THE DEVELOPMENT OF FILM INDUSTRY IN KENYA

A THESIS

BY

MAGAGA ALOT

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Science in Management and Organizational Development.

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Dr. Lilian Kennedy Beam

Mr. Philip Mogere Omoni (Msc. Econ)
Lecturer in Research Planning and Administration
DEDICATION

To Kenya's filmmakers, actors and actresses
For the struggle which must continue to establish a truly Kenyan cinema
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The cinema and television media play a major role in the entertainment education and information services of Kenya, and in her economic activities. A large amount of scarce resources is spent on importation of foreign documentary and feature films shown to cinema, television and video audiences. Much money is also spent on the importation of expertise, equipment and raw stock for the film and video-making activities in Kenya as well as on processing, as in the large number of cases, of the films abroad.

An independent and viable film industry has not yet emerged in Kenya as it has in some of the developed countries. Indeed, only a few African countries notably Algeria, Egypt, Senegal, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Gambia had established nearly credible film industries of their own by the time of this writing.

Whatever activity there is to term the "Kenyan Film Industry" constitutes merely a classic case of the dependent and subsidiary condition in which the developing countries are related to the economies of the developed industrialized world. It also provides interesting insights into the market entry and market gripping strategies employed by the multinational corporations in their dealings with the developing countries.

The western film companies and multinational corporations have vertically integrated the production, distribution and marketing of films to the extent that they virtually strangle the birth of indigenous film industries in the Third World. Where efforts have been initiated by Third World filmmakers, local interests tied to the marketing of western films have usually joined the team of those who strangle indigenous film production.
The prevailing arrangements, intricate market systems and operations imposed by the major established film producers, distributors (and exhibitors) as well as raw stock and equipment manufacturers of the developed world on the Kenyan entrepreneurs and consumers in general, tend to ensure that Kenya remains a perpetual recipient of the industry's products, and only, if any at all, a very modest producer of its own.

This has far reaching implications - negative or positive - on the cultural, economic and technological development of the country. For instance, due to the ready and regular availability of the "most current" foreign imported films and its well run cinema houses, Kenya enhances her "tourist attraction" and thus "benefits" from the film medium. Also, on account of its having the "right combination" of "hospitable people", scenic beauty and liberal investment policies, Kenya, at least until quite recently, was gradually turning into "a small Hollywood" for giant film producers from all over the world.

The films that are available in Kenya, as indeed those that are to be found anywhere, are intended invariably to entertain, educate and inform their viewers. The predominance, however, of imported, especially western-produced feature films in television, cinema and video programmes in Kenya, has meant that the film medium contributes to an unbalanced, and adverse effect, especially on the youthful population which increasingly go for them and are influenced by their alien depiction and promotion. 70% of the regular cinema goers in Kenya belong to the 18-25 age bracket.

It is recognized, therefore, that as a vehicle of cultural dissemination, "a force for civilization", the film could be used to benefit or hurt society and that, at any rate, the medium has potential for, and does apply, immense influence across all levels of society. In addition,
the film industry provides employment opportunities even as it relies on sophisticated and relatively fast and constantly developing technology. It is as such an expensive and sensitive medium whose influence and implications - social, economic, technological and political - must needs be explored, examined and become widely understood in the specific context of Kenya where the film as a force for good or bad has come to stay.

A combination of reference to written/published sources and interviews with practitioners and theorists of the film industry has been employed in preparing this paper. Quoted references have been clearly attributed. Taken on the whole, however, the analysis and conclusions arrived at in this paper are those of the author.
CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW

The motion picture medium has its genesis towards the end of the 19th century when efforts to produce "pictures that moved" took place simultaneously in France, Germany, England, Russia and the United States. (Stanley, 1978).

In the United States, Thomas Alva Edison invented the Kinetograph, a breakthrough in motion photography. Thanks to Edison's invention, and to the spirit of enterprise and competition which it engendered, the movie industry had by the early 1920's assumed the basic characteristics of its modern technological and commercial form.

In the United States, all the main features of a modern film industry were evolved between the years 1890 and 1920. These included sleek advertising and promotion drives, the star actor system, sound on film as well as the "tripartite (production, distribution and exhibition) structure" of the industry.

The high point in the history of the film industry was reached in the 1920's, particularly in the United States. With the advent of sound on film, there was a great rush for the box offices, and the big studios each produced at least one new movie a week to satisfy an enthusiastic audience.

The industry had its low, but nonetheless exciting moment, in the 1930's following the Crash of 1929. It picked up again in the 1940's, with good performance in the United States during the second World War (1939-1945) just as it had done during the first World War (1914-1918).

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With the introduction of television - and even more recently of video - the Big Screen system went into a spin. In the 1970s the big film studios could on average release only between two and ten features a year (Thomas, 1979).

The natural competitive, as well as the regulatory anti-monopoly aspects of the free enterprise system in the United States contributed much to the overall success not only of the film industry but of other industries in the United States.

Drucker (1948), in his discussion of the interaction, in the years 1910-1920, between Ford Motors and General Motors makes the pertinent remark that, "and while a good many of the creations of this period, such as General Motors (put together by medium-sized companies to counteract Henry Ford's near monopoly) in turn became the leading company in the industry, the defensive mergers made for less concentration of power in the country's major industries and for more vigour and equity in competition. It often resulted in oligopoly; but it more often thwarted monopoly".

Competition in the American context, therefore, proved healthy in that it encouraged the maximization of enterprise; it provided a challenge which led to increased and improved production. As the result of the competition new and better inventions were realized; and the quality of film products was constantly perfected as the market, constantly expanding and progressively discriminating, demanded to have its own satisfaction.

The competition was expressed over patent rights, film distribution rights and the battle for actors and actresses. The technological advancement and quality uplift realized as the result led in turn to market expansion and to profit-maximization for all concerned in the industry.

For instance, Vitagraph company formed in 1897 with less than $1000 capital, realized a gross income of $6 million in 1912. By 1912 there were 13,000 movie houses in the United States, and between 1914 and 1922 alone, 4000 new theatres were opened in the country.
Individual actors/actresses also benefited. Launching an acting career at the age of 16 in 1909, Mary Pickford earned $35 a week. One year later, she was lured by Carl Leamle who hired her at $175 a week. In 1913 she worked for Adolph Zukov who paid her $385 per week, and three years later she established her own Mary Pickford Picture Corporation and proceeded to earn herself $10,000 a week.

Within a short history of its development, the film medium proved an opportunity for the meteoric rise of many, offering fantastic opportunities for wealth and fame. The industry attracted both the low and the high, including millionaire Joseph Kennedy who sponsored actresses to break away and set up on their own; and Adolph Zukov who rose from the humble circumstances of a $2 a week floor sweeper to the staggering heights of founder of the film empire known today as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

The symbiotic features of the American free enterprise, namely free-rein competition and anti-trust regulation, renders it ultimately a cooperative system in the overall interest of American industry. The tendency under the system is for competition ultimately to give way, or submit, to cooperation. Thus,

"after years of patent disputes, the major movie companies (in the United States) realized it was to their mutual advantage to cooperate". (Stanley, 1978).

