Life is a German and not a Kenyan production. According to Wanjiru, it could only have qualified if the director was a bona fide Kenyan. In this case, Tosh Gitonga was a trainee and therefore the German trainers are the ones who hold the certificate of origin of the film. Claiming that the film is Kenyan is to perpetuate a falsehood.

There are startling discrepancies between the published Cast and Crew details published online by different websites. Tosh Gitonga, the movie director, doesn't appear on the full list of production crew of Nairobi Half Life published by The NY Times Movies<sup>150</sup>. The full list includes;

**Production Credits:** *Producer - Sarika Hemi Lakhani; Producer - Tom Tykwer; Producer - Ginger Wilson; Co-Producer - Marie Steinmann; Director of Photography - Christian Almesberger; Production Designer - Barbara Minishi; Sound Mixer - Matthias Lempert*

On another website, **imdb**<sup>151</sup>, Tosh Gitonga's name comes first and there are no German members of production crew alongside him as should be the case. His name is followed the local team who helped in writing the script. The credits of the producer, director, director of photography etc normally go together. Why are they different in this case?

**Credits:** *“Directed by David 'Tosh' Gitonga, Writing Credits (in alphabetical order); Billy Kahora (writing supervisor); Potash Charles Matathia (script writer); Samuel Munene (script writer); Serah Mwihaki (script writer).”*

The German team comes towards the very end, much after the long cast list and from the lay out one can note the disjointedness of the information, which is indicative of efforts to masquerade the film as a Kenyan enterprise.

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<sup>149</sup> IDI...

<sup>150</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/movies/movie/471229/Nairobi-Half-Life/credits>

<sup>151</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2234428/fullcredits/>

The entire movie's success notwithstanding, *Nairobi Half Life* is a highly disturbing movie because along its success as a movie, it succeeds so well to beguile the city of Nairobi and the Kenyan nation, as it hammers home a story of chaotic failure, corruption and despondency.

Nairobi from the start we are told is 'where poverty, disease and the devil live.' The critics of *Nairobi Half Life* deride it because it is unapologetic and unforgiving about the corruption, the insecurity and the general apparent mismanagement of crucial social systems. This film epitomizes Amy E. Harth's<sup>152</sup> "hopelessness myth" which claims that in Africa, there is so much violence, instability, corruption, poverty, disease, and other problems that these issues can never be resolved. The myth claims that it is not worth trying to help or concerning oneself with the continent. This appears to be the dominant message from *Nairobi Half Life's* outlook to Nairobi, where we are told early in the story, the devil lives.

All the police in the movie are more villainous than the murderers and criminals they are supposed to be controlling. Even though the local police are well known for their corruption, the exaggeration in the movie creates an image of despicable decadence. Not that I have much sympathies for the boys in blue, but at least they're not so lacking in humanity to the extent that virtually all of them are totally rotten. This allusion rekindles the one sidedness of storytelling that creates such deep prejudices that the stories become incredulous. Even though art has room for hyperbole, there must be limits for credibility's sake.

According to a local critic, "There is a very hopeless voice that runs throughout the movie and unfortunately it does not change up to the end of the story."<sup>153</sup> Except for Mwas' miraculous escape, the whole gang that he had joined for his own survival is exterminated by police machine gun fire in a cold blooded massacre that can rival the best Hollywood gang extermination by police.

That is 'First Cinema' violence at its best. No wonder the film was such a big hit in the US when it was shown there in 2013.<sup>165</sup> The movie and its violence has a superficial meaning

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<sup>152</sup> Amy E. Harth, *Representations of Africa in the Western News Media: Reinforcing Myths and Stereotypes*

<sup>153</sup> Karimi Nyaga, an MA student in Film and Theatre Studies Dept of Literature, UON, Essay.

but below the surface there's another layer of meaning – one that comments on the depravity, the social immorality, the decayed and dead social order replaced by a disorderly mess that locals have taken to be the order of the day. As the conflicts in the film are resolved, there's nothing to show that tomorrow will be a better day. No one is changing anything. Those who escape police bullets will do so by luck.

