DECLARATION

I, Rebecca Ohene-Asah hereby declare that except where I make references to other works which I have duly acknowledged, this thesis is the result of an independent research conducted by me at the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies of the University of Ghana under the supervision of my PhD supervision committee members. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis has not been published or presented for another degree in any other academic institution.

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PROF. MALCOLM MCLEOD         DATE

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PROF. CAESAR APENTIIK        DATE
ABSTRACT

Existing literature on postcolonial cinema production in Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrates substantial success of indigenous film industries. The last two decades have witnessed a rise in local Akan videos originating largely from Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The quantum of movies produced, and audience reception have resulted in a decline in the circulation of foreign movies, including those of Nigerian origin which once dominated the Ghanaian cinema industry. Akan videos are currently popular and dominant across Ghana. In spite of their popularity, the video products and the industry have not been widely researched. Their value and relationship with film production units during the Gold Coast colonial era is not adequately investigated. From a normative perspective, this study relies on postcolonial theoretical bedrocks and the dictates of Third Cinema to interrogate current and past film productions. The theories, postulate that the ex-colonized can overcome neocolonial bondage through critical discussions which can lead to inventions. Therefore, relationships between the organizational structure and products of the Akan video industry and those of the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU), the first establishment to make films in the Gold Coast and whose films are preserved by the British Film Institute are critically examined within the above theories. Employing a largely qualitative approach, this study used interviews, survey questionnaires, content analysis and ethnographic methods to collect data on Akan films, GCFU films, and Ghana’s cinema heritage traditions. The study has demonstrated that apart from the difference accounted for within filming technologies, there are similarities between the two organizations products. Akan filmmakers are unconsciously influenced by the style, content, and philosophy of the GCFU films and
organization structure. These similarities are exhibited in the thinking that inform ideation, themes and language of Akan videos. The study has also revealed that although Ghana has archived and preserved some films in the past, Akan video have not been preserved nationally, although they are constructed with cultural elements that are of value to Akan heritage. Although the British colonial government and post-independence governments spearheaded by Kwame Nkrumah packaged and presented some films as the official cinema heritage of the Gold Coast and Ghana, no such collective currently exist. Whereas Akan videos represent aspects of Ghana’s cinematic heritage, it cannot profess to represent the cinema heritage of the diverse groups of people who make up Ghanaians.
DEDICATION

To my husband, Mr. Michael Adukwei Hesse

&

To my children, Carissa Tsui Hesse and Michael Nii-Ayi Hesse
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My utmost gratitude goes to God Almighty for granting me excellent health and directions throughout this PhD process. The content of this dissertation has been shaped by the advice, guidance and supervision of my thesis committee members. To my lead supervisor, Professor Kodzo Gavua, I am grateful for your diligent supervision, your patience and for mentoring me throughout this PhD journey. Thank you Professor Mcleod, for your comments and assisting with access to colonial films stored at the British Film Institute. I thank you Professor Caesar Apentiik, for your critically insightful perspectives on this work.

I am grateful for the financial support I received from The African Humanities Program (AHP), Pan African Doctoral Academy (PADA) and the Ghana Educational Trust Fund (GETFUND). I am grateful to Professor Michael Jarvis, Professor Renato Perucchio and Ghislaine Radegonde-Eison all from the University of Rochester for their support and encouragement during my year stay at the University of Rochester. I thank the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) for supporting this thesis and granting me time away from work demands to concentrate on this project.

I would like to acknowledge Prof. Benjamin Kankpeyeng, Prof. Henry Nii Adzri-Wellington, Dr. Fritz Beveridge, Dr. Wazi Apoh, Prof. Boakye Ansah and Dr. Aba Eyifa for their advice and encouragement. Thank you, Madam Christiana Nettey for making my stay in the department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies a memorable one. Thank you, Dr. Susan Wilcox, for your support, friendship and mentorship.

I further extend my appreciation to my colleagues at NAFTI, Dr. Jim Awindor, Dr. Ramatu Dadzie, Emmanuel Tei-Mensah, Daniel Azumah, Lauren Abdallah, George Bosompem and my
colleagues from the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Nsuiban Gmayi, Victoria Gyamerah, Beatrice, Zonke Guddah and Edward Nyarko, your collegiality made this process an easier one. To my classmate from the Institute of African Studies Patricia Serwaa Afrifa, thank you for your support and friendship.

Mr. Evander Kwame Agyemang, your immense contribution cannot go unnoticed. You were my liaison during my field study in Kumasi, facilitating connections and supporting me throughout my stay. God Bless you. Mr. Augustine Abbey of (FIPAG), thank you. I am also grateful for the assistance I received from Ms. Samira Hussein and Judith Beccle.

I thank my family for their prayers and support. For bearing with me and understanding why I had to be away from some important family responsibilities. My siblings, Nana, Sietie, Abdallah, Manaf, Fahima, Helda and Zaree, thank you all for always being there. Thank you to my mothers’ Hajia Kutum Momori and Hajia Kubura Abudu. Thank you Alhaji Ben Musah and Mr. Malik Issahaku for all your prayers and support. To Mr. Edmund Oheneasah, I say thank you for always observing and praying from afar. I like to also express my appreciation to Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Chris Hesse, Auntie Dear, Dr. and Mrs. Akita for all your prayers and encouragements. Carissa, Nii- Ayi, and Wuntima, thank you for the promise of a brighter future.

Last but not the least, I feel indebted and extremely appreciative of the support I received from my husband Mr. Michael Adukwei Hesse. Thank you Kwei, for your love, support and prayers. God bless you for being my chief supporter!
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<tr>
<td>BEKE</td>
<td>Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment</td>
</tr>
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<td>BFI</td>
<td>British Film Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>BM</td>
<td>Basel Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFU</td>
<td>Colonial Film Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>Digital Video Disk</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCA</td>
<td>Film Crew Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDMA</td>
<td>Film Distributors and Marketers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FESPACO</td>
<td>Festival panafricain du cinéma et de la télévision de Ouagadougou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIPAG</td>
<td>Film Producers Association of Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAFTA</td>
<td>Ghana Academy of Film and Television Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAMA</td>
<td>Ghana-Malaysia Film Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBC</td>
<td>Ghana Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCFU</td>
<td>Gold Coast Film Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFIC</td>
<td>Ghana Film Industry Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMMB</td>
<td>Ghana Museums and monuments Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTV</td>
<td>Ghana Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICOMOS</td>
<td>International Council on Monuments and Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISD</td>
<td>Information Services Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAFF</td>
<td>Kumawood-Akoben Film Festival Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAFTI</td>
<td>National Film and television Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UR</td>
<td>University of Rochester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCD</td>
<td>Video Compact Disk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VHS</td>
<td>Video Home System</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

STUDY BACKGROUND

1.1: Introduction

This introductory chapter presents a background to the problem which the thesis attempts to address and the aims, objectives and questions pertinent to the study. It explores the convoluted journey of the country Ghana to attaining cinematic independence epitomized in Akan video productions. An attempt is also made to define cinema heritage as an operationalized concept. In this write-up, cinema, film, movies and video are used interchangeably to mean the same.

This study focuses on the Akan video industry located in Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana (Fig. 1.1). It examines current video productions of Kumasi-based establishments, which some Ghanaians popularly refer to as, ‘Kumawood’ (Aveh 2014:113) in relation to colonial films produced by the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU) and other traditions such as the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) that preceded it. The attempt is made to identify and define variations and similarities in film content, film accessibility, preservation actions, ownership and organizational structure between the GCFU and current Akan language movies as a platform for assessing the heritage potentials of Akan films in Ghana.

The beginning of this millennium ushered in a new wave of production, exhibition and consumption of films, presented on video compact disk (VCD) and digital video disks, (DVD) for the entertainment of largely Ghanaian audiences. For close to two decades, movies made in Kumasi have been on the ascendancy both in quantity and popularity. According to Garritano (2013), Kumasi has become a major video producing city, rivalling Ghana’s capital city of Accra which houses most English language movie production organizations. The rise in video movie production in Kumasi occurred in the early 2000s after a decade-long influx of mostly outdated
Nigerian video movies into Ghana (Haynes 2007). Enthusiastic business people primarily from Kumasi took advantage of the relatively cheap but lucrative nature of the fast-developing digital video medium to tell stories differently from the norm. Earlier film traditions, beginning with the GCFU- (1948-1957), the Ghana Film Industry Corporation, (GFIC) (1957-1996) and early video productions from the mid-1980s made films predominantly using the English language. The Akan Video industry however dwells principally on Akan languages to make films. The positive commercial outcome of this move has resulted in the emergence of filmmakers whose top priority has since been to take full control of their economic and cinematic destinies, bringing an end to the dominance of English Language films and the ‘Nigerian film invasion’ in Ghana (Aveh 2010). Despite this rising popularity, there is no clear strategy aimed at safeguarding and preserving these videos as part of Ghana’s intangible heritage assets.
FIGURE 1.1: Map of Ghana with emphasis on localities in the Ashanti Region where field work was conducted.
1.2: Ghana’s Cinema Traditions

Ghana has gone through successive phases of cultural colonization within the domain of cinema (Diawara 1992; Meyer 2015; Sandon Rice & Bloom 2013; Sandon 2010; Smyth 1988; Ukadike 1994). For the purposes of this dissertation these phases are identified first; between 1939 and 1947, which was characterized by films produced by the Colonial Film Unit (CFU). British filmmakers dominated the industry with subjects that were mainly propaganda, aimed at amassing support for the colonial government’s agenda (Smyth 1979). Cinematic images produced by the CFU were intended for the consumption of indigenous people across the British Colonies. This phase was followed by the period between 1947 and 1957 that featured films produced by the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU) led by Sean Graham, whose personal initiative saw the inclusion of local trainees and their indigenous socio-cultural lifeways into films productions (Sandon et al. 2013). Although films of the period presented and represented peoples of the Gold Coast (the collective of a large number of people now known as Ghanaians), they were nonetheless philosophically dominated by colonial ideologies (Rice 2015). These ideologies permeated the unconscious and embodied the relationships that characterized social control in the colonies (Foucault 1977).

For instance the film, Progress in Kojokrom, made in some Akan languages, was a drama produced to instill into the people the discipline of paying taxes (Rice 2011) failure to comply was surely to attract punishment as suggested by Foucault (1977). Since the idea of tax payment was intrinsically alien to the colonized, the colonial government needed the people to understand the essence of a favorable tax collection scheme hence, the production of films such as Progress in Kojokrom. The production and use of such films sort to simplify and bunch the cultural needs of indigenous people within colonial knowledge and understandings. These generalizations
reinforced the relationship between knowledge, power and imperialism which served to further dominate the colonized world (Said 1979).

Following Ghana’s independence in 1957, the post-colonial government attempted to restrict external cultural domination by restructuring the existing film unit to tell stories that reflected an African identity (Diawara 1992). Dr. Kwame Nkrumah’s reign was characterized by the use of film for the emancipation and “political freedom” of the entire continent of Africa (Nkrumah 1962:43). This was demonstrated in the GFIC’s filming of the political independence attainment of African countries. The independence ceremonies of countries such as Togo, Burkina Faso, Kenya and many others were filmed under Nkrumah’s instructions. However, Nkrumah’s attempts at synchronizing cinema with political freedom were thwarted after his overthrow. This led to a long period of state disinterest and poor financial support which affected quantity of productions in Ghana (Diawara 1992). The disruption in the aggressive film production from Ghanaian perspectives is equated to a break in filmmaking that first “reflected the true African Cinema” a label espoused by the Third Cinema (Murphy 2000:241). This may have further contributed to the increase of commercial films from American, Indian, and China (Meyer 2015).

The most significant effort to use cinema to propagate the culture of Africans was made, however, from within the African continent. Technological advancements within video technology led to an extraordinary rise in the production and distribution of Nigerian videos across Africa in the 1990s, turning Nigeria into an “economic and cultural power in the West African Region” (Garritano 2013:2). Nigerian movies demonstrated more action scenes than their Ghanaian counterparts and although Nigerian videos contained more violent scenes “Ghanaian audiences were ready to pay for the titillation” (Haynes 2007:4) of actions. Nigerian videos eventually dominated the Ghanaian market and Ghanaian videos were soon competing with Nigerian videos,
which were cheaper than Ghanaian products because they had already gone through exhibition in their home country. The Ghanaian market was just a way for Nigerian producers to increase their profit margins. Economically, the Ghanaian video commerce was affected negatively leading to a near complete dominance of Nigerian videos in Ghana (Aveh 2014).

It was at the height of this Nigerian film domination that Kumasi-based filmmakers began making videos. Akan videos mostly from Kumasi were different, as they used Akan language instead of English which was the norm, and incorporated Akan folk tales, traditions, histories heritage elements and vernacular stories (Aveh 2014). Although the pluralization of filmmaking with video technology and use of local languages is not the sole prerogative of Akan video producers, the rate of production and consumption of Akan films under this new socio-economic praxis, outweighs any of the cinema setups preceding it. Garritano (2013) indicates that by the year 2009, four out of five movies released weekly were made in Akan language instead of English. The use of Akan as the main language of presentation is one of the steps to achieving the desired cultural independence. It is estimated that about 47.5% of Ghana’s population identify their ethnicity and language as Twi, also referred to as Akan (Ghana Statistical Services 2012:5). In effect, language may be serving as the most important identity trait and perhaps, the Akan language is the single most claimed heritage element in the Akan video industry.
1.3: Problem statement

Despite Akan video producers’ success in appropriating the video medium to forge a unique filmic convention which is currently attracting wide popularity, the industry and its products have not been adequately researched (Garritano 2013). While video movies made in Akan language provide many thought-provoking points of intersections for intellectual discourse particularly on post-colonial text and heritage, not much scholarly attention has been given to it. For instance, films such as The Yaa Asantewaa War, and Okomfo Anokye ride on significantly popular Akan folk-tales and intangible heritage to present dramatic stories that are of heritage importance to most people with Akan lineage. Yet, the place of these films within safeguard and preservation activities is largely unknown.

Whereas there is a growing body of literature on the broad subject of film studies in Ghana, the literature review in the subsequent chapter will demonstrate that there are indeed many gaps in knowledge about the place of Akan videos within Ghana’s post-colonial video film tradition. Even where researched, it tends to focus exclusively on the English language videos produced in Accra. No scholarly attention has been given to the relationship between current films produced using local languages, and the very first narrative films produced by the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU).

Apart from Adjei, (2014) and Aveh, (2010, 2014) who specifically speak to the origin of the Akan video movie form, other scholars such as Diawara (1992), Garritano (2013), Haynes (2007), Haynes & Okome (1998), Meyer (1999; 2015), Ukadike (1994) who are at the forefront of research encompassing different points of intersections for the study of film, its culture and history in most parts of West Africa, have had the English language industry as the main focus and barely touch on Akan video films or any other indigenous language film industries.
Garritano (2013), nonetheless, recognized the rising significance of the Akan video as a new force in Ghana and recommended further studies. There is therefore the need for such a study to contribute to knowledge and deepen understanding of Ghana’s intangible heritage from the perspective of film.

1.4: Research aims

This study therefore explores relationships that may be found between Akan video and products (films) of the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU) the first establishment to make films in the Gold Coast, while seeking to understand the meanings of the movies. The existing cinema archiving, and preservation dynamics of the country Ghana is also explored.

1.5: Research objectives

To achieve the above aim, the following objectives were set.

- To identify and define changes and continuities that may be found between the GCFU and current texts of the Akan language video movies and its industry and the variables that account for these.
- To gather data that will inform on the meanings of the types of Akan movies produced.
- To inform on cinema preservation activities of the nation Ghana and that of Akan industry.

1.5.1: Research questions

To achieve the objectives, the following key questions were addressed.

- What constitutes Akan film production industry?
• To what extent are current Akan video producers aware of the earliest narrative films produced in Ghana and draw inspirations from them?

• Are there any safeguard and preservative activities of films in Ghana and how is this done?

• What are the deeper connections about, thematic structure and social impact undergirding Akan movies and those made by the GCFU?

• Are there any cultural similarities and / or variations between these two organization’s aesthetic screen productions?

1.6: Significance of the research

This research contributes to the expansion of the narrow literature on the prospects of Akan film as a repository for elements of Akan tangible and intangible heritage and the relationship with cinema history, south of the Sahara. Emphasizing the relationship between cinema produced by the GCFU and current videos will benefit the current crop of Ghanaian filmmakers some of who seem to be oblivious of the cinematic traditions that precipitated theirs. It will inspire Akan filmmakers to critically examine their cultural products so that they can produce intellectually different from colonial films. Scholars and African filmmakers will be able to properly contextualize video films as a democratizing medium for identity expression in Ghana.

1.7: Towards a definition of cinema heritage

The concept of heritage is a contested issue within the humanistic field of study. The definition of what constitutes heritage has been central to key scholarly works (Aplin 2002; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; and Howard 2003). Regardless, heritage connotes inheritance and some form of legacy passed from one generation to the other with the idea of safeguarding, conservation and preservation rooted in it. Aplin (2002) notes that cultural tangibles such as
landscapes, historical monuments and archaeological sites are elements that often gain center space regarding heritage by the fact that they may encompass vital information about significant stages of human development which is of importance to future generations. These actions also extend into global recognitions such as the UNESCO led World Heritage Sites statuses often conferred by the international cultural organization on sites of global heritage importance. Significant examples are the European Forts and Castles dotted along the coast of Ghana which are on the UNESCO World Heritage list because of their combined African and European trans-Atlantic trade heritage.

Perhaps UNESCO was the first to offer a definitive meaning of heritage. It states that, “heritage is a legacy from the past that we live with today and what we pass on to future generations”. Whereas UNESCO’s general definition confines heritage materials to things from the past, others such as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) argue that heritage is a cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past. Peterson et al. (2015) extend Kirshenblast-Gimblett’s definition by arguing that the construction of heritage is dictated by power relations initiated and controlled by people with power and authority in societies and it is often a present construction. They continue that in Africa, it has always been politicians, chiefs, administrators, linguists, heads of families who have defined and constructed heritage and as such decide what is worth conserving for future generations. This will imply that heritage is not only constructed by the Kumasi video producers when they make movies, nor government who may want to preserve them but also the audiences who have the power to choose to watch and preserve or not. For the purposes of defining Ghana’s cinematic heritage therefore, it is important to consider current movies produced in Ghana and examine their recourse to past cinematic traditions.
Furthering the definition of heritage, it is important to discuss the role that tradition and culture play in the definition of heritage. Aplin (2002) emphasizes the importance of tradition and culture to the heritage discourse and cites aspects like drama, music, dance as important intangibles cultural assets some of which are commodified and marketed for the sake of preserving heritage. It is important to note that cinema is better encompassed under the intangible domain of heritage which UNESCO defines as;

“the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity” (UNESCO 2003:2)

According to UNESCO (2003) intangible heritage is often expressed in one of the following forms:

- oral traditions;
- performing arts; (folklore, drama, film etc)
- social practices,
- rituals and festive events;
- knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- traditional craftsmanship

Heritage scholars such as Ballard (2016) and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) recognize however that UNESCO’s definition presents too many ambiguities particularly for the professional who curates intangible heritage and may have accounted for the luck of scholarly attention on the area. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) reminds the heritage practitioner that the definition only recognized the master pieces while neglecting the masters or creators of the pieces. In effect, the producers of the cultural pieces were completely ignored until 1952 when calls for the protection of intangible heritage begun in earnest (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). Intensive advocacy for recognition of the interconnectedness of tangible and intangible cultural heritage has thus become important. The
intangible has been defined as the aspect of heritage that provides meaning and understanding to the tangible cultural heritage. Indeed, intangible representations have been described as “the heart and soul of Africa” (Gonçalves et al 2003:1) as there is a strong bond between the two fields of heritage. It is thus, apparent that in cinema, the tangible dvd, vcd and celluloid material become a repository for assembling intangible performances and traditions of groups of people.

Film may be captured as an important intangible heritage asset because of three unique qualities of the medium which I discuss below. First, cinema possesses the ability to record, present and showcase tangible heritage in its contents. Heritage and cinema traverse first, using high angles and aerial photography that often showcase important monuments and sites in the filming area or locations. In many Akan video movies, important iconographies weighing heavily on history and tradition such as the statues of Okomfo Anokye, Osei Tutu (important legendary Figures in Akan history) and important central markets such as Kejetia Market are constantly highlighted to progress dramatic scenes. Additionally, the Armed Forces Museum in Kumasi, which is a vital heritage site in Ghana, has been used in some films to progress the narrative. Indeed, the Fort was used as a Prison facility where a significant part of the film, Prison Nkrabea unfolds. After destroying the original palace edifice which served as the place of abode of the then king of Asante, the British rebuilt the Fort in 1820 as part of a peace agreement. The Armed Forces Museum in Kumasi is currently considered a vital part of Ghana’s tangible heritage. According to the Ghana Museums and monuments Board, (GMMB) the Fort is an important landmark in Kumasi, and a tour of the city is never complete without a visit to the historic site (www.ghanamuseums.org).

Secondly, cinema encompasses cultural renditions some of which include important traditions such as folktales and performing arts such as music, dance, poetry and language all of which are intangible heritage assets. Language as an aspect of intangible heritage asset has been
identified as an important aspect of a people’s identity that is learned and passed down from one generation to another (Harrison 2010). The pioneers of video-making in Kumasi attest to the fact that making videos in the Akan language was a way of preserving the language and the socio-cultural lifeways of the Akan people.

Lastly, the settings and location of films, have the potential to attract tourists from different parts of the world turning those sites into major tourist sites for those countries. Butler (1990) equates this attraction to cinema tourism and explains that it is the process where people will choose their tourist destination based on some audiovisual media such as television and cinema they may have seen. Couldry (2003) also describes these types of travel as ‘media pilgrimage’ and compares them to other traditional pilgrimages that are considered integral to a country’s tourism activities. For instance, aspects of the environment such as locations, settings and the monuments that appear in movies have been recognized as heritage and play a significant part of the tourist industry in most Western European countries. For example, the production sets of the film, Lord of the Ring has assumed heritage status and ended up attracting tourists from varied backgrounds to the location, particularly the created Hobbiton village, turning the places into an important sites of New Zealand (Singh & Best 2004).

The preservation of historical films has been a part of socio-political fabric of many cultures. The UNESCO has set aside a date in October for the purposes of audio-visual heritage. The World Audio-Visual Heritage Day exists to create awareness on recorded video and audio that is preserved or needs preservation. The British, for instance have large collections of archived films that highlight the activities of the ‘Empire’ during colonial days. National archives such as the British Film Institute (BFI), Imperial Royal Museum, and private collectors hold films that are preserved from the colonial days epitomizing the British empire and its colonies. Grieveson &
Colin (2011) argue that films made in the colonial period do not only constitute “precious contents” but also serve as a reminder to present generations about both the ‘lovely’ and ‘ugly’ side of colonialism.

As such, the films of the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU), which are the historical precursors of filmmaking in Ghana, are also preserved and largely accessible to the public at the British Film Institute (BFI). These cinema materials are kept, maintained and safeguarded essentially for future generations. The heritage nature of these archives attracted the need for a multidisciplinary project that assembled scholars in the fields of cinema and heritage who curated the films under the subject matter of Empire films. In effect, most of the films are digitally available on the BFI’s website for easy access. Details of this preservative process as well as Ghana’s attempt to preserve its own historical films will be explored in a later chapter. Whereas celluloid cinema safeguarding, and preservation is a widespread practice in other parts of the world, the same actions cannot be said for the quantum of video films that have been produced in Ghana since the emergence of video technology in the 1980s.

Contextualized within the above attempts to define cinema heritage, this study defines Ghana’s cinematic heritage, as films that local and foreign filmmakers have packaged and presented as representations of collective identities of the people of Ghana, which may serve as references for further development of film on the ways of life of Ghanaians and to remind Ghanaians of the waywardness of the past. Ghana’s cinematic heritage in this regard comprises films that the CFU and GCFU packaged and presented as well as early post-colonial films which the government of Ghana preserves with the Bonded Services of London.
1.8: Cinema, Film and Video Defined

Definitions of cinema, film, video, motion picture are often complicated and controversial. Ponech (1999) suggests that, these labels and concepts are now used synonymously. He contends that the fundamental connection with the different labels is in the idea of exhibition on “big screens” (Ponech 1999:53-54). It is however worth noting that ‘big screen’ exhibitions somewhat exclude film stories that eventually get screened on television sets and other media which makes the idea of big screen no longer adequate in defining cinema.

Early proponents of motion picture, called the movement that occurred in pictures, cinema and equated it to a “mysterious happening” (Bordwell & Thompson 2007: 4). The wonder of seeing reality mediated on the screen was viewed as the very epoch of the quest for realism and movement in the photographic arts (Bazin 2005). In effect, the very moment movement was incorporated into images, the artform became known as cinema. Cinema is thus, the phenomenon of illusion of movement in images.

The difference between film and video is essentially with the technology and material used in the creation of the illusion of movement. Apart from the technological aspect, the artistic aspects share many similarities. For instance, directorial styles and commands, crew duty descriptions, cinema conventions and artiste renditions share similarities. Technologically, film is a photographic medium where light reflection from scenes produces an image on a celluloid material. This scientific process of utilizing light to create images and impressions is completed with a projection onto a big screen at a speed of 24 frames per second to give the illusion of realism in movement (Bordwell & Thompson 2004). Further scientific discoveries revealed significant phenomena namely persistence of vision, phi phenomenon and later, critical flicker fusion and apparent motion (Ibid: 3). Persistence of vision for instance suggests that the human eye retains
remnants of the last image it sees and automatically connects it to the next image to create the illusion of movement which audiences perceive as continuous motion. Critical flicker fusion is concerned with what happens to the eye when flashing a flashlight at a constant speed, the eye begins to connect the single flickers to a continuous beam. Experimenting with this knowledge, the earliest proponents used movements in photography to tell stories and they called the process filmmaking and the product, ‘film’. This process of filmmaking was accomplished with the aid of film cameras which operated with different inches of celluloid material. The sound or audio is also recorded separately on quarter inch materials and the two are later, exposed and synced before editing to the desired film story for exhibition on big screens.

Video on the other hand translates light waves into electronic pulses in the process of recording on magnetic tapes or a disk (Bordwell & Thompson 2007). It also began as an auxiliary to television but was incorporated into cinema making because of its portability and the ability to record both pictures and sound simultaneously unlike celluloid filmmaking. Indeed, video was first co-opted into celluloid filmmaking as an image assist system. Since it takes a while for celluloid to be processed in laboratories for viewing, early filmmakers utilized video to record alongside celluloid cameras. This allowed filmmakers the opportunity to immediately view a copy of their recordings before the original film on celluloid is processed in the laboratory.

With the advent of analogue video and subsequently digital video technologies for storytelling, proponents resorted to exhibiting on big screens as well as on television via cassettes and disks. The exhibition of video on ‘big screens’ gave Ghanaian audiences the same feeling of watching celluloid films as they could not tell the difference (Meyer 2015). In Ghana, movies filmed using video technology are simply identified as films. A fundamental fact is that film professes a higher image quality than video. Nevertheless, audiences research establishes that viewers do not notice
deficiencies in image quality if the overarching story is engaging enough (Bordwell & Thompson 2007:10).

Currently, video is synonymous to film in Ghana and is no longer a substandard medium or the preserve of television production, but a standardized medium for making films. In essence, film encompasses anything that is an attempt to tell stories whether with video or celluloid cinema technology. Haynes (2007) suggests that video’s commercial success in Ghana and Nigeria have catapulted them into the category of “great success story of African Cinema” (Haynes 2007:1). The movement of pictures as we know today is film, cinema and video (analogue and digital) which are all under the umbrella of cinema production.

1.9: Structure of the thesis

This research work is organized into seven (7) chapters. The first chapter presented a general overview of the study. It provided a background to the study which focuses on the road map to the attainment of cinema independence in Ghana and how cinema production has progressed through colonial to the post-colonial. It also defined the research problem, aim objectives and key questions.

The second chapter reviews literature relevant to the study, including literature on cinema production, distribution and marketing from colonial period to the present. It also traces universal cinema progression from the global to the Ghanaian context, exploring the genesis of video filmmaking technological movements, the prospects and challenges within and outside Ghana that finally begot the Akan language video production industry. Chapter two also presents the theoretical framework that underscore this study. The criticisms and justification for applying it to this study is elaborated. Chapter three is a description of how this study was undertaken.
Specifically, it describes the approaches and methods used in data collection and discusses their effectiveness and limitations.