Cooperation among American entrepreneurs in the film industry became even more imperative with the manifestation of the need to effectively confront foreign, particularly British, French and Italian penetration of the American market with their offers of raw film stock and film products.
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<td>1890-1914</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>- Prevalence of competition and attempt to establish monopoly destructive activities among competitors. &lt;br&gt;- My success is threatened by presence of foreign competition. &lt;br&gt;- Technology is in a backward stage.</td>
<td>- Edison, despite his great inventions, lost much money in litigation against patent busters. &lt;br&gt;- In 1903 Mutual Phonograph Company formed as a &quot;merger&quot; monopoly. &lt;br&gt;- Lumière of France made raw film stock available to US Companies that opposed the Patent Company's monopoly. &lt;br&gt;- Edison's Phonautograph weighed more than a ton; it was a clumsy equipment.</td>
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<td>1914-1918</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>- A healthy competition and generally cooperative spirit exists among US film entrepreneurs. &lt;br&gt;- Foreign competition is absent on account of war in Europe.</td>
<td>- In 1915, 20th Century Fox's herald, Fox Film Company is incorporated. &lt;br&gt;- By 1919 Paramount Pictures distributing 220 features a year to over 5,000 theaters.</td>
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<td>1919-1929</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>- American ascendancy in film industry established, and the momentum is continued after World War I. &lt;br&gt;- Vigorous activities of expansion domestically and abroad. &lt;br&gt;- Consolidation of sound on film. &lt;br&gt;- Prosperous years lead to popularity of leisure activities. &lt;br&gt;- The film offers fantastic opportunities for wealth, and many inventors are attracted to the industry.</td>
<td>- The emergence of the big studio system, each big studio producing an average a movie a week. &lt;br&gt;- The development of Hollywood, e.g., Sidney Optical Company's English Studio on Hollywood Boulevard founded in 1922 at $800,000 cost. &lt;br&gt;- The evolution of the big producer and distributor, e.g., MGM, 20th Century Fox. &lt;br&gt;- In 1918, the industry's leading personalities, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin and D.W. Griffiths claim &quot;Why sell for others?&quot; and form own producing and distributing company, United Artists. &lt;br&gt;- In 1922, Lee de Forest demonstrates sound-on-film at the Rivoli Theatre in New York. &lt;br&gt;- 1923-24, Willian Fox expanded studio locally and abroad by going public and purchasing stock. He purchased for $30 million, General Pictures Corporation of Britain which operated 300 theaters in the British Isles.</td>
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<td>1929-1939</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>- The economic depression now is in for the 10th. &lt;br&gt;- Many American films driven out of boxoffice. &lt;br&gt;- Poor America turns to cheaper forms of entertainment. e.g., radio. &lt;br&gt;- The new burgeoning field of radio. &lt;br&gt;- Government taxation increases cost of making and selling movies.</td>
<td>- Columbia Broadcasting System formed in 1927. &lt;br&gt;- The corporation's success led to the creation of the ABC network. &lt;br&gt;- 1928, RKO Radio Pictures formed. &lt;br&gt;- Film was cheaper to produce. &lt;br&gt;- Paramount's high profits of $18 million in 1930 dropped to $16 million in 1931. &lt;br&gt;- 1929, Federal tax of 10 percent imposed on all admissions over 40 cents; rents increase and attendance drops further. By end of 1930, theater admissions dimmed by 20%. &lt;br&gt;- In 1936, 20th Century Fox's personal fortune in 1927 had exceeded $200 million. In 1937, $100 million in declared bankruptcy and his total assets listed as $800. &lt;br&gt;- Gone with the Wind, one of the all-time successes was released in 1939. &lt;br&gt;- In 1939 Warner Bros released Confessions of a Nazi Spy, luridly advertised as the picture that will open the eyes of 100,000,000 Americans. It fulfilled great box office success. &lt;br&gt;- Walk Disney's The New Spirit, featuring Donald Duck cartoons, some 1,000 prints of the film ordered by the US Treasury Department, and was won by an estimate 26 million people.</td>
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<td>1939-1945</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>- The recovery of the US economy and the war in Europe both favorable to the American film industry. &lt;br&gt;- Films assumed significance as a tool for psychological warfare and propaganda against Axis Powers. &lt;br&gt;- The interest in war themes led to box office popularity. &lt;br&gt;- The film directors and writers fled America from Europe.</td>
<td>- Estimated average weekly movie attendance fell from 90 million in 1945 to 78 million in 1955. &lt;br&gt;- By 1948 TV sets sold at the rate of 200,000 a month, and the number of TV stations increased to 61 in the United States. Interest in radio waned. &lt;br&gt;- Radio gripped movie producers. &lt;br&gt;- In 1954, Willers Guild of America formed; had strengthened bargaining power. &lt;br&gt;- In 1957, German playwright poet, Bertolt Brecht, accused of Communist, fled America.</td>
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<td>1945-1960</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>- Encouraged by the war boom, film companies increased production to exceed demand. &lt;br&gt;- War themes no longer exciting. &lt;br&gt;- Low incomes and steady unemployment were no longer there to provide jobs. &lt;br&gt;- Other leisure interests, including bowling and golf developed; TV whose development had been hampered by the war emerged as a powerful medium to rival motion pictures. &lt;br&gt;- The netting in of the cold war and its implications of power shift and government intervention affected the movie industry adversely.</td>
<td>- Estimated average weekly movie attendance fell from 90 million in 1945 to 19 million in 1955. By 1948 TV sets sold at the rate of 200,000 a month, and the number of TV stations increased to 61 in the United States. Interest in radio waned. &lt;br&gt;- Radio gripped movie producers. &lt;br&gt;- In 1954, Willers Guild of America formed; had strengthened bargaining power. &lt;br&gt;- In 1957, German playwright poet, Bertolt Brecht, accused of Communist, fled America.</td>
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<td>1960-1980</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>- Moving pictures lose luster; stars lose glitter. &lt;br&gt;- Inflation note in the early 1960s and costs of film-making high, and a 20% cut in the tax rate. &lt;br&gt;- Marketing costs are also high. &lt;br&gt;- TV threat increasingly grows. &lt;br&gt;- Video cassette recording, motion pictures and television broadcasting, film and television directly and the difference of production and exhibition affected the movie industry adversely.</td>
<td>- In the seventies a hit, studio could release only 2-6 features a year, compared to one feature a week in the 1970's. &lt;br&gt;- American film producers increasingly go abroad to exploit cheap sets, actors and locations. &lt;br&gt;- Argentina, one of the best sources of this, at the number of about 17,000 movie houses in the States in the 20's there were only 11,250 in 1971. &lt;br&gt;- Film cost control at MGM, Paramount, Columbia and others - low budget film is the rescue - be hit, stars worked as much as possible, e.g., it cost MGM $4 million to make the film in 1928, while Sauer a typical low-budget film in 1969 cost Columbia $400,000 to make. &lt;br&gt;- In the fall of 1973 MGM withdrew from film distribution. MGM concentrated mainly on TV production and Las Vegas hotel and gambling operations. MGM makes about as much money from a single hot-l. MGM Grand in Las Vegas, as it does from all its feature films and TV programs put together. &lt;br&gt;- In fall of 1967 Paramount merged into Gulf and Western Industries, an enterprise conglomerated with holidey in automobile parts, slow mining, cusses and meat packing. &lt;br&gt;- In 1966 Columbia Pictures' TV subsidiary, Screen Gems, earned $6.5 million but the rest of the studio showed $2.2 million deficit... by 1973 Sable had a three-year fiscal loss of $2.2 million and its book debts amounted to more than $2 million. &lt;br&gt;- In 1970 Columbia sold its publishing division to Ballantine for $42.5 million.</td>
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Through this cooperation, the American film industry found itself in a strong position to make its own penetration of the foreign market of film. Such opportunity presented itself at its highest for American industry during the years of War in Europe (1914 - 1918 and 1939 - 1945) and lowest during the economic depression (1929 - 1939).

Indeed, America's emergence as a world hegemony in film was helped by the first World War. During the War (which was fought mainly in Europe, and not on American soil) the American film industry grew without a hindrance. As a result of the War, foreign competition, particularly from the French, virtually disappeared.

As Table 1.1 in page 4 shows, a situation whereby a competitive/cooperative atmosphere prevailed for the Americans at home while War raged abroad, affected the American film industry favourably. Given its stable economic and social environment at home, the American film industry gains a technological and market edge over competitors in the foreign lands where and when War and other destabilizing factors prevail to retard similar technological and market advances.

**SUMMARY**

This chapter has briefly traced the development of Film Industry in the West with specific reference to United States of America.

This thesis consists of five chapters following this Overview chapter. Chapter two reviews literature on War and Film. Chapter three shows the political, economic and social implications of films. Chapter Four discusses ownership, control and content of media in film industry. Chapter Five traces the development of film industry in Kenya between 1941 and 1980. Chapter six draws conclusions from the findings resulting from the study and subsequently
CHAPTER TWO

WAR AND FILM IN KENYA

This Chapter highlights the attempts made by the colonialists in the development of Film Industry in Kenya. In essence, it discusses how the coming of the Second World War generated interest in films as a form of entertainment for the soldiers of the War and the public at large.

Among the first significant attempts at making films in Kenya was one by the British colonial interests in the country, in 1942, in the heat of the Second World War, and it was explicitly meant to serve a colonial and imperial purpose.

"It was the (colonial) Information Officer's idea. He thought that a film record should be made of Kenya's War effort, partly as a permanent record for the Colony's archives and partly for propaganda purposes in other parts of the Empire" (Johnson and Blankart, 1943).

As in the case of the American film industry (see table 1.1. in page 4), the emergence and early development of the film industry in Kenya was both stimulated and sustained by a war situation. The experiences underline the factor of exploitation of War, firstly as a theme on which a film is made, and secondly as a condition under which a film industry tends to rise and thrive.

The film Johnson and Blankart (1943) refer to was significantly named War Came to Kenya, and it depicted Kenya's War Effort. The War period not only saw the filming of War Came to Kenya but also a resurgence of popular interest in cinema entertainment in Kenya.
Rathborne (1943) in a brief account of what "Kenya Colony" - on the fringe of the War - was doing in 1942, in production, training, hospitality and in the War Effort generally makes constant and extensive reference to cinema entertainment. He notes that in 1942 there was,

"a steady flow of weekly entertainment for soldier, sailor, airmen and civilian alike.... during the year full houses have been the rule rather than the exception".

The target audience, and indeed the main beneficiaries, of the 1942 cinema boom in Kenya were the Union Defence Forces (UDF) who had arrived in Kenya to "defend" the Colony.

The arrival of the men of the UDF was indeed the spur to an unprecedented overall entertainment activity in the Colony. The men of the UDF were welcomed by the Kenya Women's Emergency Organization (KWEO) formed to treat the troops to hospitality and entertainment. They took full advantage of the concessional price of 85 cents for admission to cinemas which had been accorded them, and the management of Theatre Royal in Nairobi offered their facilities free of charge to the troops for the duration of the War. Remarked the Sunday Post,

"this was in fact the peak point of theatrical entertainment in Kenya" (1)

(1) Sunday Post Kenya Review, 1941-42

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In the same period, Kenya also enjoyed "an amazingly up-to-date selection of moving pictures" (Rathborne, 1943). Among the releases in 1942 were Chocolate Soldier and 49th. Parallel all which dealt with war themes. In a sense, therefore, War Came to Kenya had meant "Film Came to Kenya."