More than anything else, *Nairobi Half Life* is an “art film” and it is a “Twyker film,” the trainer director. The film is fully funded by German finance, the main technical crew is German and they hold the certificate of origin as stated earlier but they entered the film as a Kenyan film for the sake of Oscar Award nomination which gave Twyker a lot of international exposure. By giving it as a Kenyan film, its chances of nominations became enhanced because according to Elizabeth Ezra (2007), “major awards ceremonies such as the Academy Awards and the Cannes Film Festival still use national identity as a primary selection criterion, and these awards have global marketing implications.” *Nairobi Half Life*'s national identity as a Kenyan film became an effective promotional tool and Kenyan national identity was used to market the film to diasporic communities around the globe.

According Faustina Starlet (2015), art films have formal qualities that mark them as different from mainstream Hollywood films, which includes, among other elements: a social realism style; an emphasis on the authorial expressivity of the director; and a focus on the thoughts and dreams of characters, rather than presenting a clear, goal-driven story. In this case, the film *Nairobi Half Life* is on Mwas dream to be an actor, and the escapades he goes through in a horribly rotten city and his miraculous survival. It does not endeavor to change the status quo in any way, despite telling us at the beginning of the film that Nairobi is where the devil lives.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

The selected three movies have shown the need to pay more attention to representation to ensure that the heroes and heroins in the local stories are not biased to the extent that they are likely to show the national image in bad light. This means being more sensitive to the overall image we have created of the country. Its important to know that films have a power for both positive and negative impact. This however doesn't mean doing films for

propaganda but ensuring a fair balance in characterization so that we don't create stereotypical situations such as the ones in *Simba*. There also ought to be more care in selecting nominations for Kenyan films for future international festivals such as Oscar Awards to ensure that the nominated film rhymes with the demand for copyright owner and the owner of the certificate of origin.



## 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.0 Introduction

This study set out to evaluate the historical evolution of Kenya's film industry; how the policies and institutional frameworks evolved over time, and how varying social and political circumstances affected the film industry to make it what it is today. The study also endeavored to trace the evolution of Riverwood and the challenges that have impeded its emergence as a national cinema. The study also attempted to evaluate how South Africa has influenced film in Kenya from the colonial days to the present. Lastly, the study endeavored to scrutinize whether the representation of Kenyans on the screen had changed significantly from the racist, biased, and denigrating representation during the colonial era to the present. This chapter will draw conclusions and make recommendations.

### 8.1 Conclusions

#### 8.1.1 Historic Highlights

As noted earlier in this study, Kenya's scenic beauty was noted as an ideal film location from

1911 after the former US President Roosevelt TR *in Africa* documentary was shown in London and Washington. Kenya was seen as a suitable location for "Hollywood in Africa" movies from then up to the late 1940s. The national uprising against colonialism in the 1950s led to the shooting of propaganda films in Kenya aimed at quelling the uprising. The independent Kenya government in the 1960s failed to establish a film industry and denied a multiracial group that wanted to produce Mau Mau films a license in 1968. *Mlevi*, the first local film was produced in 1968 by Ragbir Singh. In the 1980s, three local movies; *Bush Trackers*, *Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* and *Kolormask (1985)* were produced. *Kolormask* was the first government funded movie but it was a disappointing box office flop and ever since then the government didn't produce any other movies. *Out of Africa* (1985) a Hollywood film swept the awards at the Oscars and gave Kenya great publicity internationally. In the 1980s, video technology entered the market and VHS movies became popular.

Cinema attendance numbers dropped heavily and several cinema theatres closed down and some converted to churches. *Saikati*, by Anne Mungai was released in 1992. In the 1990s, South Africa dropped apartheid and it started competing with Kenya for “Hollywood in Africa” movies. After 2000, some local movies such as *From a Whisper (2002)* started making a mark. In 2012 *Nairobi Half Life* the controversial but most successful Kenyan film was released and got Oscar nomination. The Kenya Schools and Colleges Film Festival launched in 2012 and it has had a phenomenal growth since then.

