

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

FOREIGN CINEMA AND POPULAR CULTURE IN GHANA, 1960 Circa

1980.

BY

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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
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AWARD OF MA IN MUSEUM AND HERITAGE STUDIES DEGREE.**

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DECLARATION

I, Erika Novieku, hereby declare that except for references made to other people's work which I have acknowledged, this thesis is the original work of my research carried out and submitted to the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, under the supervision of Professor Kwabena Akurang-Parry.

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ABSTRACT

A trend of popular culture evolved among Ghanaians from the 1960s to the 1980s. The watershed of this was foreign cinemas or films awash in Ghana. It became popular with the youth who served as agents of acculturated products, namely dressing, hairdo, slang, accents, and gaits or imitated walking skills harvested from the foreign films. This M.A. thesis examines the two decades of the efflorescence of unique popular culture in Ghana that influenced Ghanaian intangible heritage.

Data for the thesis was based on primary and secondary sources. I made use of some research methods, namely structured interviews to garner specific questions for the objectives of the study. An open-ended interview questionnaire allowed respondents the latitude to add complimentary insights. Additionally, focused group discussions among adults who were between the ages of fifty-five and seventy years were employed. The relevance of the age-set group is that they had the privilege to witness foreign films as a conduit of popular culture in Ghana, and indeed, participated in the process and were impacted by the films whose end products were a composite heritage.

Cinema and popular culture are centripetal to discussions of the tangible and intangible heritage of people living within a specific era. The tangible refers to cinema houses that are operating or those whose premises are being used for other purposes today. On the other hand, the intangible ones are in the realm of acculturation. The demise of foreign cinemas in the late 1980s appears to have brought to an end the ongoing acculturation emanating from foreign films. This is not to say that the cultural influences from foreign films atrophied. Rather they were perpetuated in streams of social change with some being retained while others took on new hues and glow. Thus, the main goal of this thesis is to historicize heritage from the watershed of foreign films, pointing to cultural trends such as fashion styles, hairdos, gaits, slang, accents, and so on.

In sum, I show that from 1960 to 1980 foreign films were heavily patronized in Ghana because it was a medium for watching movable human action or scenes on screens. As a result, it eventually functioned as a venue of socialization and acculturation for the youths. Thus, the thesis discusses how foreign lifestyles of popular culture were acculturated into Ghanaian society through foreign films with Ghanaian youths as the agency.



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, especially Professor Christian Anthony-Krueger and Nana Serwaa Boakeywa II my parents for their relentless support and counsel all through my master's program. God richly bless you.



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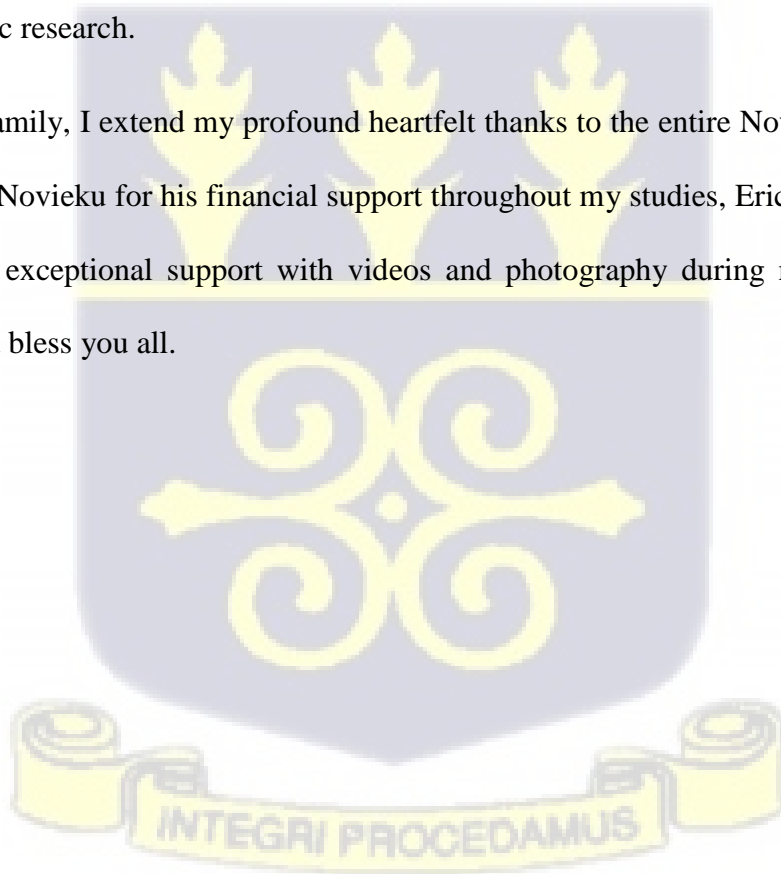
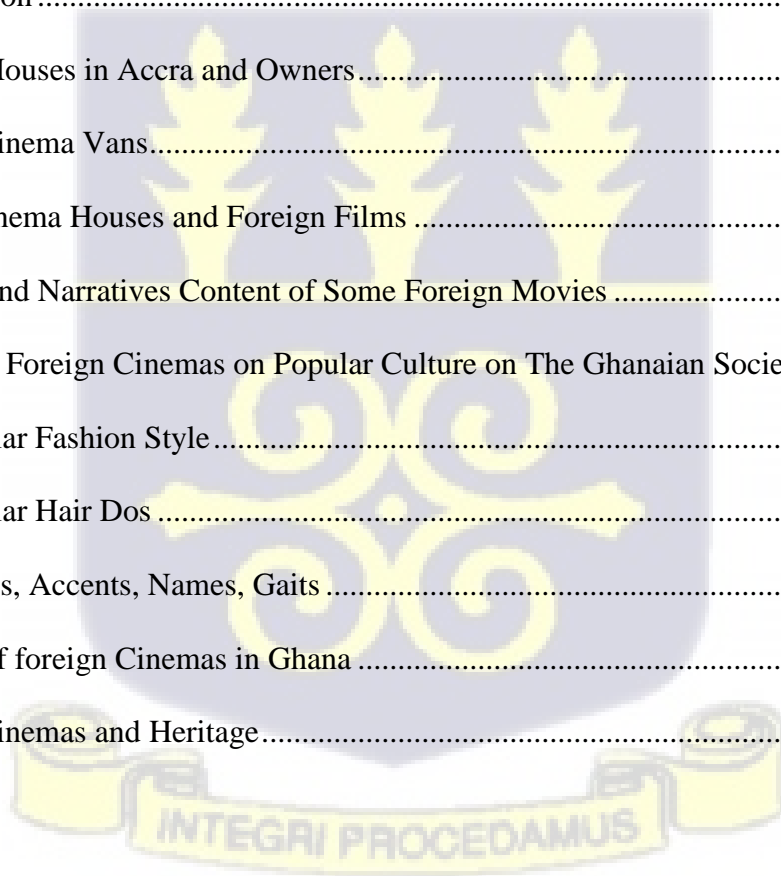


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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

In the recent past, the film, movie or cinema industry has flourished worldwide and influenced cultures. Foreign films shown in cinema houses and special venues in Ghana were sources of entertainment until their apparent collapse by the end of the 1980s. Cinema can be considered the source of heritage, history and epistemology. Definitions of cinema, film, video and motion pictures are complicated and contentious. According to Ponech (1999), these concepts of cinema, film and movie can be used interchangeably. For him, the fundamental link between these art forms is the idea of an exhibition on "big screens" (Ponech 1999:53-54). Following Poneh cinema, film, and movies are used interchangeably. Cinema is a technology that provides the means of recording historical and fictive stories through audio-visuals. It is also a means of epistemology that mirrors a society's past and present. Thus, cinemas can present themselves as a vehicle for heritage, culture, education, leisure and acculturation. The term acculturation is the cultural modification of an individual, group or people, by adapting or borrowing traits from another culture. The trends that cinema conveys may have lasting effects on audiences through the roles of different characters, structured themes, imageries, and settings, that is place and time. Cinematic traditions are valued for their cultural importance and societal influences. Such may earn heritage status by being identified and accepted by members of a specific contemporary society that passes it on to the next generation. Thus, heritage so acquired by a given society will be preserved for future generations, be it at the local, regional or international level (Howard, 2003: 136).

Cinemas in Ghana since their inception in the era of the Christian missionaries around 1910 have progressed through various phases with thematic and technological innovations in the colonial, independence, and postcolonial period (Diawara 1992; Meyer 2015; Sandon &

Bloom 2013; Sandon 2010; Smyth 1988 and Ukadike 1994). Facets of popular entertainment in Ghana explored particular themes or genres. The 1960s for example, witnessed the introduction of Western popular music, in particular, African American soul music and its associated Afro-centered trends. These triggered the Africanization of imported Western popular music to Ghana (Collins, 2005:18). In many ways, therefore, the natural world of things, including the human race, is reflected in cinema, as it is in literature, storytelling, religion, and other facets of memory and culture (Ukadike, 1994).

Over the years, what we see on the screens in terms of film narratives has been studied and known to have effects on viewers. Undoubtedly, the introduction of cinemas in the 1950s and 1960s had a major impact on popular culture among Ghanaians. This led to the adoption of slang, hairdos and fashion styles, gait, dance and professions such as musicians, and comedians. To give example, slang like “*Girls-Girls*”, “*Lungu-Lungu*”, “*Jorley*” and “*Killer*” was used to reference villain and “*Jack*” identified as a protagonist were all common terms used by cinema-goers (Nanbigne, 2011:122). Some film scholars theorize that films provide a glimpse into human life. The actors are real people who are photographed in their natural environments and play roles in stories about people's everyday lives. The recorded stories and movies serve as a medium from which current and future generations are informed by historical events and learn from them.

This research examines the popular culture that metamorphosised into heritage emanating from Ghanaian cinemas from the 1960s to about 1980. This focuses on the representation of newly adapted cultures and lifestyles that emerged in Ghana at the time. The thematic lenses of the genres of films shown between 1960 to about 1979 form the subject matter of this study.

The 1950s ushered in the introduction of foreign movie houses across the country. Some notable ones were Opera cinema, Orion cinema, Rex cinema, etc (see Fig 1.1 and Fig 1.2). Most of which were located in the Central Business District in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. Some of these foreign movie houses were managed by Syrians, Lebanese and a few Ghanaians. As noted, the movie houses mostly showed foreign movies such as *The Eternal Sea* produced by John H. Auer in 1955 (The Daily Graphic, 1957: 12). Foreign movies were advertised in a local Ghanaian newspaper, For example, The Daily Graphic. The showing of foreign movies continued until 1979 when Flt. Lt. J. J. Rawlings's regime brought about two military coups and imposed a two-and-half-year night curfew (Collins, 2005:18). This contributed to the demise of popular entertainment, including foreign films. The post-1970s emergence of new technologies of television and video cassette player interestingly gave foreign cinema the added push toward decline. The historic buildings have been currently converted into shopping malls, warehouses, church venues and legal offices. For instance, the Opera cinema popularly known as “Opera Square” situated in Accra is now a shopping centre and also has some parts converted into legal offices and banks. The original historic exterior of the Opera Cinema has survived, though it is now hidden beneath a modern mask of the Guarantee Trust Bank (GT Bank).

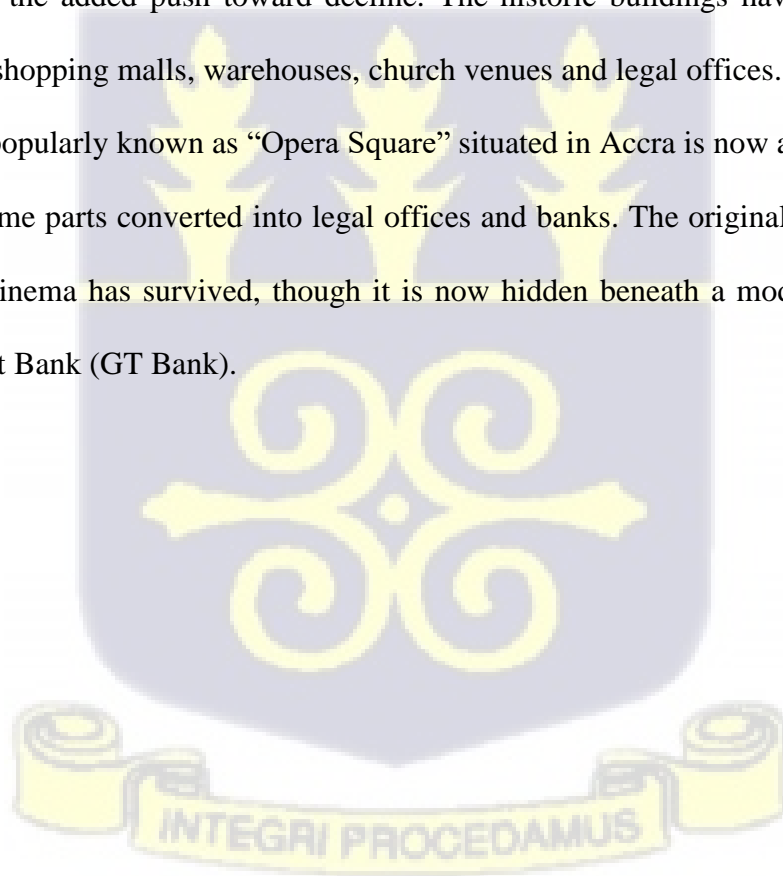




Figure 1.1: Rex Cinema, Accra Central, Ghana.
(Source: Author's collections)



Figure 1.2: Forecourt of the Rex cinema
(Source: Author's collections)

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

This study is aimed at examining the popular culture that emerged from foreign cinemas from the early 1960s to the 1980s which became heritage whether ephemeral or long-lasting. It will also address the following objectives:

- a. Identify aspects of the development of foreign cinemas in Ghana.
- b. Access the demise of the foreign cinemas in Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

This research was guided by some research questions. These questions were addressed to achieve the research objectives.