Chapter four covers the research findings and explores the rise of Akan language video productions and the structure of the industry. Chapter five deals with prevailing preservation and safeguard dynamics currently underway and its ensuing political implications for Ghana’s cinema practices. Chapter six discusses the similarities and variations in text and themes between Akan video movies and that made by the GCFU and their social impact. It further addresses the source of inspiration and ideas that begot Akan movies and the relationships with the stories told by the GCFU.

Chapter seven presents an overall analysis, of research data, final thoughts, suggestions and conclusion of the research that encompasses salient issues with Akan language videos and heritage. This chapter also highlights the study conclusions, suggestions and recommendations.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: Introduction

This chapter is a review of literature on the production and use of film in Africa from the colonial to the postcolonial periods and the journey to cinematic independence in Ghana. It also reviews literature that focuses on video technology and its role in creating some level of democratization, and cinema self-reliance in Ghana.

Research and general interest in cinema (film/video) and its social, cultural and political ramifications have been important because of the communication power the medium possesses. Wide scholarly attention on cinema may have begun only around the late 1970’s (Bordwell & Thompson 2007). In recent times however, scholarship on this subject area has been on the ascendancy with the general focus centered on a critical examination of the relationships between film and the representation of African people and their cultures.

2.2 Towards Cinema Independence in Africa

The development of cinema globally can be traced to the 19th century when European inventors developed various technologies that created the illusion of movement in pictures (Bordwell & Thompson 2014). By the year 1894, Louis and Augustus Lumiere had invented the ‘cinematographe,’ a device with the capacity to record and project recorded events and materials. In March 1895, the Lumiere brothers recorded a short slice of life that displayed workers leaving the Lumiere factory in Lyon, France. The brothers subsequently filmed The Waterer Watered, Feeding the Baby, L’Arroseur Arose, and other short films that enjoyed wide exhibition in different parts of Europe and elsewhere. Their first public screening of their short films took place on the 28th of December 1895 in France at the Paris Grand Café on the Boulevard des Capucines and the
Saloon Indien which seated 120 people with as many as 20 shows a day (Barnouw 1993). Cinema’s ability to attract and entertain people was immediately recognized. Enthusiasts observed that it had the potential to attract audiences far beyond any other art form before it (Bloom & Day 2000).

Nonetheless, some African scholars have suggested that storytelling is the bedrock of cinema and as such, has a universal inclination. Ukadike (1994) asserts that Africans have engaged in storytelling as a socio-cultural activity long before the introduction of cinema technology by European groups. From a highly post-modernistic perspective, he argues that there existed a system of “sophisticated communication” which incorporated dance, folklore, sculpture, songs, rites and ceremonies into a holistic entertainment, educational and informative pieces. He identified similarities in “structure, dramatization, plot and continuity between indigenous African storytelling and modern forms of storytelling in cinema” (Ukadike 1994:22) while making his arguments.

Although global cinema begun as an entertainment medium, its early use in Africa after World War II (WW II) was far from entertainment (Austin 2011). Cinema was the flagship channel for ‘education’, reorientation and propaganda for easing the ‘the white man’s burden’ (Kipling 1997), which was the feeling of a burden of responsibility European colonialist took upon themselves to justify their invasion and ‘civilization’ of Africans. According to Ukadike (1994) the main ideology of European colonialism was to cut off Africans from their traditional roots and cinema was one of the main channels for the success of colonialism. After the Berlin conference of 1884-1885, Africa was partitioned amongst the European powers, and each took upon itself a moral duty to civilize the indigenous African people they were entrusted with (Diawara 1992). The rush for a share of Africa between 1870 and 1890 also coincided with the period of European construction and invention of their own social-cultural traditions such as formal education,
monarchy, and military institutions. It was thus natural for them to import these ideologies and structures to the colonies (Ranger 1997:450). Cinema facilitated the easy dissemination of these ideas, eventually entrenching their philosophies as the main yardstick for determining civility.

The African continent was introduced to the concept of cinema around the same time film screenings was spreading in Europe and other parts of the world. Rouch (1962) postulates that cinema first appeared in Africa when a magician stole a theatregraph projection machine and later used it to project short films to audiences in South Africa in 1895. Nevertheless, the first documented African to feature ON cinema was a Senegalese-Wolof woman engaged in pottery making, who was filmed by the ethnographer, Felix-Louise Regnault, in 1895 (Weinberger 1992) the year in which the Lumiere Brothers showcased their short films around the world. In effect, the African continent played a significant role in the evolution and development of cinema around the world except that, like the Wolof woman’s example, it seems the idea of showcasing ‘others’ to Western people was innate to those who engaged in early cinema.

In West Africa, Christian Missionary groups were instrumental in introducing cinema to the sub-region. The earliest known photographs in the Gold Coast were produced by missionary workers attached to the Basel Mission (BM), a Christian society founded in 1815 in Switzerland (Jenkins & Geary 1985). Jenkins claims that, the BM has in its archives pictures of a young girl named Wilhelmine Locher dating as far back as 1857. The pictures were taken by Wilhelmine’s father who was on mission to the Gold Coast. The BM archives also hold other pictures of indigenous people mostly in the Gold Coast (Jenkins 1993). Christraud Geary observes that photographic medium assisted the BM and other missionaries to raise money from folks back in Europe. In effect, these images served as insurance for the much-needed support towards missionary activities in the colonies. While the BM images were within the context of still
photography, they nevertheless preempted the important role that cinema begun to play in missionary propagation of Christianity particularly in Africa soon after the invention of cinema.

Apart from taking photographs of indigenous people, missionary workers propagated their faith armed, not only with the bible, but also with cameras, projection machines and audio-visual images that showed the birth and death of Christ, interspersed with capturing images of the indigenes (Ukadike 1994). Eventually, the missionary groups did not only succeed in spreading their gospel but also paved the way for a successful colonization of the entire continent of Africa, as Africans became more acceptable of European visitors.

The era of experimentation of cinema was soon succeeded with many narrative stories in which Africa and its people formed the backdrop as unusual ‘others’ mostly for anthropological purposes. David McDougal describes the sentimentalized nature in which most anthropologists approached their work. According to him, “an early remedy, as we know, was to bring exotic people to museums, lectures and such popular venues at world fairs and colonial expositions” (MacDougall 1997:276). He suggests that by displaying indigenous people, the anthropologist brought scientific authenticity to the practice of anthropology (MacDougall 1997). The role of anthropologist and other explorers in presenting indigenous people as exotic objects has contributed to recent discourse about the merits of anthropology as a discipline in Africa (Bates, Mudimbe & O’Barr 1993).

Although Africans on the continent may not have had the opportunity of serving as audiences for early non-religious cinema, their race and kind were subjected to scornful caricature depictions in many early films (Murphy 2000). One such example is D.W Griffith’s 1915 film, Birth of a Nation which is considered the most controversial film in history because of its depiction of black people played by white people with caricature faces acting out outlandish roles (Stokes...
According to Diawara (1993), scenes of black depiction in *Birth of a Nation* is what has continued to define black people’s roles in Hollywood till date. The Blackman is only important, within the context of second fiddle to the Whiteman who is almost always the center of attention in films (Diawara 1993). Other cinema presentations like ‘*King Solomon’s Mines*’ produced in 1937 and based on Rider Haggard’s 1885 novel were also considered racist and a misrepresentation of the African people. Unlike *Birth of a Nation*, which used white people acting as black people and filmed in the United States, *King Solomon’s Mine* had black actors acting out barbaric roles. Generally, the portrayal of Africans to a largely western European audience was under the philosophy of ‘others’ and were designed to reinforce Europe’s notion of a ‘dark continent’ (Murphy 2000). The aim of these films was also to prove to their audiences that there were ‘uncivilized’ societies in ‘other’ parts of the world. Cinema, like other forms of cultural productions portraying other peoples as uncivilized, served as a justification for colonialism in totality. Unknown to the inventors of the cinema apparatus, the technology may have just presented power to a few to satisfy a glorifying feeling of superiority over others.

### 2.3 Cinema and the Gold Coast

Emerging publications over the last decades have focused on cinema within the British colonial Empire and the cinema legacies that currently represent the cinematic histories of many Anglophone African countries. The Gold Coast in particular features strongly in the scholarly works of Grieveson & Colin (2011); Grieveson & MacCabe (2011); Rice (2015); Sandon *et al.* (2013) & Smyth (1979;1988). Grieveson & Colin (2011) for instance explore the dynamic relationship between cinema and political thinking, with highlights on indigenous presentation and representation within the socio-political atmosphere in British colonies across Africa. Film, according to the literature (Diawara 1992; Murphy 2000) aided in the successful institution of
British imperialism across the colonies. The process of instituting British cinema policy in British colonies was explored by Smyth (1979) who posit that a carefully designed film policy led to the decentralization of production units, one of which led to the creation of local film Units that eventually incorporated indigenous participation (Smyth 1979; 1988; 1992). An important policy was the attachment of local interpreters to colonial cinema exhibition units whose services became crucial to the success of film screenings in the colonies (Rice 2015). Although the films were made in English, the interpreter run commentaries in local languages for the understanding of the local audiences. Rice situates the local interpreter at the very center of all successful colonial screenings. Rice’s work is important in highlighting not only the discourse on local participation in film but also, the nexus between the use of local languages, and successful film reception. The function and language in this case was clearly a display of colonial cultural strength and attests to the fact that colonial film production and exhibition functioned clearly with underlying politics of domination (Said 1979).

Commercial cinema screenings begun in the Gold Coast as early as 1913 (Collins 2007). This was championed by the British commercial trading company, John Holt-Bartholomew, which established cinema halls for screening mostly films from the North American Hollywood industry. Other cinema viewing centers included Azuma House and Merry Villas in Accra which Collins described as centers of elite gathering and entertainment with mostly European patrons and few Africans within the elite class (Collins 2007). The establishment of the Palladium string of cinema houses in the middle of the 1920’s by a Ghanaian businessman named Alfred Ocansey enhanced commercial cinema exhibition in the Gold Coast. In addition to showing silent shorts from mostly the United States, the Palladium cinema house in James Town, a suburb of Accra, also featured comic acts and sketches which, Collins observed, may have been the beginning of the Concert
Party theatre tradition in Ghana (Collins 2007). Although it was an unusual achievement for local people in the Gold Coast to be involved in cinema business as early as the 1920, those involved in the business, only had the technology to screen stories that were conceptualized by others. Even so, admission to view the few films available was highly selective as it was regarded as an elitist medium reserved for the exclusive few.

Despite these developments, the British colonial government had overall control over the kinds of films people in the colonies could watch. The reason for this is rooted in colonial ideologies where the “former dominate; and the latter must be dominated” in order to control every sphere of their lives (Said 1979:36). Smyth (1979) observed that the British government saw the influx of Hollywood and British commercial films into the colonies as a threat to their control over the local people. Sir Hesketh Bell, a former governor of Uganda and Northern Nigeria, was noted to have lamented for example that: ‘The success of our government of subject race’... depends almost entirely on the degree of respect which we can inspire ...The damage had already been done in India and the Far East but there was still time to avert similar damage ’in our tropical African Empire” (Smyth 1979:438). Hollywood commercial films such as the Charlie Chaplain comic pieces which portrayed eccentric behavior, was seen by many at the realm of colonial governance to be exposing the bare humanity of the white man. Smyth (1979), suggests that films showing white people as criminals, thieves and other appalling behavior threatened the established race supremacy within the empire and the British colonial government made efforts to prevent indigenous people from accessing them.

A major strategy for preventing the people from becoming corrupted by ‘obscene’ images was the adoption of censorship. This involved a process of re-editing and re-narrating films. This allowed colonial leadership some control over cinematic materials that local viewers could access.
The censored versions, nevertheless, remained popular in the colonies as the original euphoria that begot the cinema medium continued to persist (Smyth 1979). People were either just excited to watch movies or perhaps, the screenings served as an escapist medium for the suppressed indigenous people. Nevertheless, it is worth imagining this era of the Gold Coast from ‘Bentham’s’ panoptic view where the truncated access to certain films was thought to structure and order the affairs of the state. Once the people did not see uncensored films, it reduced resistance and friction and guaranteed that the colonizer’s hegemonic power relations was maintained (Foucault 1977).

The British government begun to recognize the vast potential of film for mass ‘political education’ following the successful use of film prior to World War II. Germans, including Leni Riefensthal made the films, *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *Olympia*, (1938), and many other films with high political undertones. These films were utilized as propaganda tools for disseminating Adolf Hitler’s Aryan race supremacy philosophies which eventually convinced Germany into an unsuccessful world takeover mission. Regardless, Riefenstahl’s films were successful and reemphasized the enormous potential of cinema in the specialized forms of education the British intended to roll out in the colonies.

By the late 1930’s, the British government had settled on cinema in the colonies as a major tool for ‘education’ that will ensure the awareness of the indigenous people’s place within the Empire. To achieve this, the assistance of American organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation became imperative. They supported this ‘educational’ agenda and sponsored the production of short films in East-Africa under the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE) project which made films on malaria and hookworm prevention and treatment for distribution in different parts of the British colony (Burns 2011). According to Burns, these films were not only meant to educate the indigenes but also ‘uplift the colonized’ (Burns
2011:55). Although the Rockefeller health education pieces were successful by way of indigenous patronage, some British officials were not convinced, because the films were not set in the indigenous people’s familiar environment. These may have been realized because peculiarities of the orient may not necessarily be generalizable as argued by Said (1979). Groups function within varied needs and cultures and this must be acknowledged in cultural studies.

Subsequently, the British Colonial Office in London set up the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) with the main aim of making propaganda films to recruit Africans forces for WW11 (Sandon 2013). Through the advice of William Sellers, who was the head of the CFU, however, the unit adapted special filmmaking techniques in the production of films for African viewers. Sellers was convinced that Africans could not understand complex story lines and techniques which form the very basis of global conventional filmmaking. As such, he recommended limiting image sizes to simple ones like a full shot and long shot variations (Sellers 1953). This claim about the Africans’ inability to understand complex stories told with complicated shots is again reiterated by Rudi Meyer who opined that “blacks don’t understand film language. This means that if you show a guy going into a house, you have to show him coming out as well. If you cut from the house to a car on the highway, your audiences won’t know what the hell’s going on” (Burns 2011:1).

The philosophy addressed above may have been the general understanding of British policy makers for the most part of colonial rule. Indeed, the CFU’s operation in Africa was an integral component of a propaganda apparatus engineered to subtly brainwash and condition the colonies first into supporting the world war and educating them to standards deemed acceptable to Europeans. This way, the colonial “machinery assures dissymmetry” (Foucault 1977) and could function perfectly no matter how randomly selected its leadership was. The CFU produced films with titles such as Victory Parade (1946), Village Development (1948) and Mr. English At Home.
These titles and many more were produced to ‘educate’ the indigenes and make them proud members of the British empire. The CFU incorporated the use of local interpreters who among other rhetoric, asked audiences’ questions like “are you proud to be British?” (Rice 2016:332). This was followed by the British National anthem amidst the commentary which the interpreters were instructed to make.

The different kinds of colonial films produced and what accounts for their variations are explored by Gareth Austin. Austin (2011), categorized the content of films from the different colonial eras under three umbrellas according to specific changes that occurred. The first, was the interwar films which he describes as highlighting the era of “high colonialism” (ibid:.226) during which the word native was always used to describe Africans and films mostly portrayed the indigenous people as mere beneficiaries of British colonial efforts. He cites the film, West Africa Calling, as an example that epitomizes this category with the conclusion that most of the films made in that era “did not acknowledge African contribution to their own prosperity” (Austin 2011:226). In effect, the interwar films made between 1920s and mid 1930s portrayed Africans as mostly backdrops within the vast empire with no authorial voices. Austin’s next category is the wartime films which, he observed, begun to acknowledge the presence and contributions of indigenous people in the colonies to some extent. This change might have occurred because there was the need to convince the people to join the WW II effort. The tone of the wartime films changed as African peoples were now referred to as ‘Africans’ instead of natives.

The variation in colonial film content occurred according to Austin between 1940’s and 1950’s and represented an “era of development aspects of post-war Africa”. Films produced by the GCFU such as Progress in Kojokrom therefore told stories of new reforms to local governance such as levies and taxes within colonial structures in the Gold Coast. The film sought to encourage
model citizenship. The indigenous people were convinced to pay taxes for community projects and other forms of development. *Amenu’s Child*, another educational film presents a story on how to prevent infant mortality amongst the populace by encouraging nutritious feeding methods.

Apart from the interwar films, all the films in the different era Austin writes about were more persuasive in nature. The persuasive or propaganda films appear to be the most dominant. Those films succeeded in their propaganda agenda of coaxing the indigenous people to support the war agenda, appreciate European cultures and eventually adopting them as their own. The Europeanization of the African also involved a deliberate effort by the colonizer to dismiss African cultures and traditions, relegating indigenous ways of life as mere superstitions and backwardness, while highlighting Europe’s cultural supremacy.

Sellers’ colonial philosophy of producing ‘educational’ films using specialised filming methods specifically for the African mind soon became unpopular with some colonial workers who found the CFU productions too didactic. These concerns were integral to a UNESCO-sponsored event where John Grierson (considered as the father of British Documentary film tradition) is reported to have waded into the discourse about making specialized films for Africans by arguing that film has to be filmed for “for Africans, with Africans, by Africans” (Sandon 2013:3).

By 1949 the CFU was already implementing decentralization strategies, part of which was the creation of the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU) with Sean Graham as the head. Prior to the establishment of the Gold Coast Film Unit, the CFU established film training centers across the colonies; Gold Coast, West Indies, and Cyprus (Smyth 1988). The Gold Coast Unit trained three Gold Coasters and three Nigerians in the techniques of filmmaking and subsequently absorbed them as assistant technicians. These pioneers were; R O Fenuku, Sam Areyetey, Bob Okanta of
the Gold Coasters and R. F. Otugba, F. Fajemeson, and Alhaji Auna of Nigeria (Hesse 1995)

The mandate of the Graham led GCFU was like that of the CFU which was to make educational films that would raise the standard of living of Gold Coasters. However, Graham’s GCFU, unlike the CFU embarked upon the production of films that deviated somewhat from this core mandate. According to Sandon et al (2013), Graham and the GCFU did not produce specialized films for only Africans as there was a strong Indian film presence in the public theatres. This suggested that the local people were already sophisticated enough to understand film contrary to Sellers’ opinion.

The deviation from the CFU’s policies may not have been the only catalyst for the variation that later occurred in cinematic activities in the Gold Coast. Graham’s own desire to be a professional filmmaker and not just a colonial worker also contributed. He was young and wanted to be like the respected John Grierson who had recommended him for the job. This desire partly accounts for the change in philosophy with which the GCFU begun its work in the Gold Coast. Like Grierson, Graham wanted to use cinema to “change the world” (Sandon et al. 2013:530).

The Gold Coast Film Unit eventually produced cinematic contents that seem to veer away from the original objectives of the Unit. By 1953, the unit had produced 25 films and over 50 reels (Gold Coast Film Unit 1953) These productions were mostly commissioned by government agencies who wanted to educate the populace about their activities or teach them about new methods of doing things. Thus, many productions followed the documentary genre of filmmaking. However, the Unit also produced some fictional narratives which incorporated entertainment elements into moral and educational stories which was a deviation from its mandate of making didactic films to simply educate people.

Audience reception of the GCFU films was very impressive as the film, Boy Kumaseunu (1952), was seen by 40,000 people within the first three days of exhibition in Accra alone (Swanzy
1952). This record excludes the cinema van screenings across other parts of the Gold Coast. Mobile van screenings of Graham’s film, *Progress in Kojokrom*, reached over a million and a half people in the Gold Coast (Sandon et al. 2013). The success of the GCFU films may have been made possible because of the inclusion of local trainees in film production. The Accra Film School trained several students who graduated to work as assistants on the film productions. This was perhaps the beginning of demystifying the filmmaking process. Apart from the fact that trained students worked as assistants, the actors and actresses were drawn from the communities and the films were set in the people’s familiar socio-cultural environments. This probably promoted public patronage.

With a total of three European filmmakers, namely Sean Graham Producer/Director, Peter Hoyle, Sound Engineer/Recordist, George Noble, Chief Cameraman, and the Gold Coast trainees as assistants, the GCFU produced about 50 shorts, full-length documentaries and fictional films between 1948 and Ghana’s independence in 1957 when the Unit was bequest to the new nation Ghana.

Among the films produced by the GCFU were those that presented complex stories, some of which went beyond the borders of the Gold Coast and won international awards. *The Boy Kumaseunu*, which was a coming of age story, centering on the chronicles of a village boy in a big city, received high theatrical successes both in the Gold-Coast and internationally. Some consider the film as a metaphor of the Gold Coast at the verge of independence and the looming dangers the colonizers probably envisaged thus making it not only an entertaining piece but also, somewhat of an intellectually provoking piece. The GCFU, in addition to producing narrative films, continued to make documentary films for the sake of education and distribution via the cinema van medium which was initiated by the CFU.
Regardless, the activism that accompanied independence agitations in the colonial world brought with it an urge to reverse the status-quo of colonial representations and Ghana was not different. This was precipitated by the radical use of film for political change which had begun with the training of indigenous people in the language of cinema (Murphy 2000).

2.4 Post Independence Cinema

The Sub-Regional training school established in Accra became the foundation of local film production in Ghana. Graduates of the school became the pioneers of the film industries in both Ghana and Nigeria. Ghana’s independence in 1957 coincided with the transfer of the GCFU to the government of Ghana. Under local management, the unit was restructured and renamed Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC). Filmmakers of the GFIC attempted to use cinema to create an African personality and a cinematic style that could be referred to as ‘African cinema’ (Diawara 1992; Ukadike 1994). These have been approached mainly from the postcolonial and third cinema theoretical perspectives.

Kwame Nkrumah, the new leader of Ghana, was convinced that the creation of a new African personality following Ghana’s independence could be best achieved using the media and film as critical instruments for political education and mobilization” (Biney 2011). His ideas for using film within political spheres were radically dictated by the postcolonial prescriptions on the structure of the independent State (Fanon 1963). Nkrumah’s government thus, bought existing cinema houses in the country and aligned them to the GFIC (Diawara 1992).

Sam Aryeetey, a pioneer from the Accra film School assumed the chief administrative position of the GFIC following Ghana’s independence. During his reign, the documentary film types aimed at changing attitudes and worldviews continued. The unit produced many documentary films and recordings mostly about the post independent euphoria and pan-Africanist
activities of Kwame Nkrumah within the new nation. Nkrumah’s numerous travels around his African Unity ideologies were also filmed, exhibited, and preserved. According to Hesse, who was Nkrumah’s personal cinematographer, these coverages were shown in theaters before commercial films were projected. The revolutionary production and use of film in independent Ghana leans on the dictates of the Third cinema (Getino & Solanas 1969) within postcolonial ideals which “stressed the political use of film” in independent Nations (Murphy 2000:241).

Productions of the GFIC included *Africa Reborn*, a documentary film encompassing the different speeches, interviews, and the proceedings reinforcing why Africa must unite at the May 1963 Africa Unity conference in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. Other films like *Towards a United Africa* and *Operation Congo* which Heymann (2009) notes as important films showcased some of the atrocities that culminated in the murder of Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Otiko and Maurice Mpolo during the Congo crises. Films of continental interest included *Ablode* and *Uhuru* both highlighting the independence struggle of Togo and Kenya respectively. These were part of the conscious production of newsreels and documentaries, an initiative that characterized Nkrumah’s government policy on the use of film. Nkrumah believed strongly in letting Ghanaians know about other Africans. As at the year 1995, the GFIC could boast of the most comprehensive film archives not only on Ghana’s history and development but the entire African continent (Diawara 1992) There were also dramatic stories like *Hamle*, a local rendition of the Shakespearean play, *Hamlet*, in 1965 which was perhaps the only attempt at telling a narrative film in the early years after independence.

Indeed, the long-standing documentary tradition continued to flourish much more than their narrative counterparts, although public support dwindled after the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. The years after Nkrumah’s overthrow was accompanied by general strife, fear
and decline in the economic growth that Ghana had commenced. Everything associated with Nkrumah became bad! His books were burnt and his statues and other monuments destroyed (Gavua 2015). The opposition to Nkrumah’s ideas by the National Liberation Council military government affected all aspects of culture and art production, including cinema. The result was drastic starvation of funds to most cultural organizations and the GFIC was no exception. The military government was only interested in being filmed and so the GFIC produced some newsreels with General Ankrah, his council members, and successive military leaders, mostly in speaking and state visit scenarios.

The few narratives that stood out within this period include, *I Told You So, No Tears for Ananse*, and *Genesis Chapter X*, produced in the 1970s. Documentaries produced include *Ghana our Motherland, Panoply of Ghana, Ghana Reborn*, and *Solidarity in Struggle*. Distribution and exhibition of film was mainly through cinema theaters, and later, television channels. However, distribution to the interior parts of Ghana remained in the domain of cinema vans, a practice which had begun and continued from the CFU through the GCFU and to the GFIC.

In the early 1980s there were private initiatives by filmmakers who utilized crew and facilities of the GFIC to produce films. Titles such as *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (1980) and *Heritage Africa* (1989) both by Kwaw Ansah, *His Majesty’s Sargent* (1983) by Ato Yarney and *Road to Kukurantumi* (1983) by King Ampaw were intellectually engaging and framed within the prescriptions of the postcolonial theories much to the disappointment of some Western European critics (Murphy 2000). GFIC-initiated co-productions with foreign companies also led to the production of *Contact and African Timber*. These films were distributed widely, won international awards, and placed Ghana on the global cinematic map.

However, the ever-increasing cost of celluloid production within the lack of state support
could not sustain the demands of the vast number of cinematic audiences in the country. The activities of the GFIC’s leadership had assumed the epitome of the “underdeveloped bourgeoisie” who Franz Fanon suggests are without economic power (Fanon 1963:98). The GFIC continued to be reliant on British laboratories for post-production work and depended heavily on imported foreign films from America, India, and China to augment their exhibition networks across the country. The lack of funds and complex processes in acquiring rights to these foreign films led to repetition of the films at the theatres. By the beginning of the 1980’s cinema production in Ghana was struggling and new technological strategies needed to be employed to salvage the production of film.

2.4.1 The Emergence of Video Technology

Technological advancements in cinema from the mid-1980s particularly the emergence of video technology and its socio-cultural impact within West Africa has been a major area of study (Aveh 2010; Aveh 2014; Garritano 2013; Haynes 2007; Haynes & Okome 1998; Meyer 2015). Obiaya (2011) has also explored the cinematic pluralism and independence that accompanied video development particularly in Nigeria. He observed that the adoption of unique production techniques, marketing, exhibition styles, and the use of vernacular languages suggests an important break of Nigerian film industry from colonial filmmaking structures.

Video emerged on the global market in the late 1960s with the invention of the Portapak by the Sony Corporation in the United States (Boyle 1985). The Portapak was a portable battery pack analogue video tape recording system which could be carried and operated by one person unlike the conventional television cameras which were large and hardly immovable. According to Boyle, this invention encouraged enthusiast mostly artists and politically minded individuals
whose voices were otherwise drowned by a dominant few to venture into new creative alternatives to television. Although the medium was envisaged as an adjunct to television technology, it soon became an important tool for performers and visual artists to reinvent their artistic identities within diverse and multiple philosophies, eventually democratizing television audience choices (Boyle 1985).

In Ghana, video production emerged out of curiosity of mostly self-taught, self-trained enthusiasts, some of who had worked as auxiliary staff in the then thriving Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC), to see their story ideas on the screens (Meyer 2015). Many of these enthusiasts had observed the lucrative economic gains associated with exhibition of imported films and filmmaking in general. They therefore ceased the opportunity of video technology to make movies with total control over distribution and exhibition using video (VHS) technology. The commercial viability of video also stemmed from the exhibition of pirated foreign films for paid screenings in small video parlors in major towns of Ghana.

Birgit Meyer conducted several ethnographic studies, ranging from the place of video in Ghanaian cinema, to the central underpinning themes in Ghanaian videos. She identifies key themes in videos films she studied as mostly religious intermediations, Pentecostalism, occult, and spiritual remedies intertwined in socio cultural working and worldviews within, politics and class systems of the Ghanaian society (Meyer 2015; 2010; 2008; 2005; 2003; 1999). Her studies focused on the democratizing outcomes of video technology and non-formally trained video makers. She observed that videos which are mostly filmed in affluent settings represents the dreams and desires of the audiences. But the same cannot be said for Akan video movies, many of which are filmed in ‘poor’, rural traditional settings but still enjoy wide patronage.
Nonetheless, Meyer’s studies cover the earliest proponents of video technology in Ghana who essentially migrated from unrelated professions. The proponents included auto technicians, used clothes dealers and general merchants such as Socrates Safo who had a background in auto mechanism and Allen Gyimah who had been dealing in imported ‘second hand’ clothing (Meyer 2015). William Akuffo appears to be the only one amongst the pioneers who worked with the GFIC as a projectionist prior to becoming a video movie maker. Video allowed these filmmakers to write and produce stories from their own perspectives while maintaining control of the marketing and distribution without organized state interferences.