#### 8.1.1.1 Policy Highlights

Colonial government policy of Kenya as a destination for adventure films from 1920s to late 1940s continued and wildlife documentaries were the order of the day. Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE) was also established as a pedagogical tool and free cinema was taken round the countryside in mobile vans in the 1930s giving basic training through films in farming, hygiene, and how to be better servants of the white man. The Mau Mau uprising in the early 1950s led to the creation of Mau Mau war propaganda films both locally and internationally. Three major feature films and documentaries were shot and shown in cinemas in Europe and America as Britain desperately tried to stop Kenyans from fighting for their independence. Locally, many propaganda stories were filmed and taken round on mobile cinemas to isolate the Mau Mau from other communities. After the 1963 independence, the colonial film policy remained unchanged and Kenya continued to depend on films made in western films. Kenya government refused to license shooting of a Mau Mau film in 1968 for unknown reasons. There was no policy to regulate remuneration of artistes hired to work in the movie industry, which opened up room for their exploitation. Film remained under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting until 2013 when it was shifted to the Ministry of Sports Culture and the Arts.

The current government appears aware of the usefulness of the film industry and is in the process of launching a film policy. Although the actual detail of the film policy has not been released, it is expected to raise the threshold of local television programming to 60% between now and 2018. All imported television programmes and advertising are expected to be heavily taxed. Taxing all film and television materials heavily that are imported into the country will discourage importation of foreign film and television content into the

country and encourage production of local content. The 2015 budget incentives to the film industry and the film youth fund is a pointer that government is taking decisive action to spur the growth of the film industry.

#### 8.1.1.2 Institutional Highlights

BEKE created by colonial government for brainwashing and training Africans to make them better servants of the white man. Free mobile cinema started in Kenya and increased for antiMau Mau propaganda from the 1950s. Kenya Broadcasting Corporation TV set up in 1962.

In 1966, a Documentary Films Unit was created under the Ministry of Information and Tourism. The Kenya Film Corporation created in 1967 to distribute imported films in Kenyan cinemas. KIMC film school was launched in 1975 to train technicians to work in the broadcasting sector. The facilities were 16mm celluloid format. From early 1990s, Riverwood established itself on River road in Nairobi without any formal structures. . Kenya Film Censorship board was created in 2001. Nairobi Cine week started under French Cultural center in 2003. The Kenya Film Commission started in 2006. Kenya Film Classification board was established. Kalasha Awards to professionalize film production locally were initiated by KFC in 2009. Department of Film Services (DFS) moved to Ministry of Sports, Culture, and the Arts in 2013 when government realized that film is a tool of culture and not information. Establishment of film in the Drama Festival in 2012 started enlarging the spread of film productions in all parts of Kenya. After the implementation of the 2010 constitution, county governments reacted to film production in different ways. Because the Machakos County Governor Dr Mutua is a well-established film producer, the county created Machawood a film production hub and the county now is far ahead of other counties. There is need to sensitize other counties to the potential in film for youth employment and wealth creation.

#### *8.1.2 Challenges of Riverwood as a National Cinema*

Unemployed youth started music piracy using video on River road in the early 1990s. They started putting vernacular voice-overs on popular Kung-fu films to make films accessible to audiences who could not understand English. This developed into shooting local vernacular

stories which helped to establish Riverwood as a local film industry. Riverwood developed an innovative approach in coping with technological and social-political changes that led to the emergence of a local film industry based on video and later digital devices. The growth and popularity of the Riverwood film industry attracted formally trained producers and a gradual improvement of the quality of Riverwood products. The infrastructural spread of the so-called Riverwood went beyond River Road and today producers are scattered all over the city and beyond. The innovative approach using local stories, in vernacular languages are shot hurriedly, using sub-standard equipment by untrained people resulting in unprofessionally produced films. But the entry of trained producers into the industry is helping to improve the quality of the films. A proper mapping of what and where Riverwood is, requires to be clearly established. Production standards at Riverwood also need to be raised because most of the so-called producers have no formal film production training and require to be equipped with professional skills to uplift the quality of their work.

### *8.1.3 South African Cinema Encroachment into Kenyan Territory*

South Africa started film production early and at the beginning of the film industry globally, they were at par with Hollywood. A South African company had a franchise from MPEAA to distribute film throughout Africa and this continued even after apartheid declaration in 1948. Attempts by the Kenya government to establish Kenya Film Corporation in 1967 was blocked by South African cinema houses in Kenya, which led to a closure of all cinema houses in Kenya in a boycott led by South Africans for a whole year. After South Africa stopped apartheid in 1994, they started attracting foreign filmmakers who were previously shooting their stories in Kenya. South African influence is growing and efforts to attract 'Hollywood in Africa' films back into Kenya is ongoing but South Africa still offers better rebates to foreign film producers to encourage them shoot in the country.