These include:

1. What foreign films impacted Ghana between 1960 and 1980 in the form of popular culture and which lent themselves as heritage?
2. What led to the demise of cinemas in Ghana?

1.4 Intellectual Underpinning

Undoubtedly, people of the post-1980 era would wonder what type of movies were available in the past as well as their impact on the lives of the people in the pre-1980 era. My interest has been aroused to delve into the study of foreign films in Ghana and their impact on social life and popular cultures in the 1960s and 1970s. Berry's model of acculturation theory concerns the adoption of aspects of foreign cultures (Berry, 1992). This occurs when individuals adopt the norms of a culture and graft them onto an indigenous niche (Ibid). It could be identified from the above statement that regular cinematic exposure may alter an audience's perceptions of their real world as well as their perceptions of the other world presented to them.

Popular culture also known as pop culture is a collection of habits, and values that are dominant in a society at a given time (Corthers, 2021: 48). The primary force behind popular culture is mass appeal. The most common pop-culture categories are entertainment, namely film, music, television, sports, fashion, and slang. Popular culture studies are multi-disciplinary and multi generic. The multi-disciplinary studies involve the works of scholars of literary critics, historians, sociologists, anthropologists and other scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Multi generic involves activities of the graphic arts, newspaper and magazine, journalism, film, broadcast media, and stage entertainment (Mintz, 1983:88). These disciplines and genres give information concerning popular culture. Popular culture is in a constant state of evolution. Therefore, the seams of heritage and history are an important part of its development (De Groot, 2009: 5).

The most common allusion to popular culture is that it is subordinate to high or elite culture (Strinati, 2004). In this context, popular culture is viewed as the vernacular of the masses in a given state, where a complex network of production and consumption produces an equally complex set of interactions between producers and consumers, resulting in popular culture among a community of people. Over time, popular culture becomes well-accepted and practised by a cross-section of the population and may become a heritage.

Films are objects, but they are products that a specific industry creates and sells to audiences who view them for amusement or enjoyment (Turner,1999 and Sorlin, 1991). The images allow the audience to have a certain connection to the outside world. In general discourse, therefore, popular culture is considered the “other” of high culture. Cinemas in Ghana served as a platform for popular mobilization of aspects of foreign cultures as a result of their mass appeal. Whether a film was intended to be didactic or purely for commercial entertainment, it often included cultural dialogue and texts that were familiar to some viewers or which viewers can associate with (Nanbigne, 2011:122).

Popular culture is not a thing or an entity. It is a process involving those who bring it into being, those who are responsible for its availability, and those who use it (Mintz, 1983:94). What is worth noting is that popular culture in the sense of its mass appeal regarding some particular practices, lifestyles, and narratives became an integral part of the social formation of various cinema-goers in Ghana in the 1960s and 1970s.

1.4 Research Problem

It is important to identify, document, and preserve the cultural heritage of the lifestyles of people within a particular epoch, in this case, 1960-1980, such lifestyles are still being practised to a large extent in our current heritage landscape. Thus, the researcher seeks to interrogate the frame of cinemas in Ghana as an examination of the symbolic seam of acculturation among Ghanaians during the period of study and undoubtedly in its generational aftermath.

1.5 Research Methods and Techniques

The data for this study was collected through ethnographic fieldwork, employing the use of video recording, voice recording, and interviewing knowledgeable people. The collection of data was undertaken between September to November 2021. Additionally, the researcher relied on, archival records and newspapers. Relevant secondary sources, namely, published books, journals, articles, and dissertations dealing with foreign films were consulted from libraries and online sources. Furthermore, I watched some of the foreign films on YouTube to gain first-hand experience of cultural products and narratives that inform them. I also did a reconnaissance survey of some movie houses where foreign films had been shown. This included Opera cinema house, Rex cinema, Palladium Cinema, and Roxy cinema all located in the central district of Accra. This exercise gave me insights into the potential population accommodated by the movie houses, a sense of social interaction that might have occurred outside the film structures and the advantages of the location of the cinema houses. Overall,

the reconnaissance of the movie houses provided me with perspectives on what it may have been like attending the cinema houses to watch foreign films. Apart from the exterior structure, visiting the interior allowed me to gauge where the film's screen, equipment, operators and audiences were located. These helped me to understand the craft and motivation of film-goers.

Regarding interviewing, the format was based on both one-on-one interviews and focused group discussions. An interview guide was developed and used in the field. The study sample was a total number of thirty (30) people between the ages of fifty-five years to Seventy years. As noted, people within this age range were primarily interviewed because their age-group range was likely to witness or attended the various foreign films that were shown during the period under study. Thus, the chosen sample of people likely had clear memories of their experiences of participation in watching foreign films.

Apart from face-to-face interviews, I used the mobile phone WhatsApp social media application for some of my interviews. Interview questions were digitally sent to the participants, who either typed their responses or recorded them using the WhatsApp voice note option and forwarded them to me via the same medium. The WhatsApp interviews provided respondents with the opportunity to thoroughly deliberate on questions before responding. This strategy was effective because it allowed me to communicate with respondents in-depth. And it saved me money by eliminating the cost of travelling to meet with respondents. Also, because some of the respondents were busy, this approach proved to be more convenient and efficient for them.

Lastly, field notes were kept on observations relevant to the study. To present more detailed data, most interviews were captured in videos and voice recordings supported with photographs. A digital camera and a mobile phone were the primary research tool in the

study. I used Canon 6D digital camera for photographs. I also used Samsung Galaxy Note 8 2017 android mobile phone to voice record some of the participants. The digital camera enabled me to obtain and take photographs of the current state of some cinema buildings in Accra.

1.5.1 Study Population and Sampling Techniques

The city of Accra was the sample frame for the study area. Although cinema houses and foreign cinema shows were seen all over the country. The researcher was able to visit some cinema houses in Accra to investigate the current situation and took some photographs for visual documentation.

Also, participants with diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds were easily accessible for interviews within the Accra metropolis selective sampling method was used. This sampling procedure was considered because it was time effective and also the researcher targeted people of a particular age. Appendix 1 shows the sample questionnaire with questions focusing on cinema and popular culture and heritage.

As noted, the study sample was a total of thirty individuals between the ages of fifty-five to Seventy years, pseudonyms are used to fulfil the ethical codes of research work. Table 1.1 shows the number of participants interviewed for the study. This includes participants for both Focus Group discussions and interviews.

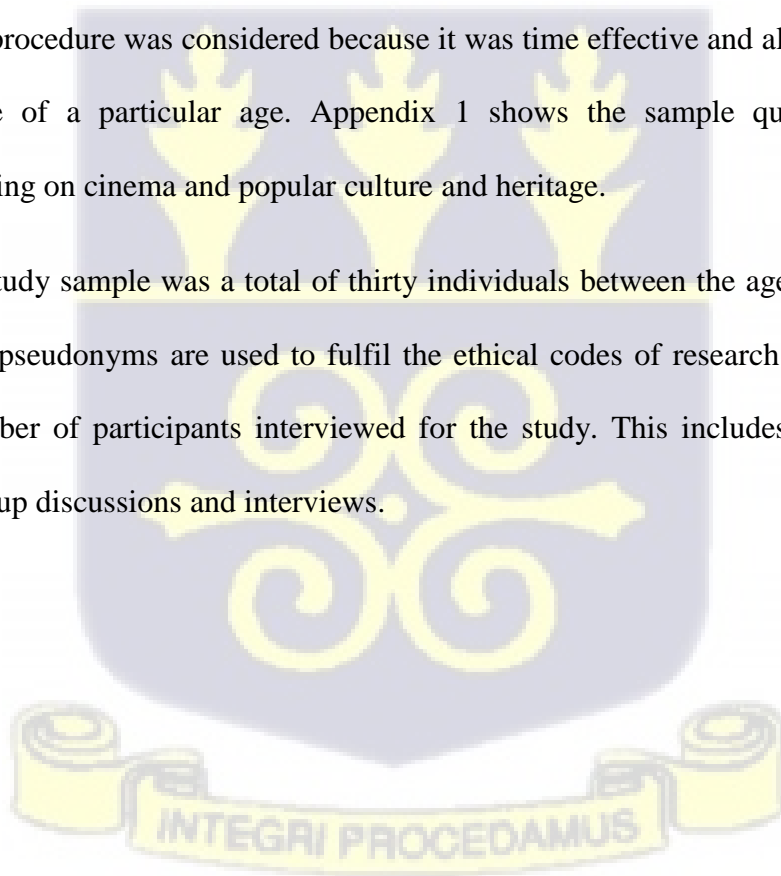


Table 1.1 Number of Participants at The Various Study Site

Place of Interview	Number of Participants
University of Ghana	15
Osu	7
Accra Central	8
Total	30

1.6 Literature Review

Little has been written about cinemas in Ghana during both the pre-colonial and post-colonial eras. This research contributes to filling the lacuna regarding cinemas and popular culture some of which translated into heritage. Foreign films and how they were acculturated as heritage form the core of this thesis.

The literature on cinemas reveals heterogeneous and complex ranges of events, including political, cultural, social and economic, all entertainment laden often associated with popular culture.

Information on Ghanaian cinemas is presented by some notable authors such as; Manthia Diawara, Birgit Meyer, Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike among other scholars (Diawara,1992; Meyer,1999; Ukadike,1994). *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (1992) by Manthia Diawara devotes two chapters to the discussion about filmmaking in Anglophone African countries with emphasis on Ghana and Nigeria. The book also provides information on films in Sub-Saharan Africa, before the early1980s. The first chapter on Anglophone African production provides a brief history of the British Colonial Film Unit and the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment in Eastern Africa in the 1930s. In addition, Diawara worked on film productions in independent Ghana and Nigeria until the 1970s (Schmidt, 1993:150).

Black African Cinema (1994) by Nwachuku Frank Ukadike also offers a great deal of information about cinemas in Ghana. Ukadike's *Black African Cinemas* traces the evolution of African films, both documentary and fictional, from their introduction by Europeans to their most recent production. The third chapter of his book, "Development in Anglophone Film Production", explores several cinematic settings in Africa, detailing various approaches to cinema while looking at popular culture and media. Ukadike mentions some fascinating term manifestations, such as, "picture books" which use photos of African models/actors with captions to depict adventures borrowed from non-African genres such as the Western Tarzan films, Rambo, and violent pulp fiction (Ukadike, 1994:195). Most of the chapters also explore television and cinematic production in Nigeria and Ghana.

Brigit Meyer's article *Popular Ghanaian Cinema and "African Heritage"* (1999) also gives a glimpse of the Ghanaian popular cinema industry that emerged in the 1980s. Her paper gives a brief history of the Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) and discusses the themes of films produced by Kwaw Ansah and King Ampaw. Although all the authors wrote extensively about African cinemas, none of them has rigorously worked on popular culture in Ghanaian cinemas and the ways that they influenced a generation that imbibed features of foreign films as popular culture. Eventually becoming a foot bridge of heritage.

1.8 Research Challenges and Mitigations

The limitation encountered in conducting the research was access to film data. There was also great difficulty in accessing literature on foreign cinemas and popular culture in Ghana.

1.9 Significance of Research

UNESCO's definition of heritage has much to recommend: "Heritage is a legacy from the past that we live with today and passed on to future generations". The need to safeguard intangible cultural heritage is a crucial issue of world concern (UNESCO, 2003). The

convention for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage recognizes that identification, documentation and research are integral measures (UNESCO 2003: 4). Heritage connotes inheritance and some kind of cultural, social, political and economic legacy passed down from one generation to another with the intention of safeguarding, conserving, and preserving.