The War provided an exciting theme on which films were made. It also provided a cause for which a film, as with the case of War Came to Kenya, could be made through the cooperation of the Colonial Government of Kenya and the authorities in South Africa. The South African Bureau of Information provided the raw stock, and the African Film Productions Ltd. of Johannesburg provided all the necessary technical studio facilities for the film.

Johnson and Blankart (1943) account of the filming of War Came to Kenya gives insight into the keen interest of the colonial commercial and political institutions in making the film.

"some of the scenes required floodlighting. For these we obtained the help of Mr. Ramsey of the East African Power and Lighting Company without whose help many of the shots would not have been possible. A Saturday afternoon was spent arranging some 10,000 watts of extra lighting in one of the conference rooms of Government House. The following morning His Excellency Sir Henry Moore (the Colonial Governor) sat for an hour in the glare and heat of these lights. Over and over again he "received" news from London of Italy's entry into the War, in a dummy telegram prepared for us by the Post Office. Over and over again he signed the "official proclamation" whilst it was being shot from various angles until the cameraman was satisfied."

Finally, War time also provided the audience for the cinemas in the form of the UDF troops who were drawn from East Africa, South Africa and from the Imperial Army. On the whole, the War time contributed to, at any rate witnessed, a technological advancement of the film industry in Kenya. During an earlier War, in 1916, the cinema-goer in Nairobi was entertained
to only some "extremely flickery flicks" at the Theatre Royal, but in 1942 Nairobi had Empire Theatre, Capitol Theatre and Theatre Royal among the cinema houses to choose from, and

"new apparatus of a type unrivalled in Africa, the Western electronic Mirrophonic, have recently been installed and the seating accommodation in all three cinemas have been upholstered" (Rathborne 1943).

It is pertinent to refer to the Soviet film industry to which, as it were, War served as the midwife. One of the oldest institutions in the world for training in the film business is VGIK, the Soviet Cinematography Institute in Moscow. It was founded on the ashes of the first World War, in 1919, only five days after Vladimir Lenin signed Decree transferring the photographic and cinema trade and industry to the Peoples Commissariat for Education (2)

It was VGIK that trained most of the pioneers of the Soviet Film industry, and boasts among its graduates such names as Vladimir Gardin and Lev Kuleshov that have been associated with the great tradition of the Soviet Cinema. The need to have an organized and effective propaganda machine to aid the War and revolutionary effort under Lenin had created VGIK which in its early years produced such features as Hammer and Sickle, At the Red Front and Mr. West's Extraordinary Adventures in the Land of the Bolsheviks, all which dealt with War and political propaganda themes.

(2) Soviet Film 80/2 1980, Moscow. It is necessary to add that VGIK, a huge training complex in Moscow, and the oldest and largest film training school in the world today trains students from all over the world, including Europe, America, Asia and Africa as directors, cameramen, film designers, film critics and theorists.
VGIK’s further opportunity to advance came with the Second World War when the Institute was moved to Alma Ata, and its trainees and graduates were deployed, as war-time correspondents, to the war front where according to Lutyans (1980),

"they produced some priceless historical footage and a great many of them died on the battlefield with their cameras gripped in their hands".

CONCLUSION

This Chapter has attempted to bring into an analytical focus the relationship between War and the film industry. To the extent that film was utilized to buttress the so-called 'War Effort' it is demonstrated that film is an important media to which the agents of society turn in seeking to establish and further their many varied causes. Extensive reference has been made to Rathborne in this Chapter. The author wishes to emphasize, however, that Rathborne has merely chronicled the facts which he (the author) has then used to make some analytical derivations. There is no evidence to suggest that Rathborne had reached, was aware of, or even concerned about, such conclusions as the author has now made on the relationship between the film industry and War.
CHAPTER THREE

POLITICS AND FILM MAKING IN AFRICA

This Chapter discusses the status of politics in film making industry in Kenya and Africa as a whole. In particular it attempts to bring out some of the problems film producers face in the event of producing films which have political underpinnings.

Should films be made for profit, or should they be provided as a public service? The western capitalist system holds, as Stanley (1978) that,

"the motion picture industry is precisely an industry with profit as the imperative".

This capitalist view is strongly contrasted against the view generally held in the socialist and in some developing countries that the film industry should be regarded as a public service essentially; commercial exploitation of the industry could be incidental to it, but certainly not an imperative. The majority of film makers in the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc in general view the commercial exploitation of the film industry with something more than suspicion and disgust. They consider the search for profit through the film industry as an aberration.

In a review of the film industry, a noted Soviet film producer commented in the following terms about the 17th. International Film Festival held in San Sebastian Spain in 1980:

"One hopes that the San Sebastian Festival, free of profit policies of movie business, profiteers, the "star mania", the advertising ballyhoo and nine-day wonders, will maintain its reputation as a progressive forum of the best films of the world". (Lotyanu, 1980).
In the socialist context, the film maker conceives himself in an exalted position as the custodian and/or reflector of higher social values and not as a profiteer in the capitalist rat race. Thus Latyanu, after making the above statement against the profit policies of others, boasts that for his part,

"I have done my best to carry on the poetic trend in the Soviet Cinema".

Latyanu's view postulates a film industry that serves "art for art's sake", even though, in reality, such a situation may remain untenable. Film industries of all countries serve definite interests, and depending on their respective emphases they may be channelled towards promotion of mainly commercial or social interests. In the African experience there has been tendency to emphasize the social responsibility aspect, as in Allouache (1980),

"Our experience in Algeria where the film industry is nationalized, could serve as an example to other countries. Third World film makers should be able to work without having to be businessmen... Naturally, at the beginning of our film production the themes were predominantly militant, and the first films were documentaries, designed to the people for the liberation struggle. At independence, attention was given to describing the liberation struggle. As years went by, new subjects dealing with the building of modern Algeria gradually appeared. These themes were linked to the social transformation, the agrarian revolution, and the National Charter".

An examination, (Schissel, 1979), of the works of Africa's leading film producer, Sembene Ousmane, reveals the emphatic social and political content of Africa's films as exemplified by Emittai (Thunder Gods) which
advocated continued resistance by African people to the varied manifestations of neo-colonialism.

Essentially, the African film maker is pitted in the role of crusader against the many ills that afflict society. The film is deployed within the context of a War Effort against the perceived forces of subjugation, corruption and decay. As stated more specifically,

"I think it is necessary to attack and denounce the existing African regimes but I do not want to make films that are empty slogans. It is utopian to believe that the new African bourgeoisie will permit the development of a revolutionary cinema. In other respects, I am without illusions. I know that even in a socialist system, it will be necessary for me to struggle to have the right to denounce wrong-doings. I conceive my films as introductions to the comprehension of situations, which demand to be changed" (Ousmane, 1979).

Pressures, both internal and external, inevitably bear on the producers of "revolutionary cinema" (1); and the clash between film producer and the political authority in Africa could be extremely engaging. The saga of the Entebbe Raid feature film which the Film corporation of Kenya (FCK) attempted to make in 1977 is an interesting case in point.(2)

(1) Sembene's Emirat attacked French colonial rule and as a result when it was released, the French Ambassador applied pressure to have the film banned as it was "anti-French". After an uproar, the film was finally allowed to be screened in Senegal, but not before the censor had drastically tampered with. Just the same, the film was banned in neighbouring Ivory Coast.

(2) Based on oral interview (6 February 1980) with Sharad Patel, Managing Director of FCK.
The Entebbe Raid Saga followed a highly dramatic event in which Israeli commandos stormed the Entebbe airport to rescue Jewish passengers who had been held hostage there in a hijacked Air France airliner. Patel considering that it provided a sensational and crowd-pulling theme, sought to base a film on the Entebbe raid. It would be FCK's first venture into full-length feature film production, and a film based on the raid would certainly have an international appeal.

At the time of the Entebbe raid relations had soured between Kenya and Uganda. A film intended, as it were, to expose the Ugandan dictorial ruler Idi Amin in his most embarrassing and humiliating circumstances was not only favourable to Patel whose Asian kinsmen had been among the first victims of expulsion from Uganda and expropriation under Amin's ruthless rule, but also to the Kenyan authorities, who at the time were wary of Amin's constant accusations, insults and more importantly, threats to annex parts of Kenyan territory. Permission to shoot the anti-Amin film on location in Kenya was therefore expeditiously granted to Patel who went to work immediately. The Kenya government even helped Patel negotiate "special rights" with the Israeli government for shooting parts of the film in the Holy Land, and for distribution.

The shooting of the Entebbe Raid got underway, but not for long before the "problem" arose in the form of a peace accord that was now reached between Kenya and Uganda. One of the terms of the Kenya-Uganda reapproachment had been that neither country would engage in adverse publicity against the other. The proposed Entebbe Raid film was considered one such adverse publicity against the government of Idi Amin, and the Kenyan authorities promptly withdrew the licence hitherto granted to Patel to shoot the film in Kenya.
Patel was left with little choice but to cancel the project. He had already spent £500,000 on the film which went down the drain. The government offered neither apology nor compensation. The option to sue the government did not arise. As a film producer and exhibitor in Kenya, Patel needed to retain the government's goodwill, and the strategy paid off in 1979 when after the overthrow of General Idi Amin in Kampala, Patel was granted licence and cooperation by the Kenya government to shoot *The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin*.