South African investments in film production in Kenya is growing and they bought Film Studios, a local production company that was providing technical back up services to both local and foreign film and television productions. South African company Mnet a dominant CCTV company has created Africa Magic channels, which specializes on showing African films. They have also created a Kiswahili channel to encourage production and

consumption of Kiswahili movies. Nu metro cinema houses a South African enterprise is growing fast as they establish cinema houses in new malls across the country.

#### *8.1.4 Representation of Kenyans on Local Films*

In the film realm, the negative representation of Africans continues both by foreign and local producers. The representation has not changed significantly between the colonial times and now especially when the production finance and control is by foreigners. Because this research did not carry out a study to gauge the knowledge of the local producers on representation, it is hard to generalize whether the negative representation of Kenyans in coproduction with foreigners is created wittingly or unwittingly. Although it is impossible to control representation because creative people deserve to keep their creative license, film producers should be trained to understand film language so that all screen representations be it based on gender, ethnicity, race, religion, and all that 'otherness' is done from an informed perspective.

## **8.2 Recommendations**

### *8.2.1 Historic Legacy in film*

Many films shot in Kenya since the beginning of the industry over one hundred and sixteen years ago ought to be searched for, dubbed and a database of Kenyan films created to preserve the heritage of films shot in Kenya.

#### **8.2.1.1 Policy Framework**

The long awaited film policy needs to be launched and implemented without further delay. The policy needs to ensure the minimum 60% local content for local television stations is enforced and rebates to film producers be made to encourage more foreign movies be shot locally. Incentives also need to be made to encourage more Kenyan producers to get into film production. The awaited film policy is expected to generate a lot of production work in the Kenyan film industry. It should consolidate all regulations in one place because currently, there are many pieces of legislation governing film industry scattered in different statutes.

Government must take decisive measures against piracy for the movie industry to grow. The cheap American and Nollywood movies pirated openly are a road block to a thriving film industry. Although stopping the pirated DVD hawking has been done infrequently in the past, the hawkers don't seem to have been made fully aware that they are committing serious crimes. The high rate of unemployment and prevalent poverty exacerbate the problem. A more decisive strategy to end piracy of movies should be designed so as to encourage film producers to produce products without fearing that their products will be hijacked by pirates.

Government needs to assist facilitate training of Riverwood producers so as to uplift the quality of the films and ensure for a professional representation of Kenyans in movies emanating from the industry.

#### 8.2.1.2 Institutional Framework

There is great need to evaluate the capacity of the institutions offering film production training to ensure that they have the technical and the human resource capacity to offer the training. The film academy that the Kenya government promised to launch to professionalize the film industry needs to be expedited. To enhance the growth of film in the devolved governments, counties need to set up studio space for movie productions and subsidize costs of production for producers operating in their counties to encourage them to produce more content in the respective counties.

This implies KFC also being devolved to the counties to take services closer to the people. Because there is a big disparity in knowledge between the counties, an attempt should be made to make the ones who are lagging behind visit leaders like Machakos, which is way ahead of the rest in infrastructural creation and giving incentives to producers to produce movies in Machakos town.

1. The Kenyan movie industry needs to have an efficient marketing and distribution system that makes audiences aware of available movies and where they can be bought. The

institutions that were created to establish the film industry such as KFC, and DFS have failed to put in place a repository of movies made in Kenya. In business, it is impossible to do effective trade without a show room and a distribution network.

### 8.2.1.3 Film Production Training Curriculum

The film production-training curriculum needs to be evaluated and streamlined with the best practices globally. There is a great need to revamp film production training across the colleges and universities where it is being taught with little hands-on production training. In the curriculum, it will be necessary to inculcate need to understand the value and implications of different types of representation and how representation impacts the integrity and dignity of Kenyans. The Kenya Film Commission which is charged with the responsibility of spearheading local and international film production should have their mandate expanded to enable them vet and license institutions to train in films to ensure the basic infrastructure and personnel is in place before institutions are licensed.