This study adds to the limited literature on cinema's tangible and intangible heritage and the symmetrical relationships among foreign film, popular culture and heritage in Ghana, focusing on 1960 to about 1980. In this regard, the research would help to preserve the history of foreign cinema, popular culture and heritage. It would also add to the body of knowledge about cinema in Ghana in general. Additionally, It will provide an in-depth understanding of the interpretation and significance of the social change in Ghana. In many ways, the study ultimately advocates for a reconsideration of cinema traditions as a potential source of Ghanaian heritage, culture and history.

1.10 Organization of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter two presents information on the history of foreign cinemas. This chapter reviews relevant literature on the study, including literature on cinemas, heritage and popular cultures. The literature review will trace cinema progression in Ghana from the colonial to the post-colonial periods. The chapter further gives a general overview of early cinemas in the then Gold Coast, now Ghana, to the post-colonial decades of 1960 - 1980.

Chapter three focuses on the ways that popular culture informed by watching foreign films impacted Ghanaian culture, serving as a source of tangible and especially intangible heritage. This includes fashion, gait, slang, accent hairstyles, sports specifically taekwondo as a result of the influence the foreign movies.

The fourth chapter summarizes the research and draws conclusions based on the results. It also provides suggestions for potential future areas of research.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 The Concept of Cinema

Cinema has evolved from a simple mechanical recording of nature and events to a multifaceted tradition of art, technology, business, and intellectual pursuits. According to Mast & Kawin (1996), “the important question for the first film audience was “Is the image discernible” rather than “Is the image meaningful?” (Mast & Kawin, 1996:1). Cinema tends to shape our beliefs, attitudes, and, ultimately, our behaviour as a people. The wonder of seeing reality displayed on a screen was viewed as photographic arts' quest for realism and movement (Bazin: 2005). Cinemas are formed when the act of movement is incorporated into a series of images.

In film narrative, the images represent ideas, ways of thinking and feelings (Kolker, 1999). Arthur Marwick pointed out that one reason for studying film is that it diverts historians' attention away from traditional topics and high politics and toward issues that affect ordinary people (Marwick, 1989). People have been trying to figure out why cinema has captivated humans and society for many years. Films convey information and ideas, as well as show us places and ways of life that we may not be aware of (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008:4). It is important to understand that cinemas comprise some genres which are cinematography, film, film industry, filmmaking and Movie theatre (Bazin, 1999: 47).

Bordwell and Thompson's film history book may be regarded as a significant contribution in terms of confronting the complexities and events that occur in cinemas around the world. Hypertext, technological inventions, cinematic currents, and major single films all serve as themes of the book. Thus, they critically provide the fundamentals of filmmaking (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

Michaelis, cited in Ivor Montague (1964), gives a good definition of cinema as “A series of separate images recorded on the same continuous ribbon and exposed at standard intervals of time to represent successive phases of movement; when displayed in the rapid sequence above the fusion frequency of human vision, the separate images persist in the observer’s mind long enough to reproduce the appearance of continuous motion” (Montagu, 1964: 14). This means that we learn from films and they shape our ideas and acculturate us.

Films from all over the world are thus not confined to tight compartments of their nationalities but are interconnected with one another based on their historical relevance and narrative techniques. Allen & Gomery (1985), stated that film history became a serious academic discipline in the 1960s as a result of the development of cultural studies and, in particular, the elevation of cinema from a so-called cheap side-show entertainment for the masses to a part of important cultural phenomena worthy of serious study. Sobchack (2000), also suggested that during the 1960s, film Studies attempted to establish itself as a genuine subject of academic enterprise and cinema as an aesthetic and historical form worthy of serious scholarly study within the academy. The evolution of film from a cheap spectacle to a serious art form was aided by the immigration of many European directors whose work was regarded as art. Cinema studies expanded in universities and colleges in the United States. According to Allen & Gomery (1985), it is a logical extension of other academic subjects like literature, rhetorical criticism, journalism, broadcasting and media theory, heritage and history. The growth of film studies and interest in cinema as a kind of culture increased the demand for film grants, particularly scholarships that could be used as textbook material in film classes (Allen & Gomery, 1985: 28). In many ways, film history was a chronicle of inventors, innovations, businesspeople and business arrangements, as well as film directors and the forms and styles of the films themselves.

2.1 The Development of Cinema in Ghana

In Ghana, there is not much literature on cinemas. Two important texts devote a great amount of attention to Ghanaian cinema. Some information was gleaned from some journals and articles that offered historical accounts or interpretations of cinema in Africa as a whole, and Ghana in particular. Manthia Diawara's *African Cinema- Politics and Culture* (1992) devotes two chapters to discussions of filmmaking in Anglophone African countries, focusing on Ghana and Nigeria. Diawara establishes a historical context within which the politics and culture of African cinema can be comprehended, with a focus on the economics of film production and distribution, and how these affect ideological and formal considerations. He recounts the emergence of filmmaking in Anglophone Africa from the time European colonisers conquered Africa and partitioned it, introducing missionaries and cinema to Africans. The use of movies for colonial exploitation, wartime propaganda, and the persistence of a neo-colonial system even after African independence are all significant themes (Nanbigne, 2011: 27). Diawara also analyses the state of filmmaking in Anglophone countries, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s. Diawara examines the structure of film production and exhibition in Ghana and offers a brief history of the Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC).

Nwachuku F. Ukadike *Black African Cinema* (1994) also offers a great deal of information about cinema in Ghana. Ghana is mentioned in almost every chapter of the book, especially in the sections where he discusses Anglophone African cinema. Ukadike (1994) undertakes a theoretical and conceptual formulation of Ghanaian filmmaking, both by the government-controlled production company, that is the Ghana Film Industry Cooperation (GFIC) and by independent filmmakers, rather than a historical account of cinema in Ghana. Ukadike (1994) also discusses Ghanaian cinema. His research establishes a historical background in which

the political and economic components of film in Africa are situated within colonial and postcolonial contestation settings. His investigation of the infrastructural development of cinema in Africa, ideological and aesthetic trends, traditional influences on African film form, and the reception of films by African audiences are set against the backdrop of postcolonial deconstruction of Western hegemonic forms of expression, as well as Africans' efforts to negotiate their ideologies, cultural repression, and the reception of films by African audiences.

Some African scholars believe that storytelling is the foundation of cinema and, as such, has a universal appeal. According to Ukadike (1994), Africans have engaged in storytelling as a socio-cultural activity long before the Europeans introduced cinema technology. He claims that there was a system of advanced communication that merged dance, folklore, sculpture, songs, rites, and ceremonies into a holistic entertainment, educational, and instructive work from a postmodernist standpoint. Thus, he found parallels between indigenous African storytelling and modern forms of storytelling in cinema in terms of structure, dramatization, plot, and themes (Ukadike, 1994:22). The cinema in the colonies was a medium for education, reorientation, and propaganda aimed at sustaining the 'white man's burden' and was of cultural hegemony that saw Africans as the inferior "other". According to Ukadike (1994), the core of European colonial ideology was to cut Africans off their traditional roots, and showing films was one of the main strategies for that goal.

According to Ukadike (1994), European colonisers were initially apprehensive to enter the African heartland because they still saw the Blackman as a violent creature. As a result, they needed to devise a strategy to counteract the so-called African hostility while also courting the latter's hospitality. Christian missionaries were hired to carry out this mission, which they accomplished by converting Africans into Christianity. This was done with the help of Bibles

and film projectors. They were able to expand their hegemonic evangelism from the coast into the interior, where they showed films about stories in the Bible. This drew a large crowd, leading to acculturated conversions to Christianity.

Christian missionary groups in West Africa were essential in bringing film culture to the sub-region. Missionaries linked to the Basel Mission (BM), a Christian group formed in 1815 in Switzerland, took the first documented pictures on the Gold Coast (Jenkins & Geary, 1985). Jenkins asserts that the BM possesses photographs of a little girl called Wilhelmine Locher in its archives dating as far back as 1857. Wilhelmine's father, who was on a mission to the Gold Coast, took the photos. Other images of indigenous people, mostly from the Gold Coast, can be found in the BM archives (Jenkins, 1993). According to Christraud Geary, the photographic medium aided the BM and other missionaries in raising funds from people in Europe with the ardent hope of saving poor pagans for Christendom. In this regard photographs effectively functioned as insurance for much-needed financing for missionary activity in the colonies. While the BM photographs were created in the setting of still photography, they foreshadowed the crucial role that film began to play in the missionary dissemination of Christianity, notably in Africa, shortly after its inception.

Ukadike (ibid:30) argues that the missionaries used these visual tools to accomplish two goals: first, they were able to attract and convert larger and more curious audiences, and second, they were able to seize African culture in what amounts to a cultural rupture with Africa's past. The colonists only moved in after that to establish their political authority and institute new laws. The different roles of films were quickly recognised by indigenous people. However, a mix of film and the Western educational system developed a corps of African aristocratic elite who began to understand their colonised status and felt the need for

enhanced social amenities and a stake in political power as they were being indoctrinated into Christianity.

Later, Catholic missionaries joined the endeavour to use movies for evangelization on the Gold Coast though only as part of a colonial agenda to get to know Africans. It is prudent to say that, once the colonialists had established contact with the majority of people in a colony, they looked into the propaganda possibilities of film, both to consolidate their political power and to keep the natives submissive and loyal. They mostly focused on the accomplishments of the British Empire. According to Roberts (1987), Cadbury (the British chocolate company) released a video in 1913 to promote their model factory at Bournville. They also made “Message of the Drum” in 1930, which was a film about cocoa production and marketing on the Gold Coast, followed by another about coastal forts and fishermen in 1933 (Roberts, 1987: 197).

Commercial cinema screenings first appeared on the Gold Coast in 1913 (Collins, 2007: 151). According to historical records, the Cinematographic Palace, the first cinema house on the Gold Coast, was opened in 1913 in Accra by the British company John Holt Bartholomew Ltd (Meyer, 2015: 41). This was championed by John Holt-Bartholomew with the British commercial trading company, which developed cinema halls to show predominantly films from the North American Hollywood industry. Additionally, the Second World War had its influence on the Ghanaian entertainment culture. British and American troops were stationed in Ghana, particularly after 1942. As a result, numerous foreign soldiers and Ghanaians formed swing-music bands to entertain the troops. Sergeant Leopards’ Black and White spots, the Tempos, and the Fireworks four were among the bands (Collins, 2007: 155). One of the earliest cinema houses in Accra, called Azuma, was a local Ghanaian elite venue that opened in 1910. Apart from the fact that it was one of the first, there is no information available regarding this theatre. Azuma House and Merry Villas, both in Accra, were

described by John Collins as centres of elite gathering and amusement, with largely European and few African elite clientele (Collins, 2007: 152). The Palladium Cinema then opened its doors to the public in 1922. The fact that the Palladium was used as a dance hall for the local elite demonstrates that film was at the forefront of modern urban entertainment at the time. Its owner, John Ocansey, a wealthy Ga man also established Ghana's first bank and established more theatres throughout the country (Meyer, 2015: 41). More importantly, the establishment of the Palladium chain of cinema houses by a Ghanaian businessman named Alfred John Kabu Ocansey in the middle of the 1920s boosted commercial film exhibitions on the Gold Coast. A hand-cranked projector was used by Ocansey to show silent films to paying audiences. Audiences were observed actively participating in the narratives through commentary and loud reactions. When there was a chase sequence, a fight, or some other action, for example, audiences were said to yell and urge the projector operator to crank the projector faster (Dadson, 1998).

The Palladium cinema house in James Town, a suburb of Accra, not only showed silent films from largely the United States but also presented comic performances and tap dance. John Collins explains that this may have been the start of Ghana's concert party theatre tradition (Collins, 2007:153). Even though locals on the Gold Coast were active in the cinema business as early as the 1920s, those involved in the business only had the technology to recount stories that had been developed by others. Even so, because it was viewed as an aristocratic media reserved for the privileged few, entrance to see the few films available was extremely limited.

Throughout the 1930s, Ocansey, Bartholomew, and other businesses used cinema vans to travel to the rural areas, especially the cocoa-growing areas. Films were brought in from India, America, and the United Kingdom. Typically, they were divided into sections, so that a full movie might be screened across three or four evenings (Meyer, 2015:41). Despite these

changes, the British colonial administration maintained complete control over the types of films that may be viewed in the colonies. This is due to the colonial ideals of the whites (Said, 1979:36).

Since viewing movies was gradually becoming a popular leisure activity, in 1932, a Lebanese, Salim Captan, founded Captan Cinema Company and entered the film industry by purchasing the Palladium Cinema. He eventually purchased all of the other cinema houses previously owned by Ocansey. Salim Captan opened the Opera Cinema in 1940, followed by a series of other cinema theatres in Accra (including Olympia, Orion, and Oxford), Kumasi, and some key towns in cocoa-growing districts. West Africa Pictures Limited, another Lebanese firm, operated cinema houses in Accra including the Plaza, Rex, Royal, Regal, and Roxy. The Indian Nankani family also opened several cinemas in Kumasi in 1950. These cinema companies also distributed movies and shared them (Meyer, 2015: 42). Cinema operators continued to screen foreign films. For example, the audience showed a great desire when they watched Charlie Chaplin or cowboy films. Beginning in the 1950s, cinema began to flourish, extending into Accra's popular neighbourhoods and traditional Ga communities. In sum, it introduced its spectators to primarily Western films. Many of the cinemas built during the period were open-air and represented a modern type of commercialized leisure that addressed the need of an emergent urban population (Ibid, 43). As evidenced by the preceding discussions, urban audiences patronizing cinema houses have existed since the early twentieth century, with private cinema houses located across Accra, other towns, and rural areas.