The interest which governments take in the film industries of their countries has led in many of the film industries in Africa coming effectively under government control through nationalization. This interest has often led to the film producers' loss of confidence and independence in the exercise of their profession. There develops tendency among those African film producers who want to stay in the industry to "play it safe", as it were, and to succumb to the will and dictates of the governments even against their better professional judgements.

For his part, Patel reflects philosophically regarding the *Entebbe raid* saga that,

"In making or attempting to make political films, one is bound to counter problems of that nature. Here is a situation where the government has reached a peace accord with a neighbour, and so you don't want to be the one who jeopardizes the accord. You simply count your losses and halt the project. In making any political film you run up against all possible risks. You never know when the axe will fall, and from which side. One time you get cooperation, another time you don't. Sometimes you are lucky, but you are not lucky all the time. That is the risk you take as a film producer. If you are not prepared to take the risk, then you opt out of the business, or you decide simply to make films based on love stories which do not concern anybody and which are not controversial".
CONCLUSION

In this Chapter the author has highlighted the effect politics can have in the production and marketing of films. He has shown that films can be heavily censured or rejected altogether if they are suspected to arouse political disharmony within a nation or among nations. The author has indicated that for the films to succeed for commercial purposes in Africa, there should be little but necessary government intervention and a lot of cooperation from the same.
CHAPTER FOUR

OWNERSHIP, CONTROL AND CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION MEDIA

This Chapter addresses the ownership, control and content of films in the context of mass communication media. In particular, it traces the history of control and content from the days of Aristotle through Hammurabi to the present day ownership of films in Kenya.

The problem of control and content of films in Kenya must be viewed in the context of the mass communication media in general, their history and behaviour. From an empirical analysis, it is to be observed that, ownership of the means of production calls for, makes possible and determines the extent and impact of control of the media of communication in any given society. There is a clear interface between communications and economic interest, and indeed, the desire to control the wealth of society is also the will to control its communication media.¹

Communication power does not express itself as a phenomenon apart, but as a function inextricable from the whole economic and political power exercised only by those organized groups and/or individuals who have gained the upper hand in society.

¹ The author expands on this thesis of the relationship between economics and communications in a forthcoming publication, People and Communication in Kenya. Kenya Literature Bureau. The author also found that Robert Montgomery and particularly Herbert Schiller in their Publications Open Letter From a Televisi Viewer (Heineman, 1973) respectively, have been extremely eloquent in their exposition of this view.
The hard and harsh reality of the social situation dispells the fantasy and fallacy of "free flow of information". It is an untenable notion that ideas could be formulated and let to flow freely regardless of the economic and political interests which they promote in society. The mass media exist and function inherently to advance and promote ideas about, for or against, the interest of society, seen as a whole or in its conflicting parts. It is also evident that ideas would not of themselves be, but as the functions of the interests which they expressly serve or seek to advance in society.

To this extent, it is further deduced that ideas are let loose on society but only towards the deliberate and specific aims of those who have the right and means to exploit the communication media for various purposes. For instance, the top cigarette manufacturing and sales firm, Philip Morris, have since 1980 sponsored the Kenyan international Safari Rally as a means to promote via television coverage of the event, the sale of Marlboro brand cigarettes throughout the world.

(Gachuki, 1980).

The use and abuse of the communication media in the hands of all types and all kinds of prevailing interests is as old as history. For instance, in the upsurge of Nazi Germany, the Germans in their masses were presumably tuned the "people's receiver", but it was to the voice of the elites, Hitler and Goebbels that they listened.

(Hatem, 1974).

2 This is a phrase frequently harped upon and popularized by the United Nations in the discussion of the so-called "New International Information Order". There is prevalent tendency, however, to define the phrase loosely but, as in Joe Mulobi's view (Standard, May 31, 1980), "free flow of information naturally presumes the availability of independent and varied information gathering and disseminating centres, and the ability of the disseminating centres to ensure that the information reaches the target groups in time to enable them to make the necessary decisions. For this reason, the developing countries should encourage the formation of new information gathering and discourage the tendency to overcrowd in the major urban centres".
In ancient Greece, the citizens turned up at the public square in Athens to listen to Aristotle who had developed a fantastic degree of sharpness of wit. The privileges which the specialists and celebrities of ancient times claimed to make them the sole communicators in society had no small impact on human civilization. It certainly made a mockery of the much-vaunted "civilization of the Greeks" which it rendered into no more than the "civilization of the elites" if not the "mystification of the Greeks". This was the fact, as in Plato's Greece where 90% of the population were illiterate and, more sad to note, the authorities were determined to perpetuate the situation for fear that to let the general public be well informed, would be to turn them into revolutionaries against the social order which favoured the elites.

In his *Republic*, Plato proposed therefore, to the acclaim of the ruling elites of his time, an educational system as discriminatory and as compartmentalized as the one to be found today in Apartheid South Africa. The System had the deliberate aim of distorting the aspirations of the masses, holding down their progress and preventing their enlightenment, keeping them safe for exploitation by the elites. Indeed, "persuading the people to vote against their own best interests has been the awesome genius of the political elite from the beginning". (Vidal, 1972).

In those days in Greece, Socrates communicated with the youth, and for that "crime" against the state he was executed for having defied, as it were, the established policy that people should not be introduced to the study of philosophy before they had attained the age of 45. On the other hand, Aristotle, a pro-establishment communicator of the time, held sway and was safe with his beliefs, which he propagated, that the masses of Greece, the subjects, were slaves by nature and needed neither liberation nor education...
from their impoverished and ignorant conditions.

Concentration of the power of communication in the hands of the elite therefore meant the denial of the rights of the masses to formulate policy and to participate in the vital communication processes of their societies, and was based on the premise very much like Adolf Hitler's, that the masses' receptive ability is only very limited, their understanding is small, but their forgetfulness is great. The arrogant assumption caused Hitler to engage in his so-called "big-lie" technique against the masses, but it also led mankind into the disastrous Second World War.

Not all cases of concentration of the power of communication in the hands of the elite, have been ill-intentioned or led to disaster. In the case of the codification of the laws under the Babylonian King Hammurabi in 2000 B.C., the Hammurabi laws which were inscribed on stone, had a concern with social justice. Being an elite communicator Hammurabi nevertheless championed the interests of the masses in his message.

Hammurabi's style of communication was complex and elitist (inscriptions on stone to a largely illiterate mass of his subjects), but his message was for the liberation of the people and therefore was in their interest. It was an entirely different matter in the year 196 B.C. For then, Egypt, the youth King Ptolemy, also taking to the stone for communication, caused to be made on the so-called Rosetta Stone, certain inscriptions the total content of which was to proclaim that he (King Ptolemy) was wise, intelligent and just, and that his policies would lead to prosperity.

Not only was the Rosetta Stone a form of printed communication, unappealing to the majority of the people and therefore alienating them as far as style was concerned, it was also deliberately untruthful, seeking no doubt to boost the image of Ptolemy regardless of the interests of the Egyptian masses.
Ptolemy belonged to a dynasty that had reigned for over a hundred years in parts of Rome and Greece. There was little to suggest that the dynasty had any interest in the prosperity of the general population whom it merely crushed at every opportunity, and subjected to extreme bondage. The Ptolemy's ran their empire as if it was a huge private estate, and had the lives of the people thoroughly regimented. Under King Ptolemy V himself of the Rosetta Stone - because he was lazy and philistine - the Ptolemy dynasty began its expected decline and eventual collapse.

King Ptolemy's act on the Rosetta Stone serves a good example of the early creeping in of propaganda into human communication. Sadly to note, it is a general rule that the media of communication are fashioned after the Rosetta Stone as far as the message - the political and commercial contents and advertisements in them goes. In contradistinction to Marshall MacLuhan's thesis on the "uniqueness" of each medium, there is an underlying similarity in the message flow with respect to basic systemic values, and all media transmit the same message, each in its own form and style. (Schiller, 1974).

Today's media are generally in the promotion business for the few individuals or otherwise well organized groups who own, control and manipulate them. Communicators who today find that they have to sell their "principles" inevitably, and as a matter of course, in order to be what they are or claim to be, have little cause to consider themselves as a new breed. For the prostitute's relations of the communicator, be it film producer or journalist, with the dominant powers in society traces most certainly back into history, and significantly to the 5th century.

Then it was the talented poet Simonides who placed his poetry at the service of Mammon, offering, as so he did, to write his poetry in praise
only of those who could pay for it. A decisive blow had been dealt on the concept of the communicator as a free moral agent of society. Henceforth sheer crooks and grabbers, tyrants and oppressors, the very enemies of the people, would simply command or buy space and air time in any medium they preferred, and have their sins against society covered up, rationalized or simply praised as they wanted it. The role of today's communicators is more akin to that of Simonides than to any paragons of their claims or daydreams.

From the Soviet Union to the United States, from Algeria to Zaire, the mass media of communication serve the established and predominant interests which directly or indirectly own, and in any case control them. The communication media are owned and or controlled by interests - whether they are local or foreign - that are private, corporate, political or religious, and with the singular purpose and intention of promoting the sectional and particular interests of those who own and control them. In principle and in practice, therefore, to be owned, which is always the case as far as the function and organization of the mass media goes, is to be controlled.

