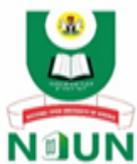**COURSE GUIDE**

**FMC 113**
**HISTORY OF FILM AND CINEMA**

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**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**CONTENTS**

## INTRODUCTION

You are welcome to FMC113 HISTORY OF FILM AND CINEMA. It is available for the undergraduate students of the Film Production programme, particularly in their first year. The course provides an opportunity for you to acquire historical antecedents of film making and production. They will be exposed to the history of films globally and it such moved down to the African continent and eventually to Nigeria. This is necessary for you to understand the trends in film making from time to time and to understand the developmental trends that form the foundation for modern production.

This course guide provides you with the necessary information about the contents of the course and the materials you will need to be familiar with for a proper understanding of the subject matter. It is designed to help you get the best of the course by exposing you to some exceptional materials and write-ups by outstanding journalists in the mass communication profession. It also provides necessary guides on the way to approach your Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMAs).

Overall, this course will leave you with a lot of historical records concerning film making and production across the globe. And importantly, you will acquire the skills that will help you in a great way to become an expert in film production.

## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE

The overall objective of FMC113 HISTORY OF FILM AND CINEMA is to expose you to the history of films. To achieve this, attempts have been made to carefully select history of films from different regions and countries.

In this course, the history of film has been thoroughly discussed in a chronological friendly manner.

## COURSE AIMS

The aims of this course are to:
i.      examine the pre-historical record of film making and production
ii.     expose you to the various trends in the history that led to the perfection of film production
iii.    expose you to notable individuals that have contributed to the development of films production.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Several objectives can be delineated from this course. Besides, each unit has specific objectives. The unit objectives can be found at the beginning of a unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the particular unit to check on the progress you are making. You should always look at the unit objectives before and after completing a unit. In this way, you could easily check whether or not you have covered what is required of you in that unit.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:
•       explain good historical knowledge of film making and production
•       mention the notable individuals who have contributed to the development of film production
•       discuss how the films began in Nigeria.
•       appraise significant effort towards perfecting film production.

## WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units. Most of the units contain self-assessment exercises, and at some points in the course, you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of this course is a final examination.

I would like to state categorically that this course is practically drawn and it is expected that students approach it with every sense of practicality. Students must make it a habit however to read newspaper and magazine articles and be curious to identify both good and weak Feature articles. Besides, you need a good dictionary, Thesaurus and Writing Pad.

The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1.      Read this course Guide thoroughly, it is your first assignment.
2.      Organise a Study Schedule. Design a "Course Overview" to guide you through the Course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Important information e.g. details of your tutorials and the date of the first day of the Semester is available online on the NOUN website.
3.      Once you have created your study schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please, let your tutor know before it is late to get help. 4.

         Turn to Unit 1, and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.

5.      Assemble the study materials.

6.      As you work through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.

7.      You will learn a lot by dutifully doing the assignments. Keep abreast with ththe deadlines given to the submission of your assignments online. The assignments have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course, and therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.

8.      Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor.

9.      When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.

10.      When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for assessment, do not wait for feedback before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the Assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignments.

11.      See that you have fulfilled the objectives listed in the course guide and the main course materials. After completing the last unit, prepare yourself for the final examination.

Stated below are the components of the course.

## COURSE MATERIALS
Course Materials
Study Units
Recommended Textbooks and other Reference Materials
Assignment File
Writing Notes

## STUDY UNITS

There are 20 study units in this course as follows:

**Module 1      Unpacking Concepts of Film, History and Optical Illusion**

Unit 1        The Concept of History and Film
Unit 2        Origin of Films – Optical Illusion/Principles

**Module 2      History of World Cinema**

Unit 1          Prehistory of Cinema
Unit 2          Hollywood Cinema
Unit 3          History of African Cinema
Unit 4          History of Nigerian Cinema

## TEXTBOOKS AND REFERENCES

Cameron, K. M. (1994). Africa on Film: Beyond Black And White. New York: Continuum Publishing Company.

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Shaka, F., Uwah, I. & Uchendu, O. (2014). The motion picture industry in Nigeria: A criticaappraisal. In African Communication Research. Vol. 7, No. 2. pp 199 – 22.

-------------(2007). Introduction to film and television studies. In Bell-Gam, H. L. (Ed.) Theatre in Theory and practice for beginners. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press. pp 124 – 145.

------------(2011). Nollywood: Reconstructing the historical and socio-cultural contexts of the Nigerian video film industry. In Kiabara: Journal of Humanities. Volume 17, Number 2. pp 237 – 262.

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## ASSESSMENT

There are two aspects to the assessments of this course. First, are the tutor-marked assignments; second, is a written examination. In tackling these assignments, you are expected to apply the information, knowledge and experience acquired during the course. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment under the deadlines stated in the Assignment File. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will account for 30 per cent of your total course mark. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final examination of three hours duration. This examination will account for the other 70 per cent of your total course mark.

## TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

There are many Tutor-Marked assignments in this course. I want to implore you to try hard to submit as many as you can. The best four (i.e. the highest four of what you submit) will be counted. Each assignment counts for 20 marks but on the average when the four assignments are put together, the score will count at 30 per cent towards your total course mark. When each assignment is completed, send it together with a TMA (Tutor-marked assignment) form to your tutor. Ensure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the stipulated deadline given.

## FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

Please be informed that the final examination for FMC113 Feature and Magazine Art Writing will be of three hours and with a value of 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions that will

reflect the practice exercises and tutor-marked assignments you have previously submitted. You are therefore advised to pay stringent attention to all the practical exercises you have encountered in the course of your studying this course.

## COURSE MARKING SCHEME

| ASSESSMENT | MARKS |
|---|---|
| Assignments | Four submitted best three counts for 30% of course, marks. |
| Examination | 70% of overall course marks |
| Total | 100% of course marks. |

## HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

Because of the practical nature of this course, the first thing you will need is to brush-up your reading and writing skills. Secondly, you may need to purchase some of the recommended textbooks text-books for additional guides. You will unavoidably need a quiet study friendly environment to write and read. If you are not computer literate (I will advise you to make a conscious effort to be one) because you will also need to visit some websites. Lastly, you should cultivate the habit of visiting reputable institutional or public libraries accessible to you.

## FACILITATORS/TUTORS AND TUTORIALS

There are specified hours of tutorials allotted in support of the course. You will be notified of the dates, time and location of these tutorials together with the name and phone number of your tutor as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your article submissions and keep a close watch on your progress. Be sure that your tutor-marked assignments will be promptly sent in, and feel free to contact your tutor in case of any difficulty with your self-assessment exercise, tutor-marked assignment or the grading of an assignment. I strongly advise you to attend the tutorials regularly and punctually too. And please, active class participation will be noted.

## SUMMARY

This is a practically driven course. Much of the effort to excel in this course lies in the hands of the students. Great success will be achieved if the student takes the assigned assignments seriously and turn in exercises promptly. But there is no doubting the fact that the students will enjoy the course.

**MAIN COURSE**

## MODULE 1          UNPACKING CONCEPTS OF FILM, HISTORY AND OPTICAL ILLUSION

Unit 1          The Concept of History and Film
Unit 2          Origin of Films – Optical Illusion/Principles


## UNIT 1          THE CONCEPTS OF HISTORY AND FILM

**Unit Structure**

 **1.1    Introduction**

Since history is the study of past events, studies in film history is a course that tells you about the early beginnings and aftermaths of the invention of cinema as an entertainment industry. Already before the discovery of film, people were fascinated by the application of still photo cameras to capture images. This was in the 1830s. Not long after that, the urgency of capturing motion in photography took centre stage as a task that must be achieved. So many people were involved and experiments were carried out to achieve this. The optical principles of the persistence of vision and phi phenomenon were being considered as possible pointers to an illusion of perception to achieve pleasure in viewing simulated images. Thus, in this course, you will be taught about these principles and how they helped in the invention of cinema. In this sense, therefore, the concept of film history is used to discuss the surrounding circumstances leading to the emergence of film as art form and the different kinds of technologies that early inventors implored in realizing the medium. Before moving to see how optical principles are key to the foundation of the film, we will, first of all, define the key concepts that will be used to drive this course soon after spelling out the objectives of this unit: History and Film.

## 1.2    Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- grasp the meaning of history
- define of film and different concepts used in addressing it
- explain how cinema came to be discovered and the kind of developments that have attended its practice since then.

## 1.3    What is History?

History is the record of past events, details of stories surrounding a project or a happenstance. It refers to narratives of events, their background, context and key actors. This means that it has to do with stories, actors and actions in them, dates and timelines surrounding the incidents. The kind of history that this course refers to is the history of film, meaning that it will be exploring how the art of cinema was invented and who the actors in discovering it as a medium, as art and as an industry are.

In-text question: What is film?
**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

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Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far.
This should not take you more than 2 minutes.
1. History is ………………..

2. In this course, we shall be exploring ………….

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## 1.4    What is Film?

Film is an audiovisual means of communication that uses the art of photography to convey messages. It can also be defined as a piece of audiovisual entertainment used in passing information to viewers while entertaining them. It has a language and can be discussed in various ways, for example, as an art, as an industry, as an income earner or as a medium.

- It is art because it is creatively fashioned.
- It is an industry because it employs and pays people.
- It is an income earner because many people feed from it.
- It is a medium because it is a means of passing and sharing information.