2.2 Culture and Popular Culture

Raymond Williams (1983), described culture as the general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development. Culture can refer to a way of life, whether of a people, a period, or a group. As a way of life, culture allows us to speak to certain common behaviours in our

communities, such as beliefs, arts, laws, customs, and social behaviour among others. The term culture has many competing meanings. An understanding of the concept is dependent on the situation or context in which it is being used.

The term popular culture is always implicit or explicit in contrast to other conceptual categories like folk culture, mass culture, dominant culture, working-class culture, etc (Storey, 2009: 17). Storey explained popular culture as a form of culture that is widely liked by many people. One could examine the attendance of people at concerts, cinemas, sporting events, festivals and other public gatherings (Storey, 2009:21).

Dominic Strinati, in his book *An Introduction to the Theories of Popular Culture* (2004), focuses his philosophies and perspectives on popular culture. According to him, the growth of ideas of mass culture, from the 1920s and 1930s forward, is the historical source of the themes and perspectives on popular culture (Strinati, 2004: 1). Popular culture was identified not by those who practised it at the time, but by others, most likely future generations or the older generation who were actively involved during the period. Strinati (2004) evaluated a variety of popular culture theories, including mass culture theory, semiology, the Marxist theory of ideology, and postmodernism, to create a framework for analysing popular culture (Strinati, 2004: 247).

The introduction of mass production techniques into the making and viewing of films, as well as the mass consumption provided by cinemas, meant that they could be referred to as commercial products. The multifaceted network of production and consumption generates an equally complex set of interactions between producers and consumers, resulting in popular cultural texts, tastes, and consumer attitudes. Cinema and radio were arguably the first archetypally modern forms of mass media to emerge (Strinati, 2004:4). Those who viewed them fostered the commercialisation of culture and ideas and tended to embrace everything

they found interesting and incorporate them into their daily lives. What this simply implies is that mass media (cinema) and popular culture are important institutions that control and shape other types of social relationships. Therefore, media images dominate our sense of reality, the way we define ourselves, and the world around us. Popular Culture is in a state of constant contention and evolution. Therefore, the representation of the historical aspect is part of its development and can be transcended to the present (De Groot, 2009:5) What is important to note is that popular culture, in the sense of its widespread acceptance of specific practices and narratives, has resulted in the development of various national cinemas in Ghana.

2.3 Popular Culture in Ghanaian Cinemas

Framing cinema within the context of culture necessitates an examination of cultural production's symbolic practices as well as various other expressions of power, knowledge, identities, and hegemonies. Crofts (1998) argued that culture provides a unique circumstance for nations to affirm their identities and common consciousness against the hegemonic powers of major global commercial interests. Culture remains a key issue in cinema discourse.

Most African writers on popular culture agreed that practitioners of popular performance and popular art are primarily drawn from African society's intermediate groups. These groups consist of (urban or urbanizing Africans, skilled and semiskilled artisans, transport workers, seamen, traders and so on) who have emerged as a class different from the national elites and the vast class of subsistence farmers (Collins, 2017).

It is worth noting that the invasion of foreign films in Africa occurred even when there were few cinema halls on the continent. Cote d'Ivoire used to have seventy-five (75) cinema halls during the years of full economic boom. There were about twenty (20) in Mali, nearly thirty

(30) in Cameroon, seven (7) in Namibia, and fifteen (15) in Guinea Bissau by 1970 with foreign films and alien cultures (Tcheuyap, 2015: 139).

Ghana was no exception, oral interviews and newspaper articles confirmed that cinema halls were scattered throughout the country, particularly in the major regional capitals of then ten existing regions. In context, the majority of these cinemas screened French, Indian, Chinese and American films (Tcheuyap, 2015: 138). Many theatre owners preferred showing Western products, particularly Kung Fu and Hollywood action films (Meyer, 1999: 94).

Indeed, under British colonial rule, the popularity of films occurred especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Takoradi, Accra, Cape Coast, Winneba and Salt Pond as well as the interior urban centres like Kumasi and Obuasi became melting pots of various imported artistic performances. Not to forget European regimental brass-band marches, classical symphonies, ballroom dances, hymn harmonies, American vaudeville acts, and silent movies. It was in these centres that the Africanization and acculturation of these foreign performances thrived (Collins, 2017: 179). Through the bars that catered to them, British and American servicemen had a significant impact on local popular culture, including silent movies, the big band genre of American jazz, short films by Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, and others (Collins, 2017: 180)

2.4 The Concept of Heritage

Some Key scholarly works have focused on defining what constitutes a heritage (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Aplin 2002; Howard 2003 and Smith 2006). Heritage is a cultural practice that involves the construction and regulation of a variety of values and understandings. Aplin (2002), underscores that cultural tangible such as landscapes, historical monuments, and archaeological sites as elements that frequently gain centre stage in terms of heritage since they may contain vital information about significant stages of human

development that is important to future generations. UNESCO may have been the first to provide a solid definition of heritage. According to UNESCO's definition, "heritage is a legacy from the past that we live with today and pass on to future generations". Whereas other scholars like Laurajane Smith (2006) define heritage as intangible symbolising particular values and meanings with traditional ideas and acts with embodied meaning and effects (Smith, 2006:57). In furtherance, heritage is a cultural process that involves acts of remembering and creating new ways of understanding to engage with the present. Africa as a continent has a rich cultural and natural diversity, as well as an enduring heritage, as the cradle of humankind. Africa is also distinguished by high levels of religious and ethnic diversity, as well as a diverse intellectual, tangible, and intangible heritage (Ndoro & Wijesuriya, 2015:131).

For this thesis, Aplin (2002) outlined the relevance of tradition and culture in the heritage discourse, citing intangible cultural assets such as drama, music, and dance, some of which are commodified and commercialized for the sake of legacy preservation. It is important to note that cinema falls 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)

Because of the unique qualities of the medium, cinema can be recognised as an important intangible heritage asset. In its contents, cinema can record, present, and showcase tangible cultural heritage.

2.5 The Ghanaian Cinematic Heritage

In contemporary Ghana, cultural heritage is a source of heated public debate and contestation, but it is also, and increasingly so, a source of entertainment and marketing. Cultural heritage has long been associated with state efforts to articulate a national culture, but it is now being mobilized in a variety of ways and for a variety of different purposes, including commercial ones (Witte & Meyer, 2012:44). Heritage and cinema are thus not to be understood as distinct realms that merge in the process of media representation, but heritage is intrinsically mediated.

Again, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004), argued that heritage is more than just things from the past. Heritage is a cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). Gonçalves et al. (2003) and Munjeri (2003) investigated the place and value of intangible heritage, arguing that the tangible is dependent on the intangible for meaning and purpose. In the film and video industries, the interconnectedness of tangible and intangible heritage is obvious and critical.

Blumer as cited in Lang, K. & Lang, G. E. (2009), attributes the concepts of mass cultures related to moviegoers and identifies them as a different type of audience because of the content of films they subscribe to. Blumer's theory of mass cultures states that “they are individuals with heterogeneous background, different families, communities, local cultures and class affiliations. This mass has no form or organisation, no program, no rules, no tradition and no culture. It has no group consciousness, no we-feeling, no bound of loyalty. In it, the individuals are anonymous, have no social positions and no designated functions” (Lang & Lang, 2009: 1018)

Rebecca Ohene-Asah (2018), gives a detailed write up about post-colonial Akan film production in Ghana. Her research on Akan film production began with a history of the Gold

Coast Film Unit (GCFU), a film organization under British authority during the Gold Coast's colonial era. Following Ghana's independence in 1957, this organization was renamed the Ghana Film Industry Cooperation (GFIC). From the colonial era through post-independence Ghana, the above institutions set the pace for film production (Ohene-Asah, 2018: 30).

Ohene-Asah's main body of work is concerned with postcolonial cinema production within Akan video films and variations from established colonial film forms. She attempted to determine how the Akan video industry was organized by providing thorough information on Akan video production and describing the major structures of how Ghanaian Akan films were created. These structures comprised the crew, the equipment (cameras) utilized in filmmaking, language (Twi), filming locations (Kumasi and Accra), theme, promotion, and distribution (Ohene-Asah, 2018: 79). She emphasized the various types of video films that can be labelled as Akan video films, as well as how the Akan film industry has created filmmakers who have produced several Akan films (Ohene-Asah, 2018: 154).

The transfer of the Gold Coast Film Unit (GCFU) to the Ghanaian government coincided with Ghana's independence in 1957. The unit was reformed and renamed Ghana Film Industry Corporation under local administration (GFIC). The GFIC filmmakers aimed to use cinema to establish an African identity and a cinematic style that might be called African cinema. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's new leader, was confident that employing the media and film as vital tools for political education and mobilization would be the most effective way to create a new African personality following Ghana's independence (Ohene-Asah, 2018: 32).

The Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC), founded by Dr Kwame Nkrumah, has been a major focus of African and Ghanaian scholars to document Ghanaian cinema history. This is because it was an institution formulated by the government which served as a basis for articulating Ghanaian filmmaking to pan-Africanize and empower Ghanaians. Some

consideration is also given to the production of Ghanaian local films and filmmakers such as Kwaw Ansah and King Ampaw.

The film, *Love Brewed in an African pot*, produced by Kwaw Ansah in 1980, was a love story in the vein of Romeo and Juliet and was an attempt to popularize Ghanaian filmmaking. This movie is classified in the melodramatic category as a love story, set in a modern city, and deals with issues of social mobility only to end in tragedy (Diawara, 2010: 144). The lessons from this film address the utilization of African components to defamiliarize a well-known Western genre.

Another production of Kwaw Ansah film is titled *Heritage Africa* produced in 1988. In this movie, he depicts the career and downfall of a black district commissioner called Quincy who was originally meant to be Kwesi (meaning "Sunday-born male"). To highlight his closeness to the British and his new identity, he has changed his name to Quincy Arthur Bosomfield. His name Arthur was supposed to be Atta (meaning "part of twins") and Bosomfield meant to be Bosomefie (meaning "an illustrious ancestor who is born again"). Despite racism at the governor's office, Bosomfield does his best to adapt to the colonial rulers' definition of "civilization." He lived in a European house in the white quarters, went to church on Sundays with his family, took his work very seriously, and dressed impeccably. His mother eventually pays him a visit and gifts him a 500-year-old heirloom as a form of protection and pride in his ancestors. Quincy Bosomfield presents the inheritance to the British governor, who is an African art collector. When his mother learned what had happened to her present, she felt very unhappy (Meyer, 1999: 101). *Heritage Africa* is anticolonial cinema par excellence and has been celebrated by critics of African film (Ukadike 1994: 290).

King Ampaw wrote and directed two films in Ghana which are *Kukurantumi – Road to Accra* (1983) and *Juju* (1986) which tells Ghanaian stories with Ghanaian actors and a Ghanaian

technical crew. *Kukurantumi - Road to Accra* is a narrative of Addey, a truck driver, and his family's troubles. Addey commutes between his village of Kukurantumi and Accra, but he's beset by a series of misfortunes, including an accident, that has landed him in serious debt. Addey decides that one of his daughters, Abena, should marry Mensah, a successful Accra businessman, to raise money to pay his creditors. Abena rejects her father's choice of husband and, to avoid a confrontation with him about it, she flees to the city to pursue her fortunes. To her surprise and disappointment, the city is not as glamorous and spectacular as she had imagined. She instead finds herself amid unemployment, corruption, and prostitution. Abena is unable to find work due to her lack of education and special skills, and she is forced to join her companion Mary in prostitution.

With the introduction of video technology in the early 1980s, a lot of foreign films flooded the country. Previously, the elites and upper-middle classes were the only ones who could afford to go to the cinemas. The Government Information films and the biblical stories told by mission organisations were the only films available to ordinary Ghanaians (Meyer, 1999: 97). Until the late 80s, more than 95% of films exhibited were foreign.

However, there is less concentration on documenting cinema tradition that evolved among Ghanaians between the 1950s through to the early 80s. Whereby people visited cinema halls to watch foreign movies. This tradition influenced the cultures of the people at the time, in their lifestyles, fashion, hairdos, gait, slang, performances such as band music and learning of karate. And some of the acculturation based on the film has become part of our heritage presently alive and breathing. The study fills a major gap in the film culture of Ghana and it brings to light the popular cultures that arose from foreign films experienced by Ghanaians at the time. Heritage is not static, rather it is always in a state of constant evolution and flux,

therefore some of those cinematic traditions that were embraced by the people at the time, still live with us.



CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It is organised under various sub-themes; cinema houses in Accra and owners, mobile cinema vans, urban cinemas hours and foreign films, titles, themes and narratives of some foreign films, foreign film-derived popular cultures among Ghanaians, foreign cinemas as heritage and demise of foreign cinemas in Ghana.

3.2 Cinema Houses in Accra and Owners

Based on information gathered from respondents during interviews, I inscrutably ascertained that foreign films gained roots in the late 1950s through to about 1980. It encompassed a business venture that entails entertainment and may be categorised as popular culture emanating from foreign films being shown in Ghana at the time. Cinema owners undoubtedly concluded that foreign films had caught the undivided attention of local audiences. As a result, cinema owners established more foreign film outlets across the breadth of Ghana. Thus, Cinema houses sprang all over the country, especially in the regional capitals and their coterminous enclaves such as Suhum, Oda, Sekondi, Prampram and other towns (Sakyi 1996:9). What Sakyi does not permutate is that these conterminous regions tended to be the commercial hub with the seemingly cosmopolitan urban population. This delineation is important because the inhabitants' outlook was beyond provincialism. Besides, commercial activities had given them the financial resources to patronise the foreign cinema houses and their products.

There were two types of cinemas. First cinema houses for those who lived in the cities and towns such as Accra, Kumasi, Suhum, Oda. These cinema houses were sited at a vantage and

accessible area of the town, for example near commercial centres. The second was the mobile cinema vans for those who lived in rural areas. The mobile cinema vans usually visited rural communities for example cocoa-growing enclaves (Mensah, 1989:9). Apart from Mensah's views, my informant added that mobile cinema vans tended to visit the rural areas at the end of the farming seasons. This made it possible for the mobile cinema vans to have more access to rural cinema-goers than otherwise. Alfred Ocansey, a rich Ghanaian businessman, founded the Palladium chain of cinemas in 1922. After a few years, Lebanese immigrants and other movie corporations became interested in the sector and began to build cinemas in Ghana (Ibid). Notable such cinemas in Accra are Rex cinema, Opera cinema, Roxy cinema and Palladium cinema among others.

In an interview session, one of my respondents stated that *“foreign films were showed in huge imposing cinema houses like Opera cinema, Orion cinema and Roxy cinema. Cinema houses were very popular at the time because there were a few black and white television sets in the country. Thus, cinema houses served as one of the sources of the main entertainment”*. The paradox was that there were virtually no real films such as VCD or easily accessible films online as we have today. As a result, foreign films became a magnetic force of entertainment and agency in popular culture (KI interview at Accra central).

Cinema houses showed foreign films produced in America, India, and other parts of the world. These became popular sites of socialization. For example, American genres of films like Charlie Chaplin and cowboy chronicles.

Some of the foreign films were shown in open-air spaces and served as a modern type of commercial leisure aimed at the urban population. The open-air cinemas were designed with a stage with a whiteboard or screen painted white to facilitate the visibility of the film being

projected. There were also seating spaces for the audience. The stage was normally open to the sky, with a roof over the seating area to provide cover from the sun or rain.

cinema houses were mostly owned by Lebanese, Syrians and Indian descent. Respondent two in the FGD emphasised that “*most cinema halls in Accra were owned by Lebanese Immigrant Captan*” Thus, Captan may be used as a case study of ownership of the cinema houses.

Meyer (2015), states that foreign cinemas gained popularity in society and were a popular leisure activity. Beginning in 1932, some wealthy local and foreign merchants began to venture into that line of business of building cinema houses. For example, Salim Captan, a Lebanese, founded Captan Cinema Company and purchased Palladium Cinemas when Alfred Ocansey passed on. He also established the Opera cinema on Cow Lane in the Accra Central business district (Meyer, 2015: 42). Captan eventually put up several cinema houses in different Accra suburbs, including Olympio in Labadi, Orion in Circle, and Oxford. In (Fig. 3.6) the name Capatan brothers and Co limited is boldly written at the entrance of the Opera Cinema house. This meant that if one was a cinema-goer during that period, there was no way he/she would fail to see the name on the building. This confirms why most respondents were able to recall the name Captan. A respondent mentioned.

... any cinema houses those days you saw that began with the letter ‘O’ was owned by Captan. Ophri cinema at Korle Gorno and Orbit cinema at Kaneshi were all Captans asserts. He mentioned also that the Dom cinema in Bantama Kumasi and Mikado cinema at Nsawam was owned by Mr Ocansey, however, after his death, his family leased these asserts to Captan (KI interview at the University of Ghana).

Around the same time, Indians swiftly organized a consortium and launched West Africa Pictures Limited, a film production firm. All of their cinema names began with the initial 'R' and include Rex cinema, Regal cinema, Royal cinema, Rialto cinema, and Rivoli cinema all located in Accra. The Indian Nankani family also opened some theatres in Kumasi in 1950 (Meyer, 2015: 42).



Figure 3.1: Image of Opera cinema.

Source: <https://cinemaintransit.wordpress.com/2010/12/20/cinema-houses-in-accra-circa-1969/>

Date Accessed: October 28, 2021



Figure 3.2: Rex cinema stage.

Source: Author's collections



Figure 3.3: The Rex cinema.
(Source: Author's collections)

The Rex cinema is an example of an open-air cinema house as seen in the photo above. A considerable number of the cinema houses built at the time were open-air cinemas.

3.3 Mobile Cinema Vans

To reach those who do not have access to the growing popularity of cinema houses showing foreign films, mobile cinema vans were used in rural areas and other backwater regions (Meyer, 2015: 40). For example, Alfred Ocansey and other movie entrepreneurs used cinema vans to tour other parts of the country in the 1930s. This was done to allow residents in rural communities, particularly predominantly thriving cocoa-growing areas, to have the same foreign cinema experience as those in cities (Meyer, 2015: 42).

According to one key informant, mobile cinema vans were quite popular in Ghana during the colonial and post-colonial periods. He described the operation of the mobile cinema van as involving Land Rover vehicles mounted with equipment, such as a white linen screen, a portable generator, a 16mm projector, and loudspeakers. Whenever the operators arrived in the rural settings, they set up the equipment and announced their presence to the community members. This was done either by word of mouth, the use of a gong-gong beater or the vans going through the principal streets of the town to announce films to be shown later in the evening.

Rural dwellers received not only foreign films but civic education in this manner. These were frequently presented at night. Foreign films were shown at night due to the technology it warranted: the projector to screen the films only worked in the dark. Also, the social routine of the people called for this because they were farmers and the only time, they are free for leisure was at night. As explained by one respondent in the focus group discussions.

...Foreign cinema was applauded as it brought information about health, environmental hygiene, things happening in the nation and the entire world, and other issues concerning education and good morals (Respondent One, in an FGD at the University of Ghana).

Thus, foreign cinema brought a wealth of information on local and global issues that seeded acculturation.

Another respondent mentioned that colonial rule facilitated the rise of mobile cinema units which consisted of a van, 16mm projector, reels of 16mm films, collapsible screens and cinema commentators. He added that the cinema vans were used for government educational campaigns on issues such as cholera eradication, vaccination programs, agriculture, census and other government programs and initiatives. However, after the message was delivered it was followed by a foreign film, for example, usually *Charley Chaplin (1915)* and *Robinhood*

(1954). Even in the aftermath of independence, cinema vans were still in use for the same purpose.

According to Collins (2017), the creation of local mass media and communications infrastructure during the 1940s and 1950s was initially employed to broadcast Allied propaganda. In 1940, the British colonial authority in Ghana established *Aban* (or “government”) cinema to broadcast news and films such as *The British Empire war series*, these were played in urban cinema houses alongside slapstick comedy. Additionally, four mobile film units catered for the rural areas (Collins, 2017: 183). By and Large, the cinema vans were owned by both government institutions and commercial cinema operators. What was important was that they exposed Ghanaian society to some form of foreign cinema content, thereby whetting the appetite of the populace for aspects of foreign culture emanating from the films such as fashion, hairdos, slang, accents, etc.



Figure: 3.4 Example of a mobile cinema van.

Source: <https://cinemaintransit.wordpress.com/2011/01/31/mobile-cinema-van-visits-prampram-ghana/>

Date Assessed: October 28, 2021

Five of my respondents in a focused group discussion (FGD) described how the mobile cinema vans operated when they arrived in targeted communities. When the cinema vans arrived at a venue, they informed people during the day about the type of film that will be shown in the evening and the time it would be broadcast. As a result, people bought tickets in advance. Tickets were offered on a per-person or per-household basis. The cinema vans are normally parked at a large open space such as a school park, a house with walls and a gate or a community centre, which could accommodate the audience.

One of my respondents remarked:

...cinema vans entered my village with music and the young ones (boys and girls) would run after them with joy. The driver would slow down as children sang 'Cinkyale Oya, oo Kyale, Oya Cinikyae Ooya', they sang this amid clapping and jumping with joy. (Respondent two in an FGD at the University of Ghana)

In the aftermath thus, the entire community gathered at the venue of the film around 7 p.m. This not only facilitated publicity but energised interest in the pending film show. The elderly sat on long benches, while children sat on the bare ground. Before the film technicians started rolling out the film, the cinema van commentators would announce their mission on issues such as civic education on cholera outbreaks, general educational campaigns such as promoting etiquette among young boys and girls, or other government policies. The audience was usually deafeningly quiet as they listened intently to the video being shown. When necessary, the audience laughed and yelled, with the cinema commentators interspersing the spontaneous response with explanations. The cinema commentators either worked with the Information Service Department or accompanied the van operators and drivers if it was privately owned. The cinema van commentators' duties included selling tickets, operating equipment, and providing commentaries. They provided commentaries because most of the foreign films were in the English Language. Thus, they translated into the local dialects for

the audience who did not understand the English language as the film roll seen in Fig. 3.5. below.



Figure 3.5: Example of a mobile cinema van commentator.

Source: <https://cinemaintransit.wordpress.com/2011/01/31/mobile-cinema-van-visits-prampram-ghana/>

Date Assessed: October 28, 2021

An informant recounts his experience as follows:

... the introduction of foreign cinema brought a new and different dimension of entertainment to my community. Although the cinema vans did not come very often, there was excitement any time they came. As it was the newest form of entertainment at the time people could have a glimpse of what happened in foreign lands. At the time also most villages did not have lights and were in total darkness. As a result of the generators attached to the cinema, vans gave us some lights. That alone brought so much fun and excitement to the community (KI interview at Accra central).

Other informants said that the cinema vans were a way for the British colonial administration to spread their foreign ideology through visual films. Among the other functions of the cinema carried out civic duties because they worked under the Information Services Department whose mandate was to convey government policies to the people.

3.4 Urban Cinema Houses and Foreign Films

Some of my respondents fondly remembered the joy the foreign films brought to them from the 1960s to the early 1980s. One elderly man describes his experiences as “unforgettable”.

He stated that:

... I grew up at a place called Kokomlemle in Accra. There was a cinema house called Orion nearby. Many people attended cinema shows at various times during the night (KI interview at Osu).

The time a film was shown was determined by the cinema house. There were different sessions both during the day and at night. The movie started at 4:30 p.m. at the Opera Cinema house. Matinees permitted youngsters of all ages to watch movies during the day. A respondent who lived close to a cinema house explained his experience as follows:

... I used to live at Mamprombi in Accra which had Plaza cinema and Royal cinema close to my house. The way people patronized foreign cinemas in my neighbourhood made one aware of how well it was accepted by Ghanaians. The cinema houses had two sessions in the evening, one at 6:30 pm and another at 8:30 pm (KI interview at the University of Ghana).

This is exemplified by the *Daily Graphic* newspaper advertisements (See Fig. 3.5). Newspapers and radio stations were the major forms of advertisements from 1960 – to 1980. Thus, foreign cinema shows were advertised in major newspapers indicating the time, venue and title of the movie that would be shown at every cinema house, both in Accra and other towns. Radio announcements in the form of advertisements carried the same format as the newspaper. Also, posters with information on films to be shown were posted on the premises of cinema halls. This way, cinema-goers got to know which film would be shown as well as the time and venue.



On my visits to some of Accra's surviving cinema halls, I saw that several of them were open-air cinemas, such as Rex and Roxy. However, others for example Opera and Palladium were enclosed cinema halls. Although I was unable to enter the Opera and Palladium cinema halls, the exterior revealed the architectural design of the structure. Rex and Roxy cinema halls were open-air cinemas and could only show movies at night or when a dark atmosphere was created.