There is, however, nothing in theory to disprove the ability, or even desire, of the majorities, the masses, to control the communication media of their own societies. But the masses as such would have to own the media of communication first before they would claim, hope, or even think, to control them, and the masses will do that controlling of the communication media only when, and to the equal degree in which, they also control the wealth of their nations. This has been precisely the experience of the Kenya Film Corporation which though originally established to make and distribute films in Kenya, 13 years later, in 1980, acknowledged that it could neither really make films nor even take over full control of film distribution in a country heavily dominated by foreign economic and other interests.
The official view in Kenya is that "it will take some time" before Kenya breaks into the film making industry. Kenya may even never really experience a film making industry as she would be overtaken by events in view of the fast encroachment of video technology. (3)

The modern mass media have therefore reinforced the communication elites who then become the only ones in society to be listened to, who effectively send, respond and relate to communication. The elites decide the contents of the media; they control communication in such a way that they distort facts, mislead, misinform, manipulate and mystify the masses in the interest of the exploiting classes.

The technologcal advancements, beginning with the printing press in the 15. century have significantly altered the relationship between the communicators and the targets of their message. The innovations have, contrary to popular belief, meant the progressive alienation of the great masses from the arena of effective identification with, and control of the crucial activities of communication.

A closed rank of communicators, and a tiny elite - some more, others less privileged and rewarded in their roles - has been born of those who can transmit and receive information. It is the powerful, the wealthy and leisurely few who manufacture and consume information to their hearts' content.

(3) In an oral interview with the General Manager of Kenya Film Corporation (KFC) Mr. Nyolke Njoroge on 10 April 1980, the author was given to understand that KFC had given up on film making, as it was "a costly and risky affair". Foreign film producers had cheated and frustrated KFC in all their proposed film making ventures. KFC's current preoccupation was with persuading potential film makers in Kenya to cease their attempts at film making, and to concentrate on distribution of foreign made films.
The paradox of the twentieth century is that whereas the explosion of information is evident - there has never been so much to tell and to be told - the means to communicate it have been monopolized by the few. Never in history have so few handled, manipulated and consumed so much information to the utter amazement, neglect and mystification of so many. The communicators in their boardrooms, newspaper offices, film, radio and television have formed a georgeous but remote complex basically serving the tiny elite.

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter the author has indicated the role of government in the ownership of communication media. The author has also shown through a chronology of historical events in communication media that influential and respected individuals in society - as was the case with Aristotle of ancient Greece - have a substantial part to play in deciding especially the control and content of communication media.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FILM INDUSTRY IN KENYA 1916 - 1980

The Chapter highlights some of the events and developments of the film industry in Kenya between 1916 and 1980. The various developments in the industry are presented and discussed under three main sections i.e. Film Distribution, Film Exhibition and Film Production.

5.1 FILM EXHIBITION

Writing in 1943, a chronicler on Nairobi recalls that "one night in 1916 (he) decided to go to the pictures. The Theatre ROYAL was showing some extremely flickery flicks and there was another picture-house too about where Hughes Ford Motors depot now stands, a building with massive Greek columns in front and corrugated iron walls at the back" (1)

The first film showing in Kenya might, however, have taken place in Nairobi in 1902, somewhere along the present Tom Mboya Street, to employees of the Kenya Uganda Railway.

It is remarkable that so early in the history of the development of the film media, Kenya was already benefitting from the new movie technology a decade after the discovery, and the launching of the movie industry in America. (2) Advertisements in the Kenyan newspapers of the period, indicate that in the 1940s, Nairobi enjoyed the services of three major cinemas: Empire Theatre, Capitol Theatre and Theatre Royal.

(1) Kenya Review, 1942 - 1943, Nairobi

(2) New York's first "Kinetoscope Parlor" was opened by the Holland Brothers on Lower Broadway, New York on April 14, 1894.
Noting that a visitor to Nairobi in 1942 could choose to have his leisure at the Nairobi Club, Muthaiga Country Club or Parklands Sports Club, where there was tennis and golf, newspaper accounts record that "dancing and cinema (were) the main evening amusements". (3)

The Second World War (1939-1945) had the effect of greatly stimulating the film industry in Kenya in the aspects both of audience attendance and technological improvements. Not only was a major film, "War Came to Kenya" shot in Kenya during this period, but also the cinemas in Nairobi had their seats re-upholstered and their screening equipments updated.

The technological improvements and innovations aside, film exhibition in pre-independence Kenya followed the colonial pattern and mode of discrimination against the indigenous people. Recalling the cinema scene of the 1920s and 1930s in Nairobi, the journalist Narain Singh refers to Theatre Royal which he says was situated "where Cameo Cinema is today"(4) Theatre Royal, writes Narain Singh, was a "a cinema, a theatre and a meeting place for Europeans and Asians".

In those early days, it was the Charlie Chaplin films that did their rounds in the country's cinemas. Films of the Tarzan, Zoro, and Saunders of the River varieties, with their Hollywood-inspired false image of Africa, were popular, even more so perhaps, among the African audiences. "Used to participating intensely in any public display", the African public found films, any films, even those that blatantly insulted them, simply irresistible, (Balogun, 1978).

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(3) Kenya Review, 1941 - 1942, Nairobi

(4) Sunday Post, March 22, 1973
The racist contents of the films of the time were coupled with the complementary racist practice of denying the African population the right of admission into the established cinema houses. To cater for the Africans, the mobile cinema was occasionally, and in some cases regularly, taken to community centres of the urban and rural areas where the Africans lived. Apart from the Tarzan, Zoro and Chaplin shows, the African audiences were treated to colonial propaganda films, some of which, it should be admitted, could have been of a benevolent or at any rate, benign content.

Most memorable among the films of the 1940s that were taken to African audiences in the rural areas was one based on the adventures of the fictitious Kambo family. In one of the didactic episodes, it was shown how the Kambo family organized itself to fight off the rats menace in the family compound. They made rat breaks to prevent the rodents from getting to the crops, in the granaries. Following the film shows, colonial administrators would tour the areas concerned to see to it that the instructions conveyed by the films had been heeded and were being applied.

(Nguru, 1980).

Apart from the didactic films which were to some extent perhaps genuinely meant to help the indigenous people to improve their lot, the activities of the colonial film exhibitors had amounted, on the whole, to heavy propaganda exercises in an attempt to suppress the nationalist movement and to perpetuate the colonial state. This had been the case particularly with the Colonial Film Unit's productions and exhibitions of the 1940s and 1950s, as well as with those of the Simba Cinemas of the 1950s whose declared objective was to fight the Mau Mau resistance.
The Asians in Kenya, who under the colonial system came second to the Europeans in the racial stratum, were treated to a milder form of discrimination. They were allowed into the established cinema houses, though, until very much later, never into the upper class seats which were reserved for the whites. However, although the Asians formed the majority of the cinema audiences, there was little attempt to accommodate their cultural preferences by exhibition of Indian language films in the cinemas. A notable exception had been in 1924 when the first Indian language picture was screened at the Theatre Royal.

As far as film exhibition was concerned in colonial Kenya, therefore, the interests of the European ruling and settler classes were paramount.

For instance, during Kenya's "cinema boom" of 1942 which coincided with the arrival in Kenya of members of the colonial Union Defence Force (UDF) during the World War, concessionary prices and quite often free entry privileges were offered to the soldiers. Predictably, the most popular films that were shown in this period were those such as The Chocolate Soldier and 49th Parallel which dealt with war themes and glorified the British Empire.

Whereas in 1916 Kenya could boast of having only two cinemas in Nairobi, in 1976 the country had 43 cinemas, in addition to three drive-ins, all with a total seating capacity of 24,000, and an annual attendance of 5.7 million. (United Nations, 1976) Among the largest cinemas in the country are: 20th Century with a seating capacity for 1,600, Kenya Cinema 1,400, Nairobi 825, Embassy 800, in Nairobi, and Kenya 800, and Lotus 800 in Mombasa. The film attendance figures had shot up to 7.5 million in 1978.

It is significant to note that over half of the cinema houses, and all the drive-ins in the country, are concentrated in the major urban areas of Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu. There is, therefore, room for expansion of the
cinema audience in Kenya, especially in the rural areas.

Out of the estimated 48 cinemas in Kenya in 1980, sixteen of the major ones were in Nairobi and eight in Mombasa. They were, ABC, Cameo, Casino, City Hall, Embassy, Globe, Kenya, Liberty, Metropole, Nairobi, Odeon, Shan, Sun City, 20th Century, Fox Drive-In and Belle Vue Drive-In in Nairobi; and Fox, Drive-In, Kenya, Moons, Naaz, Plaza, Majestic and Regal in Mombasa. The other major cinemas were Picture Palace and Tivoli in Kisumu.

With negligible exceptions, the films exhibited in the Kenyan cinemas were foreign. Indeed, by letting one read only the cinema advertisement columns of the Kenyan newspapers of 1st June, 1980, for instance, an impartial arbiter would have been excused if he or she had guessed that Nairobi was a city somewhere in Europe, and Mombasa a code name for New Delhi. Out of the 19 films showing in Nairobi on 1 June 1980, 8 were Asian and the rest were Westerns featuring such actors as Steve McQueen, Charles Brownson, Jason Robards, Bruce Lee and Laurence Olivier. In Mombasa on the same day, all the cinemas showed Asian films featuring such luminaries as Shshi Kapoor and Amol Palekar. The only exception was Regal Cinema which showed an English language film starring Wang Tao and Chen Hsing. (5)

Film exhibition in independent Kenya has, therefore, not departed from the pre-independence mode of discrimination against the indigenous population. It is true that more cinema-viewing facilities have been introduced since independence; true that the indigenous people are no longer prohibited to patronize any cinema of their choice; true also that more Asian language films are shown in the many cinemas that in some cases, cater exclusively for them - but the fact remains that Kenyan film exhibitors have paid little attention to the need to give the Kenyan audience films that, being Kenya or African-made, would be more culturally relevant and meaningful to them.