There is need to define the characteristics of a desirable Kenyan movie that can fit within the framework of a national cinema so that issues such as desirable representation can be addressed. Nollywood movies and Bollywood movies are easy to identify. Local producers need to identify the elements that are uniquely Kenyan and maintain their use as a way of branding our films to stand out as a Kenyan brand. There's need to ask some hard questions. How does 'national specificity' manifest itself in films? What symbols or motifs should define Kenyan Cinema?

The task is not as easy as designing a national flag or composing a national anthem but there is need to design a golden thread that will weave our stories in a uniquely Kenyan way so that where ever our movies show, the Kenyan spirit within them percolates beyond the screen. Perhaps it is easier said than done but the debate is worth trying if we are going to use cinema as a symbol of our nationality and to address representation challenges that are still visible on our screens.

Kenyan movies shot on celluloid between 1909 to the present are an invaluable asset of our cultural history. Films shot in the earlier years are now not accessible because 16mm and 35mm projectors are no longer easily available locally. According to Department of Film Services of the Ministry of Sports, Culture and the Arts, the department has a very huge stock of films which are lying in a store waiting to be digitalized. The digitalization has been pending because of technical hitches. According to the head DFS Mr. Kerich, some of the movies require cleaning with special chemicals to ensure that the images can be dubbed into video without loss of quality. Others require other forms of repair. Mr. Kerich also disclosed to this researcher that they have many films shot in Kenya over the last 50years and they could easily be the only copies available in Kenya but they can't be viewed because they're not available in digital format.

#### 8.2.1.4 Film Academy Structure

The proposed film academy being put up by government needs to be well structured so as not to replicate the mistakes of the past by other training institutions. Because the purpose is to help establish the film industry, there should be certificate, diploma and degree courses. Although the purpose of the academy should be to equip the trainees with all aspects of film production and creative performance, production and writing, it will also be essential to understand culture in relation to the frameworks of historical roots, modernity and nationalism, colonialism and post-colonialism, post-modernity and globalization and to question all these with a critically creative mind to see how experiences gained from day to day experiences can be reframed for screen entertainment and business.

It will also be necessary for the trainees to see clearly how film business also relates to matters of: ideology; identity; social class; nationality; ethnicity; sexuality; gender and even species. The trainees should explore the ways in which moving images influence and penetrate our lives as they undertake a strong practical, production component, to make digital video films in various genres. One key point is to also integrate business training into the curriculum because the trainees will be learning to craft art not for its sake but for their business livelihood.



### **8.3 Representation of Kenyans in Films**

Local producers need to be made aware of the power of film as a political tool and sensitized to both the positive and negative representation so that they are fully informed when they are producing films. In workshops that can be organized by the Kenya Film Commission, a training unit should be designed to make film trainees look at and reflect upon art and film and to create art work with a deepening awareness of identity and an understanding of stereotype and how it has been used over the years to undermine the image and integrity of Africans in literature and the movies.

Examining stereotype in contemporary life, in personal experience, as a tool used by artists to heighten understanding, and the uses and absence of stereotype in depiction of characters in cinema should be key components of the study. In addition to looking at and being critical, trainees should be asked to create artwork that expresses and elaborates upon these ideas. Through analysis of image and stereotype, the trainees should consider and evolve a more complex perception of personal identity. The goal of the training should be to enable the trainees to identify, confront, analyze and critique racial stereotype, ethnicity and gender and to know each other as unique individuals, and to further develop their sense of identity.

### **8.4 Recommendations for Further Research**

#### *8.4.1 History of Film*

Research that is more detailed needs to be done under each of the five objectives of this study. A thorough comparative research needs to be done in the counties to find out the state of the film industry in the counties and make recommendations on where improvements can be done.

Audience studies in Kenya cinema have not been done and it's important to study audiences so as to know their needs and the future trends. The focus needs to embrace the new digital trends. Studies need to be done to find out how the new technological developments are impacting especially movies distribution and

marketing in Kenya. Kenyans have demonstrated time and again their quick adoption of technology. Some of the recently created Kenyan counties have come up with investments in free WiFi in the devolved governments to enhance the ease of doing business in some counties. Studies need to be carried out to map out what is happening in those counties and how film distribution and consumption can be integrated into the new networks.