There were two reasons for the time schedules of showing foreign films at night in open-air cinemas. The first was that the technology of projectors only allowed films to be shown in a dark or confined environment, while the second explanation considered was that a considerable number of people work during the day, making it more feasible to watch movies only after working hours. On the other hand, enclosed cinemas, such as the Opera Cinema, could show films both during the day and at night. As a result, they became more popular since anyone, particularly schoolchildren, could readily troop in at any time of day to watch foreign films. One respondent remarked that:

...I visited the Opera cinema. They had afternoon shows that worked well for school children. (Respondent three in an FGD at the University of Ghana)

3.5 Themes and Narratives Content of Some Foreign Movies

From the 1950s to the 1980s, cinema owners continued to screen foreign films. It was apparent that the market for foreign films was booming. Thus, a considerable number of Ghanaians were exposed to foreign films. One respondent recalls some popular films he saw at the cinema: *Sanders of the River* (1935), *Tarzan* (1981), *The Eternal Sea* (1955), *Cooley High* (1975), Bruce Lee's range of movies (1971-1981), and James Bond *007 series* (1961-1980).

The foreign films were mostly, American films and Asian films (Chinese or Indian). The themes of some of these films were mostly hero versus villain, adventure, romance, war, crime detection, science fiction and horror. In an interview, a respondent explained that:

... I remember the trend was a proliferation of Western and Indian films. In the case of the former, they involved a lot of fighting between cowboys and gangsters, ambushing, shooting, kidnapping, pursuing on horsebacks, love films are popularly known by teenagers as 'romance', while in the case of the latter, the Indian films constituted more of music and dance. As a result, the young men always preferred the action-packed movies and the ladies went in for Indian films (KI interview at University of Ghana)

These genres had several popular cultures or emergent heritage aspects, both tangible and intangible. Tangible ones as noted include fashion, slang, and physicality as in taekwondo. The intangible ones include the impact of hegemony and adulteration of the whites in cowboy movies.

FIST OF FURY (1972)

Fist of fury (1972), is a Chinese movie produced by Raymond Choo-Man-Wai and starring Bruce Lee a famous actor characterised and loved for his fighting skills involving the technique of karate. Hokama (2005) explains Karate as an unarmed martial- arts discipline employing kicking, striking and defensive blocking with arms and legs. The themes of the movie deal with topics of injustice, grief, revenge, love and consequences. In the movie, Bruce Lee plays Chen Zhen a student of Huo Yuanyia who happens to be his teacher. He fights to defend the honour of the Chinese in the face of foreign aggression and to bring justice to those responsible for his master's death. His master was a teacher of Karate, who taught students the martial arts. This in many ways mirrors our intangible heritage as Ghanaians on matters of justice, of being our neighbour's keeper.

The majority of Chinese films were action-packed, and fights based on the martial art of karate were applied. As a result, young people were influenced by these films. With the

introduction of Chinese action films starring Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, and Jet Li, martial arts became increasingly popular in Ghana. Young people were fascinated by the actors' fighting skills. People began to establish schools to teach young people how to defend themselves. Before it was recognized as a sport in the late 1990s, karate training in Ghana was a traditional martial art. Thus, one may argue that these popular culture arts evolved into a tangible heritage that exists to this day.

COOLEY HIGH (1975)

Cooley High (1975), for example, is an American comedy-drama film with African American characters that chronicles the story of high school classmates and best friends. The film was made in Chicago in 1974. The majority of the characters in the film were young teenagers (guys and ladies). The boys were typically spotted in jeans, shirts, and jackets, with flat hats to go with their outfits. Ladies were dressed in slacks, miniskirts, fitted tops, and jackets.

The film 'cooley high' was simply about teenagers doing what teenagers do, such as hanging out, going to school, partying, hooking up, cruising down the street, and fantasizing about the future. The film 'Cooley High' signalled the beginning of a change in African-American cinema away from Blaxploitation and toward more diverse depictions of black life.

The flat hats worn by the males in the film immediately gained appeal among most Ghanaian men, who referred to the hats as Cooley high, which was the film's title. Pop fashion has a big effect on Ghanaian guys. The word Cooley high, which referred to the hat, was worn not only in Ghana but throughout the West African subregion. The Cooley high hat is still worn today.





Figure 3.7: Image of Cooley High actors

Source: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0072820/mediaindex>

Date Accessed: 29 October 2021

3.6 Impact of Foreign Cinemas on Popular Culture on The Ghanaian Society

Depending on who defines it and in what context it is used, the phrase "popular culture" has diverse connotations. It is typically understood to be the vernacular or a culture that predominates within a society at a given time. Brummett (1991), in his book *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture*, defines pop culture as the areas of social life that which the general public is most actively involved. Popular culture is determined by the activities that people engage in their daily lives such as Fashion styles, the use of slangs, hairdos, greeting rituals, giants, and cuisine preferences. All are instances of popular culture that could easily influence society. In sum, Fashion, hairdos, gaits, greeting rituals and so on came to stay and hence can be constituted as heritage, however, appropriated. This is about theorizing that images couched in visuals and sounds of both popular culture and heritage mostly complement each other

The aspects of popular culture being documented for the aim of this thesis reflect how foreign movies in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s shaped the culture of Ghanaians. Foreign cinemas, as previously said, were a new sort of technology and entertainment introduced to the Ghanaian

public. Images people viewed on screens, in newspapers or in magazines have a powerful influence on them. Popular culture, in my opinion, permits vast heterogeneous masses of people to collectively identify with a given type of behaviour. Between 1960 and 1980, popular culture evolved from a diverse range of genres, including popular music and foreign films.

Within this period, one can conveniently say that aside from radio and newspapers which were the only form of media communication, the only visual thing that the Ghanaian population could experience was the act of watching foreign movies. This trend was not only limited to a particular age group but involved all members of the society both children and adults. Undoubtedly urban cities like Accra and Kumasi and other regional capitals had most of the cinema houses in almost all suburbs. The cinema operators found time to transport foreign films in cinema vans to rural areas, especially cocoa-growing areas. Therefore, the same movie that was seen in Accra was also viewed in areas beyond Accra, for example, Akuapem. This then makes it very appropriate to deduce that the same form of culture and its perceived attributes were experienced by the entire population in Ghana at the time.

Indeed, one of my respondents shared stated that:

The viewing of foreign movies was a sign of exposure to the non-Ghanian world and this experience was felt by almost every Ghanaian at one point in their lives, especially the folk who witnessed the immediate post-colonial years. At a point the more names of foreign movies you claimed to have watched, the more social capital and bragging rights you may have (KI at the University of Ghana).

Another respondent in a discussion recounts his experience briefly:

... I go to the cinema, I enjoyed watching foreign films. It was a measure of how cool one was and also a brief escape from our realities. Cinema halls were both outdoor and indoor recreational areas where kids and adults hung out. Most times, people outside did not make it inside the theatre but had much fun being outside. The cinema was seen as a leisure activity for relaxation and relief from stress and monotony (A respondent, in an FGD at the University of Ghana).

3.6.1 Popular Fashion Style

The study discovered various packages of popular culture among Ghanaians at the time (1960 circa 1980). These include dress styles, hairdos, lingo, gaits, and using names of foreign movie actors in naming children and using such nicknames. And as noted in many such have become a part of our heritage. Throughout the twentieth century, among other facets, foreign films had a major defining effect on Ghanaian culture and heritage, however long-lasting or ephemeral. The period was a watershed transformative change among all sectors of the population

The screening of foreign films influenced the taste and patterns of the fashion style of Ghanaian youth. Indeed the fashion trends shown in movies were immediately embraced by the youth, who began to incorporate them into their sense of appearance. As a result, Ghanaians began to connect with foreign pop fashion and identity. The American Zoot suit, oversize jacket, loose trousers, colourful tie and dark glasses were the rigueur. This was followed by the British ‘teddy boy’ fashion of super tight ‘drain pipe’ trousers (Collins, 2017: 191). The 1960s came in with the Italian pointed ‘winkle-picker’ shoe, jeans, oversized T-shirts, female slacks, miniskirts, and male flat hats, popularly known as ‘Cooley high’.

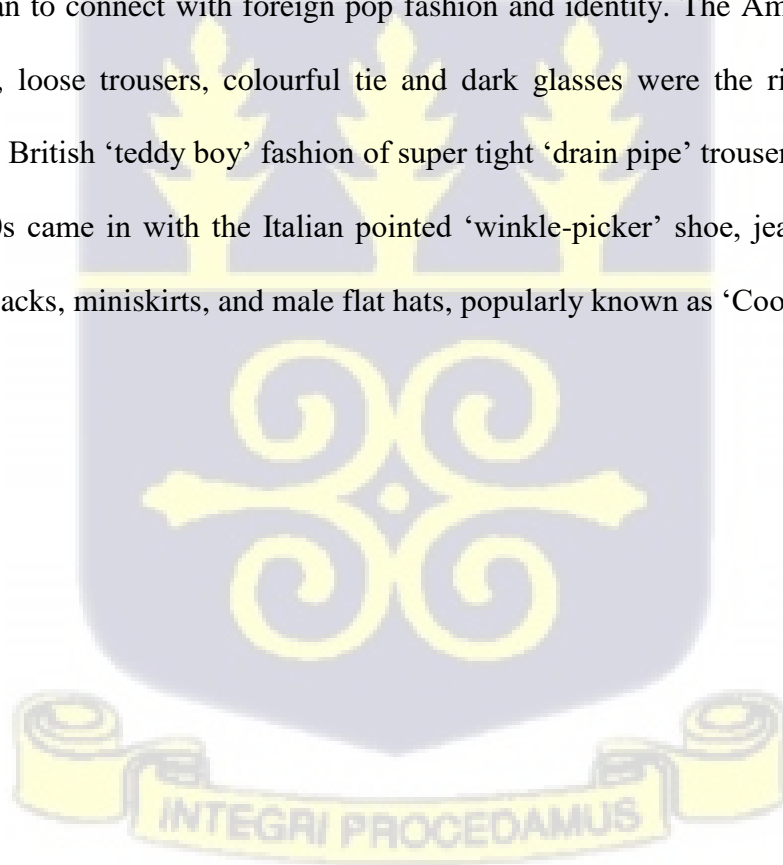




Figure 3.8: Image of bell-bottom trousers and oversized shirts

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/784118985093316260/>

Date accessed: 29 October 2021

An informant mentioned that:

... the popular fashion styles of my time were influenced by the movies we watched. Those were the days of Bell Bottom Trousers and Platform shoes popularly known as 'guarantee', maxi dresses. Copying of western dressing styles was common among the Ghanaian youths and elites. And cooley high was one of the foreign movies that brought about this popular fashion style (KI Interview at Accra central).

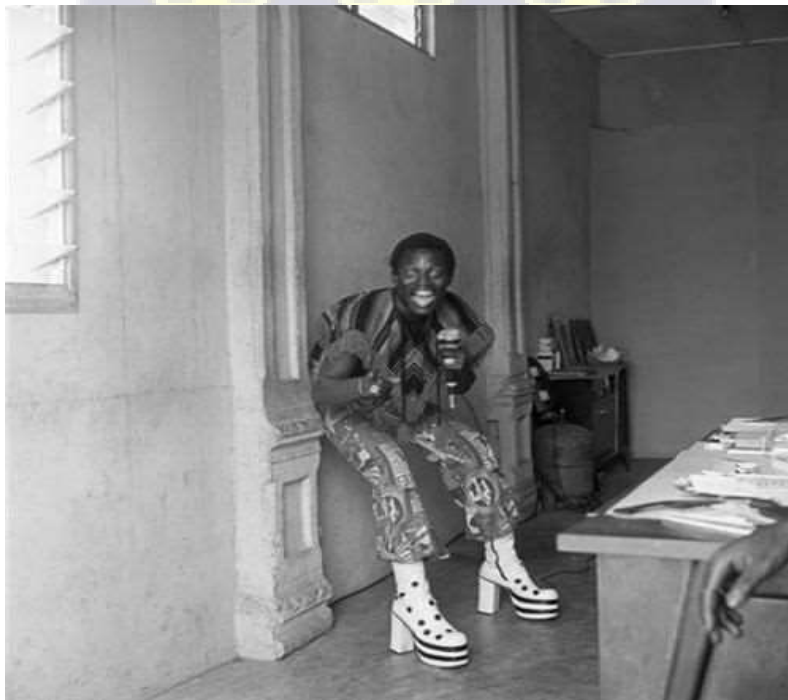


Figure 3.9: Image of a Ghanaian musician in Platform shoes

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/126382333267677071/>

Date Accessed: 29 October 2021

The Cooley High hats were generally worn by males of all ages. Only a few wealthy people could afford the brand new cooley high hats in the 1970s. As well, tailors began to sew locally manufactured ones so that any other layman could buy them. Similarly, bell-bottom trousers were all sewn locally by Ghanaian tailors. It should be noted that used clothes fashion was not as popular at the time as it is today. An informant confirms that:

... The cooley high hats were originally imported. Later, local tailors, particularly Ga tailors experimented and began to sew them (KI interview at Accra Central).