(5) Source: Sunday Nation, Nairobi, 1 June, 1980
Despite persistent calls since independence by both policy-makers and film critics that the Kenyan cinema entertainment scene should be made to reflect a more Kenyan, a more African identity, pretty little progress towards that attainment has been discernible. The predominance of Western and Asian films exhibition in Kenya has little to do with audience prejudice against Kenyan or African-made films as the enthusiastic attendance at the showing of the three Kenyan made films, Mlévi (1967), Mrenbo (1968) and The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin (1980) amply demonstrated. Indeed, Kenya's box office record has so far been set by The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin which grossed over 3 million Kenya shillings in one continuous run of 3 months.

5.2 Indigenous participation in film exhibition

The challenge to the European control and domination of the film exhibition business in Kenya was spearheaded initially, not by the majority indigenous African community, but by members of the immigrant Asian community. Under the colonial system the Asians enjoyed preferences and better income-earning and business-acquiring opportunities over their African counterparts. The Asians' interest in films was heightened by their freedom of access to the movie houses which was denied the Africans. The early availability of Indian language feature films had been a further incentive for members of the Asian community to have a share in the film exhibition business.

The first Indian picture house to be built in Nairobi was the Majestic Cinema, near the present site of Embassy Cinema. It was a modest affair, built entirely of corrugated iron sheets and had a single hand-cranked projector. However, it served its purpose well. As with other Indian cinemas that were later to be opened in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu, the Majestic did not discriminate against the Africans. The ten cents admission charge,
about 1/5 the cost of admission to the established European-owned cinemas, was also more affordable to the poorer Africans. Some of the cinemas opened in Nairobi in subsequent years with the purpose primarily to screen Asian language films were Odeon, Shan, Liberty, Casino and Globe, the latter a lavish moment to Asian enterprise in Kenya.

The Asian cinemas in Nairobi and other parts of the country greatly boosted indigenous African interest in films, especially feature films, and not just documentaries. More and more Africans, therefore, went to the cinemas on account of the non-restriction of entry, and the cheaper fares offered by the Asian-owned cinemas. African ownership of cinemas, however, remained very much a thing of the future for a long time.

With the coming of independence, it dawned on some African entrepreneurs that they could, indeed that they should, claim some share of the film exhibition. Towards the end of the 1960s, an African entrepreneur Mr. John Kariuki set up Citizen Cinema Corporation which catered mainly for Africans in the low-income group who inhabited mainly the Eastlands area of Nairobi. In co-operation with the Nairobi City Council, Mr. Kariuki later established the City Hall cinema in central Nairobi. A measure of Citizen Cinema Corporation's success was indicated by an advertisement appearing in a newspaper in 1977 in which the corporation boasted of reaching "the middle income consumer in the African locations population of over 400,000 in Nairobi alone."(6)

(6) The Standard, Nairobi, October 14, 1977, supplement commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Kenya Film Corporation.
In June 1980 it was reported that Citizen Cinema Corporation was set to expand with "plans for a three-in-one cinema complex in Mombasa, which will be more modern than anything seen in London. (7) These ambitious plans seemed, however, not to have been realized by the time of this writing, and the Citizen Cinema Corporation has concentrated its operations in the Eastlands area of Nairobi and at Furaha Cinema in Kiambu, near Nairobi. A few more indigenous exhibitors have set up in Nairobi, notably Sun City Cinema, Rainbow Cinema, and ABC Cinema. Of some significance was the acquisition in 1973 of Cameo Cinema (formerly Theatre Royal) by the African Theatres Ltd owned by an African tycoon who bought it from a Mr. S. Medick who had owned the theatre since the colonial days.

The government's readiness to assist indigenous entrepreneurs to go into the film exhibition business was demonstrated in 1979 in the case of the ultra-modern Equator Cinema in Nyeri, Central Province where the parastatal Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC) provided Kenya Shillings 6 million of the cinema's total 9 million shillings' investment capital. An official of the venture hailed the deal as being "in line with the government policy of taking development to the rural areas." (8)

Major African participation in the film exhibition business in Kenya came with the building of Nairobi Cinema on Aga Khan Walk in downtown Nairobi. Owned by the Kenya Film Corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the ICDC, Nairobi Cinema was officially launched on March 10, 1973 and it first

(7) Executive Magazine, Nairobi, June 1980

(8) Daily Nation, Nairobi, 5 May 1979
opened its doors to the film-viewing public four days later. Nairobi Cinema was a bold stroke of the government, pointing to its determination to eventually - albeit gradually - indigenize the film exhibition business.\(^{(9)}\)

There has, therefore, been a steady, even if slow, progress towards indigenization of film exhibition in Kenya. The lesson that has been learnt however, is that indigenization of film exhibition is one thing, and ensuring that more culturally relevant or meaningful films are exhibited in the cinema house, is another.

The complexity of the issue is demonstrated by the Indian experience when attempts were made to develop India's own indigenous films. Entrepreneurs found that the audiences wanted indigenous films but with western themes! Thus love affairs had to have a tinge of James Bond in them. In Kenya, as indeed in Africa, indigenous themes may find it difficult to compete with "Africanised Kung Fuses."

The Kenyan experience in the post-colonial period demonstrates that as long as western films dominate the market, acculturation will continue. There will be a more or less permanent "mobilization of bias" against films based on indigenous themes and cultures, not simply from the distributors or exhibitors, but even from the audiences themselves. This would explain why the extent of indigenization of the local exhibition of films in Kenya has not been accompanied by any departure from the preponderance of foreign western films which exploit sex and violence.

\(^{(9)}\) See sub-section below for more details on the launching of Nairobi cinema.
The Nairobi Cinema

The Nairobi Cinema was officially launched on 10 March, 1973, and the first film to be shown at the theatre was The Godfather which was extensively advertised as "the film that has broken every box office record wherever it has been shown." (10) The launching of the cinema was a long expected event sustained by several weeks of newspaper campaign for both the film and the new cinema.

Advertisements and lengthy serialized reviews of The Godfather film were published in all the Kenya newspapers. The novel on which the film was based, became an instant best seller in all the major Kenyan bookshops. It was pointed out that Mario Puzo's Godfather, a powerful book on the mafia, had already sold more than 11 million copies worldwide in several languages.

The seats were fully-booked at the official launching of the cinema, and the audience consisted of the elite of the society - those who could afford the exorbitant admission charges which ranged from KShs.30/= to KShs.75/= . Cinema enthusiasts who could not attend the official launching could hardly hold their patience for four more days after which the doors of Nairobi Cinema were open to all, at normal admission charges which were in most cases as much as 5 or ten times less than the premiere ones. There was not only the excitement about the Godfather film as fanned up by the mass media, but also the novelty of the new Nairobi Cinema to arouse audience interest.

(10) Notes from Kenyan newspapers for the period March 1973, particularly the Sunday Post, Daily Nation and The Standard.
The Cinema had a 76 by 30ft curved perforated screen, the first of its type in Kenya, designed to eliminate distortions no matter where one sat. It had electronically operated six-channel power sound system and seating capacity of 827 people. It was luxury-fitted, and for the big spenders it provided 12 pullman chairs in front of 387 balcony chairs. Everywhere, the floor was covered with specially woven carpet from Scotland. It had dual purpose projectors which could convert quickly from 70mm to 35mm. "No longer can it be said that a certain film can't be shown here due to size", Nyoike Njoroge, General Manager of the Kenya Film Corporation (KFC) said at the inauguration of the cinema. It was the KFC's intention, Njoroge said, "to match step by step the rest of the world and entertain our people in comfort previously not known in this part of the world."(11)

5.3 FILM DISTRIBUTION

The first serious attempt by Kenyans to take over control of the film distribution activity in their country was in 1967 with the establishment of the Kenya Film Corporation, and distribution of films in Kenya had been in the hands of nine expatriate-owned firms belonging to the Kinematograph Renters Society based in Nairobi.(12)

(11) Sunday Post, Nairobi, 11 March, 1973


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The biggest importer among the members of the Kinematograph Renters Society was the Twentieth Century Fox (East Africa) Ltd with an estimated investment of K£250,000 in two indoor cinemas (Kenya and 20th Century Fox) and a Drive-In (Fox Drive-In). The Twentieth Century Fox (E.A.) was a subsidiary of its American parent company Twentieth Century Fox International which produced films as well as operated a worldwide distribution network of its own. It was also a member of the Motion Pictures Export Association of America (MPEAA), a cartel based in New York, which controls and fixes prices of films from the United States.

Between them, the nine member of the Nairobi-based Kinematograph Renters Society including Anglo-American Film Distributors, Anglo-American Asian Film Distributors Ltd. Indian Film Combine Ltd., Overseas Film Distribution Ltd., Cameo Theatre and Oscar Films Ltd. imported to East Africa an estimated 350,000 film programmes a year.