Impact of Digital Convergence on Film. In the digital era, technological inventions are happening so fast that it's virtually impossible to predict what new innovations will be there in a year's time. From 3D and green screens to iMax and CGI, the Steadicam and digital film, the world of cinema has remained ceaselessly dedicated to technological advances throughout time. So much has been happening with lightning speed like the proliferation of digital platforms, evolution of tech solutions, and computer-based software and other discoveries in the fields of special effects and filming. Since the release of Avatar in 2009, the world has been shown that cinema has unlimited possibilities and the innovations that lie ahead are certainly no less thrilling than those of the last 120 years.

We need to study the technological trends and their fast change over to safeguard from falling into a technological obsolescence pit as we invest in the cinema industry for the future.

Research on cinema houses. As discussed earlier in this study, many cinema houses closed down from the 1980s due to a weakening Kenya economy, corrupt governance, and digital convergence among other reasons. A research should be done to establish Over the last five years, new cinema houses have opened up fueled by a young trendy middle class who have a disposable income to spend on entertainment. Even though the trend has been consuming movies more on the digital handsets such as smart phones and tablets, cinema is fighting back to keep audiences indoors and there are new screen inventions like 3D with surround sound, and the cinema experience from these theatres can't be found anywhere else. The digital era creates innovations every day and there are many efforts being made to stimulate all the senses including smell in the cinema. What is the state of the art in

Kenyan cinemas compared to what is trending out there? The study also needs to profile the different types of audiences, their film tastes and the value of this business.

Despite the floundering of tourism due to terrorism threats over the last three years, tourism in Kenya is taken to be the goose that lays the golden egg. It has been a key foreign exchange earner since independence and Kenya is a leading tourist destination in Africa. Film is the new kid on the block and is being looked at as a panacea to youth employment and wealth creation. The relationship between movies and tourism research is very necessary in Kenya so that synergy between the two industries can be harnessed to enhance faster development. This is an emerging trend in film studies and we need to find a way of weaving it into our curriculum.

A comparative study between Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa needs to be carried out so that the success of the film industries in the two countries can inform strategies on revamping the Kenyan industry.

#### *8.4.2 Policy*

Once the new policy is implemented, an impact assessment research will need to be carried out to gauge its implementation and impact.

Research also requires to be carried out on how the digital migration is influencing local content production.

#### **8.5 Riverwood Film Industry.**

Despite Riverwood having created a reasonably prosperous business, there are very many inconsistencies in the reports about the industry. More studies ought to be carried out in this area. There is need to investigate among other things: actual business volume; actual size of business and the rate of growth; the distribution and marketing trends – do they have networks throughout East Africa?; how much it is

affected by piracy and how do they cope with it? Studies also need to be carried out to disaggregate the DVDs in terms of genre- how many are television series, how many are musical videos, how many are live dramas recorded on stage? There's need to disaggregate them in terms of vernacular languages- how many Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Kalenjin, Kamba, Maasai etc. It's also important to find out what needs to be done to monetize the industry and how can it be done so that the quality of the content is improved.

In addition to the above, research needs to evaluate the image of Kenya that is coming through Riverwood, the philosophy(s) guiding the Riverwood Cinema and identify elements within Riverwood Cinema that would make it be called Kenyan cinema.

#### **8.6 South African Film Impact on the Local Film Industry.**

A study of South African investments in film production in Kenya should be carried out to know the extent of their investments in Kenya. The study should include an audience of the DSTV subscribers, the Nu Metro cinema houses and where they are located and how the revamped Film Studios have transformed film production locally.

#### **8.7 Representation of Kenyans**

There is need for a detailed study to gauge how representations of Kenyans have been changing in Kenyan films.

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## **Appendix 1: Key Informant Interview Guides**

Below are the questions prepared in advance which were discussed with the Key Informants. Other follow up questions were asked as the discussions went on.