Some of the fashion styles popular in the 1960s and 1970s are still popular today. Men of various ages can still be seen wearing cooley high hats in modern times. The hats were not restricted to a specific set of people in society. One can wear it as long as it is affordable.

Bell bottom trousers, like guarantee and other platform shoes, have been enhanced and modernized, but it is apparent that the 1970s style still exists.

3.6.2 Popular Hair Dos

Full Afro hair-do was a fashionable hairstyle among both men and women in the 1960s. A considerable number of my respondent stated that big hairdos (Afros) were popular from the late 1960s to the 1980s. John Collins (2017) recalls that, in addition to young Ghanaians responding to soul music and Western Afro fashions, it resulted in an Afro orientation among the younger generation in the 1970s (Collins, 2017: 195). An interview with a respondent stated as follows.

... *The Afro! Managed to stay in vogue throughout the years. If you weren't spotting Afro in the 70s you were merely existing (KI Interview at Osu).*

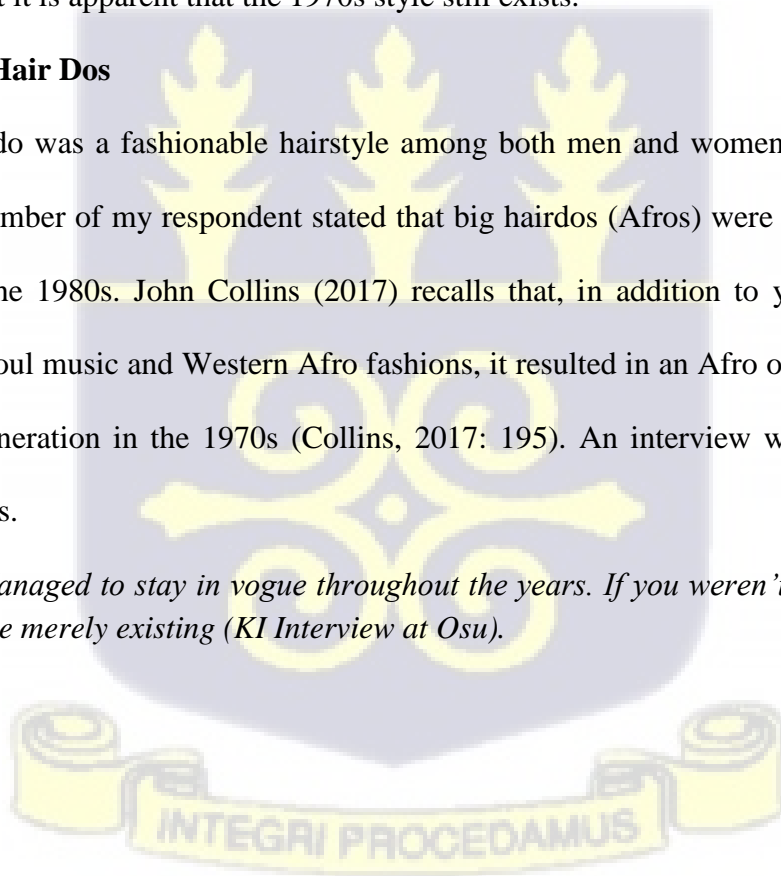




Figure 3.10: Image of ladies in Afro Hair.

Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/849913760904684245/>

Date Accessed: 29 October 2021.

Again, one of my informants stated that the hair texture of Africans helped the hair to appear denser as it grew. She explained that culturally, Ghanaians especially women wore their hair natural and full. As a result, the foreign films that portrayed full Afro hair-dos bridged the gender gap. Thus, both males and females adapted what they saw in foreign films. The African American populace, who adopted more traditional African hairstyles in the 1960s and 1970s, exemplified by foreign films shown in Ghana, influenced the Afro hairstyle. A respondent stated that the Afro hairstyle evolved as a statement of Black African heritage and empowerment of people of African descent. African American film stars wore full Afro-hairdos. This vast portrayal of heritage canvass was further enhanced by African American and social rights leaders, sports personalities, popular intellectuals who also faithfully wear Afro-hairdos

Indeed, according to Collins (2017), the Afro explosion was boosted by visits from American soul performers such as Wilson Pickett, Ike and Tina Turner, and Robert Flack, who performed at the 1971 Soul to Soul Concert in Accra (Collins 2017: 194).



Fig 3.11: Image of Black Fist Movie Advertisement

Source: <https://www.amazon.com/Black-Fist-Detective-Restored-Version/dp/B01LTHXNN8>

Date Accessed: 29 October 2021

One of my informants is worth quoting at length:

... Among the teenagers generally, the trend was how we wore our hair. Those days were characterised by Afro hair both among boys and girls. We would also wear baggy trousers and high-heeled shoes popularly known as 'guarantee shoes'. As far as the teenage boys were concerned 'guarantee shoes' especially, were the status symbol that represented the catalyst for romantic success with girls. 'No guarantee shoes and Afro no girl' seemed to be the norm. The outfit was Afro or bushy hair mostly movie stars and other legendary pop singers of the 60s and 70s (KI interview, at Osu)

In present-day Ghana, both females and males wear full hair, though not as normative as it was from the 1960s to 1980s. A cursory work suggests that a lot of people are beginning to re-embrace natural hair as opposed to permed hair. This observation goes for both young and

old and it cuts across all classes. In this light, one can conclude that heritage whether tangible or intangible is a continuous evolution of the historical development of a society.

3.6.3 Slangs, Accents, Names, Gaits

Adams (2012) explains slang as unconventional words or phrases that express either something new or something old in a new way. Slang remains distinct from colloquial and jargon terms because of its specific social contexts. While viewed as inappropriate informal usage, colloquial terms are typically considered acceptable in speech across a wide range of contexts, while slang tends to be perceived as infelicitous in many common communicative situations (Adams 2012: 10).

Slang is a type of language that consists of words or phrases that are considered to be particularly informative. Slang is more common in conversation than in formal writing among sub-culture people, though eventually, it percolates across other social groups. As noted slang is normally used by subcultures on particular occasions, but over a period, the slang may become popular (Ibid). Many slang expressions arose from foreign films and rapidly became terms used by cinema-goers. Some of these words immediately became part of Ghanaian daily lingua franca.

Words like *'chale'*, *'chale wote'*, *'abeg'*, *'jorley'*, *'chill'*, *'cool- man'*, *'go way'*, *'Your paa'*, *'Woesor - Woesor'*, *'blowman'*, *'killer'*, *'far-out'*, *'boogie'*, *'bump'*, *'borga'*, *'obroni style'*, *'girls-girls'*, *'Lungu - Lungu'* *'Killer Joe'*. For example, since most of the cinema houses were situated in Ga Communities, some of the slang mirrored the corrupted form of the Ga language. For instance, *'chale'* is a slang now very popular. For the cinema-goers the popular term was *'chale wote'*. *'wote'* is a Ga word meaning let us go, pronounced *'wor - tay'*. *'Chale'* means friend. *'Chale wote'* means my friend let's go. Below in Table 3.1 are a list of some slang and their literary meanings:

SLANG	MEANINGS
Abeg	Quit speaking what you're saying
Aluguntu	A Hausa parlance for short man
Boogie / Boogie down	Dancing to pop or rock music
Borga	A person who has returned from a trip overseas
Blow man	The protagonist in a film
Chill	Relax / Enjoy yourself
Cool-man	Mild-mannered person
Chale Wote	My friend let's go.
Far- out	Excellent / Perfect
Girls- Girls	A group of young ladies trooping out
Go way	Go away
Jorley	A good friend or Girlfriend
Keep on trucking	Keep on trekking
Killer	The villain in a film
Lungu- Lungu	Corners within a neighbourhood
Obroni Style	Depicting the white man's culture
Sakora	A male hairstyle in which the entire hair is shaved off the head
Taller	An extremely tall person
You paa	An expression of disappointment / An individual not meeting up to expectation
Woesor - Woesor	Good Punch / Nice Jab

Table 3.1 List of Slangs and Meanings

One of my respondents recalls that;

... it was a very common term among young people. It was mostly used when they were stepping out to the cinema. As they trooped to the cinema halls in groups, they passed by each other's house, mentioned the person's name and added 'chale wote'. This tradition was very common among the youths (K I interview at Osu).

The cinemas evolved into trendy spots of entertainment for a considerable number of people, including family, friends, peer groups, students and so on. As a result, the use of slang among cinema audiences became common not only on the street but at home.

Additionally, while watching a movie at the cinema sounds and phrases such as 'Woesor - Woesor,' 'killer,' and 'blowman' were all utilized in consonance with how actors behaved, particularly if it was an action film. The sound 'Woesor - Woesor' was commonly repeated to accompany the physical strikes or blows exchanged by the characters throughout their fights. Slang such as 'killer' referred to the villain, whereas 'Jack'/'Blow man' referred to the protagonist. Thus, in any ordinary street fight or pugilistic encounter, the winner is called 'killer'. Also, those who sought causes in their societies were referred to as 'killers' about the protagonist in movies who went after a good cause or had good intentions.

Names and nicknames were another big effects of pop culture on the population. Young men and women began to name their wards after foreign film actors. Individuals and other members of the community were given nicknames such as Fernando Sancho, John Wayne, Gary Cooper, Burt Lancaster, James Garner, Ronace Regan, Joanne Dru, to mention a few. Thus, a considerable number of nicknames were based on movie characters. A respondent in a focused Group discussion mentioned:

...Foreign cinemas brought kids together occasionally as we trooped down in our numbers to the cinema hall. The only influence I recall was the nicknames we gave to ourselves and other members of the community such as Gary Cooper, R.O Roland, Lancaster the majority of the names were about characters in the foreign movie (A respondent in FGD at the University of Ghana).

Such names were commonly heard when children wanted to re-enact certain scenes from a movie they had seen. People rapidly adopted the performers' identities, clothing styles, and gait.

Foreign films influenced the accents of Ghanaians, providing a glimpse into what life was like elsewhere. Based on that and foreign films, the few privileged who had the opportunity to travel there gave narrations of what it was like and how they spoke English. Because most of the films portrayed their foreign cities, way of life, and culture, the few foreign films that were screened gave Ghanaians a sense of living over there. An informant remarks:

...watching foreign movies also influenced our linguistic expression, we endeavoured to speak English like the white man. There was a great desire to imitate the accent of the white man from the foreign films (KI interview at Osu).

Aspects of intangible heritage can be seen above in slang, accents, nicknames, and gaits that emerged from foreign movies. Slangs like *chale wote* are still used today, either to refer to a person or to allude to a pair of bathroom slippers. Many young people try to speak English like the white fellow. One can certainly state that things from the past may be observed in the current day, and that heritage is continuous and keeps recreating lifestyles from the past.

3.7 Demise of foreign Cinemas in Ghana

... There were days that the cinema houses would get so full that people made beelines for tickets and waited for the next show to also have their turn. If the pillars of Roxy cinema could talk, they would be able to tell how the audience queued and crushed at the gate whenever there was a show. But sadly, like every other cinema house in Ghana at the time, foreign cinemas came to a halt (K I interview at the University of Ghana).

Some reasons accounted for the demise of foreign cinemas in Ghana. They would be discussed below. In Ghana, one may argue that popular entertainment including cinema was at its peak by the early 1970s. The country could boast of over twenty (20) cinema houses both within Accra and other regions (Collins, 2006: 145). The Ghanaian popular entertainment industry began to decline from the mid to late 1970s when there was a collapse in the Ghanaian economy due to mismanagement and corruption in local parlance called *kalabule* during the regime of Colonel I. K. Acheampong and General Akuffo military regimes. (Collins, 2006: 164). Following Dr Kwame Nkrumah's death, the Ghanaian political

space began to undergo various transitions of multiple coups. As a result, the country, its people, and its economy were all thrown into a state of disorder (Ibid).

As the general economy deteriorated, so did the commercial entertainment sector, which eventually came to a standstill in the late 1970s. One result was that many Ghanaians moved to neighbouring West African countries like Nigeria in search of greener pastures. For the part foreign immigrants, foreign company owners began to return to their home countries or relocate elsewhere.

The above scenarios of decline were followed by a period of political unrest; two military coups by J.J. Rawlings in 1979 and 1981. Among many destabilizing policies put in place by Rawling's regime was a two-and-a-half-year night curfew (1982-1984), which entirely wrecked nighttime entertainment (Collins, 2017: 199). The curfew required people to stay at home from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. or face punitive measures meted out by soldiers. As a result, fear and panic spread throughout the country, putting nightlife entertainment on the precipice of decline.