Allen Gyimah and his Video City Company, according to Meyer (2015), were the first to use video within a commercial praxis. Meyer observed that Gyimah acquired a video camera from the United Kingdom and commenced experimenting by filming social functions such as weddings and funerals. He subsequently made the video movie, Abyssinia, using actors from Ghana Television theatre groups. Abyssinia was filmed in its scene sequential order because of the non-availability of video editing platforms in the country. Although filmed in 1985, Abyssinia was not screened publicly until the year 1987 (ibid). In that same year, William Akuffo also produced and commercially screened a video movie, Zinabu, with his partner, Richard Quartey. Socrate Safo also produced Unconditional love using video technology in 1989 (Garritano 2013; Meyer 2015).

Inspite of Meyer’s assertion, some officials at the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) claim NAFTI was the first to produce and exhibit video movies in Ghana. Established in 1978, NAFTI was the first film school South of the Sahara to train students in the various filmmaking disciplines. NAFTI students are believed to have practiced, filmed and edited their productions on the video medium a couple of years before Gyimah began experimenting with video. Although available literature on the origin of video attempts to synchronize to a single origin, I shudder to
say that the origin may indeed be varied. Not one individual can be credited for beginning video production in Ghana. The experimentations occurred simultaneously by different individuals, organizations and groups in the early 1980s.

The success of video technology was propelled by a couple of factors. Chiefly among these was the decline in film production by the GFIC which was caused by a reduction in government assistance to cultural institutions. As such GFIC ventured into several co-productions which were still not enough to satisfy the growing number of cinema enthusiasts. Secondly, video was successful largely due to the cessation of night-life, activities which hitherto promoted cinema going culture. This interruption in night-life was due to sporadic military interferences in the governance of Ghana, which plagued the nation between the 1970s and 1980s. Notable amongst these military interferences was the emergence of Jerry Rawlings military government. The epoch of his coup d’état which was between 1979 and 1983 was characterized by restricted night movements and curfews that prevented potential cinema goers from going to cinemas. This eventually destroyed the already suffering cinema going culture of the country. Lastly, the video movement thrived because colour television sets and video players became popular in the country and many people acquired the technology. It is worth noting that the factors mentioned above supported the culture of indoor entertainment and audiences found this convenient. Once you had a television set, an accompanying video player, you just needed a video cassette and you could watch a movie and above all, people could exchange or rent video cassettes for a little or no fee.

By the end of 1980s the political system in the country had attained some normalcy and night activities slowly crept in. This influenced a lot more video producers including Hajia Meizongo, Asare Hackman, Augustine Abbey (Idikoko), and Hamond Mensah to join the industry. Students of the National Film and television Institute (NAFTI) also practiced and made films using
the video technology. Its alumni such as Veronica Quarshie made *A Stub in the Dark, Ripples*, and Kenny McCauley made *Behind the Box* and several others to the satisfaction of the Ghanaian cinema publics.

The GFIC remained the leader in the industry by providing rental and post production services to the video industry. Also, the GFIC offered opportunities for video producers to screen movies in all major cinema houses such as the Executive Theatre, Ghana Film Theatre, Rex and Orion among others owned by the GFIC. There were also exhibition centres across the country and managed by commercial people. For instance, Sidiku Buari owned and managed the Sid Theatre located in Dzowulu in Accra.

After theatrical releases, the distribution channel relied on sales of video cassettes by vendors in slow traffic and on corners of major markets. Another channel of distribution was to enter contracts with Ghana Television, the only television station then, until Metro Television was established in 1997. This ensured that video movies reached all levels of people in the industry and the producers made economic gains. Hesse (1995) explained that in a bid to encourage video production, the GFIC paid 70% of the box office earnings to the producers. Although GFIC’s overture seem good on the surface, it appears to challenge the total independence of the producers. In effect, if the video movement was meant to be a post modernistic mouthpiece, then the level of assistance and reliance on the state apparatus appears a hindrance to the egalitarianism video production was meant to bring.

Many criticisms and oppositions emerged and threatened the smooth development of video movies in Ghana. After theatrical releases, movie producers had to deal with piracy and competition with pirated American, Chinese and Indian films. In the view of Haynes (2007), piracy is an integral nuisance of video filmmaking. To minimize this challenge, video producers initiated
several taskforces to curb the piracy of their work, but this has not been successful.

Another set of opposition to the video movement were critics with concerns on the themes
and technical quality of work produced by video proponents. Most stories highlighted the place
of spiritual powers, witchcraft and occultic practices in the success of individuals. These storylines
attracted large outrage from seasoned proponents. For instance Kwaw Ansah, an acclaimed
independent filmmaker, expresses his discomfort about the story lines that encompassed most
videos by observing that films made through the “video medium whereby you find Africans eating
human flesh with European angels descending from heaven to exercise justice or whatever on
them” were unacceptable (Meyer 2010:9). Another critic was the renowned cinematographer, Rev.
Dr. Chris Hesse, who opined that, although film had to be first used to educate and liberate the
African from neocolonialist bondage and to enable him or her to appreciate his/her heritage and
identities, this was lacking in the local video movies. Driven by the level of unprofessionalism that
accompanied many of the videos produced, Hesse remarked that “we are aware that the
professionals are crying foul to some of the video features as unprofessional...I humbly appeal to
the professionals to take this matter up with the film guild who are taking steps to regularize
things” (Hesse 1995:10). His statement suggests that the industry at that time was not operating
regularly, that things were somewhat abnormal and thus, called for regulation to attain some
normalcy.

Some of the films made using the video medium indeed challenged comprehension with
mostly exaggerated interpretations of societies much to the discomfort of critics who contend that
the images were just too far from reality. These storylines continue to be criticized, for example,
Audrey Gadzekpo stated that “when other nations get to view us through the lenses of our current
crop of budding filmmakers, I am afraid they may be tempted to conclude that Ghana must be a
nation of superstitious, contentious people whose men have libido that are way out of control’” (Meyer 1999:96). It appears the exaggerated representations of gender, sexuality and religion were difficult for some audiences, particularly trained filmmakers and academics to comprehend. Although some of the depictions seem to share striking similarities with some traditional social cultural practices and beliefs in Ghana.

The objectionable content led many pioneers to equate video to reproachful images leading to somewhat an open display of animosity towards video producers and their films. Whereas celluloid had become a form of a high culture, elitist medium which strived to maintain standards and quality, video seemed a low cultural medium yet able to capture the excitement and appreciation of ordinary Ghanaians. If celluloid filmmaking was adapted by the Nkrumah government to repair the bruised images and identity of African, then for some of these established filmmakers, video technology was doing the opposite. The fear for many of the critics was that the lack of legal structures makes video proponents operate freely from canonized state ideologies.

Another set of criticisms came from mostly alumni of NAFTI who operated along the Pan Africanist ideals and those from students of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana. According to Garritano (2013), the trained filmmakers viewed themselves as the most professional within the video industry, thus setting themselves apart from the untrained proponents of the medium was of utmost importance. He suggests that professionalism to these trained filmmakers meant Hollywood standards and a strict refrain from themes bothering on witchcraft and excessive show of barbaric performances. Indeed, a professional film was not only a film that transcended the local market and eschewed witchcraft but also a film, in line with the postcolonial ideologies of Nkrumah which suggest that film should be used to correct the misconceptions and wrongs of the past. As such, eschewing topics that present the African in barbaric, circumstances
is a major strategy that trained filmmakers who had greater knowledge and critical of theoretical and pragmatic use of cinema in the past could help change the story of the African cinema identity.

Nevertheless, the commercial viability of video influenced filmmakers at the GFIC due to the high cost of celluloid coupled with dwindling state funding for cinema. Also, the GFIC continued to rely on laboratories in the United Kingdom to develop negatives before the film could be edited. This made the production on celluloid expensive. Consequently, the GFIC begun producing video movies such as *Dede, Harvest at 17, Mataa, Baby Thief* which were received well by the populace.

In the middle of the 1990, video makers in Ghana were challenged by the influx into Ghana of Nigerian produced videos. Haynes (2007) equates the period of video developments in Ghana to the same period that it developed in Nigeria and suggests that the Nigerian video producers had an advantage over their Ghanaian counterparts due to the differences in population size. The Nigerian population is about 10 times that of Ghana’s so it was easier for Nigerian producers to break even first in their markets and then take advantage of the free market policies of West African regional trade agreements to market their videos in Ghana.

Nigerian videos were not so foreign to Ghanaian audiences. Ghanaians could relate to the socio-cultural realities of the narratives and thus many patronized the videos. Nigerian videos also utilized a lot of spectacle and flamboyant features that Ghanaian videos did not offer. Most Ghanaian videos were either about spiritual themes or simple dramas geared towards educating audiences with the aim of protecting societal values and morals. Thus, Nigerian videos on VHS and VCD soon dominated the Ghanaian media airwaves, although most of these videos were ‘second-hand videos’, as they had already ended their exhibition life-span in Nigeria.

The height of Nigerian videos success can be attributed to the programing structure of
Metro Television, a private television station in the country. Metro TV employed a Nigerian director of television whose top priority was to promote Nigerian videos, as there was a gap in video film exhibition in the private television sector. Amid the competition from Nigerian videos, Ghanaian video producers forged distribution and co-production deals with their Nigerian counterparts. Some Ghanaian video producers became major marketers and distributors of Nigerian videos, some of which involved Ghanaian actors and actresses and parts of which were filmed in both countries. In this partnership however, Ghanaian artiste were often required to dress in Nigerian clothes and sometimes spoke with Nigerian English accents as the story identities were essentially Nigerian.

By 1996 the GFIC was divested leaving 30% for the Ghana government and the 70% for a Malaysian company. The GFIC metamorphosed into a television company with a cinema producing section. It became TV3 and GAMA Films Company. The new management was more interested in running a television station much to the neglect of cinema production.

The beginning of the 21st century, however, ushered in a new dispensation in video movie production in Ghana in which video movies were produced in the local Akan language which is widely spoken and understood by Ghanaians. Hitherto, almost all videos were produced in English language except for Sika Sunsum (1991) and Kanana (1992) which were in the Akan Twi language but not commercially successful. According to Garritano (2013) the producers including Kwesi Owusu claimed their video films were not successful because they were not made in English.

Nevertheless, Akan language movies soon became popular by 2009 as suggested by Garritano (2013) whose work indicates that as at 2009 about six movies were released each week with five produced in Akan Twi language and only one in English language, and by 2011, over a hundred videos had been registered at the Film Producers Association of Ghana (FIPAG) office.
A considerable number of these movies were produced in Akan Twi and emanating largely from the Ashanti regional capital of Kumasi. Apart from the fact that Akan language is widely understood by the audiences, the storylines and themes of the videos encompass local folklore, social drama, idioms and proverbs often identifiable to many Ghanaians.

Sold mostly on VCD and DVD’s, Akan Twi videos are a popular phenomenon with producers coming up with innovative exhibition strategies that transcend known conventions. Earlier movies were hardly exhibited in cinema houses and theaters. Instead, every corner of the city where television sets can be placed is a potential exhibition center. Other points of viewing Akan videos are on commercial buses engaged in long distance transportation. Travelers on these buses become natural audiences. Advertisement and full screenings of Akan language videos on local television and radio networks enhanced the popularity of the videos.

Patronage of Akan videos has transcended the borders of Ghana. Garritano (2013) has observed that these videos are widely distributed in New York and other parts of Western Europe where demand is high among Ghanaian residents. The popularity of Akan videos beyond Ghana may be due not only to the use of the Akan language but also to the similarities that may be found between the videos and the Concert Party theatre with which many local audience are familiar (Adjei 2014). The use of English language as the medium of communication in Concert Party was replaced after 1953 with that of Akan language when E.K Nyame and his Concert Party Troupe became popular (Cole 2001; Collins 2007). Beyond the Concert Party, however, the GCFU also incorporated local Ghanaian languages into films it produced.

The substitution of English for Akan Twi saw a shift from celluloid to video technology appear to be a major factor that influenced the attainment of cinematic independence from colonial structures in Ghana. The trend of moving from the use of celluloid to video and the adoption of
Nigerian story lines in film production also contributed to the attainment of cinematic independence in Nigerian Nollywood film industry (Obiaya 2011). Nevertheless, English with a Nigerian slant is still used in Nigerian videos.

Aveh (2014) also identified the use of Akan language as a significant factor accounting for Akan video film popularity. He suggests that there are some socio-cultural relationships between Nigerian video industry and Ghana’s. These are present in the production styles, the use of local languages, movie content as well as distribution structures. Akan video films are, nonetheless, recognized as constructions that “resonates culturally and nationally with Ghanaians” (Yamoah 2014:161) and as such should be considered in national cinema discourse.

### 2.5 Cinema and Heritage

Key studies that have recognized Ghanaian video cinema as heritage assets include the work of Aveh (2010) who has argued that video films produced in Ghana are important artifacts that encompass Ghanaian culture that deserve national preservation. He suggests that they should be viewed as important heritage assets and archived as he advocates for posterity. Similarly, Gilroy (2011) describes the content of colonial films stored at the British Film Institute archives as ‘precious’ contents. He suggests that the films are also important for the understanding of former British colonies so that they avoid repetitions of colonial mistakes and crimes that are intrinsically linked with the films units and institutions inherited. He concludes that, the archived films are not only important in the identity construction of contemporary British lives but also, for the ex-colonies whose socio-political lives are represented in the films. Nonetheless, most of those films are preserved by British agencies and not easily accessible by other nationals.
Meyer (2010) identifies a new shift in Ghanaian video production from simple drama that dwells on religiosity and pentecostalism in which tradition was almost always equated to evil to the new ‘epic’ genre films, which employ a display of tradition, culture and heritage in their content. Meyer seems to use tradition and heritage in unison. Thus, it is almost as if heritage is the same as tradition. Regardless, heritage may encompass traditional elements, and these have to be recognized. Again, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004), has argued, heritage as more than just things from the past. Heritage is a cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). In effect, current crop of video products emanating largely from Kumasi in the Ashanti region can be equated to reconstructions of the past with power dynamics negotiated between the producers, audiences and the national leadership of Ghana.

The place and value of intangible heritage has been explored particularly by Gonçalves et al. (2003) and by Munjeri (2003) who argue that the tangible is reliant on the intangible for meaning and purpose. The meaning and value of any tangible heritage are indeed dependent on the intangible variables of the asset and thus must be tackled holistically. The interconnectivity between tangible and intangible heritage is apparent and crucial in the film and video industry. The video industry thrives on the symbiotic relationship between the tangible represented in the video tapes, dvd and vcd disks which hold the film’s content. Patrons are attracted to the content through the tangible advertised dvd/vcd containment. This gives credence to the fact that to access the performances, indigenous practices, music and language contained in the dvd or vcd, one ought to first get hold of the tangible dvd/ vcd.
2.6 Intellectual Framework

The intellectual framework within which this study is anchored derives from the post-colonial theoretical underpinnings. Postcolonial theory provides “an understanding of present circumstances as well as the ways in which these are informed by, perpetuate and differ from situations which preceded them, and the complex interrelation of history and the present moment” (Williams & Chrisman 1994:4).

These group of theories emerged in the early 1960’s at the heights of global end of colonialization. These literary works are championed by writers whose identities and backgrounds connects with Britain. Because of their collective infamous legacies inherited from colonialism, post-colonial scholars have expressed themselves mainly within the struggles for independence, identity and issues of allegiance. Postcolonial thoughts propel a critical examination of remnants of colonial legacy that abrogates hegemony to colonist over the colonized. These theories aid other postcolonial writers to interrogate colonial, colony relationship with regards to knowledge creation, power, and control within traditions, cultures and images. It looks at the development of key sets of representations that have over the years, framed western ideologies of the colonized world generally. It also assists in critically assessing the patriarchal order that subtly abrogates power to itself and its resulting image creation. For instance; what form should a hybrid system of filmmaking in postcolonial Africa take? Does the rejection of the colonizer’s language for an indigenous one alone satisfy the dictates of cinematic independence, or is it a hybrid situation as suggested by Bhabha (1994).

Particularly, this study draws from key proponents of post coloniality such as (Bhabha 1994; Fanon 1963; Foucault 1977, 1980; Mulvey 1975; Said 1979). Said’s orientalism concerns itself with western conceptions and misconceptions leading to stereotypes and ‘othering’ which
feeds into domination and imperialism over the colonized worlds. Fundamentally, his concern is that, colonial legacies within cultural production were not representative of Africa and other third world nations. He abhors the non-recognition of varied identities, cultures and metacultures of the colonized world that lead to generalizations noted in the case of the Oriental worlds.

Similarly, Mulvey engages the representations of women through the unconscious and conscious feminist image which has become the status-quo in narrative films structure. Mulvey’s work connects with Michel Foucault’s works which examines the relationship between power, knowledge and colonial control. Western production of knowledge is hinged between knowledge and power relation issues which become useful in understanding colonialism and its many ramifications.

Frantz Fanon prompts the independent man to be conscious of neocolonial powers that lurk around. Fanon’s ideas have furthermore birthed movements like the Third Cinema (Getino & Solanas 1969) which advocates a strong rejection and resistance to colonial legacies, styles and methods within filmmaking in order to be truly independent. The third cinema, which was developed by Latin American filmmakers of the 1960, was particularly based on Fanon’s words which implores the ex-colonized “to invent and make new discoveries” (Fanon 1963:314). It critically examines existing cinematic power structures while creating revolutionary productions aimed at a better reflection of the identities of Third World nations. The aggressive nature of the third cinema is however criticized as being unrealistic. Murphy (2000) argues, that it has the tendency to connote a rejection of everything colonial, including the camera apparatus itself since it was invented in the West during colonialism.

Regardless of these criticisms of postcolonial theory, it is still an appropriate engine to drive this study. This is because regardless of the political dismantling of colonialism that
happened across Africa, Latin America and the Asiatic states in the 1960s, the independence did not in any way end the global penetrating nature of western imperialism. As such, it is imperative to look at current cultural productions such as films within the context of post-colonial theory and works in order to successfully understand the dynamics of film and heritage. Again, the fact that Foucault (1977), reminds the post-colonial world about the relationship between colonial knowledge and power is good justification for its adoption for this research. For cultural heritage production within independent state cannot be fully understood without recognizing the role of colonialism in the creation of knowledge in the colonial state. It is only post-colonial theories that impress upon African countries to break from neocolonial ideologies and “do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and a style which shall be peculiar to them” (Fanon 1963:98).

This call for change, however, reiterates the deficiencies that came with indigenous replacement of colonial leadership that accompanied independence. With underdeveloped leadership, independent African states, lacked the economic power (Fanon, 1963). As such independence did not immediately bring a break from the past. The current generation has thus got to facilitate this unique cultural development. Film production in the early years of independence continued to be dependent on the colonial world as much as it did during colonialism and this is what Fanon calls to be discouraged.

Films produced in the Akan movie industry consciously and unconsciously reflect a certain level of cinematic independence. By their adoption of unique structures and methods to produce stories that express aspects of local Akan values and heritage, Akan video production appear to be on the pathway to achieving cinematic independence. Care, is however, taken not to suggest that Akan cinema is a total representation of Ghana’s cinematic heritage. At best, the films produced
in Akan may represent aspects of Ghana’s cinema heritage as Said (1979) cautions against generalizations based on hegemonic powers.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1: Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss and explain how this research was conducted. Specific methods, techniques and strategies employed in undertaking this study are discussed and interrogated. The bulk of the study was conducted mostly in three market centers in Kumasi and Accra namely; Adehye Market, Opera Square and Kantamanto Market where the business of film production and distribution was concentrated.

I viewed Akan film industry, first, from a normative perspective which suggests that a certain kind of homogeneity is bound to occur in groups because of harmonious interactions within the set-up (Vygotsky 1978). I recognized that these similarities may be found in the production processes and the contents of the movies. Normative theoretical considerations also framed my engagement with colonial films, including those produced by the Gold Cast Film Unit (GCFU). Secondly, I recognized individual agency (Shapiro 2005) as a major factor which may account for differences in individual behavior and actions. These may be based on personal needs, aspirations, abilities and convenience. For instance, the variation that occurred in GCFU films may have been because of the individual agency of Sean Graham who was the head of the Unit. As such, the following approaches were employed to collect field data within the localities which are discussed in the next section.
3.2: Study Locality

The bulk of field work for this study was conducted in Kumasi and its environs (Fig. 3.1). Kumasi is the major city and capital of the Ashanti Region located in the middle belt of Ghana. Kumasi is an important point of convergence for diverse people often attracted to varied forms of commercial activities. Traditionally, the city is the seat of the Ashanti Kingdom whose king, (The Asantehene) is linked to a mystical golden stool. The Ashanti kingdom in Kumasi epitomizes a certain kind of cultural pride for indigenes. Residents appear to exhibit a strong need to preserve traditions, cultural lineage and language. The city therefore attracts tourists who yearn for a display of Akan traditions and culture.

I made the approximately 250 kilometers journey from Accra to Kumasi on a long-distance bus referred to as VIP Transport each time I went to the field. Travelling on VIP buses served two purposes. First, it is a well-managed transport service thus, relatively safe means to get to my destination. Secondly, it was an opportunity to observe travelers’ reactions to the screening of Akan language films throughout the approximately 5-hour journey. Over a period of 16 days, I navigated five communities of video film producers and distributors with the assistance of an informant who is a former student of the National Film and Television Institute (Nafti). The communities comprised Pataase, Asafo, Daaban, Kejetia, Adum and the Adehye market all within the Kumasi municipality where I then established rapport with other informants.

The Adehye Market (Fig. 3.2) is a buzzing commercial center in Kumasi where video producers, distributors and marketers relocated in the year 2015. This was to allow a government planned renovation of the central market of Adum and Kejetia which previously served as the center of film commerce in the capital. Major film producers and distributors also operate distribution and sales outlets in the market (Fig. 3.3). Apart from Kumasi, town Kumawu and
Agogo towns also in the Ashanti Region were visited to collect data. The mountainous and forest splendor of Kumawu (Fig. 3.4) and Agogo provided the filming team, a convenient location as well as a spectacular scenery meant to boost the production value.

Other localities outside the Ashanti Region where key data was collected include the Opera Square near the Makola Central Market and Kankamanto in Accra (Fig. 3.5). The Opera Square is a nerve center for trading in film materials and merchandise in Accra. The square assumed this status after the collapse and part sale of the Ghana Films Industry Corporation (GFIC) which had oversight of the Opera Cinema House located within the square (Fig.3.6). Major producers, marketers and distributors operate administrative and sale offices within this square (Fig. 3.7). Data was gathered in this area to augment knowledge on film production and commercial activities. The Kantamanto Market is the pivot of the used clothes commerce in Ghana. The Kantamanto Cassette Lane (Fig. 3.8) section of the market houses many video sale outlets which play vital roles in the film production and distribution commerce. Other spaces where studies were conducted include smaller buses that plied relatively short journeys on which films are screened for passengers (Fig. 3.9).
Figure 3.1: Ashanti Regional map detailing Kumasi and its surrounding towns where field work was conducted.

Figure 3.2: The Adehye Market-Kumasi.
Figure 3. 3: Video Distribution shops at Adehye Market

Figure 3. 4: Location filming in Kumawu (Ashanti Region)
Figure 3.5: Map of Ghana with emphasis on localities in the greater Accra Region where field work was conducted
Figure 3.6: Opera Square Market-Accra

Figure 3.7: Video distribution outlets in Opera Square-Accra

Figure 3.8: Film distribution outlets within the Kantamanto Market-Accra
3.3: Research Methods

This study relied on a wide selection of qualitative methods to collect data. These methods included ethnographic approaches namely, observation, interviews, focus group discussion, the use of visual aids- (video and still photography). Some quantitative tenets such as survey questionnaire administration were also employed. These methods have a history of use in cinematic studies and the humanistic field in general (Diawara 1992; Garritano 2013; Haynes 2007; Meyer 2015).

The ability of qualitative methods to produce descriptive data and observable actions lends itself to successful access to “insider” perspectives, also referred to as emic which complements the etic (outsider) perspectives (Glesne & Peshkin 1992). Patton (2005) suggest that, qualitative research is a “naturalistic inquiry” that concerns itself with the plurality that characterizes most post-modernistic studies. The qualitative fieldwork provided insights and “privileged information
that made a major contribution to the development of a meaningful survey design” (Sieber 1973:1342). This privileged information was crucial to the understanding and interpretation of the data collected.

3.4: Study Population

The main population for this study included Akan filmmakers who produced predominantly from Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana as well as distributors, marketers and sellers across some market centers in Accra and Kumasi who facilitate the movement of films to audiences. Additionally, audience members, artistes, veteran filmmakers, television administrators, and film groups’ leadership were sampled. The group of video makers included producers, directors, script writers as well as executive producers who finance Akan language video movies.

For the purposes of properly describing my population, I wish to define the conventional crew formation and structure in comparison to the Akan film crew distinctions. A film/video producer in the conventional sense is the one responsible for assembling the production crew to work and bring the script or story to the screen. The producer’s job is also to identify a script and bring on board a screenwriter who will translate the story into a screen play. The producer also hires a director and a production manager who in turn hires all other crew members. In the Kumasi video setting however, the producer’s functions may vary. Indeed, the Akan movie producer may play other roles apart from the above. Aside financing the project, a producer may take on other roles such as the production manager and the director. Because of these peculiarities which abound in the Akan language video environment, it became imperative for me to employ quantitative features such as surveys which allowed me to identify the number of video makers who employ traditional movie making compartmentalization and those who combined crew roles. Again, apart
from identifying the number and group variations, this approach enabled me to ascertain gender variations.

Lastly, I relied on local informants to identify other video filmmakers who due to their own agency and group variations may not be in the mainstream groupings. Particularly, the producer population who may not necessarily belong to the membership of the Film Producers Association of Ghana (FIPAG) Kumasi members was instrumental in this regard.

3.4.1: Sampling

The sample for this study was purposefully selected. I was interested in filmmakers connected to the Akan video industry. As such, the core sample consisted of filmmakers in Ghana who have specifically produced films using Akan languages. This choice gave me the opportunity to select participants based on their specific tasks on film productions guided by the intellectual basis that film, as cultural heritage production was constructed and controlled by people in power. In effect, those crew who played significant roles in the construction of films were the producers, scriptwriters, and the directors. These crew members were responsible for major decisions that defined the content of any film. They were sampled from membership of the Film Producers Association of Ghana (FIPAC), Film Crew Association (FCA), Ghana Academy of Film and Television Arts (GAFTA) and Film Distributors and Marketers Association. The leadership of these groups were first contacted before others were introduced.

The research also utilised the snowball sampling technique to identify other participants who did not identify with the groups identified above. This technique ensured that, the few known participants successfully introduced other potential participants within the population. A total of
thirty-five (35) filmmakers were interviewed and fifteen (15) others responded to open ended questionnaires.

While studies focusing on Ghana’s cinema practices had utilised mostly ethnographic data collection tools, this study went further to employ survey questionnaires as a medium for collecting data from audience members and film practitioners. This was imperative because this study recognised audience members as important component in the commodity chain of Akan language movies. This is because it was the patronage of audiences that accounted for the popularity of Akan video films and their consideration as valuable cultural heritage repositories. Other groups sampled included pioneers of filmmaking in Ghana whose interviews provided data on the historical understanding of cinema practices from the Gold Coast to Ghana.

Films were sampled from the population of Akan language films and those produced by the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU). Although Akan films were sampled randomly, many of the films randomly selected were produced by interviewed respondents. For instance, sampled films such as Ntetie Pa, Kumasi Yonkuor, Okomfo Anokye and The Yaa Asantewa War were made by filmmakers who participated in this study. The GCFU films were selected from a total of forty (40) films. As at 1954, 40 films had been made by the GCFU. Out of these, three were selected namely, Progress in Kojokrom (1953), Mr. Mensah Builds a House (1952) and The Boy Kumasenu (1955). The decision to select these titles was because these were the only narrative films out of all the film materials produced by the GCFU. Also, only these could be classified under the fictional film genre under which Akan films also fall.