### **1. John Karanja, Technical Director, Riverwood Ensemble.**

- i) Please explain your background and how you came to be involved in the film industry.
- ii) As the Technical Director of Riverwood Ensemble, please explain when and how Riverwood film industry started.
- iii) Now, when did Riverwood transform into the Riverwood Ensemble and is there a significant difference in operations?
- iv) What necessitated this change?
- v) Riverwood is blamed for the movies piracy in the country, what has government done in helping to fight piracy?
- vi) What is the Riverwood model of film production.
- vii) To what extent is Riverwood motivated by profit and to what extent does Riverwood care about quality of the movies they produce?
- viii) Riverwood movies are made with the ordinary Kenyan consumer in mind. How do your producers ensure that the content remains relevant and of good quality?
- ix) You were a contributor of ideas to the film policy draft. What were your recommendations?

- x) How do you see the future of the Film Industry and how would you rate the Kenyan film as compared to Nigeria 5 years from now?
- xi) How would you rate film training in this country judging by the graduands who are joining the industry direct from universities?
- xii) What are your feelings about South Africans investment in the Kenyan film industry.
- xiii) How do you see the future of the Kenyan film industry

**2. Lizzy Chongoti the current CEO of KFC**

- i) Kindly introduce yourself and tell me how you found yourself as the CEO of such a critical body as Kenya Film Commission.
- ii) What would you say are the milestones of Kenya's film policy development?
- iii) What is KFC's vision and mission?
- iv) What would you identify as key challenges to the Kenyan film industry?
- v) How would you rate KFC's performance since it was established in 2005?
- vi) Is there a relationship between film and tourism and if so, how can the two be harmonised to ensure that film portrayal does not hurt tourism and how can film also be used to promote tourism?
- vii) The Kalasha Awards, the main achievement of KFC, has been identified as a conduit of pirating films by some Kenyan producers. What are you doing to prevent this?
- viii) What incentives have you recommended in the new film policy to spur the growth of the Kenyan film industry.
- ix) How in your view does Kenyan film compare with Nigerian and south African movie industries? Why?
- x) What would you say about the controversies surrounding the nomination of Nairobi Half Life as Kenya's entry to the Oscars in 2012?
- xi) How has KFC collaborated with the Ministry of Education to help the Schools Film Festival?
- xii) How do you see the future of Kenya's film industry five years from now?
- xiii) What plans does KFC have for partnering with FEPACI in the next four years for the promotion of film production in Kenya?



### **3. Jane Murago-Munene, Veteran film producer and President of FEPACI**

- i) Kindly tell me your background and explain what drove you into film production.
- ii) How FEPACI got into Nairobi and how did you get into the top leadership of FEPACI?
- iii) Looking back, what would you consider as the milestones of Kenya's film industry?
- iv) What were your challenges trying to establish yourself as an independent film producer in Kenya?
- v) How would you explain the failure of the film industry from taking off after the infrastructure was created in early 1980?
- vi) How has the lack of a film policy affected the Kenyan film industry?
- vii) How does film piracy in your view affect the film industry?
- viii) Are you satisfied with current attempts to curb piracy of digital creative products in Kenya?
- ix) What could be done to improve the distribution of movies in Kenya?
- x) What are your views of the nomination of Nairobi Half Life to represent Kenyan films at the Oscar awards in 2012?
- xi) How has the representation of Kenyan people changed since the negative representations by colonial film makers?
- xii) How do you see Kenyan film five years from now?

### **4. Wanjiru Kinyanjui, veteran film Producer, founder of Udada Film Festival**

- i) Kindly give me your background and explain how you came to work in film.
- ii) Where did you train in film and where and when did you start to work as a film producer?
- iii) What motivated you to produce Battle of the Sacred Tree?
- iv) How easy was it to establish yourself as an independent film producer in Kenya?
- v) What were the major challenges?
- vi) How would you explain the situation that Kenyan Cinema is lagging behind Nigeria and South Africa?
- vii) How in your view has the Kenyan film industry changed from the 1980s to now?
- viii) What would you say about the impact of piracy on Kenyan film industry?
- ix) As a film trainer, what would you say is lacking in our training institutions so as to uplift the quality of our training in the universities?

- x) What would you want to feature prominently in the film policy which is still being prepared?
- xi) Where do you see Kenyan film in the next five years?