Every film is symbolic to the extent that it is a representation of an aspect of reality. It documents and reveals cultures. It entertains and gives its audiences pleasure. It also points to the identity of the country of its makers as a carrier of culture, values and viewpoints.

Film is called by different names by different generation of peoples, simply because of movement underlying its presence on screen. This is because, coming after the art of still photography, most people wanted to tell that it is another kind of photography, hence they call it: cinema, motion picture, movie, flicks or video-film. Below are these names with some explanations on why they are called by so many names.

In-text question: What are the different names for film?

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far.
This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1. Why is film an art?
2. Why is film an industry?
3. Why is film an income earner?
4. Why is film a medium?

## 1.5    Different Names for Film

Film is called by different names because of motion underlying its presence on screen:

a)    **Movie** – The word "movie" is a fanciful way of referring to movement, hence it is shortened to movie just because of the illusion of motion experienced while watching films. The pictures are not still, that is, they are not static (frozen) on screen but are filled with action and movement.

b)    **Flicks** – This refers to an old way of seeing the jerky transitional movements between exposed and non-exposed frames of a film gauge when cinema was newly invented. By then, viewers would literarily see narratives going from light darkness, that is, from where there is a shot (image) to where there is none in-between the individual frames. So, this movement in the past used to give the impression of flicking from darkness to light before it came to be technically perfected by projector producers so that light rays are supplied constantly to the projector without obstruction.

c)    **Motion Picture** – This is self-explanatory as it is used to distinguish the pictures we see on screen as being different from the ones we see as still photographs. The key word here is „motion".

d)    **Film** - This is so named because of the plastic or ribbon substance that is used in recording images in cameras. This would be sent to the laboratory to be developed and edited before being projected for popular consumption. The substance is popularly called celluloid. If you were born in the days of early Nollywood when video-films were recorded on VHS tapes or DV tapes, then, you have a knowledge of what the celluloid looks like. This is different today when cinema images are easily recorded on microchips and no longer on tapes.

e)    **Video-film** – This terminology is in common use in Nigeria. This is because when most films in Nollywood started coming out in the 1990s, people saw that they were shot with video-cameras rather than cinema cameras; to be consumed on television screens instead of in cinema complexes, so Nigerians started distinguishing this kind of production from proper cinema productions by calling them video-films. Again, this is because the filmic stories are realized by means of video camera technology.

f)    **Cinema** - This is coined from the Greek word, kinema, meaning "movement" or "motion" pointing at the art of writing with camera light in motion. It is from this word that the concept of cinematography is got, showing that there is a connection between kinema, "motion" and graphein (graphos), "to write" or "record".

All of these terms refer to the same thing. We will be using them interchangeably to mean one thing, not minding their specific connotations. It is movement that underlies all of them, whether they are viewed in small screen or in widescreen (silver screen). They are motion picture arts and remain different from still photographs.

In-text question: What is the difference between still photography and motion picture?

**Self-Assessment Exercises 3**

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Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far.
This should not take you more than 2 minutes.
   1.  Mention six names by which film is called.

   2.  What underlies all the names?

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## 1.6    Summary

Film is an art form and it belongs to a place and time. It is because of its unique characteristics as both art and industry that one can talk of its history referring to its context, technology, timelines and stakeholders (cast and crew, country of production, equipment and development).

This introductory part of our course was used to define the key concepts in it, such as, film and history. Whereas, we defined film as a medium of communication that applies the mechanism of photography in conveying messages to viewers, we also discussed history as a record of past events with dates and timelines. We also discussed the different terms people use when talking about film, mainly because of the illusion of movement underlying its experience. These as we saw include: movie, motion picture, film, flicks, and cinema.

## 1.7    References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Cousins, M. (2004). *The story of film.* Edinburgh: Pavilon.

## 1.8    Possible Answers to SAEs

**Self-Assessment Exercise 1**
1.      The record of past events.

2.      How the art of cinema was invented.

**Self-Assessment Exercise 2**

1.      Because it is creatively fashioned.
2.      Because it employs and pays people.
3.      Because many people feed from it.
4.      Because it is a means of passing and sharing information.

**Self-Assessment Exercise 3**
1.      Movie, Flicks, Motion Picture, Film, Video-film, Cinema.
2.      Movement

## UNIT 2       ORIGIN       OF       FILM       –       OPTICAL ILLUSION/PRINCIPLES

**Unit Structure**

### 2.1     Introduction

It is appropriate to know the origin of something before discussing its history or put succinctly, the best place to start a history of something is from its origin. Since this course is all about the history and stories surrounding film, it is right that this section of our course looks at the origin of film or the foundation upon which film is founded in order to know how scientists and inventors were able to see the possibility of entertainment pleasure in it.