As indicated earlier, major participants for this study were sampled from film crew groups, film related administrators and others in the distribution chain working within the Akan language video industry as well as audiences. Selection for inclusion was based on the normative
considerations and an understanding of participant’s body of work as pioneers and significant members of the Akan video industry. Specifically, these practitioners were directly responsible for the philosophical foundations which defined the videos. These included but not limited to producers, distributors, marketers, scriptwriters, and directors. Another category of respondents included audience members. Respondents were selected based on the assumption that they watched movies and resided in Kumasi. Lastly, some actors who have worked in the Akan industry were included. This decision was reached after a preliminary analysis of audience data revealed that many were attracted to the films because of artistes. Video film practitioners who have produced outside the Akan language prescription were however excluded from this study.

3.4.3: Key Participants and Informants

The main data on Akan language videos essentially came from producers, directors, distributors, writers and actors as illustrated in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>NUMBER INTERVIEWED</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>FEMALES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTORS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODUCERS</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODUCER/DIRECTORS</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISTRIBUTORS/MARKETERS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELEVISION ADMINISTRATORS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERAN FILMMAKERS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FILM GROUPS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTORS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3.1 Key participants and description.
3.4.7: Data Collection and Instruments

Carefully designed semi-structured interview guides were used to elicit data from respondents. This included questions which were open-ended (appendix 2). The aim was to get participants to open-up and be expansive with responses. An important tenet of ethnographic study is observation, and it was employed to elicit information from participants. Apart from observing video distribution activities in major markets, the researcher also observed the production activities of two Akan language movies. This observation was done from pre-production through to post-production levels. These observations were done over a period of three (3) months.

Questionnaires requiring open-ended responses were administered to 15 crew members who worked in other crew capacities but had produced videos from time to time. A total of 40 questionnaires were administered and 15 were completed and returned. The audience survey also saw a total of three hundred (300) responses returned out of the 400 that were administered. Appointments were made via telephone and the purpose of the research and consent forms (appendix 1) were mostly sent via emails prior to my visit to the field. Some consent forms were sent via social media platforms such as the WhatsApp application. A few participants were given consent forms on the day of the interviews. The specifics of the consent form included a brief overview which detailed my identity, the purpose of the study, the anticipated results, among many other variables, peculiar to the University of Ghana’s research and ethical protocols (appendix 8). Regardless of the specificities of the instrument, data was collected from two main sources namely, secondary data and primary data.
3.5: Sources of Secondary Data

Secondary data was an invaluable source of information for this research. This study utilized books, journals and scholarly articles from peer reviewed platforms and websites within the domain of cinema, heritage, anthropology, cultural and African studies. The internet was particularly helpful in this purpose. Countless strategic searches on the internet using google-scholar pointed me to important articles and books that were later accessed through libraries or in some cases, outright purchase from book shops or online shops like Amazon. Majority of this group of data was collected at the University of Rochester (UR) in New York where I spent a year of my PhD program schedule. The UR’s Arts / Media and Rush Reese libraries had a wide collection of books with deep relevance to this study. For instance, the books; *Film and Empire and Film and the End of Empire* which details colonial use of film were assessed through the UR libraries. Other books and articles that could not be found in these libraries were sourced from their effective inter-library loan system. The libraries at the UR were particularly helpful in granting me access to books, journals and articles on the GCFU and other colonial establishments.

Because my study dealt with the GCFU, a defunct organization, not many primary sources were available. Information I got from the UR library system augmented the data I had already collected from my home institution’s Balme Library. I also made use of the National Film and Television Institute’s library where I accessed books and articles on film production in Ghana. Also, secondary data was gathered from the personal library of Rev. Dr. Chris Hesse (a veteran Ghanaian filmmaker). These included aspects of his personal journal, films, publications, magazines, and communications he had archived because of his position as a former managing director of the defunct Ghana Film Industry Corporation. Literature was examined critically and coded under broad thematic headings such as: 1) history of cinema, 2) cinema, colonialism and
Africa, 3) cinema and the Gold-Coast, 4) cinema in Ghana and 5) Akan cinema and intangible cultural heritage.

Among the secondary data utilized in this research was an unedited MiniDV tape, containing a video interview of Sean Graham (head of the Gold Coast Film Unit). The interview was conducted in his London home in 2007 by Nana Adjoa Awindor, producer of a local television series in Ghana, known as ‘Greetings from Abroad’. This video was however never used in the Greetings from Abroad television programming. When I assessed the MiniDV tape, it was moldy and not immediately viewable. The content was salvaged with the assistance of audio-visual technicians at NAFTI who chemically cleaned, restored and digitized the tape for easy playback. The content was later transcribed and studied as part of the literature that informed on the activities of the GCFU between the colonial period of 1948 to the end of colonialism in 1957. Additionally, films for the study were collected from the local distribution markets, and filmmakers who participated in the research. GCFU films were however accessed through the British Film Institute Archives and the Colonial Film Catalogue of the Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire. These films are mostly free to access except for a few which could only be accessed on site at the British Film Institute. For those ones, I accessed through Rev. Dr. Hesse’s personal film library.

3.6: Sources of Primary Data Collection

Primary data for this study were collected mainly through interviews, photographic study, document analysis, observations and administration of questionnaires. Studies such as (Garritano 2013; Haynes 2007; Meyer 2015) used key tenets of ethnography for data collection where close interaction and observation of participant was engaged to elicit data on video production in Ghana. Such close interaction had the potential to reveal hidden nuances and dynamic relationships which
allowed researchers to “translate social experiences and construct narratives” (Glesne & Peshkin 1992:11). The use of ethnography in this study ensured that I built a trusted working relationship with interviewees and observed participants who willingly shared useful cultural knowledge. Ethnography was therefore effective in highlighting contextual interpretations and meanings of Akan film’s cultural environment which was critical to the objectives of this study. Whereas studies focusing on Ghana’s cinema practices utilized mostly ethnographic data approaches, this study went further to employ survey questionnaires as a means of collecting data. This was imperative because quantifiable data on audiences was necessary for ascertaining Akan movies’ popularity in Ghana. It is the viewing culture of audiences that accounted for the status of Akan films and their consideration as valuable cultural repositories in Ghana. As such, questionnaires were administered to audiences who patronize the films.

3.6.1: Observation

A vital tenet of the qualitative approach employed for this study was the observation method. This study employed both the participant observation and general observation methods. These were conducted in the markets, trading centers, production locations, and on passenger buses. Both forms of observation offered me adequate close interaction with participants in a less formal way. This less formal approach promoted rapport and trust building between the researcher and the participants. Respondents opened up to participate sufficiently in the study.

The reliance on field-work was essential to the ethnographic data collection of this study. Ethnographic methods such as observation and the use of audio-visual tools were employed to study film activities in the cultural environment of Kumasi and Accra. The idea of active observation was borrowed from ethnographic documentary filmmaking where the cinéma vérité filmmaker advocated for the camera to be an avowed observer as against a passive observer.
(Rabiger 2007). Rabiger posits that by declaring the presence of the camera, participants moved from different stages of awareness to a state of unawareness where the camera and for that matter, the researcher became a part of the environment. By using observation, I established a level of trust with the participants where I stayed with them for a considerable amount of time before essentially getting to the substance of the research.

Participant observations without the use of the camera were also employed to identify the structure of the distribution channels for Akan video movies. The researcher engaged in packaging of VCD and DVD films as part of the distributor’s work (Fig. 3.10). Dawn visits to sales centers in Accra and Kumasi ensured the collection of observational data on the intricate network and relationships between, executive producers, marketers and distributors. At the Opera Square, I observed distributors and their assistants engaged in packaging of video compact disks (Fig. 3.11, 3.12) in the early hours of the day in preparation for buyers who arrive from other towns and villages of the country. Another observation exercise at the Adehye Market in Kumasi from morning till evening revealed that, as of 10:00 am, major video shops and outlets in the Adehye market were not yet opened for business. By 12 noon, only 3 shops out of over 10 shops were opened. The rest did not open, by the time I left at 5pm. A total of 10 individuals walked into shops to either buy or make enquiries about films. I observed practical aspects of filmmaking at Kumawu and Agogo where the two locations were used to film four different scenes. I travelled to this set with my informant who also worked as a crew member on the production. We arrived at the location the night before the shoot. From 7 am, I observed a combined crew and cast of sixteen (16) comprising of the director, production manager, lights technicians, a camera person, an art director, makeup artist, the director of photography and about 2 assistants who had no defined roles. The cast was made up of four male actors and four actresses. The story centered on a love
triangle that went sour. Set up for the first scene which was a bedroom scene took about one hour. The director of photography, light technicians and the sound man and production manager were responsible for this. The camera, lights and sound equipment were professional range. They utilized a Black Magic professional camera which is one of the top of the range camera for video film production. Members of the Kumawu community who chanced on the set were often incorporated into the scenes. For instance, in a scene where a gentleman interacts with a lady, community members passed within the view of the camera lens freely. Community members appeared conversant of filmmaking activities in the neighborhood and went along their business with little recognition of these activities.

In recent years, ethnographic methods have been used by researchers such as (Meyer 2015) who employed such methods in her study of video movie production in Ghana. Meyer’s observation of production, exhibition and marketing activities of video filmmakers concentrated in Ghana’s capital city of Accra. This coupled with interviews revealed the inner workings and the historical context of video production in Ghana. The approach also aided the accomplishment of her book *Sensational Movies* (2015), and several other publications that has thrown much light on independent video movie movement in Ghana. Similarly, Garritano (2013) used the ethnographic approach to gain maximum access and corporation from the video makers he observed and interviewed for her book, *African Video Movies and Global Desires: A Ghanaian History, 2013*. I observed that apart from the four actresses, the executive producer and make-up artist were the only women amongst the crew. These observations highlighted the power and gender dynamics within the industry. The market observation also raised questions on claims by some producers and distributors about active business activities and made me interrogate the seeming decline in the video commerce further.
Figure 3. 10: Researcher engaged in Participant Observation at Kantamanto Market-Accra (Field photo)

Figure 3. 11: Distributor packaging vcd’s at Opera Square (Source Field photo December 2017)
3.6.2: Interviews

A key principle of the qualitative method is the use of interviews. Video filmmakers, comprising the leadership of the industry including producers and directors, were interviewed. The interview format was semi-structured in nature with open ended questions that granted interviewees the opportunity to elaborate and expand their thoughts. Interviews provided a unique exploration of the respondents’ body of work, style, structure motivation and ideological inclinations.

I normally began an interview with an introduction of the study purpose and then asked the participant to tell me about how they got into the film industry. This question generally elicited varied responses. By the time the respondent finished speaking, they normally would have relaxed and gotten comfortable with the interviewing process. Apart from adopting an active listening
posture, I also approached interviews with a ‘naïve’ special learner attitude where I set aside my biases and earlier knowledge of the experiences shared (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). This posture facilitated further probing and respondents felt confident and eager to share ‘new’ knowledge and educate me. Asking descriptive questions beginning with how, why, when and where as opposed to ‘what’ enabled participants to be expansive by reflecting and sharing their industrial testimonies. I identified trust building as an important component of successful interviews. I developed trust through occasional calls and text messages to participants and by patronizing their programs and activities such as attending funerals. This gave me the opportunities to visit and observe their filming activities.

Additional interviews were conducted with Chris Hesse, Ernest Abbequaye and Kwaw Ansah who are key veteran Ghanaian filmmakers. These three personalities shared historical knowledge of the film industry from the colonial to the present. Chris Hesse was particularly resourceful in providing documentations, journals and notes, including a 1954 publication on the films of the GCFU apart from sharing deep knowledge of the Ghana film Industry Corporation which he presided for over a decade. The success of Ansah’s films, *Love Brewed in the African Pot* and *Heritage Africa*, has distinguished him as the epitome of independent cinema production in Ghana and thus worth engaging. His film, *Heritage Africa*, won the top prize at the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) film festival which is the largest and most prominent film festival in Africa situated in Burkina-Faso.

Interview data was also collected from administrators of television networks because of the symbiotic relationship between television programming and local movie distribution in Ghana. Television stations augment the content of their programming with Akan language movies while movie producers rely on television channels as a core of their distribution chain. These
administrators were from Adom Television, United Television TV3 Television and Agoo Television all with nationwide reach but headquartered in Accra.

Other interviews were conducted with vendors of Akan video movies to ascertain the supply chain. Two members each of the leaderships of groups such as Film Producers Association of Ghana (FIPAG) and National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) lecturers were engaged in interviews to establish the nature of the group and how it connected with the Akan language video industry.

Apart from the face-to-face in-depth interview formats described above, I adopted the mobile phone’s WhatsApp audio platform for interviewing. Similar to the conventional telephone interviews which arguably distribute power equally between the researcher and the participant (Vogl 2013), the WhatsApp audio interviews went further and allowed the respondents to listen and properly reflect on the questions before providing responses. Questions were recorded using my mobile phone recorder and sent via WhatsApp to respondents. Respondents recorded their responses using their smartphones and sent them back to me via the same platform. Follow up questions were asked through the same channel. This technique was effective as I could communicate with respondents in an in-depth manner although not face-to-face. Although I recognized that I may have missed details such as facial expressions of respondents, this method worked well because many of the respondents were busy people so devising this method of interviewing was most appropriate in accessing their inclusion. I conducted four (4) interviews using this style and the average turnaround time to receive responses was about 24 hours.

Typically, interviews were conducted in the comfort of the participants’ familiar spaces. These included their work places, market stores, and homes. Interviews lasted approximately 45
minutes and was mostly conducted before noon with a few conducted late afternoons. Conducting most interviews in the mornings ensured that participants were more alert and eager to participate.

3.6.3: Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group discussions were also invaluable in data collection. On production sets at Agogo and Kumawu, I elicited information from two groups of 5 filmmakers. These included two co-producers, the director of the set, and two other directors who were observing on the set on the filming locations. The discussion centered on their rational for incessant production work regardless of a considerable decline in audience patronage. Their responses suggested that the reasons for Akan video production exceeded commercial reasons.

3.6.4: Content and Narrative Analysis

Another approach to qualitative data collection and analysis adopted by this study was content analysis. Content analysis has been identified as a useful research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context (Krippendorff 1980). According to Neuendorf (2002), “Content analysis is the systemic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics. It includes the careful examination of human interactions; the analysis of character portrayals in television commercials, films, novels and many more…”(Neuendorf 2002). Since this research requires the deduction of patterns and information from films and videos, the use of content analysis was imperative. Additionally, narrative analysis was integrated since it was ideal for film and video texts (Smith 2000). This allowed the researcher to focus attention on characters, conflicts, complications, narrative structure and developments within the movie texts.

In view of these capabilities, this study employed content and narrative analysis whereby 20 video films made in the Akan language were viewed and analysed. This was done through specific coding and categorisation under themes for identifying similarities and variations between
them and the three (3) narrative films made by the GCFU. Indeed, these two methods lent themselves to the analysis of film, which was an integral part of this study. I watched a lot of videos but only 20 were sampled for this purpose. The films were analysed based on variables such as central philosophy and themes, subject matter, mis-en scène, recurring actors and the use of cultural heritage elements. Films from the two eras were comparatively analysed within these variables.

3.6.5 Survey (Questionnaires)

Two different sets of questionnaires were also administered. The groups were audiences and filmmakers. This method of data collection was employed for this group of filmmakers because they did not identify with the production process as a full profession. Many were into other commercial activities such as sales of music disks, or other electronics at the markets but had occasionally engaged in film production. Also, these group of filmmakers were not officially linked to recognized producer, director and screenwriter groupings where most samples were drawn. This included producers, directors and screenwriters. While the multiple-choice questions provided specific responses, the open-ended questions provided opportunity for respondents to express themselves by elaborating and given some degree of meaning to responses given. Only 15 of these questionnaires were returned out of fifty 50 questionnaires administered.

The audience questionnaires were administered to a total of four hundred (400) audience members in Kumasi who were sampled based on their admission that they were active patrons of Akan video movies. The survey questions sought to collect data ranging from audiences’ medium for watching films, to the number of Akan films they watch per week, their preferred stories, and their opinion on whether Akan film content showcased elements of their heritage or not. Three hundred (300) of these questionnaires were returned.
3.6.6: Audio-Visual Documentation

This study employed the use of audio-visual equipment for documentation and observation purposes. I used a Canon TI6 DSLR camera which had the capability to record video and captured still photographic images. The video recorder aspect was particularly employed for observations. I employed the handheld style where the camera was an avowed participant. There was the possibility that I could miss some details when activities were happening simultaneously during the observational studies. As such, a recording of the activities was a good way to recollect, transcribe and study the contents. According to Collier & Collier (1986), the advocacy for the use of photography in ethnographic research is because “the camera’s machinery allows us to see without fatigue; the last exposure as just as detailed as the first” (Collier & Collier, 1986:9). My personal training as a filmmaker thus came in very handy when I used the camera in the field. I could easily blend in with other production workers which aided my observation study.

An audio recorder was an invaluable equipment for the entire research. I utilised two recorders and sometimes the recorder on my mobile phone to guarantee a recording of all interviews, conversations and interactions. I employed the use of the recorder only after I had briefed the participants and permission had been granted. I however paused recordings the few times participants requested that I paused, so they could share sensitive or confidential information. In situations like that, I used my note pad just in case they shared non-sensitive information when the recorder was paused.

3.7: Data Analysis

Interview data analysis was done simultaneously with collection. Initial analysis processes such as transcription of audio recorded during interviews were done while data collection was ongoing. After transcripts were developed, summaries were often written to highlight the main
ideas and themes. This information was grouped under variables such as, a) collaborative, b) contradiction or c) new knowledge. Together, these were analyzed with the key postcolonial theories employed for this study. For example, I queried most response against the views of Fanon and Said as the basis of analyzing data. Notes and photographic images captured during observation were also grouped under the same variables. This initial process was a way of synthesizing the data with existing literature. This facilitated easier and poignant data understanding leading to an overall and more extensive analysis after data collection was completed. Akan films were also analyzed under such themes that emphasized ideological themes, story content and use of heritage elements. These were comparatively examined with GCFU films to highlight similarities and variations. Both recorded and transcribed interviews were handled and managed by storing the information on password computers. Specifically, sensitive responses were kept on password protected computer machines away from unauthorized people.

3.8: Ethical Consideration

This study was preceded by an application for ethical clearance and approval from the University of Ghana’s Humanities Ethical Review Committee because the study involved dealing with people. The committee was particularly concerned with the content of the different questionnaires and questions for the different group of participants. They also checked for the use of vulnerable groups and the kinds of protection the study had to provide them. I provided the details of my enquiry and assured them that there were no foreseeable vulnerable groups in my population. After meeting their concerns, they signed off the study and granted me an ethical clearance certificate (appendix 8). It is important to note that my observation of ethical guidelines proceeded with satisfying the University’s requirement. For my own protection and the integrity of the research, it was imperative that strict ethical codes were observed to avoid conflicts which
could potentially affect the accuracy of the data collected. Subsequently, written consents and agreements were obtained from each participant partaking in the In-depth interviews. In instances where the participant was non-literate, consent forms were read out and translated into local languages understood by the participant with the assistance of witnesses who were literate in English. Mostly, these were non-team members.

Participants were required to either append signatures or thumbprints, as well as an oral approval on a tape recorder. The camera and audio recording equipment were only used after explaining to the participants and securing their official approvals. I briefed participants about the benefit and risks associated with participation in the study. They were also reminded that their participation was purely voluntary. For that matter, they were under no obligation to respond to all questions. They could withdraw from the study at any point if they so desired.

3.9: Limitations

The data collection of this research was delayed and spiraled out of schedule unnecessarily because getting participants to commit to the study came with some difficulties. The producers, directors and other top crew members were difficult to access. Scheduling appointments with them became very challenging. For months, I scheduled and rescheduled appointments with top filmmakers. Some would agree to be interviewed then not show up for their appointments. I later assessed the situation and realized that many of the respondents were popular individuals who were revered and hailed within their world. This made them suspicious of outsiders and people they did not know. Anyone who contacted them was profiled as a potential ‘star’ struck individual who probably wanted to be famous. I was caught up in a skepticism regarding stardom and ordinary people. This delayed my field work unnecessarily. To get around this situation, I had to court the assistance of a colleague who was familiar with most producers and directors. Evander
Agyemang is a cinematographer who works widely in the Akan language film industry and the English industry. The success with securing these participants occurred when Evander spoke with most participants prior to my scheduling of appointments. Regardless, some within the population refused to participate which limited the original scope and extended the scheduled timelines of the study.

Moreover, I could not reveal my association with NAFTI. This was because for a long time, there has existed an animosity between trained filmmakers from NAFTI and Akan Language Film Producers, many of who were not trained. Because of this rift, I recognized that my identity as a lecturer at NAFTI had the potential to put off some potential participants. I thus revealed this information only on a need-to-know basis. I rather focused on my identity as a student at the University of Ghana throughout my field work.
CHAPTER FOUR  
THE AKAN VIDEO FILM INDUSTRY

4.1: Introduction

This chapter discusses how the Akan video industry is organized, its complexities and historical antecedents. The data is analyzed and presented under the following headings; origin and history, crew and mode of production, equipment and techniques, language, filming sites and locations, artistes, story narratives and content, promotion and distribution. Other sections include a discussion of technological threats and other binding factors in the industry. This made the classification easier and clearer for interpretation and understanding of the data.

4.2: Origin and History of Akan films

The Akan film industry has several names. These include, Akan video movies, Kumasi Video movies, Twi movies, and Kumawood movies (Adjei 2014; Aveh 2010, 2014). The historical precursor of the Akan language video industry can be traced to the work of Samuel Nyamekye in 2002. To compete with Nigerian films which had been flooding the Ghanaian market, Nyamekye and his Miracle Films Productions embarked on a different mode of telling stories- using Akan language. While working as an assistant in his uncle’s electrical and video shop Nyamekye studied the business of duplication and sale of American, Chinese and other foreign films on video tapes for the consumption of Ghanaians. Recognizing the commercial prospects of selling foreign films, he in 1997 developed some story ideas, broke away from his uncle and ventured into local productions. He engaged the services of a veteran producer, Hammond Mensah of HM films, based in Ghana’s Port city of Takoradi, to assist in producing his first movie titled, Be Vigilant. This movie was filmed in Kumasi and engaged actors from Accra and they spoke the English language.
This first attempt was commercially unsuccessful. Nyamekye, however worked further to establish the business of video production in the Ashanti Regional capital of Kumasi.

After *Be Vigilant*, Nyamekye made other attempts by forging co-productions deals with Nigerian producers. When that also proved unsuccessful, his next strategy was to employ Nigerians as key crew to film his stories in order to ignite some confidence from audiences who were at this point totally engrossed and appreciated Nigerian video themes, style, text and culture. When that also proved futile, he initiated a new strategy of making videos using Akan language. Although the use of Akan and mostly-Twi dialect in cinema was not entirely new, this attempt was fresh and innovative for many audiences as it expressed aspects of Ghana’s local traditions.

The pioneering artistes in Nyamekye’s works included performers drawn mostly from a local television series titled, ‘Cantaata’ and others from local stage theatre called ‘Concert Party’. Earlier in his career, Nyamekye established a drama group with players who also featured in his films. Popular stage actors who were associated with Concert Party, notably ‘Bob Santo’ and ‘Judas’ were cast as lead characters in his first purely Twi movie called *Sika* in 2002. Judas and Bob Santo had already made a mark in the Concert Party moving theatre series where they had established themselves in comic roles intermingled with morals and societal lessons often mediated in family situations.

After the commercial success of *Sika*, Nyamekye’s work attracted many young enthusiasts who refer to themselves as producers and directors of Akan videos. His work also became the yardstick for determining what Akan videos should be. His *Kumasi Yonkuor* movie and its accompanying sequels for instance got the attention of many film lovers. Eighty percent (80%) of informants indicated their preference for this film.
Nyamekye contends that the change in status quo courted Nigerian distributor’s attention and they attempted to intervene at the national and diplomatic levels.

Nigerian officials came to Ghana to engage us and our officials to allow the comeback to the status quo of buying and selling rights of Nigerian movies in Ghana. But this was not the way to go because Twi movies were doing better, and we did not need them (Interview with Nyamekye 10/09/17).

Other proponents of Akan films seemed ready to dismantle all forms of external domination including those from within the African continent which attests to the fact that Africa is a heterogeneous group, and certainly not one country. What may relate to one group may not necessarily relate to the other. The control of Ghana’s “internal affairs”, (Said 1979 :36) including distribution markets and audience share in this regard, placed Nigerian marketers and distributors within the concept of the colonial West.

4.3: Crew and Modes of Production

The Akan film industry crew consist of executive producers, producers, directors, production managers, distributors, marketers, script-writers, camera crew, sound crew, lighting-man (gaffers), makeup and costume artists and editors. Hierarchically, the executive producer is at the top of this list being the main financier. Sometimes, an executive producer may be the originator of the story. In such a case, they will employ a script writer to write the story into a movie script. Other times, the executive producer will acquire rights to a script through an outright purchase from a script writer. In cases where the executive producer is a novice in film business, they may employ a producer either wise, an executive producer can also take the role of the producer. The producer may represent the executive producer on locations, negotiate contract deals with crew and cast and oversee the production budget. A production manager may work directly
under the producer to organize permits, transportation, accommodation, feeding and manage crew and cast on location. The director is responsible for working with the artistes, and the technical crew (camera, sound, gaffer, make up and costume artists) to translate the story from the script to the screen. The editor oversees the post production work where the film is packaged. Most digital editors also engage in visual effects and animation.

The distributors, and marketers control the finished product. The distributors facilitate the duplication of compact disks for distribution. Marketers handle the promotional aspects of the film as well as television deals. Regardless of these role variations, members of the industry may assume any non-technical role depending on the situation. For instance, an executive producer might also be a director or the production manager or even the make-up and costume director. Executive producers may also be acting hopefuls who invest monies into a production in order to select the acting role they wish to play. Other crew such as distributors, marketers, as well as camera and sound crew also branch into producer roles sometimes. In most cases, filmmakers refer to themselves simply as producer/directors.

Akan filmmakers are driven by an enthusiasm to tell stories and a desire to make money. As such, film personnel and crew training or education is not a huge priority for many. Out of 50 participants sampled only 6 were formally trained. The others got involved in the industry through observation, apprenticeship and or self-taught. Many nurtured their craft through childhood entertainment activities such as communal dramas and theatre performances. For instance, Daniel Safo of Peace and Love films begun with observation of production activities on Cantata television shows. He subsequently assisted others on their productions before becoming a producer and director of his own films. Maame Yaa also became a producer after venturing into the industry as an actress. Some executive producers who also double as distributors got into the industry from
quasi-related fields such as music cassette distribution and other home electronic dealers. Mercy Ofei of *His Mercy Films* for instance switched from music cassette distribution to film distribution and subsequently into producing after she observed the commercial prospects of the industry. The genesis of the Kumasi movement was however aided by several trained and experienced professionals. Currently, some National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) alumnus such as Evander Kwame Agyemang works as a cinematographer on many Akan movies. Some formal trained Nigerian crew also played significant roles in the nurturing of the industry.

Although an alternative cinema that challenged basic assumptions of mainstream productions within video technology had shifted, in the Akan video industry, the shift was from one patriarchal control to the other. There were very few women producers and close to none when it came to directors. The few women observed had no technical roles. Apart from acting roles, some women worked as make-up and costume artist or production managers.

### 4.4: Production Equipment and Techniques

Equipment for productions have gone through some evolution. From filming on low quality Video Home System (VHS), to Beta Cam professional and other home video formats, Akan filmmakers currently utilize some of the highest standards equipment available for digital video filmmaking. The advent of digital DSLR cameras have greatly improved the picture quality of videos produced in the Akan language industry. The camera, which continues to be the most important equipment in the production process has evolved to include, the use of Canon Mark II and III, Black Magic Pocket 4K, Panasonic AF 100, and some of the highest international standards such as the RED. The Black Magic DJI was observed in use on the two filming locations visited. The cost of rental varies from about 200 cedis to 400 cedis and about 1800 cedis per day for the RED camera. Similar improvements have been recorded within sound recording, lighting and
editing equipment. Producers seem to have migrated from using home videos to the use of high standard professional equipment in making films. Because of this, technical crew such as the cameraman and sound person are carefully selected based on their technical track records.