**5. Dr. S. P. Otieno, Lecturer in Theatre and Film . University of Nairobi, and founder and national coordinator, Schools Films Festival**

- i) Kindly introduce yourself and explain how you got involved in film.
- ii) What motivated you to write your PhD on film when your interests were in literature?
- iii) Explain in detail how the schools film festival came about and your role in it.
- iv) What challenges did the school film festival experience in the formative years and how were they resolved?
- v) How has the schools embraced film and is there a point of conflict between films and drama productions especially when there are limited resources?
- vi) To what extent has KFC provided necessary help to the formation of the schools film festival?
- vii) How would you rate the quality of the films produced from the schools?
- viii) What do you have in plan for addressing the film distribution problems to market the films produced in schools to a wider market?
- ix) How is piracy of films in Kenya impacting the marketing of the films produced in schools?
- x) How do you envision the future of the film festival and how do you see it impacting the expansion of the film industry through out Kenya?

**6. Lenny Juma, Veteran actor and Casting Director**

- i) Kindly introduce yourself and explain how you came to be involved in film production
- ii) Having been involved in film from the 1970s, kindly outline the milestones you have seen with the growth of film from those years to now.
- iii) How has the industry changed since the 1970s?
- iv) How has the absence of a film policy affected the growth of the industry.
- v) What in your experience has been the biggest challenge of especially the local actors in the film industry?
- vi) Have they been well remunerated according to your assessment?

- vii) What role did you play in the Bush Trackers in 1979?
- viii) In your view, how did the death of Gordon Parks impact Bush Trackers film and the Kenyan film industry in general?
- ix) South African investments in the Kenyan movie industry have been growing steadily. Why do you think this is the case?
- x) Is there a likelihood that South Africa will fully dominate the movie industry in Kenya?
- xi) What needs to be done to move the Kenyan film industry to the next level?

**7. Mr Ernest K. Kerich, Head Department of Film Services Ministry of Culture, Sports and the Arts.**

- i) Kindly introduce yourself and how you have come to be heading a department that is said to hold so much potential for the future growth of this country.
- ii) Department of Film Services has moved lately from the ministry of Information and Broadcasting to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and the Arts. What necessitated this change?
- iii) How has the change from Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to the Ministry of Sports, Culture and Gender affected the operations of the department?
- iv) What criteria does your department use to determine whether to license a film to be shot in Kenya or not.
- v) How does your department relate with Kenya Film Commission?
- vi) Transition from celluloid film to digital video has impacted film production, marketing and distribution in a big way. How has this impacted the operations of your department.
- vii) Your department is supposed to keep records of all films shot in Kenya. How do you store those films to ensure that their value as cultural products is not lost to Kenya?
- viii) Your ministry is in the process of creating a film academy. How is the envisaged film academy going to be different from other institutions teaching film in Kenya?
- ix) As part of the team involved in designing a new film policy, how do you envisage its launch is going to impact film production in Kenya?

**8. Kajetan Boy, Film Trainer, Script Writer and Independent Producer**

- i) Kindly introduce yourself and give me your background and experience in film production
- ii) How would you explain the way the Kenyan movie industry is in?
- iii) As a producer and a writer and trainer who survives purely on the film industry are you satisfied with the way it is.
- iv) How would you say the lack of policy has affected the industry?
- v) You have in the past expressed some scepticism about the Riverwood film industry. Why?
- vi) In May this year you had an experience marketing Riverwood movies for theatre screening. How was your experience.
- vii) Riverwood have in the past marketed their movies by DVD. Who suggested the new idea and why?
- viii) Do we as Kenyan film producers have an auteur style that would make our films recognisable as uniquely Kenyan?
- ix) What are the qualities of a good film?
- x) How as a Kenyan producer do you feel about the nomination of Nairobi Half Life to represent Kenya at the Oscars in 2003?
- xi) To what extent do you think it is a Kenyan film and to what extent is it a German film?
- xii) You have stated in the past that Kenya Film Commission has failed Kenyans. Please explain.
- xiii) If you were the CEO of KFC, how would you do things differently?

**Appendix 2: KNADS Official Entry Permit**

Permit No. 18297 Valid from 19/5/14 to 19/5/15

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