### 2.2     Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

•       discuss the origin of film
•       explain the concept of optical illusion
•       explain the tenets of the principle of persistence of vision and its relation to film
•       explain the connection film has with the principle of phi phenomenon
•       discover how the optical principles are logically applied to film.

### 2.3     Origin of Film – Optical Illusion/Principles

The attempt to view motion on screen is what gave the world the toys we see kids enjoy. David Cook commenting on how fascinating toys are and

revealing their connection to optical principles states that, "Between 1832 and 1850, hundreds of optical toys were manufactured which used rotating "phase drawings" of things in motion to produce a crude form of animation." (1981, p. 2). What he means by this statement is that the toys were built based on a principle that has to do with vision or perception, that is, the way we see. The principle is called optical principles since they involve the eye. He argues that following this principle in making toys originally, live actions were simulated photographically in the toys, but not recorded spontaneously and simultaneously as it occurred (David Cook, 1981, p. 3). The idea of viewing simulated photographs of art works in toys is based on two key optical principles which help to explain the reason for illusion of motion in film. First of all, let us say that scientists discovered that people were happy with the art of photography when it was discovered. But they were challenged with the task of capturing motion in photos which was proving difficult. With the arrival of toys which showed simulated images drawn on paper that appear to be moving about once the knob is wind on the toy, most scientists believe that they have found something about human perception. They discovered that the human eye struggles to keep pace with what it sees and does not lose the perception even after the image is removed from its field of vision. It is this that they called the principle of "the persistence of vision" and believe that it can be applied to photography to achieve an illusion of movement especially in the case of shots moving in speed. It was Peter Mark Roget, a British mathematician who in 1824 described this principle scientifically (Cook, 1981, pp. 1-2).

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

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Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1. The toys produced between 1832 and 1850 used ……….
2. The toys produced ………..
3. A British mathematician described the principle of vision scientifically. (True/False)

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## 2.4    The Principle of the Persistence of Vision

This principle states that the human brain retains what is seen by the retina of the eye for approximately 1/20th to 1/5th of a second after the eye is removed from the field of vision, that is, the object you are looking at (Cook, 1981, pp. 1-2).

What this principle teaches is that the human brain retains what is seen by human eyes for a fraction of time even after the object is removed.

Let us further break this down. The argument here is that you might have grown up having the joy of playing around with toys. Some of these toys were like small televisions to you, wherein you peep through a tiny hole by the side and possibly see cowboys moving off the frame on top of their horses or someone dancing on the floor or anything at all. It is this kind of experience of seeing movements in the toys that the scientists call an illusion of motion. This is because the things you see to be moving about are only images drawn by an artist. They appear to move because the frames upon which they are drawn are set to flash on screen for you to see, at a particular time rate. Since the rate is in speedy form, you are not able to see the gaps between one image and another because your human mind, like every other person's own is made in such a way that it retains what is seen by the retina of the human eye briefly even when the object is removed the field of vision.

All cinematographic artworks exploit the gains of this principle in creating an optical illusion. We tend to enjoy movies because our eyes are kept busy while watching them on screen. We see pictures moving about on screen and see actions being performed by characters and before one thing passes, another follows it, meaning that our vision persists and a passing frame (image/shot) is seamlessly connected to the one coming after it, without you remembering that every movie is based on series of shots, taken at different locations, edited and joined to others to form a sequence, which when joined to another sequence, or more (depending on the duration), will give you a sense of a seamless storyline.

If what the principle of persistence of vision does is to help us retain the image of what we see in passing shot or frame just as another one is speedily being connected to it, another principle called the "principle of phi phenomenon" helps us to see a series of these frames (i.e. images of shots) presented speedily as a seamless narrative. It was Max Wertheimer, a German who explained it scientifically in 1912.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

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Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 2 minutes.

1. The eye continues to see an object even after that object has been removed from the field of vision. (True/False)

2. The act of the eye continuing to see an object even after it is removed from the field of vision is called ………

---

## 2.5    The Principle of Phi Phenomenon

This is also called the stroboscopic effect. It states that the appearance and disappearance of objects in stationary modes at high speeds make them look like a single object. Some examples include the movement of bicycle spokes or fan blades in speedy fashion.

By way of breaking it down, what this principle teaches is that when things are presented to the human eye in quick succession, it is difficult to keep pace with them in order to remember that they are a collection of individual objects. Rather, because of speed the human eyes see the objects as a unitary whole, a seamless.

This impression we get from watching film boils down to how these principles have been used to condition film to work in human mind in order to give pleasure by giving suspense. The images that fall on screen tend to last a bit longer in our minds even as they fade into incoming others (i.e. persistence) and at the same time, because of the speed of their appearance and disappearance, they tend to make us see them as a unitary whole, a seamless movie (i.e. phi phenomenon).

**Self-Assessment Exercises 3**

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Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 2 minutes.