Post production work is done by the same group of editors and visual art professionals. The effect was also observed by Aveh (2014), that Kumasi videos often are “show- pieces of visual effects – from animated creatures to flying coffins to magical charms leading to dramatic vanishes” (Aveh 2014:113). The editors’ selection is mostly based on a demonstration of dexterity in visual effects and animation. Some of the producers interviewed observed that what made Nigerian videos receptive was not only the storylines or superior technical qualities but also, the incorporation of visual effects. Currently, the use of special effects is an integral part of the Kumasi video movie. Producers go the extra length to make visual effects that complement their stories on traditional spiritism, sorcery and spiritual beliefs that form some of the subject matter mostly employed.

Regardless of these successes, little improvements have been recorded in terms of captions, labelling and subtitling imprinted on films. Most Akan videos sampled did not have the dates of productions provided on the jackets nor in the films’ credits. The absence of this information creates difficulties in contextualizing films. Again, poor English subtitles characterize most of the films analyzed. Typographical mistakes (Fig. 4.1) often lead to misunderstanding of the messages intended. Direct transliteration from Akan to English also results in loss of the essence of what is intended and create misleading interpretations especially for non- Akan speakers and natives.
4.5: Artistes

The industry relies heavily on the concept of ‘stars’. A movie ‘star’ is represented in main characters who may play lead roles. This practice begun with Bob Santo and Judas. After Santo’s death in May, 2002 a new ‘Star’ emerged in the character of Agya Koo whose real name is Kofi Adu Mensah. This character has continued playing lead roles in most movies based on his comic moves which are rendered in Akan language with proverbs and idioms. The most memorable character names of the ‘Stars’ becomes their identifiable names. For instance; Kofi Adu assumed the name- Agya Koo after his concert party stage name which he transplanted into movies. Kwadwo Nkansah became (Liwin) Akwasi Boadi became (Akrobeto) and Rose Mensah became Kyeiwa.

Agya Koo appeared in almost all videos till about 2010. The role of Stars in these movies is integral to the success of the films. Most patrons describe movie titles by simply referring to the lead artiste. Out of 200 audiences surveyed, 80 percent claim they watch Akan videos because of the Stars who appear in them. Agya Koo’s roles in movies and his social impact indeed motivated the government of Ghana to award Agya Koo a national award in 2008.
Currently, the core lead players include Kwadwo Nkansah, Akwasi Boadi, Nana Ama McBrown, Emilia Brobbey, Vivian Jill and Kwaku Manu. According to most of the producers I interviewed, audiences are attracted to buy films, depending on the ‘star’ featuring in them. As such, movie posters, video jackets, and television commercials feature these top actors prominently (Fig. 4.2). The idea of utilizing ‘stars’ in Akan films was further stretched to encompass successful Nigerian Stars. Audiences appreciated the idea of experiencing their celebrity Nigerian actors on Ghanaian screens speaking in the Twi language. The incorporation of top Nigerian stars such as Aki and Popor, Patience Ozorkor and Mr. Ibu in Akan films popularized the industry. These films were subtitled and enjoyed some success in the Nigerian markets suggesting that the Akan language films could enjoy potential successes beyond the Akan geographical environment.

The repeated use of ‘stars’ or celebrities in Akan videos is an integral part of the success of the films. Actors in this category are members who have gained the audience’s trust and love mostly because of their language use, acting skills, and their ability to evoke emotions such as laughter from audiences. Many stories are conceptualized and evolve around these performers to the extent that, audiences buy films based on the appearance of their favorite performers on the compact disk casing. Titles like Lilwin KungFu and Agya Koo Old Soldier for instance dwell on the main characters to drive the narrative and attract audiences. Audience survey highlighted the following actors as favorites; Lil Win, Akrobeto, Kwaku Manu, Agya Koo, Samuel Ofori, Nana Ama MacBrown, Emila Brobbey and Mary Mensah (Kyeiwa). Audiences revealed that these actors’ ability to effectively entertain them in every film they appear as the reason for choosing them as favourites. These actors are known to mostly adlib and improvise once they get the story idea. The level of improvising thus has a way of drawing audience to the very characters of the
artiste regardless of the role they play. This makes audience identify with them in a unique way making them an important partner in the success of films.

At the Kantamanto Market and the Opera square markets of Accra, it was observed that buyers hardly read synopsis or blurbs of films to decide if they fit their preferred genres before purchasing films. Instead, they relied on the retailers to recommend the latest or simply requested for selections of films based on the latest film starring their favorite artiste. The implication of this practice is that the unique content of films may not be such an important consideration at the purchasing stage. An audience member can only regard films as having important contents after they have watched them. Most stories are character-driven so production duration is determined by the availability of the ‘star’. The centrality of these stars sometimes means they dictate the pace of the filming process often to the detriment of the finished film.

Furthermore, the use of such ‘stars’ sometimes attract criticism from some audiences. For instance, some ‘stars’ often reduced almost every role to a comic one. Regardless of how serious the subject matter is, the stars are employed to the detriment of the substance and essence of the film. For instance, the use of Agya Koo as the lead character playing the legendary Okomfo Anokye in the film Okomfo Anokye drew a lot of laughter to a subject which is of much importance to Akan mythology and intangible heritage assets. This is because Agya Koo by nature is a comical character.
4.6: Language

An underlining element in Akan films is the centrality of the Akan language. This language is of utmost importance to all producers. According to informants, some earlier producers scrutinized stories with respect to the proper structure, syntax of the language before stories were filmed and released on video compact disks. Although earlier films utilized a mixture of Akan and English, Akan dominated much of the language.

The languages used in Akan videos comprises Twi, Fante, Bono, Akyem and Akuapim dialects of the Akan peoples. These dialects are rooted in the ‘Kwa’ branch of the Niger-Congo language family (Kropp Dakubu 1988). In Ghana, this collective group of dialects are believed to be the most populous. Scholars such as Bodomo (1996) and Buah (1998) suggest that the Akan
form the biggest nucleus of Ghana’s population. The most pervasive dialect used in films is the Asante-Twi which originates from the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Few Akan movies may have a combination of Akan and some English language. This combination is representative of a growing crop of vernacular spoken by many literate Akan speakers in Ghana. As such, the characters who may incorporate English language in their delivery are portrayed as the formally educated members of the community. Again, when producers employ Nigerian comic stars in Akan videos, they often speak Pidgin English and some Twi.

It must be noted however, that the use of Akan language in films is not the preserve of Kumasi video producers alone. Although Kumasi producer have revolutionized and demonstrated the highest form of its ownership, the practice transcends the recent (Adjei 2014; Collins 2007). The current use of Akan language in films is rooted in a long running Television (tv) drama series called *Obra, and Osofo Dadzie* as well as Concert Party theatre and its television rendition; *Cantata*. Whereas Concert party was essentially a theatre genre that dwelled on comedy, the Osofo Dadzie and Obra Shows were educational dramas laced with entertainment which run from the late 1970s through to the end of the century. Before the Osofo Dadzie and Obra Shows however, were the films of the Gold Coast Film Unit which utilized Akan dialects. Actors in the film; *Progress in KojoKrom* and *Mr. Mensah Builds a House* spoke in Akan languages. Although *Progress in Kojokrom* was intermingled with the English language, it essentially represents the earliest use of local language in films in Ghana. The use of the Akan language in films resurfaced on the Ghanaian screens in the 1970s when the Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) made the film, *I Told You So (1970)* on celluloid. Again, through the work of Kofi Yirenkyi, and Kofi Owusu, the films; *Kanana* and *Sika Sunsum* were made in some Akan dialects. The latter pair represent the most notable use of Akan language within video film production context. The main
thought behind these performances was the idea of comedy and drama underlined with exaggerated acts meant to ignite laughter from audiences’ whiles being informative and educative and these are clearly present in current Akan videos.

4.7: Filming Sites and Locations

Most Akan movies are filmed in Kumasi and outskirt towns in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. In the early years of video production, Mankranso, one of the towns near Kumasi gained prominence for its continual hosting of film crew who utilised the town’s space and environment for location work. This location houses neither studios, nor technical facilities. But offers producers convenient, affordable locations and settings for filmmaking. Although all filming equipment and editing facilities are available in Kumasi, and in Accra, Mankranso’s lack of modern infrastructure fitted well within the contextual framework of the themes and subject matter mostly employed in Akan movies. With its proximity to the capital, Mankranso provided both the travel convenience and the right scenery for the village setting that characterizes a significant number of Akan film stories.

Over the years however, producers with new story genres begun to explore other locations such as Kumawu, and Agogo. Other Akan films are made completely outside of the Ashanti Region. Kasoa in the Central Region of Ghana has particularly gained prominence as a favorite location for Akan videos. Some producers who reside in Accra utilize areas in Kasoa instead of travelling to the Ashanti Region. Some go to the extent of filming establishing shots of notable monuments in Kumasi and inserting into a Kasoa shot film. Others also explore different parts of Ghana to find suitable locations. For instance, producers of the film *Okomfo Anokye* filmed some aspects in Awukugua in the Eastern Region of Ghana.
Another attribute of Akan videos is the recurrent use of exterior scene settings. Technically, very few interior scenes are employed to tell Akan film stories. Most actions take place in exterior scenes such as compound houses, adjoining verandas of the compound homes and other communal spaces such as markets and lorry stations.

4.8: Story and Narrative Contents

The content of most Akan videos exhibits the dynamic lifestyles in contemporary Ghanaian societies typical of the Ashanti regional capital of Kumasi. Attempts are made to promote local foods and other material culture. Other things that feature in the contents of the films are representations of tangible heritage assets and historical sites within the cultural setting.

The films analyzed showcase historic sites in Kumasi which are presented as establishing shots, and other scenes that speak to the identity of the Kumasi township. For instance, there is almost always the shot of the Okomfo Anokye statue which stands in the center of the city (Fig. 4.3). Again, the use of major streets and community centers such as the post office and largest market square, Kejetia is a common scene in Akan videos.

After analyzing a total of 40 Akan films, the common stories, subject matter and themes that stood out encompassed the dichotomy between modernity and tradition. This often revolved around the supernatural, religion (mostly Christianity), as well as everyday family dramas laced with lyrical Akan proverbs and innuendos. The stories are mostly drama and comedy. Very few action films, thriller and other genres are explored. Even when the horror genre is explored, it is incorporated with dramatic or comic situations. Other themes and subject matter employed are connected directly to social and community issues. Nevertheless, the stories explored by Akan video producers can be grouped under three broad headings.
The first group is the Reality Drama Stories. Films in this category have content that tell stories about happenings in the environment. These stories aim to present sensationally emotional stories about real life scenarios that may relate to the producers or form a significant part of the target audiences’ cognition and worldview. The message here is that this is the cause and effect of these actions. These stories aim to educate and or inform society so may have very little entertainment. Instead, the deep emotions displayed by a grieving widow or someone who has lost their job are supported with comic reliefs delivered by a popular comic star or a popular ‘jester’, who presents the comic sides of the film world. Other times, these stories may ride on the comical exaggerations of these ‘jesters’ who are mostly the main characters. These are sometimes manifested in the titles of the films produced. For instance; *Agya Koo Old Soldier*, gives a good dose of laughter and entertainment as the famous comic character gives a dramatic rendition of an old strict soldier who returns to his village from the city after retirement. Other films in this group are satires and a comment on society or at least the topical issues in society. An example is the title; “*All Die Be Die*” which is adopted from the infamous words of a Ghanaian politician which attracted criticisms from a wide section of the publics. Other stories with strong connections to Akan traditions and way of lives form an important part of this narrative group. These may exhibit practices associated with traditional ceremonies surrounding birth, marriage and funeral ceremonies, as well as chieftaincy and its related festival displays. The content of the film ‘Adinkrah’ for instance unfolds around a struggle between traditional burial practices and a foreign one. After the main character- Adinkrah’s life is cut short for disobeying a foreign secret society to sacrifice his only child, the family is drawn into conflict with the secret society in which he had membership. The battle over which group should perform his burial rites is what drives the story. The traditional Akan funeral ensemble and accompanying music, objects and clothes are presented.
as it happens in reality. The similarities between these stories and the realities of the audiences is in direct unison. According to Nyamekye, the filming of *Asoreba* caused some conflict between his team and the collective community where the story was filmed. This is as a result of detected similarities between an original story that occurred in the village and the film’s plot. The fact that the similarities included names of the original people further muddled the situation as the community could not accept that the story is just a creation of the producer’s imagination.

The idea of cause and effect culminating in a moral is integral to the development of these stories. For instance, *Ghana Galamsey* seeks to educate Ghanaians and warn foreign operators on the threats and dangers of illegal alluvial gold mining to water bodies and the environment generally. The subject matter was a topical national issue that motivated government to set up a taskforce to protect water bodies and the environment of the communities most affected. Thus, the story concludes where the perpetrators are apprehended to serve as a deterrent to others even beyond the film world.

Other stories within this category crystalizes around a protagonist, whose actions or inactions unfold some real-life scenarios highlighting the central role of religion on human existence. The structure and overarching idea here is the emphasis on the existence of supernatural principalities occluding the prosperity of the protagonist. This struggle between good and evil proposes only one solution- a direct call for audiences to turn to the Christian Religious faith to assure victory. Meyer (2006) acknowledges that English language videos from Accra were also dominated by the type of stories where struggle between good and evil, often represented by Indigenous Religious beliefs vs. the Christian Faith is a constant feature. To suggest that these stories share a striking relationship with Ghanaian social reality is almost an understatement as many patrons are indeed engulfed in similar real-life scenarios. It is a reality that current popular
television programing on the digital terrestrial broadcast on Ghanaian screens is Christian Religious activities where church leaders constantly reiterate the presence of evil and witchcraft which can only be defeated through the acceptance of Jesus Christ. It is therefore not surprising that Kyeiwa, a story of a notorious witch terrorizing her community succeeded in sustaining the interest of audiences with over 10 sequels.

The stories under this category although fictional, speak to the very lives of the audiences. Audiences emotionally identify with them because they are stories they have experienced or heard through the gossip mill. Viewers can therefore run commentaries, and even predict the dramatic structure. The assumption is that, the film world should encompass the perfect universe where good always triumphs over evil. The Dramatic Reality stories are like the films with Social Realist tendencies suggested by Diawara (1992) which “uses melodrama, satire and comedy” (Diawara 1992:141) to concretize its wide popularity. It is the correlation between the real world and the film world that accounts for the popularity of African films and for that matter; Akan films.

The second category identified is the Historical Epic Stories. These stories ride on popular traditions, legends, myths and historical narratives surrounding the traditional lives of the Akan peoples. The stories attempt to present historical narratives on the screen for younger generations’ orientation on issues with significance to their histories and origin or renditions of known traditional histories. As such, films in this category are made with mis-en-scenes (film world) that highlight traditions and ways of lives carried over from generations to generations. Some titles from this group include films such as Okomfo Anokye, Yaa Asantewaa, and Sundiata Awieye. These films explore popular historical figures (heroes/heroines) in the Akan/Asante tradition and culture. There is the conscious employment of many Akan heritage sites and symbols aimed at telling stories that are analogous to the histories familiar with audiences. Some are presented
almost like the documentary genre of filmmaking, where ‘real’ historical facts, objects and places are used. The filming of *Okomfo Anokye* for-instance took the directors and producers to Awukugwa (hometown of the legendary priest). Audiences claim they appreciate these films because although they are fictional, they bare much semblance to authentic lifeways and histories of their origin passed down through oral traditions such as (Anansesem) from one generation to the next.

The third category of Akan videos are the Action Emulated Stories. This category is relatively cheaper to produce because they hardly showcase ‘stars’ who charge quite a hefty fee. Action Emulated Stories usually encompass an ensemble of unknown martial artistes, body builders and young men and women who may be debuting their acting career. This is a rising genre which may not have a defined story lines but numerous fight scenes, and thug life. A few times, some producers have included the popular jester who is of a ‘star’ status to feature in the film. Apart from delivering his comic role, he /she will also engage in some action scenes where guns, martial arts and other fight scenarios are the highlights. Some incorporate the cultural antecedents and genre traditions in these action sequences. As such, the films might have a character who has had some foreign travel experience outside the local settings to the countries where the actions portrayed originates. These films may have story lines that mimic action films from China, America, and others. Examples are *LilWin The Kung Fu Master, and Mortal Kombat*.

Regardless of the story type, one defining quality of Akan language videos is the use of sound tracks that effectively narrate the entire film. The stories are interconnected with the realities of majority of their audiences. Also, the symbiotic interrelationship between the audiences, sellers, distributors and producers that result in the creation of particular genre trend is something that is unique to Akan movie industry. Story trends are sometimes determined by this demand and supply
chain. Often, retailers carry information and comments about the kinds of storylines and genres that buyers (audiences) regularly request and distributors in turn, inform the producers and executive producers who may be encouraged to produce similar genres. This chain makes the final film construction, somewhat of a communal or collective vision.

Figure 4. 3: Okomfo Anokye statue that appear in most Akan films. Source: field photo 2017.

4.9: Promotion and Distribution and Exhibition

Conventional distribution of films is done through the theatre system. When cinema begun in 1895, the idea of big screen was what effectively defined the new art form. As such, this conventional practice of screening in cinema houses was practiced during the early years of filmmaking in Ghana and even the beginning of video production. Audiences appreciate stories when they are exhibited in cinemas regardless of the filming medium (Meyer 2015). Although the
practice of screening in cinema houses continues to be practiced in Ghana by some English language film producers, it is almost non-existing in the Kumasi distribution system.

Once editing is completed, a trailer is produced, and radio commercials are recorded for the purposes of advertisement. The marketing includes advertisements, which take the form of television announcements where a voice-over dramatically advertises the movie. Some radio and tv presenters have carved careers for themselves through providing voice acting services for Akan films’ promotion. Advertising is done through radio and television channels through promotional pieces, and music videos that are produced purposely to advertise the new movie.

The music video is usually an extended version of the movie’s soundtrack. It may or may not include the main actors of the film participation in the video. Bits and pieces of the film are interspersed within the music and played on television with an overarching message that directs patrons to where to buy video compact disks. The master disk with the film is sent for duplication at companies such as Accra Sounds located in Accra where copies are made onto video compact disk VCD and Digital video disk DVD formats. The duplicated disks are delivered to the distributors who have been contracted by the executive producers. Top distributors include Kwame BA, Pat Thomas, Peace and Love, and Karimodey.

The distributors spend the entire Sunday packaging the video compact disks with the casing and inlays. By Monday dawn, traders within the marketing chain arrive from different parts of the country to the Opera Square, Kantamanto Markets in Accra and Adehye in Kumasi to buy in bulk. These releases are done by the beginning of every week in time for retailers from different parts of Ghana to buy at wholesale prices. If there is new demand for extra copies, new copies are duplicated and sent to the retailers in the regions. An average of fifty thousand (50,000) copies are printed initially. A title can be divided between two (2) and (5) parts. Some go beyond this
convention to as many as 10 parts. The film Kyeiwaa is a typical example of a film that was divided into over 10 parts. Each vcd/dvd is sold at an average price of 4 cedis per segment and this increases through the distribution line until it gets to the buyer/audience who buys between five (5) and seven (7) cedis per segment. The sale prices at the retail shops are determined by how popular the film is and how recent it is. After the film becomes old, which means its demand has reduced, the film become known as ‘oil’ a term used in the markets to depict old films that have been reduced to clear from the distribution points. The business is a swift one that is usually transacted in the early hours of every Monday.

Other sale avenues which include float and street sale events through slow traffic, have reduced considerably. After the films are sold for a couple of months, the producers will now begin approaching television stations. These processes have changed quite significantly since the business begun to decline. The researcher’s observations at Kantamanto Market indicated that out of about 20 distribution shops located in the heart of the used clothes market on the Cassette Lane, only 6 were opened by 6am on Monday for sale of films. At Nyamekye Films and His Mercy Films, a total of 15 sellers made enquiries and bought videos by mid-day. The films bought ranged between 10cd’s to about 30 vcd films. Similar situations were observed at the Opera Square Market where Kwame BA’s shop displayed very little activities and Adolf Film was the only shop opened as at mid-day at the Adehye market Kumasi. At Wofa K films at Kantamanto however, packaging of films was busily going on for retailers at Koforidua. The business appears to have been greatly affected by technological changes such as the introduction of digital terrestrial Television which has brought about pluralism in programing often incorporating the Akan language. Details of these are discussed in the latter part of this chapter.
Regardless of re-emerging conventional exhibition centers such as the Silver-Bird Cinemas and Watch and Dine located at major malls in the Accra and Kumasi, viewing of Akan videos remains a private affair mostly at home (Fig. 4.4).

![Pie Chart: Where people watch films]

**Figure 4.4: Places where people watch films**

### 4.9.1: Television for distribution

Television has always been one of the channels for distribution in all conventional film practices. Most film industries have had televisions as their final exhibition points. In Ghana, the practice became popular with the advent of video movie production. At first, it was the nation broadcaster- Ghana Television (GTV) which held the monopoly of showing movies because it was the only television station. However, with the liberalization of the media landscape, other television stations begun showing video movies as an integral part of their programming. The premier private television station was Metro Television which was partly owned by GTV. When
Metro Television was established, they had major difficulties in broadcasting the few local movies that video producers had available. Informants suggest that the network suffered a vacuum with local films because many of the local producers had signed long term contracts with GTV which prevented them from distributing their films to other media outlets. To survive therefore, Metro begun acquiring and showcasing Nigerian videos. As the only alternative to GTV, Metro commanded a respectable viewership and so their programming activities further contributed to the Nigerian film dominance in the late 90’s to the early 2000’s.

When the Kumasi video movement begun, one avenue for curbing the Nigerian influx was to also distribute to television stations. Earlier Akan filmmakers sometimes granted free rights to television stations to show their movies since they believed that was a sure way of promoting their Akan movie contents. Currently, the relationship between Akan video movies industry and television stations is almost a symbiotic one. Most television stations augment their programing structure with movies produce by Akan producers. Adom TV for instance professes to broadcast only local contents by relying heavily on Akan language videos. Established in 2009, Adom as at 2015, showcased an average of 20 Akan movie tittles a week. These tittles came mostly in an average of a 3 parts or segments. The television stations acquire these films through three main options. The first is an outright sale which ranges from 200 to 500 cedis per tittle. The second is a pure barter where producers give their old films out for airtime to play the advertisement of their new films. The duration of airtime is determined by the existing television rate cards. The other form of barter is a system whereby a number of movie titles are given to tv stations and in return, the producer gains airtime not to just advertise films but to screen longer pieces like television drama series. Whereas television stations such as Adom can pay up to 500 cedis per segment of a tittle, other networks, pay the same for a complete tittle which may be an average of (4) four parts.
Thus, many complain of an unfair trade with the television stations enjoying the upper hand. The barter system nonetheless appears the most popular with most television stations. The selection of film titles to acquire by most television networks is based more on content than technical quality. This is because most believe that their audiences prefer to watch stories that have relevance to their personal lives and thus may not concern themselves so much with film technicalities and conventional structures. Nevertheless, to ensure that every story shown on their network fits into their organizational mission, the networks may edit out extremely violent scenes, explicit sex scenes and any actions that may be considered alien to the psyche of their target audiences. Generally, free to air television has become the most popular means of Akan film distribution (Fig. 4.5).

Figure 4.5 Medium for watching Akan films
4.9.2: Other Exhibition Avenues

Apart from free to air television stations that broadcast films, the internet was identified as a major means for Akan video distribution and exhibition. Audiences access most Akan films through the internet platform called YouTube. Others include mobile applications such as Kumawood App and the 2C TV. The Kumawood App provides access to a wide range of Akan videos ranging from daily to monthly subscriptions that can be paid using mobile phone credits. The application also hosts several English language videos all classified under Kumawood movies. The 2C TV also works on the mobile phone and has similar payment structure for accessing films and other television programs.

Other means of exhibiting Kumasi movies include screenings on public transportation services. Screening of Akan movies on buses like VIP and OA involved in long distance travel is a major means of exhibiting films. Some domestic passenger buses also screen Akan videos to travelers. The practice is so pervasive that producers begun demanding compensation from bus owners for screening their films. It was observed that passengers become natural audiences and some run commentaries about the drama unfolding and form bonds with total strangers as they enjoy the films.

In recent times, some Akan filmmakers have begun exploring the concept of conventional exhibition practices. Some organize premiers in hotel auditoriums and town halls around the country. The films are screened a couple of times on that night amidst red carpet activities which sometimes have stars in attendance.

4.10: Audiences

A total of three hundred (300) audience members were surveyed purposefully. They were surveyed based on their admission that they watch movies. This number consisted of men and
women from sixteen years and above. Audiences between the ages of (30-34) and (40-above) constituted the highest number of Akan film patrons which represents seventy percent of the total. The lowest age group of audiences were between the ages of (16-19) year group. Sixty percent of audiences who watch Akan films were women. Ninety percent watch Akan films out of the four to five films they watch per week.

4.11: Technological Threat to Akan Video Industry

Although technological advancements in video cinema contributed to the rise of the Akan movie industry in the early 2000s, in recent times however, similar technological changes have contributed to a decline in the industry’s prospects. In the year 2006, Ghana together with a host of other nations around the world, met at the International Telecommunication Conference in Geneva and resolved to broadcast television signals via the terrestrial broadcasting service in the frequency bands of 174-230 MHz1 and 470-862 MHz (International Telecommunication Union 2006). The implication was that all signatory nations were to migrate from analogue to digital broadcasting. Although the nation Ghana committed itself to an immediate migration, it was not until 2015 that the nation saw considerable signs of system migration. The move to digital broadcasting diversified the media airspace. Currently, there are over twenty (20) free to air television and seven (7) pay per view Television stations in the country as at 2014 (Apenteng 2014). Unlike the analogue transmission however, this new system called for the acquisition of digital boxes to access signals. Although this media pluralization increased access to information and varied voices into the media landscape. It has nonetheless affected film production and Akan video producers are not excluded.

Potential audiences for Akan movies all acquired digital boxes which eventually gave them access to a wide variety of programing. In smaller cities and villages especially, where
producers claim have the largest patrons for their movies, suddenly had an alternative to Akan films. Most of the television programs were also in Akan language. Again, smaller communities had other challenges in combining the usage of their old vcd/dvd playback machines and the digital boxes. Most patrons in smaller towns and villages had limited power outlets so it became difficult for them to use both machines.

Although the FIPAG predicted this development and attempted to get importers of the boxes to incorporate a slot for playing CD’s in the digital box, it was unsuccessful as government suppliers had already placed orders. Additionally, some filmmakers extended rights to their old films for television broadcasting on the digital channels so patrons were not missing much.

Another factor that has affected the Akan language video industry is the 2013-2015 national energy crises that affected Ghana resulting in power rationing which was locally dubbed ‘Dumso’- literally translated as ‘off-on’. Ghanaian movie producers like many other business operators who rely on energy supply were affected negatively by the erratic power supply. Akan movie producers identify this infamous occurrence as a major contributing factor to the decline in Akan film patronage and filmmaking in Ghana at large. Some retailers lamented the effect of the power situation by citing how audiences queried why they should buy films every week when they did not have power to watch it. The devastating effect prompted film stars, musicians and other media practitioners led by Yvonne Nelson a leading actress in the English film production industry to organize a vigil in protest of the power situation in May 2015.

The factors threatening the industry’s progress are indeed convoluted in the sense that, by the time the power situation was stabilized, producers had lost most of their patrons. Many television stations had found ingenious ways to attract patrons. Adom TV took the lead in dubbing imported Indian Telenovela series into Akan language which was telecasted and repeated severally
on television. Patrons had the chance to watch some entertainment in local language even with the unstable power situation. Currently, popular Indian Telenovela series named *Kukumbagya, Veera* are a popular cultural phenomenon and has attracted a local name coining, ‘Twinovella’.

Contrary to earlier telenovela formats, which had English subtitles, these Telenovelas are dubbed into the Twi-Akan language. The series has attracted scores of audiences across Ghana’s class systems. *Kukumbagya* telenovela in particular command a wide popularity which motivated the a local chief from Assin Asaaman in the Central Region to present a cow as gift to the staff and management of Adom TV “for being innovative and presenting to viewers the telenovela which is dubbed in Twi language” [https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2016/January-20th/photos-chief-dashes-cow-to-adom-tv-for-showing-kumkum-bahgya.php](https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2016/January-20th/photos-chief-dashes-cow-to-adom-tv-for-showing-kumkum-bahgya.php).

Dubbing of these telenovelas into Akan language is a pervasive practice amongst the over 20 television stations that are free when utilizing the digital boxes. Television station compete for viewership by attracting them with varied programs dubbed into local languages – predominantly Akan.