The Kenya Film Corporation

On 16 July, 1967, the then Minister for Commerce and Industry Mr. Mwai Kibaki announced the setting up of the Kenya Film Corporation Limited (KFC) with Mr. J.P. Gachathi as its first Chairman. In an official statement proclaiming the establishment of the Corporation it was stated "the company will take over the importation and distribution of 35mm films for all cinemas throughout Kenya, and will co-operate with the private cinema operators to ensure that the public will continue to enjoy the best current releases in film entertainment from all over the world. Because of the complexity of the industry, it may be necessary to recruit personnel from overseas during the initial stages, but training will be given to Kenyans to take over fully the running of the company." (13)

The launching of the KFC to assume control of film distribution in the country was met with stiff resistance by the foreign interests and their mouth organs. In an angry editorial comment, entitled "State Control of Films", the East African Standard warned that the formation of KFC would create a state monopoly of films" a situation which was "fraught with dangerous possibilities", and predicted that KFC would come up against the stiff opposition of the American multi-national distributors.

As the East African Standard had predicted, the Motion Pictures Export Association of America (MPEAA) reacted angrily at the suggestion that KFC would henceforth distribute their films in Kenya. The NCK report notes that "by the end of 1967, deadlock had been reached between the MPEAA and KFC, with the result that a number of Kenya's leading cinemas were shut down and the main channels of quality films for Kenya were closed. In August 1968 in Kenya Cinema re-opened under the new arrangements with KFC". (14) What could also be deduced from the way the KFC-MPEAA controversy was played out was the role in which the East African Standard, by 1967 still cherishing its anti-nationalist stance of the pre-independence era, was a willing tool in the hands of the foreign MPEAA in its attempt to stifle independent Kenya's legitimate move to nationalize the film importation and distribution industry and to put these activities in the hands of the Wananchi. Judging by the tone and depth of the East African Standard editorial of 18 July, 1967, it was clear that the writer had been privy to the schemes of the foreign film distributors and had simply published their views against the KFC.

(14) Op Cit
The nine month deadlock, 1967/1968, between the KFC and MPEAA had been characterised by the readiness and determination of the MPEAA to apply the tactics of blackmail to realize its objectives, and also by the extent to which the Kenyan cinema audience had developed psychological bias for a dependence on Western especially American films. The MPEAA insisted that distribution of films remain in the hands of their own companies. At the time, they were in control of 60% of the English language films that were shown in Kenya's cinemas, and when they withheld co-operation, Kenya's cinemas were starved. KFC's attempt to fill the vacuum with films from some Eastern European countries did not succeed either as the films, according to officials of the KFC, were not appreciated by the cinema goers.

Eventually, a compromise was reached between the protagonists when it was agreed that 20th Century Fox would distribute films in Kenya alongside the KFC. KFC remained officially recognized as the "sole importer and distributor" of films in Kenya, but through a "gentleman's agreement" allowed 20th Century Fox to to share in the business. Of the 300 to 320 films which Kenya imports every year, KFC which owns Nairobi Cinema imports 220 (60 Asian and 160 English) and the 20th Century Fox which owned Kenya, 20th Century and Thika Road Drive-In cinemas imports 80 - 100 through its importing subsidiary the Anglo American Film Distributors. There is current speculation that Anglo-American Film Distributors, might soon cease its operations whence the KFC will take over all films distribution in the country.

.../39
Mobile film units

Mobile film units are today an established feature of Kenyan social and cultural life. They were perfected under the colonial system especially in the forties and fifties when they were put to most effective use for the propaganda purposes of the colonial regime. The colonial authorities had ensured that all parts of the country—including the remotest ones—were reached by the mobile cinema vans through the "cinema units" that were established in all the provincial information offices.

The colonial cinema units were inherited by independent Kenya's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting whose "mobile vans continued to entertain the people in the rural areas and took part in (various) national campaigns" such as against cholera in Western Kenya, famine in northern Kenya and drought in the southern region. (15) Taking advantage of the improved technology, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in 1975 introduced Mobile Telebeam van units to supplement the work of the mobile cinema vans by giving outdoor television shows to groups at places where no TV sets were available or where electrification programme had not reached.

Apart from the Ministry's Mobile Film Unit, Kenya has the services of the Ministry's of Agriculture's mobile film unit operated by the Agriculture Information Centre, and of other private commercial mobile film units, including Factual Films and the Film Corporation of Kenya.

5.6 FILM PRODUCTION

It was in 1942, in the heat of the second world war, that the first major attempt at film production, and not just film showing, was made in Kenya. The film, *War Came to Kenya* was the brainchild of the "Colonial Information Office which felt that a film should be made to record Kenya's "war effort" partly as a permanent record for the colony's archives and partly for exhibition in other parts of the British Empire for propaganda purposes. (Johnson and Blanckart, 1943).

Even that early, the making of *War Came to Kenya* demonstrated the importance of the combined effort of political and commercial interests towards realizing success of venture in the highly complex and expensive film industry. For co-operating in the production of *War Came to Kenya* were the Colonial Office (the Colonial Governor of the time, Sir Henry Moore who took time from his busy schedule to play in the starring role of the film) and the East African Power and Lighting company (which provided free flood lighting for shooting of vital scenes of the film). Also contributing their part were the South African authorities who, through the South African Bureau of Information provided the raw stock for the film, and the African Film Productions Ltd of Johannesburg, a commercial firm which provided all the necessary technical studio facilities.

The collaboration in the propaganda and other fields between the colonial authorities in Kenya and those in South Africa was most vicious, but it came naturally on account of the affinities and common interests of the two systems. In their second most ambitious film production of the time, the colonial authorities in Kenya contracted the same South African firm,
African Film Productions Ltd., in 1954 to make a film meant to discredit the Kenyan nationalist struggle. According to the colonial authorities, the film entitled Mau Mau and which was "widely distributed" was "designed to show that the Mau Mau had brought great hardship to the Kikuyu and retarded their progress." Documentaries produced by the colonial Information Services in Kenya were routinely exchanged with the authorities in south Africa and Northern Rhodesia.

There is no doubt that the colonial authorities put a heavy premium on local production of films which they put to effective use to realize their objectives. In the forties the colonial African Information Services working closely with the colonial Film Unit produced films at an average of a dozen every year dealing with a wide range of subjects aimed nevertheless, in the colonial context, to urge and instruct the Africans on how to keep fit, to be loyal and work hard for the benefit of the British Empire. It is only in this context that the efficacy of such films as Kazi Leo na Kazi Kesho (1947) and Princess Margaret in Mombasa (1957), which were so much foisted on the African audiences, should be determined.

It was significant that in 1953, one year after the declaration of the State of Emergency in Kenya in 1952 following the heightening of the nationalist struggle, the old African Information Services was reconstituted into the newly strengthened Department of Information, with its first director a Brigadier Gibson, "designed to support security force and administrative action and to endeavour to show those who supported Mau Mau their error and to turn them back to sanity". The staff of the department was boosted from


a previous 46 in 1952 to 331 at the end of 1954, and a Cine Film Division introduced with responsibility for the production of both 16mm, for showing to Africans within the colony and 35mm, material for television and newsreel use overseas. (18)

5.7 Foreign film making in Kenya

Kenya's abounding flora and fauna, her beautiful contrasting landscapes and sceneries, her efficient services and communications links, her favourable investment climate have made her a prime attraction for foreign filmmakers intending to shoot films on location in Africa.

Since the Tarzan strips of the 1920s hundreds of foreign documentary and feature films have been filmed either in whole or part in Kenya. Quite often the foreign filmmaker has been attracted to Kenya as much by her liberal investment and labour/industrial policies as by her natural offerings.

Contrary to commonly held opinion, the steady trek of foreign filmmakers to Kenya and their near turning of Kenya into a "mini-Hollywood" have little to do with the "hospitality" of the Kenyan people or, even less so, the "altruism" of the foreign filmmaker. It is all a function of expedience and of tough-headed business sense.

The history of foreign filmmaking in Kenya has been both a colourful and contentious one. Indeed, it could be said that the intense love affair between the foreign filmmaker and his Kenyan host has been marked, and rendered so remarkable, by its stormy nature.

(18)

Apart for the 1920s Tarzan episodes, the earliest known foreign feature film produced in Kenya was Bozambo on the colonial theme featuring the black American singer-actor Paul Robeson in the title role in 1935. In later years, an American filmmaker Richard Brooks made Something of Value based on Robert Ruark's novel of the same name about African nationalism. The film featured Hollywood star Rock Hudson and black American actor Sidney Poitier. Neither the book nor the film, however, was taken kindly to by the Africans, and the displeasure was demonstrated when Robert Ruark was declared a prohibited immigrant by Kenya's independent government.

The mutual recriminations that tend to characterize the relations between the foreign filmmaker and his Kenyan host stem from the fact that, increasingly so, the African has grown wise to the tricks and impact of the film medium, is no longer amused by, in fact vehemently resents, especially the Western filmmaker's penchant for depicting him as the "noble savage".

An ambivalence is to be noted, however, among the Kenyans in their reactions to the foreign filmmakers. Whereas revulsion is expressed to the making of of the films that exploit the natural heritage and abuse the dignity of the African people, there is also the harbouring of some secret joy at the prospect of a foreign filmmaker arriving in the country with desperately needed millions of dollars to spend on a few weeks of filming in Kenya.