1. The Principle of Phi Phenomenon and the Stroboscopic Effect means the same thing. (True/False)

2. The appearance and disappearance of objects in stationary modes at high speeds make them look like a single object. (True/False)

---

## 2.6    Application of the two Principles to Film

Looking at the arrangement of shots in a film gauge, you should be able to get a clearer picture of how these principles work in film production and consumption. It is all about illusion of movement which is surreptitiously created by the application of the two principles we have looked at. First, you have been taught that film is a collection of individual shots joined together. Ordinarily the human eye can flip through them if there is no speed and they would not linger much in one's memory if they are not falling on screen rapidly. So, since the human mind is not capable of seeing them as individual frames, given human limitations, we tend to take them as seamless and feel thrilled by their rapid action movement on screen. This is what early psychologists and scientists observed about

human eye and by observing the arts of photography and optical toys vis-à-vis the two principles seen above guide us as consumers towards enjoying the illusion of motion in cinema.

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**Scenario/Case Study:**

1. Try to raise your eyes and look at something. Close your eye and see if you immediately forget about what you have seen or not. That is what the persistence of vision is all about. Your vision (sight) of what is seen remains with you for some time before it is replaced by another.

2. Switch on the fan nearest to you to its highest speed and attempt to count its blades and see if you can succeed in distinguishing one blade from another.

3. Take six related pictures from your collection or album, taken at different locations to make a story by setting them together, one after another. Try sticking them together and see if someone outside of you can make meaning of your narrative. If yes, then think through and see if when the pictures are made to be flipping on top of each other at a high speed that your guest would notice them to be different pictures stitched together. What do you think? Write down your experience in one page.

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## 2.6   Summary

Since a movie/film is a series of individual photographs/shots, our eyes are not able to retain what they see in a speedily passing frame before connecting to an incoming frame. This is what is exploited to fixing the rate at which frames fall on screen during film projection so as to create the illusion of movement. It is standardized at 24 frames per second.

In this section you have learnt that there are optical principles responsible for the way we see things. Scientists and inventors capitalised on these principles to give us the illusion of motion in cinema. The point made in this unit therefore is that since the human eye is unable to distinguish different images in rapid succession when presented to it, so also the collection of shots when flashed on screen at the rate of 24fps gives the sense of a seamless whole to films shot at different scenes and locations, especially when watching them. This happens because each shot or each

frame blends fast into another in such a way that they tell a story. Therefore, the movement that the human eye seems to see on screen in film is an illusion.

## 2.7  References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Cook, D. A. (1981). A History of Narrative Film. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company.

Cousins, M. (2004). The story of film. Edinburgh: Pavilion.

## 2.9   Possible Answers to SAEs

**Self-Assessment Exercise 1**

1.     Rotating phase drawings.
2.     Crude form of animation.
3.     True

**Self-Assessment Exercise 2**

1.     True.
2.     Persistence of vision.

**Self-Assessment Exercise 3**

1.     True.
2.     True.

# MODULE 2   HISTORY OF WORLD CINEMA

# UNIT 1       PREHISTORY OF CINEMA

**Unit Structure**

## 1.1   Introduction

The use of camera in both photography and cinematography is a great feat achieved by early inventors and filmmakers. Cameras are unique in the way they store information and tell about the society, events and peoples. Camera use became popular between 1827 and the 1830s and like today fascinated people whenever it was put to use in capturing shots of people or recording historic moments. Whereas, it is easy to press the button and capture shots on camera, one challenge early cameramen had at the earliest days of it was on how to capture motion. It is in trying to solve this problem that cinema was invented. This is why this unit teaches you about the prehistory of cinema; meaning that it guides you in discovering how camera technology were originally applied to capturing motion. Let us at this moment outline the intended outcomes of this lesson.

## 1.2    Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the role the art of photography played in inventing cinema
- explain how cinema is not a one man's invention
- discuss how inventors gave the world different kinds of early motion picture cameras and the names of their makers
- discuss the pioneers of world cinema.

## 1.3    The Eadweard Muybridge Experiment

This is better appreciated as a story. It is the story of two friends. One is Leland Stanford, a one-time Governor of California and the other, Eadweard Muybridge, a British photographer who emigrated to the United States of America at the time and was employed by Leland and they became friends. The Governor wanted his friend to demonstrate that motion can be captured by camera and he agreed to do so. What he did was to go and mount twelve cameras along a race track, linking them up with threads so that once there is a contact with the thread by a running horse, the camera shutter would flash and take photo of the movement. His speculation worked for him. Once one of the horses in the race made contact with the thread linking all the shutters of the other cameras, a sequence of photographs was taken and produced what Muybridge exuberantly showed the world as his ability to capture motion in photography. (See: Robin, Siegel (1999). The Muybridge Animal Locomotion at the National Museum of American History. In *Topics in Photographic Preservation*, Volume 8. Pp 1 -10).