Although this is working out well for television stations profit margins, many producers and key players in the cinema industry have argued that it has some detrimental effects on their industry and are advocating for regulations that will curb the practice. However, with no strict broadcast laws in operation, the domination of foreign content on Ghanaian screens is yet to see its end. In 2014, a revised Broadcast Bill was developed, seeking to regulate commercial television stations. In the proposed bill, commercial broadcasters will be expected to set a considerable aggregate of airtime to promote the “culture and aspirations of the people of the area covered by the service and have significant amounts of local content” (Apenteng 2014:6).
Key Producer Association (FIPAG) has therefore advocated for a broadcast percentage of 70/30 in favor of indigenous/local content. This drive has included a petition delivered to the Asantehene (the King of Asante) to join in their advocacy to get government to institute this recommended Broadcasting Bill within the shortest possible time. The above difficulties, amidst pirates who copy and sell many Akan videos on pen drives without producers’ approval, have resulted in a considerable decline in the industry, and its activities and many producers and distributors have ventured into other businesses such as mobile phone import and sales as a commercial survival strategy.

4.12: Other Collectives of the industry.

Akan films often come together under a film festival named Kumawood-Akoben Film Festival (KAFF). The festival recognizes video makers in the Akan film industry. KAFF begun after it was clear that Akan filmmakers were sidelined by film awards that concentrated on English language movies (Adjei 2014).

Whereas some filmmakers find the ‘Kumawood’ name preposterous because of its seeming imitation of foreign industries such as Hollywood, others are excited to be associated with that noun and made references to it during interviews. This type of imitation is reminiscent of the ‘mimicry’ (Bhabha 1984) which reminds the colonized about its elusive yet effective potential to exhibit colonial power and knowledge long after colonialism. One respondent rhetorically questioned why their awards and industry name be modelled around Hollywood anyway?

Overall, Akan movies appear to border on issues arising from key aspects of post-colonial studies which advocate for a rejection of colonial values and structures in the independent state. This is captured in the words of Fanon that; “The Third World ought not to be content to define itself in the terms of values which have preceded it. On the contrary, the underdeveloped countries
ought to do their utmost to find their own values and methods and a style which shall be peculiar to them” (Fanon 1963:98).

By advocating this point of view, Fanon, and in extension, Third Cinema (Getino & Solanas 1969) proponents called for the rejection of western cultural concepts that attempt to filter the once-colonized cognition, thoughts, practices and philosophies while calling for a post-modern society which engages itself in the deconstruction, reinterpretation and rebuilding of its socio-cultural identities. This argument can be comfortably stretched to include the cultural production of cinema since the medium is a direct remnant of colonization.

Regardless of Fanon’s prescriptions, it is important noting that African countries are not exempt from social change and dynamism that social groups undergo universally. As such, although indigenous filmmaking begun with the belief that English is the bona-fide language for making films in Ghana, it took the efforts of current Akan video producers and their predecessors to change the status-quo by employing Akan language as against using English as film language.
CHAPTER FIVE

CINEMA HERITAGE DYNAMICS IN GHANA

5.1: Introduction

This chapter attempts to navigate the political underpinnings that have dictated changes and continuities in production, postproduction, exhibition and preservation of films from the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU) to the Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) era. It also emphasizes the roadmap from dependence of Ghana on UK laboratories to proposals for digitization that promise to make preserved films more accessible. Lastly, this chapter highlights attempts at preserving Akan films both on the national level, and the individual levels.

Cinema heritage is identified as a major component of the cultural heritage of nations around the world. The importance and relationship between audio visual /cinema archives and heritage is reiterated at the first celebration of the United Nations Year of Cultural Heritage in 2002. At the event, UNESCO produced a list of cultural heritage to be recognized, protected and safeguarded by member states. UNESCO’s list presents the variety and categories of things to “which people attribute heritage value” (Harrison 2010:12). These were grouped under tangibles and intangibles for the official consideration as significant cultural heritage ensemble. The list includes cinematographic heritage (movies and the ideas they convey) (UNESCO, n.d.). I highlight on cinematographic heritage because that specifically conveys the ideas surrounding the recognition and protection of cinema in member states and its ramifications.

Cinematographic heritage obviously made it on the list because audio-visuals such as cinema possess the ability to capture and preserve collective memories and histories that dwell heavily on the identity of the collective group of people. Many countries around the world thus
invest in cinema and other audio-visual preservation, archiving and safeguarding. These practices have been further recognized by UNESCO and the 27th day of October has been set aside for a yearly celebration to create awareness on audio-visual materials of member states at a general assembly Conference in 1980. UNESCO indicates that audio visuals are currently endangered, a critical aspect of humanity’s common history and as such, must be preserved and safeguarded for present and future generations [http://www.un.org/en/events/audiovisualday/](http://www.un.org/en/events/audiovisualday/).

The celebration has since become a yearly affair and many countries use the occasion to create awareness of their audio-visual heritage while taking stock of what is preserved and what could be preserved. Although Ghana is a signatory to this resolution, not much attention is given to the annual celebration in the country despite the large collection of film materials held and preserved at the Bonded Services of UK, and with the British Film Institute. It appears that in the absence of a centralized film institution, the onus may lie with the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) which has in its establishing decree, the mandate to secure and protect any materials of “historical, artistic” interests (Harlley 1969:11), or any of the other governmental agencies such as the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

This section presents films that Ghana has preserved as its cinema heritage and how Akan video movies connect with this process. The information presented was collected from pioneers of Ghana’s cinema industry such as Chris Hesse and Ernest Abekwei as well as Akan filmmakers, UNESCO, GMMB officials, and survey responses from audience members.

5.2 Preservation of Films in the Gold Coast

Attempts at safeguarding Ghana’s cinema heritage has been focused on mainly its historical films. At Ghana’s independence, the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU) bequeathed to the newly independent state the general administration of the unit as well as film materials and film
titles produced since the establishment of the colonial unit. The films of the Gold Coast thus became the property of the reorganized Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC). Although the films’ key crew were British, the films’ materials could be considered as a shared heritage assets between Ghana and Britain (St. Juste 2011).

Whereas the cost of producing film was born by the colonies, the production units continued to have connections with film laboratories in the UK where post production work was done. None of the units set up in the colonies was equipped with its own laboratory. UK laboratories such as Victor M. Gover & Co. Limited which metamorphosed into the Overseas Film and Television Centre offered laboratory services to units established in the colonies (St. Juste 2011:268). The Gold Cost Film Unit also utilized British Laboratories for all their post-production work. The reasons for this arrangement was not merely because the GCFU had no editing facilities, but because, the celluloid film was a delicate material that required very low temperatures after exposing the negatives. The processing of celluloid film required a coolant technology to maintain very low temperatures at approximately sub-zero degrees celsius. Moreover, engaging British laboratories was imperative for both exposing and storage of celluloid materials. Chris Hesse explains that this dependence on foreign laboratories continued even after Ghana’s independence.

Although independence had been achieved, this dependency on Britain in relation to cinema post production continued and the reliant relationship between the GFIC and major film laboratories in the UK soon became a symbiotic one. The laboratories competed for jobs from oversees and depended on countries such as Ghana and other newly independent states for financial survival. Specifically, the Rank laboratory was the leader in this commerce where Ghana was concerned. After films were shot on celluloid in Ghana, they were airlifted to Britain where a Rank Laboratory representative waited each week at the airport to take stock of materials arriving into
the UK with promises to complete laboratory work within the shortest duration. Early independent film productions for most African countries were rather focused on nationally conscious films made using celluloid technology (Murphy 2000). These independent producers also utilised similar channels for completing their post-production works.

5.3: Films of the GFIC

In the early years of the GFIC, indigenous films were shot on 16mm and 35mm celluloid materials. Whereas 16mm was mostly used for news coverage and smaller projects, the 35mm was used for bigger projects such as documentaries that formed the major part of the organization’s filming projects. Ghana’s first president Kwame Nkrumah’s commitment to establishing and maintaining a production and exhibition network that could ensure that the Ghanaian, and to a large extent, the African personality was reflected in all cinema products influenced much of the film productions. Nkrumah’s rational for getting involved and re-organizing the Film Industry was not only to make it an important part of Ghana’s economy but also to allow the black person, the opportunity to tell his or her own stories (Nkrumah 1957). He requested for a personal cinematographer whose duties were to film all activities he undertook as the president. All Ministries, Departments and Agencies under the government of Ghana were encouraged to include plans for documentary films showcasing the activities and progress of the organization in their annual budgets. In response, the GFIC produced several documentary pieces that showcased the developmental status of governmental agencies. A practice that is rooted in the GCFU’s organizational structure.

These films were broadcast by Ghana Television and exhibited in cinema houses. Although the Nkrumah vision for the GFIC was to dismantle and invent differently from colonialism, the administrative structures that outlined their activities were rooted in colonial framings.
Nevertheless, to ensure the thriving indigenous participation in the film industry, the government of Nkrumah selected personnel from the GFIC for further training. This action was necessary because, although the Gold Coast Film Unit was composed of a significant number of Ghanaians, these people were not in key positions.

Cinema was an integral part of the first republic of Ghana. In May, 1963 a film crew accompanied Nkrumah and other members of his government to film the inaugural meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The result was a documentary film titled *Africa Reborn* which chronicles not only the speeches delivered by the various Heads of State, but also a showcase of other interviews presenting the diverse perspectives on why Africa must unite. The following year, *Towards a United Africa*, a film about the organization’s second summit in Cairo was cinematically documented. In a related disposition, Chris Hesse filmed the Congo crises upon Nkrumah’s request. The film, *Operation Congo*, captured some of the worst atrocities that culminated in the murder of Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Otiko, and Maurice Mpolo (Heymann 2009). Other productions are *Ablode*, a documentary about the independence celebrations of the Togolese people and *Uhuru*, a documentary coverage on Kenya’s independence. A film on the Malawian independence is cited on the list of films produced by the GFIC. Other documentaries on state visits were made and dubbed; *Nkrumah’s Indian Visit, Journey to Bamako*, and many others. *The Sahara Unites Us*, produced in 1958, is a documentary that focused on Nkrumah’s state visits to the seven independent African states of Ethiopia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia and Liberia. The undergirding principle behind the production of these documentaries was the solidarity messages embedded within them in support of the Pan Africanist and African Unity visions of Nkrumah. Other documentaries were *Ghana, Freedom for Ghana*, and *Republic*, all of which represents the nature, form and activities that epitomized
the independence celebrations of Ghana across the entire country.

Clearly, the GFIC’s early productions were rooted in postcolonial ideologies of the Third Cinema (Getino & Solanas 1969). The documentary film genre as knowledge construction became a tool for reversing the colonial gaze and power. Perhaps, only one fictional film was produced by the GFIC aside the many documentary films. *Tongo Hamle*, was a local adaptation of William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* which was set in the Upper East village of Tongo within its natural environment to showcase the Ghanaian rendition of the famous play. Directed by Terry Bishop, the film debuted the careers of local acting pioneers such as Kofi Middleton Mends, Martin Owusu, and Earnest Abekwei. Table 5.1 shows other titles of films produced by the GFIC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE OF FILM</th>
<th>YEAR OF PRODUCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom for Ghana</td>
<td>(1957)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>(1957)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sahara Unites Us</td>
<td>(1958)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkrumah’s Tour of Eastern Countries</td>
<td>(1961)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkrumah’s Tour of India</td>
<td>(1961)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>(1960)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice of Peace</td>
<td>(1960)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwame Nkrumah Gold Cup (No date)</td>
<td>(NO DATE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founders Day</td>
<td>(1964)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards a United Africa</td>
<td>(1964)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tema Harbour City</td>
<td>(1962)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa Cup</td>
<td>(1963)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddenly Freedom</td>
<td>(1966)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 5. List of other films made by the GFIC Source; (GFIC Films We Have Produced) GFIC Film Library (1974)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghana International Trade Fair</td>
<td>(1967)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panoply of Ghana</td>
<td>(1970)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regardless of their independence undertones, most of the Nkrumah engineered films were exposed in UK laboratories until a laboratory was set up towards the end of Nkrumah’s reign in 1966. The laboratory was established along with new cameras, lights and sound studios. The equipment revamp was described as “the most sophisticated infrastructure for film production in Africa” (Diawara 1992:6) capable of producing over a dozen feature films a year (Viera 1975). To complete the chain of production, Nkrumah acquired additional exhibition centers and cinema houses which were owned by private Lebanese and Indian Merchants and annexed them to the GFIC to ensure that government had maximum control over every step of the production to exhibition of cinema in the newly independent state.

5.4: Towards A New Filmic Tradition

While producing pan-Africanist oriented films, the GFIC did not totally cut its relationship with UK laboratories, as it worked with British laboratories to produce colour celluloid films. Whereas news and other magazine programs were continually filmed on black and white, documentaries and special events were filmed on colour celluloid formats. The GFIC formed a relationship with the Rank laboratory to provide post-production and storage services particularly for colour celluloid film production.

The relationship between the GFIC and the Rank Laboratory are explained as follows; once the laboratory received the exposed celluloid material from Ghana, the negative was developed, and positives were printed. The laboratory also run an analysis of the light exposure
and enclosed this in a report that accompanied the positive celluloid materials returned to Ghana. Ghanaian editors then used editing machined or benches such as the Steinberg to edit. The editing was a process of virtually cutting and joining the celluloid material in order to rearrange the film into the desired story. The sound and effects that was recorded separately was also arranged alongside the story. The completed edit, including specific instruction is send back to the UK laboratory where the audio and visuals are mechanically synchronized into a “married” print. It is after this synchronization that the film is returned to Ghana as a completed product for exhibition. This back and forth, Hesse explained took approximately a week for films on news report to be completed and approximately, a month for post-production work to be completed on narrative films. Sometimes, officials from the GFIC accompanied the film travels making the process quite a capital-intensive venture. Nevertheless, the gains of the end product were viewed to outweigh the monetary value.

The complex route to cinematic independence was interrupted after Nkrumah’s overthrow in a military coup’detat in 1966. The National Liberation Council (NLC) military government that took over from Nkrumah’s government viewed the GFIC and its activities as pro-Nkrumah. The leadership of the NLC saw many of the GFIC films as promoting Nkrumah’s ideals and thus ordered their destruction. In addition, the GFIC and other cultural organizations were starved financially making it difficult for them to purchase film materials and to fund productions.

Regardless, the most significant production made during the periods of military interventions in Ghana’s political history between 1966 and 1972 is, I Told You So (1970), directed by Egbert Adjesu with cinematographic work by Chris Hesse. Although colour filmmaking at this stage was a well-advanced format, this film was made on black and white celluloid because the GFIC could not afford to film in colour anymore. The melodramatic/ comic love tale highlights
the conflicts between a post-independent Ghanaian family surrounding money, greed, deceit and ostensibly the choice of parents over who their daughter should marry.

The GFIC continued to produce mostly documentaries and very few fictional films. Apart from *I Told You So*, the unit made *Genesis Chapter X* and *Contact* which was a co-production with a foreign company. Most notable documentary during this period included film titles such as *Solidarity in Struggle, Ghana Our Mother land, Ghana Reborn* as well as several newsreels and coverages that centered on the most important schedules of the different heads of state.

Distribution channels included the Ghana Television (GTV) of the Ghana Broadcasting (GBC), cinema houses and Ghana’s Information Services Department which operated in towns and villages through the government owned cinema vans. Copies of these films were preserved in airconditioned rooms to prevent molds at the audio-visual archives of the GFIC and at GBC whiles the negatives were left in the possession of the Rank Laboratory in the UK for preservation. Rank kept the negatives under a suitable condition of subzero degrees. The cost of preserving the negatives was charged to the government of Ghana and the GFIC was committed to settle it on yearly basis.

5.4.1: Sale of the GFIC and the effect on Ghana’s audio-visual heritage

In the late 1990s, as Ghana struggled through structural adjustment programmes imposed on it by the International Monetary Fund, many institutions that were perceived as commercially unviable including the GFIC were either dissolved or divestified. Interviews revealed that a few months before the GFIC was divestified, the organization had taken stock of professional standard video filming equipment including BETACAM professional filming series which was to boost the corporation’s production output and offer rental services to private video producers. Regardless, the company was divested under an agreement of a 30/70 percentage in favour of a Malaysian
Company- System Televisen Malaysia Berhard. The new company became GAMA Media Systems Ltd and consisted of two divisions, TV3 and Ghana-Malaysia Film Company (GAMA). The underlining expectation of this re-investment was to revamp the GFIC in terms of celluloid filmmaking which was the professional standards for filming then.

The Malaysian leadership seemed, however to be more interested in television business than filmmaking and so concentrated its attention and resources on the development of TV3 which soon became the first independent television station in Ghana (Garritano 2013:26). With time, the TV3’s business became viable as it was the only alternative to the nation’s broadcaster, GTV and Metro Tv which was partly owned by GTV. As TV3 begun its operations using the video format, its celluloid equipment inherited from the GFIC became obsolete.

Some equipment were destroyed while others such as cameras and other gadgets that video technology could not utilize were auctioned or trashed. The GFIC’s cold rooms that had served as storage and cinema archive were refurbished for television purposes and several film materials encompassing remnants of the film corporation were destroyed in the process. In 2002, Meyer photographed a heap of celluloid cans and reels dumped on the parking lot of the organization to signify the height of the effect of the diversification on the audio-visual archival heritage of Ghana (Fig. 5.1). In sum, the new management that took over the operation of GFIC had no recourse to the historical antecedents of cinema development in Ghana. They only wanted to operate a television station, and this marked the end of celluloid film production in Ghana (Meyer 2015). Some celluloid versions of important films were however projected and filmed onto video before the destruction (Fig. 5.1). An example of the salvaged films is, I Told You So which was salvaged
through the projection of the celluloid copy while a video camera was used to record from the screen through independent initiatives by some workers within the organisation. Aside these initial losses, the negative celluloid materials and some positive copies of film materials belonging to Ghana held at the Rank Laboratory were also at risk. The new company, GAMA /TV3 and the Ghanaian government failed to pay the yearly rent for the celluloid materials held with the Rank
Laboratory. Thus, in the year 2002, the UK company, according to Chris Hesse, loaded a truck full of celluloid materials (both negatives and positives) and without warning, dumped them on the premises of the Ghana High Commission in London. The films were at the mercy of the elements and risked being destroyed. Their new storage became the High Commission’s basement which was not equipped to keep celluloid. Officials of the Ghana High Commission and other film professionals like Chris Hesse eventually contacted a new laboratory to salvage the materials from destruction.

5.5 Salvaging Ghana’s audio-visual materials

An agreement was signed between Ghana government (through the High Commission) and the Bonded Services of UK in 2005. The terms of the agreement required that the Bonded Services would secure all the materials kept at the Ghana High Commission, chemically clean moldy films, restore images, re-can those that were not canned and properly store for the purposes of safeguarding and preservation under favorable conditions for celluloid materials.

In recent years, the discourse on the heritage potential of cinema archives has been on the ascendancy (Grieveson & Colin 2011; Grieveson & MacCabe 2011). Since the institution of the 27th October World Audio Visuals Day, there has been calls for awareness creation of audio-visual holdings of members countries through creating access for current and future generations (Harrison, 2010) and (St.Juste 2011). A key action towards this drive was a 2011 British Film Institute (BFI) project that assembled a team of film historians and scholars to study the use of cinema within colonialism (Grieveson & Colin 2011) and the legacy of British colonial past represented through film (Grieveson & MacCabe 2011). Gilroy (2011) posits that the film materials in the Colonial film project grants the opportunity for “re-engaging with the past”(Gilroy 2011:4). This reengagement with the past through film, undoubtedly is a post-colonial prescription
and re-affirmation of the need to discuss shared colonial cinema heritage for the purpose of preservation and creating access to the materials which in a lot of cases, can be considered as collective ownership between the British and its former colonies. According to the project website the reason for establishing the platform was; “to allow both colonizers and the colonized to understand better the truths of Empire” http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/

The platform reminds of cinema’s unique ability in capturing the collective memories of societies around the world. Ultimately, the project developed a website where details of film materials in their holding are displayed for the information of anybody who shares the collective heritage with the films. A click on http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/ will expose researchers and enthusiasts to the over sixty thousand (6000) film titles with one hundred and fifty (150) available for viewing. Out of this, three hundred and fifty (350) films contain detailed writeups and meta data on films produced by colonial organizations, including the GCFU. The highlight of the films from the Gold Coast consists of titles such as Amenu’s Child, Progress in Kojokrom, Mr. Mensah Builds a House, and The Boy Kumasenu, which is considered the first feature fictional Film in the Gold Coast. Others include films on the general lifeways and culture of people in the Gold Coast. Whereas there is data on many of the titles, only seven (7) titles out of the seventy three (73) titles that cover the Gold Coast are available online for viewing. Inspite of this intervention, not all BFI films materials are available online, thus making it difficult for researchers and history enthusiasts to fully access the materials. Indeed, researchers interested in the full extent of the archives are requested to pay subscription fees despite the shared heritage status of the films.

The project has moreover had its own share of criticisms regarding ownership and rights to the materials. St.Juste (2011) for instance has argued that images filmed about Jamaica and its people should be repatriated. He centers his call on the argument that Jamaica as a colony paid for
the films so they indeed belong in Jamaica and not the British Film Institute or any other shared
ownership (St.Juste 2011). Like Jamaica, the Gold Coast was responsible for the funding of all
films made by the GCFU and perhaps should be requesting repatriation or at least joint access to
the materials by its citizens and researchers since few films inherited from the GCFU are currently
present with the Ghana holdings with the Bonded Services of UK.

5.5.1: Digitization

With issues arising on the luck of easy access for historical audio-visual materials and with
Bonded Services charging an approximate yearly fee of six thousand, six hundred and three pounds
(£6,603), it became imperative that some new measures be taken to safeguard and grant Ghanaians
access to the materials with Bonded Services. The decision and negotiation for a digitization action
to be taken has been ongoing for close to fifteen (15) years. The proposal for digitization submitted
to the Ghana government through the Ghana High Commission estimates the number of celluloid
film assets at the Bonded Services care at thousand three hundred and ninety two (1392) and
approximately forty five (45) VHS tapes (Shakespeare 2016). These encompass cinema materials
from Ghana’s pre, and independent periods. The inclusion of VHS tapes goes to suggest that at a
point, the UK lab must have been utilized not only as a laboratory, but also for simple storage as
VHS tapes did not require the same degree of temperatures for preservation. The deliverables of
the digitization projects proposed four formats for storing the digitized materials.

The proposed medium for the digitized films includes the use of Linear Tape Open Six
(LT06) tapes, a file server, the cloud, and the use of portable hard drives. Out of these
recommended digitized formats, the cloud-based viewing platform may end up being the most
accessible format. Although the other formats may augment the cloud server, it runs into the
problem of limited accessibility. But as heritage, it should be easily accessible to anyone who claim
that identity (Hewison 1987). The tape formats have a caveat that requires that materials are migrated to a superior format every five (5) years. Failure to adhere to these may have a devastating effect on the quality and eventually, access to the content as technological changes are inevitable. Although the Ghana government is yet to grant approval for the process to commence, the interest already exhibited with the visit of the Ghanaian High Commissioner to the Bonded Services laboratory in 2017 to ascertain the status of the archives, is suggestive that the project may be undertaken.

5.5.2: Preservation and Safeguard of Video Films

Whereas the celluloid film materials belonging to Ghana are attracting such heritage strategies, the same cannot be said for video movies produced since the 1980’s when the technology was adopted for filmmaking. Storage and preservative actions of current Akan videos are done at the individual level. Many producers have lost some of their films and some cannot account for the number of films they have produced. My search for Sika SunSum and Kanana (the first Akan video film) for instance was a difficult task. I was fortunate to find a vcd copy in the markets. The poor quality and the packaging suggested that it was a pirated copy probably sold without the owners’ knowledge.

The advent of digital filmmaking however has made it easier for producers to keep and preserve copies of their films. Most Akan filmmakers who participated in this study use hard drives and keep transferring the drive contents every other year. Some filmmakers also revealed that they have their films stored on the cloud (an internet-based storage system). Many of the films are also uploaded on the internet through the YouTube channel. This platform allows both storage and easy access as the YouTube is ranked highest in video searches. Perhaps, apart from the films stored on the digital cloud, those stored on hard drives are at risk unless they are constantly played and / or
transferred onto other drives since hard drive storage is considered quite transient (Klein 2013). Another platform primarily meant for distributing Akan video has become a way of preserving videos also. In partnership with a telecommunication company in Ghana named MTN, the Kumawood Mobile App, was established with Kumawood Media, as a digital umbrella to provide access to movie lovers in the digital age via mobile phones and as an exhibition platform for filmmakers. Fig. 5.2 and 5.3 show the Kumawood Application and also a gift voucher that allows patrons to view films on the application.

![Figure 5.2 Kumawood mobile App movies voucher](image)

![Figure 5.3 Kumawood Mobile App platform](image)

The only national action aimed at recognizing Akan videos as heritage can be identified in a recent decision by the Ghana’s Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture to establish a mobile content to promote Akan films known as The Agya Koo Tv which will focus on films that have Agya Koo character featured in them. The sector minister who launched the initiative said “Agya

Although there have been criticisms of government’s decision to single out this personality from various quarters of the entertainment and cultural industry, the role of Agya Koo whose real name- Kofi Adu Mensah as a celebrated actor who is believed to have revolutionized the Akan film industry through his mastery of the Akan language and comic acts may have influenced the ministry’s decision. Beyond this however, Agya Koo was an active political activist for the NPP government on its journey to political power. In essence, the politics of heritage observed by Peterson et al. (2015) seem to be at play here as what is selected and regarded as official heritage is not only controlled by power relations, but also strongly tied to politics dictated by the government of the day. Only time will tell how these top down heritage dynamics pun out in a new political dispensation.

At the individual audience level, however, persons surveyed revealed that they keep the Akan video compact disks and take pride in recommending the films to others to watch. They keep the video cd’s because the contents almost always contain important aspects of their Akan culture. At an observation session on a bus plying Kantamanto market to Pokuase a suburb in Ghana’s capital, passengers numbering fifteen (15) on the bus were turned into audience members as they watched the film, *Woye Kwa*. The film stared Lil Win as a deported immigrant Ghanaian from the United States. Back in his village, he displays his eccentric behavior underscored with foreign (American influences) which creates comic situations. He navigates the convoluted stories between his extended family which included his brother whose wife leaves him because he is poor,
and his sister whose husband’s riches makes her the family’s breadwinner. The passengers immediately became active audience members as soon as the driver slotted in the video compact disk. On the 2-hour journey, members were observed giving commentary and discussing the actions on the screen. Upon interview, I found out that one passenger had watched the film earlier and wanted to share with other riders on the bus. She acquired the video cd and arranged with the driver to screen it on her next trip. She continued that it was a regular habit for her to buy and watch films and subsequently attempt to enjoy with other travelers because the films provide her with real life lessons as well as her main entertainment because she leaves home early and returns late, so the bus screenings make up for her home viewing. She revealed that she owned many video cd’s of her favorite films at home.

Nevertheless, with the ever-changing dynamic nature of technology that threatens to lock most of these videos from accessibility, it remains to be seen what many of these patrons will do with the quantum of video cd’s they have acquired once the technology for playback becomes obsolete.
CHAPTER SIX
THE GCFU AND AKAN FILMS
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1: Introduction
This chapter discusses relationships that may be found between the films of the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU), the Ghana Films Industry Corporation (GFIC), and Akan film industry. I discuss deeper connections within similarities and variations between the films of the GCFU and Akan video industry.

The data presented on the social, political and economic impact of the GCFU are mostly from interviews with film history pioneers, some of who trained with the Accra Film School and worked with the GCFU. Also, details of Graham’s video interview which was cleaned and restored, as well as secondary data from books, journals and publications informed this chapter. Other data for this section was collected from the content of selected films from both the GCFU and Akan video industry. I begin this section with an exploration of the origin and history of GCFU, its crew and production modes, equipment, artistes, their narrative contents, languages used, and the distribution practices which characterized the work of GCFU in the Gold Coast. The rest of the chapter discusses similarities and differences within creative philosophy from the perspectives of selected films from both eras.