5.8 The indigenous Pioneers

Since independence, the activities of the Kenya film industry have involved mainly the distribution and exhibition of foreign films, and the backing up of foreign filmmakers in the country. Indigenous film production which is what makes up the core of any country's film industry has been relatively neglected.
Kenyan-produced feature films so far number no more than five of very modest impact. **Mlevi**, a Kiswahili film produced in 1967 by local Asian businessmen Kuljit Pal and Raghbir Radhal, about the vice of excessive drinking, was the first local feature film produced in Kenya. **Mlevi** was a remake of an Indian film, but it demonstrated some very fine acting by Kenyan actors Omari Suleiman (Mzee Pembe), Oliver Litondo, Kipanga Athumani, Joseph Kiema, Lucy Waithera, Jane Ngigi and Stephen Oyando.

A low budget film done on black and white, **Mlevi** cost about KShs.300,000 to make, and it is reported that the film made a modest profit for its producers when it was shown to full houses of enthusiastic audiences in Kenya and Tanzania. **Mlevi's** success encouraged the production in 1963 of yet another Kiswahili film, the 200,000/= also in black and white, **Mrembo**, by a Mr. Sadiq who was supported in part by a loan provided by the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC).

**Mrembo**, a love story, starred Kenya's leading screen actor Oliver Litondo, but it was of a poorer quality. It faced, moreover, the negative attitude of a high official of the Kenya Film Corporation who opposed its screening. It, therefore, had limited exposure, and its producers did not realize a return on their investment.

Next came **Safari Rally**, a more ambitious local production in 1978, based on the annual Nairobi-based international motor rally, by Kenyan film entrepreneurs Ali Twaha and Harun Muturi teaming up with an Italian filmmaker. The **Safari Rally** was an absolute financial disaster, and it was more in reference to it that a high official of the Kenya Film Corporation (KFC)
warned them against it. "We told them that unless they had money to spare, it was not worth while going into the business (film making). Some of the entrepreneurs took a plunge anyway and they now regret it."(19)

5.9 The Film Corporation of Kenya

The Film Corporation of Kenya (FCK), a private commercial venture, was established in 1962 with a chain of mobile cinemas to take documentary and feature films as well as commercials to the masses especially in the rural areas of Kenya. It is today perhaps the largest cinema concern in the country.

FCK's first major documentary film was The Birth of a Nation in 1963 whose script was written and produced by Sharad Patel. It cast the FCK £18,000 to make the film which used an entirely local cost. The documentary depicted the independence struggle, and the emerging new leaders of Kenya. It showed how independence came to Kenya, and it captured the euphoria that gripped the nation during the independence celebrations.

Ninety per cent of FCK films, especially commercials, are made locally, and among the documentaries that it has made are Space Age Communications and Telephone, a threat to Life. The latter is a didactic expose on the use and misuse of telephones such as the habit of people breaking coin boxes deliberately or cutting up telephone wires and causing government to go to great expenses maintaining the telephone system.

(19) Oral interview with Mr. Nyoike Njoroge, General Manager of the KFC, 10 April, 1980.
The FCK made its debut into the big international feature film industry with its *The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* which it produced in 1979 in co-operation with *Intermedia Productions of the United Kingdom*. It cost the producers 5 million dollars to make *The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* which was shot entirely in Kenya, using mainly a local cast. The star of the film is Kenyan Amin look-alike Joseph Olita who appears in the role of the ex-Ugandan dictator. Another major film that FCK has produced is *In the Shadows of Kilimanjaro*. FCK currently plans to produce an epic film based on the *Mau Mau* nationalist struggle of the 1950s in Kenya.

The documentary film

Kenya has done well in documentary films production since, and even before, independence. Numerous documentaries on civic education, development campaigns, and on the need to utilize rationally, preserve and enhance the natural environment have been produced in the country by both local and foreign private and public film making concerns.

Among the main documentaries producers have been the government's Ministries of Information and Broadcasting and of Agriculture which operate mobile film units. Private companies such as Shell, Caltex and Esso have sponsored documentary films productions especially on wildlife preservation as part of their public service contributions and public relations exercises, not to mention so many other public and private corporations, which have made documentary films about their own activities for advertising and other promotional purposes.

Apart from the multinational advertising agencies such as Hill Ayton, Pearl and Dean, Mcan Erickson, Ogilvy and Mather which produce advertising and documentary films on behalf of their corporate and other clients, Kenya has a number of film making concerns among them *Contrast Film Makers Ltd.*, *Pearl and Dean*, *Africapix*, *Camerapix*, *Savannah Production*, *Equator Productions*, *Film Corporation of Kenya*, *Africa Films Ltd.*, *Cobra Films*, *Kenya Institute of
Mass Communications, Kenya Film Corporation, which between them hold adequate 16mm. and 35mm. as well as video production facilities for documentary film making.

Originally, the documentaries had been required essentially for the mobile cinema units operated by the departments or ministries of information of the colonial and post-colonial governments respectively. With the introduction of television in Kenya in 1962, need arose for more documentaries to fill the air times, but most of them continued to be supplied by foreign commercial producers - usually at low cost or free donation to Kenya's television station.

The trend of foreign documentaries domination of the Kenyan television screens was reversed by President Jomo Kenyatta's directive of 1970 to the Voice of Kenya television and radio to "go local" in its programmes by ensuring a higher proportion of locally produced programmes in its services. In response to the Presidential directive, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting began "actively to consider how locally produced films can be made available continuously to reduce dependence on non-governmental sources", and it was further decided that "television programmes should be as much as possible locally produced, and imported films were reduced by 30 per cent. (20)

The go-local move was, however, frustrated by lack of adequate facilities, a constraint that was tackled by recourse to the establishment of the first Documentary Film Unit in the ministry of Information and Broadcasting with the assistance of the West Germany Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung Foundation (FES). Under the agreement setting up the unit, the foundation and the government pledged co-operation in the production of films and television programmes, the production of documentary and educational films which would be mainly based on the African culture and heritage. (21)

CONCLUSION

This chapter has clearly indicated the problems that have more often inhibited the development of film industry in Kenya. In particular, the author has shown how pressure from international film corporations affected the role of Kenya Film Corporation, a parastatal of the Government of Kenya. The author has further analysed the Western bias in the films that are made and/or shown in Kenya.

(21) Ibid
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

This study was essentially undertaken to show the development of film industry in Kenya in the world context. The following are therefore the major conclusions which have been derived from the analysis and findings of the study.

Firstly, the study has pointed out the relationship between War and films. In this respect, efforts have been made to show that the development of film industry in Kenya started with the arrival of UDF forces during the Second World War and the making of the film War Came to Kenya in 1943. In the circumstances, the film has been discussed as an important media through which members of society seek to establish and further their varied causes.

This study has also brought to light some of the problems that film producers experience in the face of Government policies and regulations. The problems evolve around strict censorship and banning or withdrawal of films on grounds that they can arouse political hatred within a nation among nations. The effect of this on the part of the producer therefore is that he looses huge sums of money which would otherwise be invested in other profitable ventures, not to mention loss of interest in production of films in future.

The study has equally addressed the question of ownership, control and content of communication media. In this respect it has been concluded that influential and respected members of society own and control mass media - as with Hammurabi and Plato of Ancient times. Thus, the masses or the majority of members of society will own and only hope to control the media of communication only when they are in a position to control the economy of their nations. In other words, the extent to which masses control the
communication media very much depends on ownership of the means of production.

Finally, the study has traced the development of film industry in Kenya. In this regard, it has been shown that film shows started in Kenya in the 1940's with the use of three theatres namely Empire, Capitol and Royal - which were all foreign owned. Distribution of films then was in the hands of foreign based in Nairobi. However, with the advent of independence, and more especially so the creation of Kenya Film Corporation, the distribution of films was passed on to the corporation. This move promoted angry reactions from the previous foreign distributors which resulted in a number of theatres been shut down and reductions in the number of quality films imported into Kenya. The major lesson learned here is that foreign owned firms have the power not only to produce but also to control the distribution of films with the recipient country, usually a Third World Country, left with little, if any, option of deciding the distribution mechanisms of such films.

Another factor that has come out in this study is the attempts made to produce films locally. In this regard, it has been observed that in Kenya documentary films were produced initially, followed by attempts by indigenous pioneers to produce feature films whose circulation was mainly confined within Kenya and Tanzania (Mrembo/Mlewi) largely because the medium of communication was Kiswahili which is spoken mostly in Kenya and Tanzania. As a result of this medium limitation, which has direct impact on extent of circulation, the expected profits or returns and hence development of the industry are curtailed.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has exposed some of the problems that producers face in the process of making films in Kenya such as banning or withdrawing of films before they are shown. The problems represent an area that would require further research
work, the primary purpose being to find out how these problems would be reduced to ensure a progressive trend in the film industry. Another aspect that may require further research work Centres around the communication media. It may be necessary to find out whether films besides their entertainment role can and are able to adequately educate the masses on matters of development given their varied existing media of communication.

Finally, research may in future be necessary to specifically examine the problems that inhibit both the development of local talent (potential actors) and the expansion of local film industry and subsequently make recommendations as to how the problems can be addressed.
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