In order to display the pictures, Muybridge needed a device that can help viewers appreciate it, hence he invented what he called ZOOPRAXISCOPE: a kind of machine for projecting his photos as slides. The thrill in his invention is the fact that by winding the pictures to display in rapid succession, similar to what you see with the toys, it gave the viewer the impression that the horses were in a running movement.

Muybridge showed his invention to many people and knowing the reputation of Thomas Edison as an inventor, he also showed him what he is able to produce. Edison instantly discovered a whole lot of opportunities in producing machines like Muybridge's Zoopraxiscope. He commissioned his laboratory assistant by name, William K. L. Dickson to produce a machine capable of not only capturing photos but should be able to project them. Following this, Dickson invented a

machine called KINETOGRAPH for recording live images and produced another one, the KINETOSCOPE for viewing them. Thomas Edison later built the first studio called the Black Maria, in New Jersey, in 1893, where he used both the kinetograph and kinetoscope to mesmerize viewers but the machines were bulky and could only allow one viewer at a time.

In 1895, two brothers from a family of photographers in France, named Auguste and Louis Lumiere, invented their own motion picture camera. The good thing about theirs was that it can be used in shooting the images as well as in viewing them. Their camera was smaller in size than that of Thomas Edison and could even be used for outdoor jobs. It was much more portable and less noisy. Again, it operated more quietly than the kinetoscope and projected images more smoothly. The Lumiere brothers called their device the CINEMATOGRAPHE, from where the word "cinema" became popularised. Their first film, La Sortie des Usines Lumiere a Lyon (Quitting Time at the Lumiere factory) was the first film shown to the public on 28th December 1895 at the Grand café on the Boulevard des Capuchins in Paris, France, and is used to mark the arrival of cinema in world stage (See. Cousins, M. 2004, *The Story of Film.* Edinburgh: Pavilion).

Thus, from this story you have seen how camera works helped in pursuit of capturing motion picture (another name for cinema). Already in the story, you can identify a few names mentioned. But in the subheading that follows, the contributions of these pioneers and their colleagues would be made explicit under their names. Remember you can read further to be fully abreast of the full contributions of anyone of them. We have not presented you with their entire biography but only hinted one or two on things they did to move the invention of cinema forward. Let us therefore take them one by one in the section that follows.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1.  The device which Eadweard Muybridge invented was called …….
2.  The motion picture camera which Auguste and Louis Lumiere invented was called …………
3. The first film was shown to the public on ……..

## 1.4    The Pioneers of Cinema

### 1.4.1 Thomas Edison

Thomas Edison (1847–1931) is reputed as giving the world the first motion picture camera known as the Kinetograph. This was fashioned to work with the peep-hole projector called the Kinetoscope. This was made public in 1891. He also built the first studio in New Jersey, USA in 1893 and influenced the regulation of the movie industry in the US through the establishment of Motion Picture Patent Company that he helped to form to standardize film practice and lock out amateurs. His studio produced about 1,200 short and silent films. Among these were: *Fred Ott's Sneeze* (1894), *The Kiss* (1896), *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1910), *Frankenstein* (1910).

### 1.4.2  Edwin S. Porter

Edwin S. Porter (1870–1941) joined Thomas Edison's company known as Edison's Manufacturing Company in 1896 and was responsible for most of the films produced in his studio such as *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) and *The American Fireman* (1903). He was a producer and a director. Later on, when he left Edison's factory, he became a projectionist and toured South America, West Indies, Canada and the US showing different movies he produced and directed.

### 1.4.3  George Eastman

George Eastman (1854–1932) was one of the very innovative pioneers of film in the US. His contribution was in the area of inventing the roll film, that is, the film stock used in shooting motion pictures in 1888. He also invented the Kodak camera made for shooting film and founded the Eastman Kodak Company dealing specifically with photography and cinematography equipment.

### 1.4.4  Louis Le Prince

Louis Le Prince (1841–1890) is often referred to as the father of cinematography but this is only because he was the first person to present a sequence of shots with a single lens camera and paper negatives, he bought from George Eastman's company. Of course, this claim was keenly contested by Edison who lobbied to be seen as the father of cinematography and controlled the American film industry long before the formation of the Hollywood industry. Louis Le Prince was very well known in both the US and UK but did not last long in the field of cinematography because he suddenly disappeared on 16th of September 1890, leaving his family, friends and acquaintances with multiple

speculations regarding his end. While some say he was murdered, others think he must have committed suicide. His major contribution after the legal battle with Edison on who is the father of cinematography include the invention of a 16-lens device that served as motion picture camera and a projector.