A considerable number of my respondents attributed the decline of both day and night entertainment forms to the curfew imposed by the Rawlings regime. For one thing, the public spaces remained unfriendly, and for another, people's movements where one would be before and after 6 am. Also, parents were very particular about their wards, especially teenagers who patronized foreign movies. Indeed, one informant's view, however evanescent or episodic is worth quoting at length:

...The curfew, as I and my contemporaries witnessed, was a reign of terror. It silenced Ghanaians. It limited our movements. It killed the entertainment industry as well as many aspects of the economy and social life in Ghana. Soldiers roamed the street both daytime and nighttime. People were mercilessly beaten. People were tortured in public to the dismay of all. To cap it all was the dreaded curfew. The landscape before 6 pm was chaotic as people struggled to get home. And by 6 pm, streets and public venues in Accra had been deserted. It was a time of anomy, a season of uncertainty and fear (KI interview at the University of Ghana).

The decline of public entertainment in the Rawlings era was followed by the introduction of new technologies such as video cassette players and televisions. The televisions came with advantages, such that families who could afford them could enjoy films in the comfort of their homes. Televisions enhanced family time together, therefore, people didn't have to go out to the cinema, which had vanished.

Additionally, the introduction of video technology in the late 1980s gave rise to video centres and low-cost video productions for local and low-budget audiences. This allowed Ghanaian filmmakers to begin creating local Ghanaian films such as *Diablo* (1987) by William Nana Akuffo.

According to Ohene- Asah (2018), video production in Ghana arose swiftly from the desire of primarily self-taught, self-trained employees, some of whom worked as auxiliary staff in the then-thriving Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) to see their ideas on the screen. Undoubtedly people had witnessed the rich economic rewards linked with international film screening and filmmaking in general. As a result, they continued the use of video technology to create movies for people to view in small video parlours in Accra. The video movement flourished because colour television sets and video players were popular in the country, and many people purchased this technology since it was more convenient to watch films at home (Ohene-Asah, 2018: 36).

3.8 Foreign cinemas and Heritage

According to Kirshenblatt Gimblett (2004), heritage is more than just things from the past. Heritage is a present-day cultural work that draws on the past (Kirshenblatt- Gimblett, 2004). Because of the importance and worth of intangible heritage, tangible heritage is reliant on intangible for meaning and purpose. In films, there are definite connections between tangible and intangible heritage. There is no denying that foreign cinema was formerly a major part of

a certain group of people's history and life experiences. It is only prudent to document these few decades of foreign cinema traditions that shaped Ghanaian society. This is significant in that among other things, it provided future generations with an understanding of the type of cinema technology that existed before the emergence of television and other modern devices that give easy access to films. Heritage can be both tangible and intangible. Aspects of both tangible and intangible heritage have been defined and discussed in the previous chapters that inform this study. The physical structures, namely cinema houses, represent the concrete parts, while the intangibles form the popular culture that arose from the patronage of those theatres.

The implicit notion that heritage had its roots in the deepest wells of the past may be questioned. This study has shown that contemporary popular culture can be fertile grounds for heritage whether tangible or intangible. In this sense, rich memories recovered from people watching foreign films, such as slang, fashion styles, sports, hairdos, and foreign names have continued to influence our heritage. Even if it is generational some are being transmitted. This means that memory is crucial to the sustenance of heritage. Through memory, heritage is served.

These cultural seams created both tangible and intangible heritage based on foreign films of the period under study. Such traditions of acculturations were grafted swiftly onto local Ghanaian culture and became a part of their way of life. Even though the act of going to the movies has died, the heritage born out of them has been sustained in many inalienable respects. The vestiges of the films remain strong among the populace. For example, Afro hairstyles are still popular, however, they are more toned down. People still wear jeans, T-shirts, sweaters, and cooley hats and some of the slang is still in use today. Heritage arising from popular culture does not go extinct; rather, it goes through renderings of change and renewals.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary and Conclusions

The fundamental focus of this thesis is that popular culture and its product of heritage in Ghana can be conceived when contextualized within specific historical periods and cultural frames. This is exemplified by the subject of this thesis that deals with the ways that foreign films periodized from 1960 to about 1980 served as a watershed of popular culture with heritage as its stable confluences. Thus, the study deals with how popular culture that evolved from foreign cinemas influenced Ghanaian society at the time and in many ways in its aftermath.

Higson proposes that cinema can be used to examine cultural patterns, agency, and representation (Higson, 2000: 64). These provide avenues for individuals to collectively identify and hence appreciate cinematic contents in their localities serving as routes to national heritage. According to Schlesinger (2000), popular culture and expectations of the performative arts, cinema, and media offer a conduit of national coherence that is dependent on the sharing of people's memories, acculturation, habits, and values. Cinema is one such agency.

The study deals with cinematic heritage and how it has influenced Ghanaian popular culture. I examined the historical template of cinema in Ghana from the colonial to the postcolonial era. To establish the facts required for the thesis, the findings were bolstered by oral data as well as historical documents. The major goal of the thesis was to pinpoint and discuss the various seams of popular culture that emerged as a result of the inexorable influence of foreign cinemas and ally them as inalienable frames of Ghanaian heritage.

The popular culture that sprouted through viewing foreign cinema may be classified as intangible heritage. The abrupt end of foreign cinema operations in Ghana as a result of political intervention and the introduction of new technologies brought foreign cinema as well as shows in cinema houses and social nightlife activities to an unheralded halt. However, these did not erode the popular culture and its heritage that grew from foreign cinema viewing. To this day, some popular cultures that emerged at the time and their vestigial frames are still widely evident among segments of the Ghanaian population.

Additionally, the thesis establishes that popular culture is a collective framework that is adopted by a large number of individuals in society. Throughout my interview sessions, respondents explained that during the period under study, the primary activity of many people, particularly the youth, was patronizing cinema halls to watch foreign films. It may be that the youth who was preoccupied with foreign movies may not have identified themselves as being immersed in popular culture that may be metamorphosed into beams of heritage.

The study's findings are organised around several sub-themes, including the founding of prominent cinema houses in Accra Central from the 1960s through to the 1980s, popular foreign film themes and storylines that engaged the undivided attention of cinemagoers, popular culture acculturated into the fabric of Ghanaian culture as outcomes of foreign films and the demise of foreign cinemas in Ghana due to political interventions.

The findings focus on pop cultures that originated from foreign films, such as fashion styles, hairdos, slang, accents, and gaits. The introduction of foreign cinema theatres into Ghana in the 1960s signified a massive shift in the people's social and cultural lives. The period heralded a new trend among youngsters. This is because people had a new type of socialization space conditioned by stories and activities about foreign films in their communities.

In essence, foreign cinema served as a magnet enticing Ghanaians to witness what was happening in other parts of the world. Since there were no televisions at the time, foreign cinema became a popular place for people to learn about other cultures.

The thesis offers a window on how foreign cinema first appeared in Ghana in the colonial period. It gave insights into the proprietors who began the cinema business. The data collected from the field established that both urban and rural communities had first-hand foreign cinema experiences. Based on the comments of respondents in urban regions, it was obvious that the same foreign films that were shown in urban areas were also seen in rural areas.

The findings show how some scenes and cultures from the foreign films were consumed by cinemagoers, resulting in a popular culture that was in many ways accepted by the population, and as noted translating into heritage, whether ephemeral or long-lasting. I suggest, based on this that heritage is not only about what is contemporaneous, but that which was in vogue for some time with vestiges that continue to influence a section of the society. For example, today, wearing Afro-hairdo is not as common as it was in the period under study. This said a few people continue to wear Afro-hairdo, either wig or natural hair.

Additionally, I have established that foreign cinema houses advertised foreign films via newspapers. Adverts were also plastered on the premises of cinema houses, while some were carried by mobile cinema vans. Information about films was also obtained through word of mouth and gong gong, the latter especially in the rural communities. These mechanisms of dissemination universalized interests in foreign films in both the urban and rural areas. Thus, popular culture emanating from films and its heritage products were nationwide.

Some of my responders had different viewpoints on the impact of foreign films. Although the majority of them thought it was an exciting time in the life of any young person at the time. Others felt it had both positive and negative aspects.

For example, a respondent stated that:

Some families held the view that foreign cinema was a source of negative influence on the youth. As a result, did not introduce their families to those entertainment houses. He alluded to the fact that his parents perceived that some of the film contents as advertised on billboards were potential pollutants that were likely to ruin the Ghanaian culture that was instituted within the household (KI Interview at the University of Ghana).

On the flip side, however, most of my respondents stressed how foreign films were embraced as exemplified by people's lifestyles, such as dressings, accents, hairdos, imitated walking skills, and even day to day activities and behaviours influenced pro-western trends in the foreign films. As well, even what people saw being eaten in the foreign films changed some people's preferences for foods and beverages. In other words, some people considered foreign trends as the ultimate and most sophisticated things to wish for.

Tendencies of change and continuity are a part of life. Today, although the act of going to cinema houses has faded, foreign films are regularly shown alongside local films on local television stations or other multimedia platforms. People's preferences for foreign content or lifestyles are on the rise in our part of the world, particularly when it comes to fashion trends. Clothing, sporting activities, and even slang have all been adopted. These trends may have their roots in the early 1960s as much as any period in the social engineering of Ghana's heritage, history and culture.

Acculturation was evident in cultural contact and exchange as Ghanaians adopted values that were not originally theirs. On the plus side, they were able to graft such onto local trends to create a cultural synthesis, not merely adopting the foreign cultures. In this case, the

Ghanaian may just sit in a movie theatre and experience the consuming ideals of the specific society in the foreign film without having direct interaction with the country or its people.

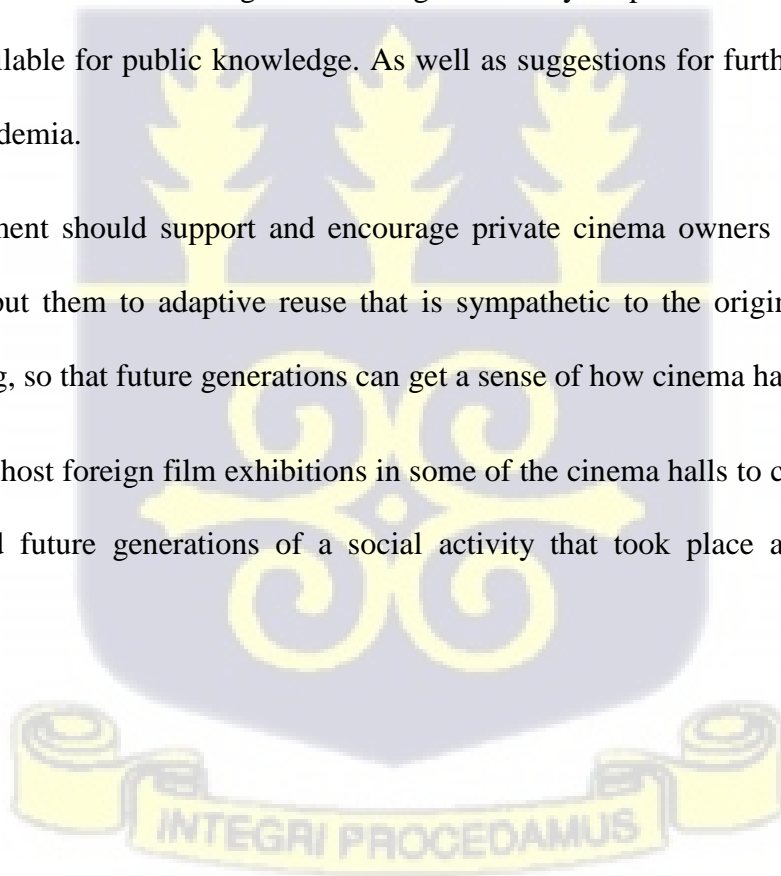
It is difficult to capture all parts of historical trends that coalesce into heritage in Ghana while ignoring the fundamental roles of the youth who contribute to shaping cultural heritage.

There is no doubt that Ghanaians incorporated aspects of the lived experiences in the foreign films into their daily lives. As well as glimpses of the world in the films shaped the worldview of Ghanaian youths within various sites of heritage.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. National Cultural Institutions such as the National Commission on Culture (NCC), must endeavour to document this intangible and tangible history as part of a concerted effort to make them available for public knowledge. As well as suggestions for further studies within and beyond academia.
2. The government should support and encourage private cinema owners to preserve their buildings and put them to adaptive reuse that is sympathetic to the original function of a historic building, so that future generations can get a sense of how cinema halls used to look.
3. Ghana could host foreign film exhibitions in some of the cinema halls to constantly remind the current and future generations of a social activity that took place among the youth decades ago.



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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS (KI) AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

1. What do you remember about foreign cinema in Ghana?
2. What do you recall about the place you grew up and how foreign cinemas influenced your community?
3. Were you a typical cinema goer, if yes, why?
4. What type of experiences do you remember from watching foreign films?
5. Do you have any idea the owners of the cinema houses?
6. Tell me about the popular culture (fashion styles and slang) during that period?
7. What were some of the themes of the films that were shown at the cinemas?
8. Which of the cinema houses were popular and why?
9. Which of the cinema house did you often visit?
10. What were the impacts of cinemas in Ghana?