6.2: Origin and History of the GCFU
At a 1948 conference at the British Film Institute- London, colonial officers working on information dissemination in the various British colonies discussed the impact and prospects of cinema, education and development in the colonies under the theme; ‘The film in Colonial Development’ (Rice 2011:135). Participants included John Grierson who is considered the most influential British filmmaker of his time and often regarded as the ‘founding father of
Documentary Filmmaking’ (Rabiger 1998:3). During this conference, the celebrated filmmaker advocated for a decentralized film production dispensation where indigenous people could be incorporated to play other roles apart from just audiences. Prior to Grierson’s call, film production was the main responsibility of the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) headquartered in London and its roaming crew led by William Sellers. These films were solely from the colonial point of view and the only role indigenous people played was in front of the camera where they were presented with racist undertones. Sellers had devised and perfected a controversial style and format for making films for indigenous people and sought to standardize it as an African filming format. His films employed simple image sizes and utilised long takes. This stems from the philosophy expressed by Rudy Meyer that “blacks don’t understand film language… this means that if you show a guy going into a house, you have to show him coming out as well. If you cut from the house to a car on the highway, your audiences won’t know what the hell’s going on” (Burns 2000:1). Such beliefs made CFU films didactically simplistic in structure (Sandon et al. 2013).

A shift in crew participation was proposed by Grierson as a means of arriving at films that could address the unique needs of specific African colonies (Rice 2015). A move to make films produced in the colonies, independent from the top-bottom wholesale direction of the CFU also involved shifting of production funding to the specific colonial governments within the colonies. The implementation of this proposal begun with the establishment of film schools across the British Empire. The first was the Accra Film School established in 1948 to train indigenous people in the Gold Coast and Nigeria. The Accra Film School trained three Gold Coasters and three Nigerians in the techniques of filmmaking. This was followed by similar schools in Jamaica, in 1950, and Cyprus in 1951 (Rice 2011). Referred to as the ‘Africanization’ of cinema production in the colonies, the move was however not without controversies questioning its effectiveness. The
training program was criticized for its inability to incorporate African pedagogies and practices into the training. Rice (2011) highlights the institutional racial hegemony with respect to cinema in a West Indies school by contending that some students disapproved of the school’s inability to tailor the training to their cultural characteristics and the local audiences (Rice 2011). Moreover, the training was generalized without specificities. The unique needs and realities of different colonial trainees were not accounted for. In spite of these criticisms, the establishment of the schools can be viewed as an important aspect of the roadmap to indigenizing cinema in Africa during the colonial days.

By 1949, the other aspect of Grierson’s proposal, which rooted for local film production centered on indigenous participation was in full force (Rice 2011). The Gold Coast Film Unit was established and annexed to the Information Services Department (ISD) which was the main organization overseeing information dissemination and colonial education. Sean Graham who earlier worked and idolized John Grierson was appointed head of Unit as well as creative writer and director. The completion part of the indigenization process was the incorporation and admission of the first students trained by the Accra Film School as assistants to the three Europeans filmmakers.

The Unit’s work seemed to be spearheaded by Graham’s personal vision underscored by the ideology that “cinema should be used to change the world”(Sandon et al. 2013:535). Indeed, it was a personal wish for artistic freedom that drove Graham to make lengthier films, which were quite different from those made in other parts of the colonies. Rice suggests that Graham’s mode and structure of overseeing his unit measured to what Grierson prescribed as a “Genuine African Unit” (Rice 2011: 147). A critical examination of GCFU films however demonstrates that every film made was guided by the overall colonial agenda which was linked to the
hierarchical exercise where monitoring of activities took a top-down approach, from the centralized government in London, through the colonial government to the Information Services Department (ISD) which had direct supervision over the film unit.

6.3: Technical crew and modes of production

The technical crew of the GCFU consisted of a director with assistants, cinematographer with assistant cameramen, sound men with assistants, focus pullers, continuity people, gaffers and editors. The assistants were mostly indigenous people. For instance, Chris Hesse was an assistant cameraman within the GCFU. The unit provided job opportunities to Gold Coasters. The pioneer filmmakers interviewed revealed that GCFU paid relatively good salaries as compared to other professions at that time. A 1953 publication by the GCFU detailing the work of the Unit from 1949 to 1953 indicates that, the Unit employed about twenty (20) African staff, some of who had received further training through short apprenticeship in England (Gold Coast Film Unit 1953:2). Essentially, the number of Africans who worked in the unit were more than the Europeans. There were only three European crew members who had very little experience yet, controlled much of the filming affair (Sandon et al. 2013). Although the Africans served in subordinate positions, they nonetheless played significant roles such as, assisting with community entry, location search, and many other aspects of production essentials.

6.3.1: Production equipment and techniques of the GCFU

Films were produced using the celluloid film technology. The Newman Sinclairs camera was often used for filming (Sandon et al. 2013). The unit was equipped with a cutting room for editing and recording studios for post-synchronization. These became necessary and useful in the first few years of its operation when the unit adopted location sound and recorded dialogue as
against the use of commentary and narrations which was pervasive in colonial films structure. By the beginning of 1953, the GCFU had made over 25 films (Gold Coast Film Unit 1953).

The Gold Coast Film Unit operated with two teams; the first dealt with news and general coverage of events. The coverage of these events was a fundamental aspect of the Gold Coast activities which focused on the developmental aspects of the colony. The second part of the unit was the dominant of the two and mostly dealt with story-telling aspect of the Unit’s work, “keeping faithful to the flavor of the local idiom” (Gold Coast Film Unit 1953:2). Members of this team dealt with conceptualization, scripting and how to incorporate purely amateur local actors into film productions. This was a more elaborate unit than the first as it had more personnel and resources committed to it. The Unit could boast of cameras, crane, sound recorders, track, lights, and many standardized equipment used in conventional filmmaking (Gold Coast Film Unit 1953). The reason for the subdivision of the Unit was unique to the GCFU and can only be explained as Graham’s own way of ensuring that his personal artistic visions did not interfere with those of his employers (Sandon et al. 2013). GCFU filmmakers employed “loose scripting” scripts as blueprints for making films (Sandon 2013:504). Because of the language deficiency of the director, he used scripts with few details and allowed the actors to improvise. The result were films like Mr. Mensah Builds a House where actors spoke Twi and English. Most GCFU narrative films were filmed in Accra. A few were filmed in the outskirt of the capital. The film The Boy Kumasenu for instance had portions filmed in Keta in the Volta region.

6.3.2: Artiste

The group of artiste utilised in GCFU films were novices from varied backgrounds. Nortey Engmann the actor who played the character of Kumasenu in The Boy Kumasenu for instance was a school boy from Accra (Sandon 2013). He is believed to have been a student at the Achimota
school. Others such as Dr. Oko Ampofo and his wife were cast to play roles similar to their real lives in the film The Boy Kumasenu. They played the medical doctor and his wife who attempted to reform Kumasenu from his delinquent ways. Dr. Oko Ampofo, was a medical doctor in real life (Sandon 2013). Others like Frank Tamakloe, and Vanderpuye who played Mr. Mensah were cast from the GCFU crew itself. They worked as assistants in the GCFU crew pool.

6.3.3: Languages

An important development was the decision to utilize “vernacular languages and vernacular stories” (Gold Coast Film Unit 1954:2). GCFU films were made using a combination of English and local languages. The vernacular is referred to as “the language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people in a particular country or region” (Oxford dictionary). The use of the vernacular did not necessarily limit the film language to only local languages, but a combination of languages, reflective of the level of acculturation that persisted during colonialism. As such the film language used in GCFU films ranged from the use of indigenous languages such as Akan, Ga, Ewe, and English which was the official language of the Gold Coast. The belief was that films fundamentally meant for education were more effective in impacting people when they are in local dialects than those made solely in English language, translated or narrated. Graham believed in the idea of the European crew immersing themselves into the local communities and culture to achieve the best vernacular films that will appeal to the people. As such, he often criticized his colleagues who were unable to make friends with locals (Sandon et al. 2013). The first of these vernacular driven films was Amenu’s Child made in 1950 that advocated for change from traditional methods of feeding babies with mostly starchy foods to feeding them with a balanced diet that ensures their growth. Progress in Kojokrom, Mr. Mensah Builds a House and The Boy Kumasenu, were also made with local idioms and a combination of languages.
6.3.4: Narrative Content and Impact of GCFU Films

The films of the GCFU were intrinsically of propagandist value. The underlining essence of the films was ‘educational’ meant to shape the thinking and cognition of indigenes. The core purpose was a planned educational to ‘develop’ Gold Coasters (Smyth 1979). Rice (2011) arrived at a similar conclusion after he analyzed the bulk of the preserved films at the British film Institute. He contends that “colonial governments utilized film as a means of shaping, defining and controlling imperial subjects, disseminating government information to local audiences” (Rice 2011:136). In effect, most films were made based on the needs and demands of government agencies operating in the colonial set up. Films on the benefits of paying taxes, breast feeding, planning for retirement and other western European cultural values formed the bulk of the contents of films produced. The Boy Kumasenu for instance was made at the request of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development. The focus was to make a film to educate people on “juvenile delinquency” (Sandon 2013:504). GCFU films often had a postscript in the content where government officials appeared to at the end of the film to address audiences as a means of reiterating the core message of the film. It is important to note that this was a period before the pluralization of television so the only visual means of communicating to the Ghana people was through such films.

6.4: Distribution of GCFU films

Distribution of films in the country was done via the cinema van system. Notes from a colonial officer highlighting the process and impact of cinema van exhibition on the socio-cultural fabric of African societies revealed that;

“by evening, the people are summoned to some convenient place by the sound of music from the loud speakers. A special place of distinction has been arranged for the chief and
his elders. The children are carefully placed where the crowd will do them no harm and where they can see and hear all that is going on, and the rest of the audiences carefully placed so that they can see and hear with comfort” (Wilson 1944:112).

This revelation highlights the enthusiasm that generally greeted the officials who exhibited films around the country. The emphasis on children’s involvement in the viewing of film also suggests that the messages carried by colonial film targeted a cross-section of the people. Again, the control and domination within discipline is clearly observed here. The colonial officials and chief representatives took central siting positions within an arrangement which provided uninhibited surveillance where the crowd’s actions are observed similar to the power and control analogy Foucault describes (Foucault 1977).

Overall, the distribution impact of the films was two-fold. Because the films eschewed overdrawn narratives of the CFU, they were widely attractive and acceptable to the locals and at the same time, accomplished the bidding of the colonial government. *Progress in Kojokrom* was said to have been distributed through cinema vans to over 1.5 million people in the Gold Coast (Rice 2011). This was a significant part of the population as reports indicate that the population of the Gold Coast was just about 6.7 million as at 1960 (Ghana Census Office 1960). Also, the fact that there were not many cinema exhibition alternatives could have accounted for the popularity of GCFU films.

6.5: Relationships between Akan Videos and GCFU films

I have categorized films compared under the heading, *GCFU films* and *Akan video films*. This analysis is undertaken within the context of the ideology that culminates in the content of the films, the content, technology used, and distribution practices. First, I explain key terms and elements that will aid in the comparative analysis. **Story** is a dramatic summary of an event. The
sequence of incidents found in the movie, including the sentiments, motivations, and the personal involvement of the characters. **Plot** on the other hand is the catalyst that connect characters in the story. In other words, the plot is the way the story is presented on the screen. **Content** here, refers to the story narrative and the elements presented within the themes, language, story ideas and the mise-en-scene of the film story. **Theme** is the overarching idea that ties the whole story together. It is the “message of the movie, what it is really about” (Lucey 1996:57). Nonetheless, a film story can be made up of several themes that guide audiences to a proper appreciation of the ideology of the filmmaker. **Mise-en-scene** refers to all the elements placed in front of the camera to be photographed including “the setting, props, lighting, costumes, makeup and Fig. behaviors” (Bordwell & Thompson 2004:504).

**TABLE 6. 1 Selected Films for Comparative Analysis**

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<tr>
<th>GCFU FILMS</th>
<th>AKAN VIDEO FILMS</th>
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<tr>
<td>➢ <strong>THE BOY KUMASENU (1952)</strong></td>
<td>➢ <strong>KUMASI YONKUOR (2002)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ <strong>PROGRESS IN KOJOKROM (1953)</strong></td>
<td>➢ <strong>NTETIE PA</strong></td>
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<td>➢ <strong>MR. MENSAH BUILDS A HOUSE (1955)</strong></td>
<td>➢ <strong>ASOREBA</strong></td>
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<td>➢ <strong>FULANI LANDGUARD</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ <strong>GHANA GALAMSEY</strong></td>
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<td>➢ <strong>OKONFO ANAOKYE</strong></td>
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<td>➢ <strong>THE YAA ASANTEWAA WAR</strong></td>
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PROGRESS IN KOJOKROM (1953)

*Progress in Kojokrom* (1953) chronicles the cause and effect of societal deviance as demonstrated in the actions of Mr. Addo a community member of Kojokrom. After the successful election of local council members to oversee developmental activities in the village, Mr. Addo doubts the significance of the council and goes on a course to frustrate their activities. He refuses to pay taxes and when it became apparent that most community amenities were funded by the council, he kept away. He keeps his daughter away from the hospital and the community school because the local council funded it. Meanwhile, his wife Akweley’s daily travels to a stream for water appear to frustrate Addo even the more. Not even his council member friend Owusu could persuade him to pay his taxes until he suffered an embarrassing situation when he fell into a ditch in his attempt to rescue Akweley who was stranded because the bridge she commutes to the river had collapsed. Eventually, Addo is convinced that taxes could be used to provide portable water which could save his wife the time she treks daily for water.

MR. MENSAH BUILDS A HOUSE (1955)

*Mr. Mensah Builds a House* encompasses the socio-cultural nature of the country Ghana in 1955. Set in an urban city in Ghana, *Mr. Mensah Builds a House*, is a moral story that promoted rural housing projects. It taught morals about adequately preparing for retirement and the dangers of trusting others to secure a comfortable future. After retirement, Mr. Mensah is excited to return to his village to live in a house he has spent all his life savings to build through his trusted nephew. Mr. Mensah gets the biggest disappointment of his life when he goes home to nothing! His nephew tasked to oversee the construction had deceived him and squandered his money. The community, through a government assisted program, aided him to pick up the pieces, and rebuild his retirement home with his nephew’s punishment as working as a labourer for the construction.
THE BOY KUMASENU (1952)

A juvenile delinquency story that profiles the life and actions of a young village boy- Kumasenu who is lured to a big city with promises of a better life. He is subsequently confronted by all the dangers and conflicts of surviving in big cities where he constantly fights his conscience to be morally upright yet continually dragged into trouble though his association with Agbo, his childhood friend and greatest nemesis. Kumasenu is eventually rescued from the streets and molded into a good child when he catches the attention of a Medical Doctor and his family who take him in and assist him in training to get a trade. Viewed as the premier feature film made during colonialism, this film is often cited as a metaphor to the looming dangers anticipated by the independence of the Gold Coast.

KUMASI YONKUOR (2002)

In *Kumasi Yonkuor* (2002), we are introduced to the challenging dynamics of a group compound home typical of the Ashanti regional capital of Kumasi. The story rides on the experiences of four women, each navigating the hegemonic patriarchal world of an Akan shared homes. The main characters are Obaa Yaa and her partner Collins. The overarching purpose is backed by moral lessons, highlighting greed, deceit, women abuse and gender compartmentalization to emphasize the dangers of unguarded friendship and close alliances in Kumasi township.

ASORE BA

A film set in a Kumasi compound home situation where the behavior and character of a key church goer is critiqued heavily. Asabea is a Christian and a key member of her church. Per the tenets of her religion, she is expected to live an exemplary life where good neighborliness, forgiveness, giving and showing of love is expected. Asabea is however the opposite when she is outside the
church environment. Her cantankerous behavior and strained relationship with her neighbors is what drives the story.

**NTETIE PA**

This film dwells on the normative assumptions of hegemonic masculinity where a woman’s success is measured by her ability to please a man by being a home maker (cook, clean, care for children). Irene, the main character suffers the effect of opting to go contrary to these societal norms. She attracts the displeasure of her parents and all the men who approach her with intentions of marriage. Unlike her sister, who is regarded the perfect daughter, wife and daughter in-law because she is a conformist.

**GHANA GALAMSEY**

A film that chronicles the illicit business of alluvial gold mining that has been identified as a panacea to unimaginable environmental hazard such as destruction of water bodies and other living things in the ecosystem. The film tells the story of Opayin Peikinkran an elderly member of a small community whose indiscriminate sale of family and communal land for mining attracts the wrath of his family and the community at large as they are unable to obtain land for farming and their water bodies are all destroyed. The relationship between this behavior and how it contravenes Ghanaian laws is the overarching theme in the film.

**FULANI LANDGUARD**

A story that thrives on local and the foreign cultures translated within the dichotomy between tradition and modernity. After the death of a village chief, the elders are thorn between selecting a successor who is well versed in the traditions and culture of the community yet without any property and another candidate, who knew close to nothing about the community’s traditions and
culture but with lots of wealth. Some of the elders conspire and sacrifices their traditions for the rich successor. The result was a new chief, with total disrespect for the heritage of the community and sacrifices those aspects held closely by the community to outsiders to make more money. He begins a business in cattle rearing and engage in indiscriminate land sales. His castle business clashes with the communal spaces of the community such as their water bodies creating conflicts between the chief and the community members.

OKOMFO ANOKYE

An epic story that essentially explores the backstory that led to the rise of the Ashanti Kingdom. The film progresses on the different conflicts that led to the invitation of the Priest Okomfo Anokye by the Kumasi Chief, and the ensuing command of a Golden stool that significantly amalgamated all other towns and villages to submit and pledge allegiance to the Kumasi chief. Essentially the dramatic circumstances that turned the occupant of the golden stool into the overlord and king of Asante (Asantehene) is what is explored in the film.

YAA ASANTEWAA WAR

The significance of the legendary local hero Yaa Asantewaa to women of today is explored in this epic film which utilizes the indigenous storytelling style of Anansesem to unfold the story of the legendary queen whose bravery made a statement to colonial forces, when their king was arrested. A simple story-time activity between a granddaughter and her grandmother reveals a world of tradition, culture and indigenous lifeways through the life of Queen Yaa Asantewaa the legendary queen of Ejisu in the Ashanti Region.
6.5.1: Similarities in GCFU and Akan Films

6.5.1.1: Ideation.

The production and use of colonial films before the GCFU era demonstrate that cinema in the colonial days was the next most effective tool of European colonialism and imperialism in beyond militarism and slavery. This is demonstrated particularly in films produced by the CFU headquartered in London. It made films that essentially reemphasizing racial hierarchy which placed Africa at the very bottom. However, the GCFU successfully operated with a philosophy that incorporated vernacular languages and local stories into films to create a more appealing filmic practice in the Gold Coast. This deviation of GCFU from existing practices shares similarities with how early Akan filmmakers utilized folklore and Akan languages instead of English to establish a unique film style and identity in current times.

Regardless of how the GCFU deviated from earlier colonial films, there were still significant continuities from the CFU organisation that guided their activities. These were evidently present in the conceptualization of film stories. Ideation of stories in the Gold Coast during the era of the GCFU was centered on the demands and needs of the colonial government. These requests were accompanied by the funding for the film production. Indeed, agencies included in their annual budgets, cost of producing films because film was an active aspect in the effective running of colonial administration. As such, their films were mostly geared toward the larger colonial ideology which was fundamentally an effort to ‘develop’ the colonies. The film Progress in Kojokrom for instance was made at the request of the Local Government Department within the colonial governance setup.

In a rather passive way, the films of the Akan industry are also shaped by some national agendas. This is demonstrated in the films, Ghana Galamsey, and Fulani Landguard where
national agenda frames the themes of the films. The theme and content of Ghana Galamsey connects with Ghana government’s agenda in the sense that; the issue of illegal mining (Galamsey) became a national canker after its devastating effects were observed. Government eventually established a taskforce within its Lands Ministry to educate and fight the canker. Similarly, the content of Fulani Landguard is also driven by a government of Ghana agenda aimed at stemming out conflict that exist between local community members and Fulani nomadic herdsmen due to indiscriminate land use and sale by some recalcitrant community leaders. Overall, the thinking behind Akan film stories are meant to send audience members on a moral journey where they are expected to change their ways. A thought that is similar to the way film was used by the GCFU through to its use during the GFIC era. Cinema was to influence attitudes and change people’s old ways. Although films from the different periods was envisioned to change attitudes, the extent of the desired change differed.

Whereas the contents of GCFU film stories were actively dictated by the bigger colonial agenda, Akan films are only partially influenced by some government agenda. The films of the GCFU were aimed to change Gold Coasters attitude by getting them to change their indigenous ways for western European cultures and ways of lives. Films such as Progress in Kojokrom was meant to get the people of the Gold Coast to adopt new tax payment regime, a system that was alien to the people were commissioned directly by the colonial governments. Similar expectations also framed most films made by the Nkrumah established GFIC. The Nkrumah government’s strategy for using film did not differ much from the way colonial governments used film. Although he was anti-colonial, his government employed the remnant of colonial film usage to his political ideologies. As such most film content was dictated by themes and subjects which supported his
political agenda. However, the way film content is arrived by Akan filmmakers differ quite significantly.

Although Akan filmmakers may be influenced to create stories that may have recourse to government policies, there is no direct government persuasion, funding nor dictates as existed with the GCFU and GFIC units. Akan filmmaker’s themes and stories are informed by sensational stories, daily life situations such as the role of religion in people’s lives, historical stories, and other topical issues which may coincide with the central government’s visions or not. Overall, Akan filmmakers create freely, devoid of centralized influences unlike the GCFU and the GFIC.

6.5.1.2: Narrative Content

The next continuity to be highlighted is with the core themes, presented in the films. Video movies churned out of the Akan industry have themes that encompass the socio-cultural realities of many people within their spectatorship. The themes are often wrapped around social drama guided by issues of gender, masculinity, sense of community justice, and social traditions within an interplay between cause and effect. Akan video producers like their other African counterparts communicate with their audiences through melodrama, satire and comedy in their narratives (Diawara 1992). They also draw from existing popular forms of art like dance, song, oral tradition and theatre. These films rely on populist themes that most people can identify with. In Kumasi Yonkuor, gender compartmentalization and power relations play a significant role the film’s progression. A woman’s purpose is to manage the home and raise children. The idea of ‘chop money’ a daily amount traditionally given to the woman (caretaker) to shop at the market and cook the daily meal gains much prominence in the issues that drive the narrative. Similarly, gender relations are a key issue in Progress in Kojokrom where Akweley’s subservient place within the household is a constant reminder. Her husband Mr. Addo is upset that he came home and Akweley
had not returned from the river-side. He is verbally abusive when he finds no food in the house. Akweley has no ‘voice’ and yields to her husband’s every need. Despite the vast number of years that separate these films, the core themes on gender roles and inequality have remained relatively consistent.

In *Kumasi Yonkuor*, Collins verbally abuses his wife (Obaa-Yaa) and her position as the subordinate is constantly reiterated. Not even Obaa-Yaa’s mother finds the need to call Collins to order when she finds out about the abuse because; “*he is a handsome man who has blessed the family with lovely children*” (from the film, *Kumasi Yonkuor*). Basically, Obaa-Yaa’s mother normalizes her daughter’s situation because Collins is a ‘Man’. Obaa-Yaa herself has been raised into the symbolic function of woman in the patriarchal consciousness. A state of consciousness that may have transcended generations before her. As such although her mother’s words are symbolic of the bane of African women, it is normalized (Mulvey 1975).

Similarly, in *Mr. Mensah Builds A House*, Mr. Mensah’s wife is not involved in the discussions on how to spend on their new house. She complains bitterly about how her husband spent on his new house at the family’s expense. A similar scenario is identified in the film *Ghana Galamsey* where Opanyin Peikinkran’s wife’s opinions are completely disregarded and her continuous advice to her husband is neglected. Professionally, women in these films are stay home wives, none of the women whose lives progresses the story is identified in any profession. They are constantly at home while their husband’s step out to work for money. When women have been portrayed as working people, they are mostly vilified as prostitutes, wicked or needlessly difficult people. Women are the weak and overly emotional and impractical people in these films. As such, they are presented crying or very wicked to the point of witchcraft if they show any form of bravery. This is contrary for men in these films from both eras. The few times when women have
sought to change the status quo, they are maligned, and the status-quo is preserved. For instance, in the film *Ntetey Pa* where Irene seeks to question the status-quo by refusing to be boxed by traditional gender roles of cooking and cleaning for a man, she is not armed with any characteristics to make her succeed in the role. Irene is unemployed, and she is gratuitously difficult in the expression of her subjective feminist views which is criticized heavily by others in the film and audiences. In effect, “the unconscious of the patriarchal society has structured the film form” since colonial through to the current (Mulvey 1975:158).

### 6.5.1.3: Language

The use of local languages is also a key continuity from the GCFU to Akan film situation. The use of vernacular stories and languages in GCFU films accompanied the use of indigenous languages. The unit used local dialects such as Twi, Fante, Ga, in addition to English for film production. *Progress in Kojokrom* and in *Mr. Mensah Builds a House* are typical examples. Similarly, the GFIC also made films using some local languages. A key example is *I Told You So* which was made in the Fante-Twi dialect of the Akan language group.

Correspondingly, one element that significantly identifies Akan video from others is the use of Akan languages. The use of Akan languages seems to signify the epitome of the route to cinematic independence in Ghana. The few times when English has been incorporated, it is reminiscent of the vernacular language Graham and his unit introduced. The incorporation of Akan and English or other local languages and English is a vernacular practice and some Akan films like *Ntetey Pa* utilized it. Akan producers strive to use Akan languages in its proper syntax, grammar and arrangements. Other language similarities include the use of proverbs and innuendos that characterize the Akan language. The main artiste in *Ghana Galamsey* (Opayin Peikinkran) for instance, uses the dexterity in the Akan language to progress the story. The effort to present the
Akan language in its skillfully ‘unadulterated’ form is displayed when Mr. Mensah’s friend prompts him to speak proper Fante Twi in Mr. Mensah Builds a House.

6.5.1.4: Sound-Track and Music

Beyond language, both Akan videos and GCFU films share a similarity in the use of music. Consistently utilized in the two eras films is a theme music that virtually narrates the whole story while placing emphasis on the main lessons contained in the film. This practice in Akan videos is a striking continuity, reminiscent of the GCFU film; Mr. Mensah Builds a House where the theme music preempts the central idea of the film. The use of music in this way indeed is an augmentation of the educational goal that guides most of these films.

The use of music in Akan films to reiterate what the films aim to teach, is indeed a reflection of a continuity of that takes its roots from the GCFU era. This is far more poignantly similar than the way theatre forms such as Concert Party have utilized music. Films from both eras have mostly used the Ghanaian highlife music as theme music.

6.5.1.5: Mis-en-scene

Another content similarity within story content is the mis-en-scene which involves all the elements creators of the film decide to include in the film. These include, the props, costume, lighting, makeup, and the setting of the film. There are similarities in the props used in Mr. Mensah Builds a House and that of the Akan film Asoreba and Kumasi Yonkuor.

The physical setting of Kumasi Yonkuor and Asoreba is also reminiscent of the compound home setting in Progress in Kajokrom where members of the film community interact in common spaces. Mr. Addo entertains his visitors in the compound space the same way that Obaa-Yaa receives her friends in the group compound space. The same is identified in the film Yaa
Asantewaa where chiefs and other community members meet in compound spaces. What is particularly similar is the fact that films from both era make use of exterior settings. Very few interior settings are used in films from both era and the reasons for this similarity may also be a key variation between the two-organization’s work. Whereas the reasons for the GCFU filming mostly exterior scenes is not cited anywhere, the reason for Akan producers has been identified as a quick and easier filming process. Because interior settings demand scrutiny in terms of lighting, most Akan filmmakers skip this aspect and set most stories in exterior locations.

The prop elements in Akan films are suggestive of the traditional Akan household. Most producers interviewed suggest that there is a conscious effort to portray an indigenous Akan setting. As such, most props are indigenous, many filmmakers avoid modern props but rather, incorporate indigenous items such as clay pots, clay bowls, as well as local cuisines when portraying characters in their films. These props formed a major part of the elements found in Progress in Kojokrom where Akweley uses clay pots for water storage and Mr. Mensah breaks a pot when he was venting his anger. The setting and props found in Ntete Pa at a village scene and indeed most village scenes are set very similarly to the setting and props used in some GCFU films. Overall, ninety three percent (93%) of audiences who responded believe that Akan videos showcase elements of their Akan cultural heritage (Fig. 6.1).

Figure 6.1: chart showing audience view on Akan film and cultural heritage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>186</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DO AKAN VIDEOS SHOWCASE ELEMENTS OF YOUR HERITAGE?