### 1.4.5 Auguste and Louis Lumiere

Auguste Lumiere (1862-1954) and Louis Lumiere (1864-1948) were brothers from Paris. Their father had a company in charge of producing photographic plates. They helped their father to revive his company when it was at the verge of bankruptcy and when he retired, he left it in their care. They are reputed for producing a motion picture camera called cinematographe used in shooting and viewing films. The first time they screened some of their films privately was on 22nd of March, 1895 and subsequently to a fee-paying audience they showed their less than one-minute actualities (real event films) on 28th December, 1895 at Grande Café du Capuchins, Paris. Among their films screened publicly on that date were:

- *Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory (Sortie des Usines Lumiere a Lyon)* 46 seconds.
- *The Gardener or The Sprinkler Sprinkled (Le Jardinier/L'Arroseur Arrose)* 49 seconds.
- *The Disemkarment of the Congress of Photographers (Le Debaraquement du Congres de Photographie a Lyon.* 48 seconds.
- *Horse Trick Riders (La Voltige).* 46 seconds.
- *Fishing for Goldfish (La Peche aux Poisons Rouge)* 42 seconds.
- *Blacksmiths (Les Forgerons)* 49 seconds.
- *Baby's Breakfast (Repas de Babe)* 41 seconds.
- *Jumping onto the Blanket (Le Saut a la Couverture)* 41 seconds.
- *Cordelier Square in Lyon (La Place de Cordeliers a Lyon)* 44 seconds.
- *Bathing in the Sea (Maignade en Mer)* 38 seconds.

The Lumiere brothers popularized cinema by taking it abroad outside Paris in 1896, first to Belgium and from there to other parts of Europe, like London, Russia and Africa. But they did not last long in the film business beyond being part of the pioneering group. This is because they refused to sell their model of camera to other filmmakers interested in buying it for filmmaking purposes. They wanted to restrict the use of their camera to themselves alone. This made others to despise them. For instance, when they could not sell a camera to one of their own, George Melies, he had to find other means to join the race by going over to London to buy another model of camera which he adapted to his needs.

### 1.4.6  George Melies

George Melies (1861 – 1938) came into filmmaking from the background of theatre where he practiced magic on stage. His father was a shoe maker who wanted him to learn English and because of this, sent him to England. He learnt the language and while there developed interest in learning the art of stage magic. Upon return to Paris, he was among the people present when the Lumiere brothers made a public presentation of their cinematographe camera on 28th December, 1895. He wanted to buy one from them for his theatre business but they refused. This made him get back to London where he bought another kind of camera model called animatograph and with his knowledge as a technical hand in theatre practice, he was able to manage it to shoot movies mostly on trial and error basis. He can be said to help the nascent cinema industry grow by discovering new things as he made mistakes. For instance, he helped discover special effects in movies by making objects appear and disappear. He also can be said to introduce editing in filmmaking. A story is told of how he was filming one day along the streets of Paris and his camera jammed. Shortly after that, the camera started working again. He later discovered that, "since no film was exposed during the jam, streetcars suddenly jumped forward and people disappeared" (Cousins, 2004, p. 27). This surprised him but at the same time inspired him to experiment more with tricks in filmmaking.

### 1.4.7  Other Pioneers

There are many other pioneers you can study on your own to find out what they contributed to film in history. We cannot continue to be taking them individually since we have to pay attention to other aspects of film history in this course. However, it is pertinent for you to know that apart from pioneer directors and producers, there are also pioneer actors, pioneer comedians, and pioneer documentarists. Thus, in your reading further, it is expected you find details about the contributions of the following, too:

- **David Wark Griffith** (D.W. Griffith) (1875–1948) – a notable film director in the US.
- **John Grierson** (1898–1972) – A British filmmaker known for coining the word 'documentary', a pioneer in non-fiction films.
- **Alfred Hitchcock** (1899–1980) – A British born American filmmaker that thrilled the world with techniques in his films.
- **Charlie Chaplin** (1899–1977) – One of the most successful world acclaimed pioneer actors in history. Originally born in London but produced, directed and acted in the US film industry.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far.
This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1. The first motion picture camera invented by Thomas Edison was known as ……….
2. ……… invented the Kodak camera.
3. ………. helped discover special effects in movies by making objects appear and disappear.

**Scenario/Case Study:**

Examine the contributions of the different pioneers of motion picture and state which one of them stands out for you.

## 1.6   Summary

The early pioneers of cinema contributed immensely to the art and helped to shape the industry that so many nations of the world today take pride in their inventions. From the experiment of Muybridge to the individual use of cameras, one can say that cinema is not only an entertainment industry but also a documentation medium. It stores events for posterity. This is what most early films did without bordering about fiction and narratives. They recorded actualities as they happened and with that set the stage for the real history of cinema. Every one of their contributions helped to move the invention of the medium forward and even until today, the process of developing film is still ongoing.