YES 7%  NO 93%
Beyond prop elements, there is also continuity in costume styles between the GCFU films and current Akan films. Women clothing in films of both eras are relatively unchanged. Women in indigenous setting from both eras wore the customary long wrap skirt and a matching blouse popularly called (Kaba and Slit) style of clothing, particularly when portraying traditional settings. However, when the films relate to contemporary issues, the clothing are supported with the trends of the times. For instance, in the film *Ntete Pa* the main character Irene was always seen with contemporary clothes suggestive of the globalized world finds itself. Similarly, in *The Boy Kumase*, and *Mr. Mensah Builds a House*, artiste clothing is representative of the level of European acculturation that was present in clothing style of the period. As such, men are seen wearing suits and other European clothes especially when the scene is in the city and the indigenous alternate clothes when they are in village settings. The level of European acculturation and the culture of Gold Coasters in GCFU films is presented in a strikingly vivid way. Images like polo games, ball room dancing forms of transportation and clothing inform today’s viewers about the years before Ghana’s independence.

Again, men portrayed in the traditional settings all use the folded cloth which is a traditional Akan male dress style. Elders in *Fulani land-guard, Yaa Asantewaa War*, as well as when Mr. Mensah went back to his village in *Mr. Mensah Builds a House* wore folded cloth from the different periods of film production (Fig.: 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4).
Figure 6.2: Scene from *Fulani Land-guard* where elders are dressed in Akan traditional mourning cloths.

Figure 6.3: Men in folded cloths from a scene in Progress in Kojokrom. Source: ‘Films from the Gold Coast’ published by the Gold Coast Film Unit in 1953.
6.5.2: Changes and Variation

Despite the similarities highlighted above, the content of films and the organizational structure also presents some changes and variations. The two organizations utilized different technologies in the production of cinema. Whereas Akan filmmakers utilize the video technological medium to make films, all the films of the GCFU were made using the celluloid technological medium of filmmaking. This variation suggests a certain systemic difference. Celluloid demands a certain level of systematic planning during preproduction through to post production which are rarely present in video film production work. Whereas GCFU utilized crew members such as focus puller, a clapper boy, a camera man, camera assistant and a director of photography, not all these crew are present in Akan film shoots because video does not demand them. Again, post production work was quite a tedious process with a lot of dependence on
laboratories outside the Gold Coast. British laboratories were central to postproduction work during GCFU productions and GFIC eras. In the Akan industry however, postproduction work is a relatively easy process. There is no reliance or collaboration with foreign partners. The digital editing ensures that films are completed within a considerably short period of time.

6.5.2.1: Distribution

Variation in marketing and distribution is apparent between the two eras films. The GCFU distributed films mainly through the conventional cinema houses. They however augmented this by employing the cinema van system which ensured that audiences in rural communities which housed no cinema halls also had access to the films. These practices are however almost non-existent in the Akan film industry. Video technology is a direct medium, using digital disks and television for exhibition. These disks are then marketed and distributed through a complex distribution channel to audiences who mostly viewed the films privately at homes. The main forms of group viewing for Akan films is on long journey buses where travelers become instant audiences. Subsequently, the films are broadcast on television sets and on internet platforms. Despite other industries such as the English language set-up in Accra utilizing cinema exhibition, very few Akan films have been exhibited in the modern cinema houses that are springing up—including the Silverbird cinemas and Watch and Dine located in shopping malls in Accra and Kumasi.

Other variations include the idea of ownership which appears to be decentralized with the Akan video industry unlike the GCFU. Whereas current audiences of Akan videos can easily own films through purchases, ownership of films in the GCFU was very much controlled. Audiences could only access films when the government decide to screen in theatres, or through cinema vans. This democratization also extends into the technology used. Whereas video technology has further
democratized the cinema medium by placing the technology in the control of ordinary people, the opposite existed with the GCFU where filming with celluloid technology was suggestive of an elitist privilege. Its expensive nature alone made it a medium that a few could afford to access. Video today however, has expanded to include formats that require very little technical knowhow, thus attracting many untrained enthusiastic people into the industry. Some operate by just a click away and everything is filmed which is a far cry from celluloid production where extensive training was required to be able to operate and make films. The control and freedom nexus between the two-technologies used almost equate as; celluloid connotes colonialism, whiles video connotes independence.

6.5.2.2: Use of Cultural Elements

Other changes are evident in the use and meaning of significant cultural objects, folklore and sites in the films. As observed in most Akan videos analysed, and from interviews with filmmakers, there is a conscious effort by Akan video producers to use local stories to make film. Story writers and producers reinvent local /community myths and legends on the screen as a way of preserving folklore and other historical stories quite differently from the way these elements were used in GCFU films. Even when producers invent stories outside their folk story renditions, filmmakers are tasked to set up the mis-en-scene reminiscent of the traditional Akan home set up. For instance, the new chief whose background as an American returnee is placed in a living room decorated with symbols suggestive of the Akan Adinkra symbols in the film *Fulani- Land Guard* (Fig. 6.5).
Films such as *Okomfo Anokye* and *The Yaa Asantewaa War* encompass folklore, historical and legend stories that are important aspects of Akan intangible heritage. The stories about Okomfo Anokye and Yaa Asantewaa are orally passed down from one generation to the next. Statues of these legends erected in central points of the Ashanti region appear in most Akan videos. In addition, Akan films have showcased elements of Akan tangible heritage such as heritage sites and monuments, actual heritage sites of these legendary Fig.s, local stools, the wearing of the Akan war dress (smock) and other elements. Other traditional practices and games such as ‘Oware’ (wood and pebble game) and Ampe (jump and clap group game) are played by characters in both *Okomfo Anokye* and *The Yaa Asantewaa War* movies.

On the other hand, GCFU films were not meant to preserve any traditional stories and no active efforts were made to incorporate the tangible heritage of Gold Coasters. This variation could be because the general household of most Gold Coasters already utilized such set ups. However,
film makers suggest that, in an ever-changing context of living in Ghana, the traditional Akan home setting is constantly transforming and as such it is imperative to preserve these lifeways on film for the collective memories of the people.

6.5.2.3: Technical Quality

Another important variation is with the technical quality of the films from both eras. Although there are many similarities within content of the two era films, the aesthetic value of Akan videos is quite technically inferior to the GCFU films. Although new technology has brought pluralism and dynamism into the Akan video industry, the quality of current films still does not match the GCFU films nor those of the GFIC. In the film Mr. Mensah Builds a House for instance, the beginning of the film alone is quite an aesthetic wonder. The first 2:30 seconds of the film was achieved with one developing shot. The crane developing shot was used to explore and introduce audiences, to the beginning credits and the purpose of the film. Again, the film’s structure was highly creative in that the film begins from the end, a style that although developed in other industries around the world, is hardly utilized in Akan videos. Flashback are used sparingly, rather, almost all films follow the classical linear structure of beginning, middle, and an end. Similarly, the film I Told You So filmed by the GFIC also employed high artistic and technical dexterity of black and white celluloid film to tell a story that has become a Ghanaian classic.

Overall, the films of the GCFU have deep metaphorical and complex meanings. For instance, the film Boy Kumasenu is viewed as some sort of an allegory or metaphor to some imagined challenges that could confront the Gold Coast after independence. The coming of age story of Kumasenu, the main character and his urge to explore beyond his horizon, is somewhat similar to the Gold-Coast’s urge to be independence and the unknown challenges that independent states are projected to experience. As the first nation in Sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence,
this film was significant, not only as a warning to Gold Coasters, but also to other states that were to follow suit to beware of global forces that may confront their journey to be truly free. Like Kumasenu’s greatest nemeses Agbo who continually tried to lure Kumasenu into abandoning his new path. Very few Akan videos have explored such multifaceted story structures. The stories are mostly linear and easily predictable by audiences. Although some scholars such as (Rice 2011) have credited *The Boy Kumasenu* as representative of a deviated narrative styles that characterized Africanization of film, the narrative did not deviate much from the existing western European stereotypes. The entire film was presented with English commentary which sometimes connotes racist undertones. Again, the use of European voice actors who spoke for the artiste rendered the actors totally voiceless.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

7.1: Introduction

In this study, the attempt has been made to show that post-colonial film production mediated within Akan video movies in Ghana exhibit some deviations from established colonial film structures. These deviations pertain mainly to the use of video technology and Akan language to create a cultural pluralism that departs from the canonized central film establishments stemming from colonialization through to the early years of Ghana’s independence.

The study sought to identify and define the different categories of video movies that may be labeled as Akan video films. The information assembled suggests that Akan films are those produced in the Akan language predominantly in Kumasi or within the Ashanti Region of Ghana, by mostly producers with Akan lineage. The Akan language has been the main determining factor whereby, Akan language films produced outside the Ashanti region are also considered Akan films. Three categories of films genres including the Reality Drama, Action Emulated and Epic Traditional Stories were identified. The Reality Drama and Epic Traditional Stories were the most explored genre by filmmakers, which predominantly showcased aspects of Akan tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The work has also shown that the Akan video industry has produced filmmakers who have taken control of their creativities and produced films that present aspects of Akan intangible cultural heritage such as folklore, legends, indigenous religious practices, performances and language. Films of the industry also showcase tangible sites some of which are of heritage value within the Akan and Ashanti regional context. By legitimizing the use of Akan language for film,
Akan filmmakers may have commenced a path to saving an indigenous African language from the threat of extinction (Adegbija 2001). They have succeeded in inventing sustainable structures and styles of filmmaking that are peculiar to them (Fanon 1963).

With regard to changes and continuities found between products of the Akan video film industry and those of the GCFU, this work has established that apart from key variations exhibited in the filming apparatus and distribution structures, Akan films appear to have been influenced by the remnants of colonial film styles and ideologies. Analysis of the relationship between Akan video industry and GCFU films suggest varied influences. Among such influences are Akan drama genre styles, concert party and Nigerian videos, (Adjei 2014; Aveh 2014) as well as cinematic traditions of the GCFU. The genres, form, themes, and elements that appear in Akan films are reminiscent of these film traditions, particularly the GCFU productions. Significantly, films from both eras are informed by national or political agenda. GCFU films were informed by aspects of the colonial government agenda while current Akan films take most of their inspiration from established central government agenda. Some local beliefs and gender compartmentalization were similarly exhibited in films from both eras. Ultimately, the use of theme music that narrate the entire film and Akan language as the main language of expression in films from both eras appear as a major similarity.

In terms of the relationship between Ghana’s film preservation practices and heritage, Ghana has a total of 6000 film materials from early years of Ghana’s independence to the late 1980’s stored at the Bonded Services-London. These preserved film materials represent the top down official heritage approach (Harrison 2010). The determination for the recognition of those preserved films was at the national level as the government of Ghana pays for its conservation. At the local level however, individual filmmakers preserve and safeguard copies of their films on hard
drives and online storage systems. The only national attempt to promote and preserve Akan films is the decision to showcase Akan films that features Agya Koo in an initiative called Agya Koo TV.

The research also found that, approximately, two Akan films are released each month contrary to five films per week recorded in 2009 (Garritano 2013). The factors accounting for this include the general electric power outages that plagued the country between 2013 and 2015, the technological shift from analogue television to digital terrestrial broadcast, pluralization of television channels and the increased dubbing of Mexican, Indian, Chinese and Venezuelan telenovelas into Akan language, which has become a major strategy of television programming in Ghana. Regardless of the decline in Akan film spectatorship, I argue that, the exposure of Akan film audiences to different stories has the potential of developing some cinema savvy audiences who may soon demand a certain level of complex films that could reverse the widely held colonial mentality that connect Akan films with colonial films.

What remains cogent however, is the cognitive relationships between the past and current in film production. There is continuity in the general philosophy that informs Akan filmmakers’ actions. The philosophy that frames the nature of Akan videos today is reminiscent of the infamous philosophy of the CFU and in extension, the GCFU which suggested that Africans were not sophisticated enough to understand conventional film structures. The notion, which led to the production of specialized films meant for only Africans is shrouded in European imperialist and race theories about “primitive origins and primitive classification” (Said 1979:232). Some Akan producers expressed similar opinions about their audiences. They suggest that what accounts for their simplistic storylines is that; most of their audiences will not understand and appreciate their films if they made them complex. Against this background, most Akan videos have simplistic
structures, form and styles. Their narrative structure is easily identifiable making it lack the element of surprise. The predictability of the form could make the videos unattractive to potential audiences who may be looking to watch films for other entertainment reasons apart from the educational motives that drive most Akan films. This core similarity highlights the problems of the post-colonial African who according to Franz Fanon; “have obtained complete freedom but who live under the constant menace of imperialist aggression” (Fanon 1963:10).

7.3 Final Remarks

In conclusion, apart from colonial films that were packaged and presented as Gold Coast cinema heritage and those by the GFIC which government preserved as heritage assets, currently there is no absolute film type or grouping that represents Ghana’s cinematic heritage. Akan videos have cultural elements that often transcend the boarders of Akan group of people. Regardless, the productions are still culturally confined essentially within Akan culture. As such, Akan videos produced in post-colonial Ghana cannot profess to be an embodiment of Ghana’s cinematic heritage. It is worth noting that the cinema of the GCFU were fundamentally packaged and presented under colonial ideological underpinnings and currently archived and preserved as cinema heritage which connects with the idea that heritage is dictated by power relations. The colonial government, and the early post-colonial government in Ghana indeed constructed Ghana’s cinema heritage by conserving films produced during their era (Peterson et al. 2015). However, postcolonial theories of Said (1979), indicate the dangers of such colonial generalizations and warn the ex-colonized to beware. The colonial views and pronouncements of the oriental world cannot and ought not to function in a postcolonial cultural production process. However, since Akan videos represent culturally significant aspects of heritage within Ghana, they may begin to attract national preservation, archiving and safeguard activities.
7.4: Recommendation

As nations around the world preserve aspects of their culture as heritage for their current and future generations, the time is perhaps right to consider establishing an audio-visual conservatory where indigenous films can be selected and preserved for future references. This can be achieved through the establishment of a unit under the proposed National Film Authority to be responsible for this. I recommend a unit that will be tasked to select films for preservation and safeguarding, like that of the American Library of Congress where a national film regulation mandates the National Film Preservation Board to select American films that are of cultural, historical and aesthetical significance to American cultural heritage. This unit, as well as a strengthened Copyright Society of Ghana can streamline film production, ownership and accessibility.

Additionally, Ghana’s audiovisual heritage should be recognized and celebrated within the UNESCO conventions in a more robust manner that will continually remind its people about what the nation has archived and what else could be preserved. I also recommend that all stakeholders advocating for the establishment of the Film and Broadcasting laws to collaborate and engage government to an agreement on what the yardstick for classifying films as local or foreign should be. Although the definition of Ghanaian films is clearly stated in the Film Act 935, the same is not stated in the proposed Broadcast Bill. The Film Act defines a Ghanaian film as one, which falls under any three of the following criteria. 1) The language used in the film is English or any Ghanaian language 2) The film has a Ghanaian producer 3) The film has a Ghanaian production team 4) The film has a Ghanaian film Director 5) The film has a predominantly Ghanaian Cast 7) The subject matter is Ghanaian 8) The film has a Ghanaian identity as identified by sight and sound (Development & Classification of Film Act 935 2016).
Going further however, it will be prudent to amend the definition of Ghana film in this document to highlight the contents of films more poignantly than what currently exists. With these criteria indicated, Ghanaian films can be easily identified for preservation and safeguard based on its portrayal of Ghanaian cultural heritage and elements. As such, a combination of different format options might offer a robust management plan to ensure that film materials are preserved and safeguarded. However, this can only be achieved at the national level within the proposed Film Authority of Ghana although heritage will once again be constructed by those with power and authority (Peterson et al. 2015) regardless, that will be a starting point.

Also, I recommend national recognition, development and support of other cinema industries springing up in different parts of the country such as; Tamale, Takoradi, Koforidua, Upper East and Upper West Regions of the country. Alongside these, it is recommended that Akan filmmakers and other indigenous film set-ups are re-oriented on the power of the film medium occasionally. This will motivate filmmakers to invest in stories with heritage significance and those that synchronize with emerging discourses of local and global importance such as gender equality so that audiences are properly informed even as they get entertained. This type of engagement could be made possible with the physical establishment and funding of the National Film Authority which is mandated by law, to coordinate such initiatives.


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Development & Classification of Film Act, (2016). Act 935


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ONLINE RESOURCES

Website 1. www.ghanamuseums.org
Website 5. http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/
APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Consent Form
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

Ethics Committee for Humanities (ECH)

PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Study:</th>
<th>Post-Colonial Cinema Production in Ghana: Akan Video Movies within Ghana’s Cinematic Heritage</th>
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<td>Principal Investigator:</td>
<td>Rebecca Ohene-Asah</td>
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<td>Certified Protocol Number</td>
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Section B– CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

General Information about Research

My name is Rebecca Ohene-Asah. I am a PhD candidate in the Archaeology and Heritage Studies Department of the University of Ghana. The focus of my study is on the Akan video movies emanating mostly form Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study enquires into relationships that may be found between the organizational structure and products of the Akan video industry and those of the Gold Coast Film Unit (GFCU), the first establishment to make films in the Gold Coast. It specifically explores similarities and variations that have occurred between the GCFU and current texts of the Akan language video movies. This study will employ methods such as in-depth interviews, content analysis, focus group discussions as well as observation of activities of Akan video makers in Kumasi. This document is to inform you on the purpose of this project, as well as seek your formal consent and approval to participate in this project. Once you agree to participate in this study, you will be required to append your signature or thumbprint to make the consent official. I am willing and available to provide further explanations to make understanding this document clearer. A copy will be provided for your personal records. The purpose of this study is to elicit information from Video filmmakers who operate within the Kumasi video environs. The information you provide will be useful in highlighting the intricate relationships between colonial cinema and contemporary cinema production and how these contribute to the construction of heritage in...
Ghana. Upon receiving a positive response about participating in this study, I will engage you in a conversational interview, which is expected to last for about an hour. You will be asked questions on your body of work as producers, directors, scriptwriters, and or other types of film worker. To allow me capture details of the interview accurately, I will use a tape recorder for the conversation in addition to taking field notes. During the interviewing process, I am committed to pausing for suggestions and willing to exclude any uncomfortable statements or questions that may arise. I like to assure you that no medical tests will be conducted in this study. A total of about 30 participants comprising active video makers in Kumasi will be interviewed.

Benefits and Risk of the study

There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation in the study. I will not seek information that will end up harming you emotionally, psychologically or physically. No monetary compensations will be given to you but the findings of this study will contribute to the overall understanding on the role of local film production and its place in heritage issues in Ghana. Ultimately, this study will assist to legitimize the operations of indigenous language movie production industries.

Confidentiality

I wish to assure you that all information given is solely for academic purposes and will be treated as confidential. Your name and address will not be recorded on your interview guide and you will not be named in any write-up I may have on the study. Your biographical data will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in the write up. The research records will be kept securely at the Archaeology Department and, the larger University of Ghana libraries. It may also be referred to in other future projects by other academics at the University of Ghana and beyond.

Withdrawal from Study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to answer all questions. You may choose not to answer a question or choose to stop the interview altogether if you so desire. If you choose to stop the interview, all responses you have already provided will be deleted from the tape.

Contact for Additional Information

Additional questions and enquiries about this study may be obtained by contacting me via email: oheneasahr@gmail.com, phone (0244669018) or by contacting my lead supervisor, Professor Kodzo Gavua (kgavua@ug.edu.gh) from the Archaeology and Heritage Studies Department of the University of Ghana.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study you may contact the Administrator of the Ethics Committee for Humanities, ISSER, University of Ghana at ech@isser.edu.gh / ech@ug.edu.gh or 00233- 303-933-866

Section C- PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

"I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and am willing to give consent for me, my child/ward to participate in this study. I will not have waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records."

________________________________________________
Name of Participant

________________________________________________
Signature or mark of Participant            Date
If participant cannot read and or understand the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

_______________________________________________
Name of witness

_______________________________________________
Signature of witness / Mark Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

____________________________________________
Name of Person who Obtained Consent

____________________________________________
Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent Date
Appendix 2: Interview Guide for filmmakers

1. What type of crew member are you? Please describe your role on movie productions.

2. How did you get into the business of making videos movies? How long have you been in the business?

3. Was there any training involved? Please describe this training process.

4. Where do the inspiration for your stories come from?

5. Why do you make videos in Akan language and how receptive are your films?

6. Tell me about the earliest Ghanaian films made before independence that you have viewed.

7. Have you watched any of the GCFU films?

8. How similar or different are your films from the GCFU’s films.

9. Tell me about the films that have motivated your work.

10. Tell me about the filmmakers whose works motivate you.

11. How do you prepare for a production?

12. How are your films financed?

13. Apart from the language, please describe the elements that makes a film an Akan language movie. Tell me about the typical Akan language production structure.

14. After editing, how do you market and exhibit your works?

15. Who are your audiences?

16. How are you organized? Is there an association? How does one become a member?

17. How does this organization promote your activities?

18. What is the relationship between your industry and other industries? Accra producers and Nollywood?

19. Where do you see your industry in the next few years? What are your hopes for the future?
Appendix 3: Questionnaire Form for Filmmakers

My name is Rebecca Ohene-Asah. I am a PhD candidate in the Archaeology and Heritage Studies Department of the University of Ghana. The focus of my study is on the Akan video movies emanating mostly from Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study enquires into relationships that may be found between the organizational structure and products of the Akan video industry and those of the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU), the first establishment to make films in the Gold Coast. It specifically explores similarities and variations that have occurred between the GCFU and current texts of the Akan language video movies. I will appreciate it if you can spend some time to respond to these questions.

1. Name: ……………………………………………………………………………………

2. Age [ ] b) Sex (i) Male [ ] (ii) Female [ ]

3. What type of crew member are you? Please tick a. (i) Producer [ ] (ii) Director [ ] (iii) Screenwriter[ ] (iv) Other
   a. b. Please Explain

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………
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4. How did you get into the business of making videos movies? Please tick. a (i) Official Training [ ] (ii) Apprentice [ ] (iii) Self-taught [ ]
   a. b. If it is Official Training, please select duration
   b. (i) 1-11 month [ ] (ii) 1-2 years [ ] (iii) 2-4 years [ ] (iv) Other [ ]
   c. If other, please explain.

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5. How long have you been in the business? a. (i) 6mnt -1 year [ ] (ii) 1-2 years [ ] (iii) 2-5 years [ ] (iv) 5 years and above [ ] (v) Other [ ] If (v), please explain.
   a. ……………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

6. Have you ever watched any colonial films? a. Yes [ ] No [ ]
   a. b. If Yes, please state the title(s) of films watched and where you watched them.

   ……………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Have you watched any films by the GCFU? a. Yes [ ] No [ ]
a. (b) If Yes, please state titles of films: 

b. (c) If Yes, would you say these colonial films have influenced the style and content of films you make?

c. (d) (i) Yes [ ] (ii) No [ ] Please explain your choice:

8. Where do you get ideas for your films? a. (i) Social issues [ ] (ii) Other films [ ] (iii) Other [ ]
   a. Please explain:

9. Do you make films in other languages apart from Akan? (i) Yes [ ] (ii) No [ ]
   a. State reasons for your answer:

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10. When was the last time you made a movie? (i) Between 2010-2013 [ ] (ii) 2014-2016 [ ] (iii) 2017-2018 [ ]
   a) (iv) Other [ ] Please state year ..........................................................

11. How are your films funded? (i) Self [ ] (ii) Bank [ ] (iii) Other [ ] if (iii), please explain........
   ...................................................................................................................
   ...................................................................................................................

12. How many DVD/VCD of your last film did you sell?
   ...................................................................................................................
   a. Where do you exhibit your films? (i) Cinema House [ ] (ii) On DVD/VCD [ ] (iii) Other [ ]
      b. a. If (iii), please state where ........................................................................
      ...................................................................................................................
   c.

13. How much in cedis did you make for your last video? 50,000-100,000 [ ] 150,000-300,000 [ ] 350,000-500,000 [ ] 600,000 and above [ ]

14. How receptive are Akan videos? Who are your target audience?
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   ...................................................................................................................

15. Have you won any award? (i) Yes[ ] (ii) No[ ]
   a. If yes, name award(s) ..............................................................................
   ...................................................................................................................
   b. If No, please give reasons why? ...................................................................
16. Do you belong to any association related to your industry? (i) Yes [   ] (ii) No [   ] a. If yes, name the group/s
............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
a. b. If No, please state reasons
............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

17. Do you preserve any of your past films for the future? (i) Yes [   ] (ii) No [   ]
a. If Yes, How do you preserve them............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
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b. If No, please state reasons............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
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THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING
Appendix 4: Interview Guide For Veteran Filmmakers

1. How did you get involved with filmmaking in Ghana?

2. Please describe the work of the GCFU in the Gold Coast

3. Where did people watch movies?

4. How popular were the GCFU and other colonial films?

5. How lucrative was your work with the GCFU?

6. How different was film operation after it metamorphosed into GFIC?

7. What kinds of films did the GFIC make? What motivated these films?

8. Tell me about the Nkrumah factor How involved was he in the activities of the GFIC?

9. Where are the films produced by the GFIC?

10. Please explain how Ghana’s historical films ended up in the UK

11. What are the plans to make them accessible to Ghanaians?
Appendix 5: Sample Script pages for Akan film

Appendix 6: Selection of field activities with focus on equipment used for filmmaking.

Crew members setting up a scene

filming equipment

Equipment bus on location

Sound and camera equipment check
Location filming with camera crew and observers

Location filming with focus on the camera equipment
### Appendix 7: Key activities observed

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF TIMES OBSERVED</th>
<th>LOCALITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VIDEO FILM COMMERCE</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Adehye, market, Kejetia, kantamanto, opera square markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location work (production work)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kumawu and Kumasi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post production work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Daaban- Kumasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition(screenings)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>VIPbus) Accra- Kumasi), Trotro (Accra -Tema) (Kantamonto to Pokuasi) Silverbird Accra and Watch and Dine (Kumasi)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix 8: Ethical Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)
P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No: .............................. 4th September, 2017

Ms. Rebecca Ohene-Asah
Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies,
School of Arts
University of Ghana
Legon

Dear Ms. Ohene-Asah,

ECH 005/17-18: POST-COLONIAL CINEMA PRODUCTION IN GHANA: AKAN VIDEO MOVIES WITHIN GHANA’S CINEMATIC HERITAGE

This is to advise you that the above reference study has been presented to the Ethics Committee for the Humanities for a full board review and the following actions taken subject to the conditions and explanation provided below:

Expiry Date: 29/08/18

On Agenda for: Initial Submission

Date of Submission: 12/06/17

ECH Action: Approved

Reporting: Bi-Annually

Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,

Rev. Prof. J. O. Y. Mante
ECH Chair

CC: Dr. Wazi Apoh, Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies

Tel: +233-303933866 Email: ech@ug.edu.gh | ech@isser.edu.gh
## Appendix 9: List of films kept with the Bonded Services - London

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<th>TITLE</th>
<th>CONFIRMATION OF TRANSFER</th>
<th>PRIORITY ORDER</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. 11TH AFRICAN CUP OF NATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. 150TH ANNIVERSARY PRESBY CHURCH</td>
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<td>3. 3RD REPUBLIC</td>
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<td>4. 5TH YEAR S.M.C</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. 7TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. AFRICA AND MALAGASY CONFERENCE</td>
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<td>7. AFRICA CUP</td>
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<td>8. AFRICA PROGRESS</td>
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<td>9. AFRICA REBORN</td>
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<td>10. AGRICULTURE PROJECT</td>
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<td>11. AHEAD FOR PROSPERITY — FISHERIES</td>
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<td>12. AMENUS CHILD</td>
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<td>13. BAMIRI STORY</td>
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<td>14. BEYOND THE NEW DEAL</td>
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<td>15. BOXING</td>
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<td>16. CAIRO</td>
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<td>17. CATTLE ON THE PLAINS</td>
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<td>18. CHALLENGE OF PROGRESS</td>
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<td>19. CIRCLES OF POWER</td>
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<td>20. CITIZENS ON REPUBLIC DAY</td>
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<td>21. CONFERENCE OF INDEPENDENT AFRICAN STATES</td>
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<td>22. CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE</td>
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<td>24. DAWN, THE</td>
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<td>25. DIPO, A PUBERTY RITE</td>
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<td>26. DR LIMANN TOURS EUROPE</td>
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<td>33. FLIGHT TO FORTUNE</td>
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