This section taught you about the interesting names and contributions of inventors like Thomas Edison, Edwin Porter, George Eastman, Louis le Prince, the Lumiere brothers, George Melies and many others. They are the pathfinders that shaped the industry of cinema right from its inception. We looked at the Muybridge experiment and connected it to how cinematography is tied to photography.

## 1.7   References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Cameron, K. M. (1994). *Africa on film: beyond black and white*. New York: Continuum Publishing Company.

Robin, Siegel (1999). The Muybridge Animal Locomotion at the National Museum of American History. In *Topics in Photographic Preservation*, Volume 8. Pp 1 -10.

## 1.8   Possible Answers to SAEs

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

1.    Zoopraxiscope
2.    Cinematographe
3.    28th December 1895

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

1.    Kinetograph
2.    George Eastman
3.    George Melies

## UNIT 2     HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

**Unit Structure**

 **2.1     Introduction**

Hollywood evokes many meanings when it is mentioned ranging from the name of a place to the cinema industry in the US. It can also be used to refer to spectacular style in doing things given the impression of US movies as filled with wonderful sceneries. In this unit, the focus is on the film industry and its history as an entertainment empire.

 **2.2     Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

•       explain the connection between the name of a place in California, US and the American film industry
•       discuss the reasons for the emergence of store-front theatres called Nickelodeons
•       explain the different phases of Hollywood film history and unique characteristics of film in its different stages: silent era, sound era and the digital epoch.

 **2.3     Hollywood as a Place and as Industry**

Hollywood refers to the American film industry. It is the name of a place in Los Angeles, in California, USA, where filmmakers can be said to have established their production headquarters. After the Lumiere brothers have shown the films to the world between 1895 and 1896, many more

people started getting involved in filmmaking production and projection business. How Hollywood came to become the hub of the American film industry is a simple story. First and foremost, the Southern City of California is natural sight to behold with mountainous landscapes, beaches and all-round natural vegetation. Filmmakers used to travel down there to explore ideas and spend winter seasons together. With a group of filmmakers forming the Motion Picture Patent Company (MPPC) and cutting some others off their circle, many artistes decided to leave the city for them and relocate to shoot their films in cheaper locations. This was how Hollywood in Los Angeles became the chosen place for many. In one of his efforts to shoot a film titled *Intolerance* (1916), D. W. Griffith built sets for ancient Babylon in an open field in Hollywood which became a huge landmark for filmmaking and attracted many independent producers to use the set. Some also started building their studios in Hollywood at this stage such as: Universal Pictures, Paramount Pictures, Fox Film Corporation, etc. and that was how they began to gather around Hollywood, which by all standards is the capital of film worlds today. By 1911 the first film studio was built in Hollywood and with many other studios, the owners formed a conglomerate of movie moguls. People looking to become famous through movies moved to Hollywood just like celebrities in Broadway shows. Each studio employed many film actors, directors, scriptwriters, set designers, stunt managers and many others on long term basis. This is how Hollywood established the studio-system in film history whereby individual studios managed the production and exhibition of their films from beginning to the end. Following this too was the star system – referring to the use of actors (stars) as vehicular purveyors in promotion and selling of films.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

> Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far.
> This should not take you more than 2 minutes.
>    1. Hollywood is the name of a place in ……….
>
>    2. Three studios which were established in Hollywood in its
>       early days are (i) …….. (ii) ……… and (iii) ……….

## 2.4 The Nickelodeons and Formation of MPPC

If we remember that Thomas Edison and his assistant, William K.L. Dickson had given the world the fact that a motion picture camera (kinetograph) and a machine for viewing films (kinetoscope) as well as a studio (Black Maria) earlier in the United States, before the Lumiere brothers, we shall attest that America did not go to sleep after its initial productions. Among the people that kept America strongly in the

limelight were people like William K. L. Dickson and Edwin Stanton Porter (who worked for Thomas Edison).

Edwin S. Porter was in his twenties when he began working for Thomas Edison's company, specifically in his studio as a projectionist in 1901. Soon after that, he started making his own films and became the first man to introduce multiple shots in movies, which means that his films became longer in duration than those of the Lumiere Brothers and others before him.

With his film, *The Great Train Robbery* released in 1903, Edwin Stanton Porter showed the world that films can be shot in different locations by moving his camera to different positions. Another of his films called *The Life of an American Fireman*, which was also made in 1903 showcases how creativity was brought into film. Here, he used his camera to follow the movement of a fireman who arrives to put off the blaze at both exterior and interior positions. This, in film history, is seen as the beginning of continuity shooting. Being highly successful with spectacular images, people were lining up to see the movies. It was this that necessitated the opening of store-front small theatres along the streets in major cities of the US for film viewing. Only 5 cents were paid to be admitted to see the movies. For this reason, the roadside theatres were called 'nickelodeons' after the name of currency called nickels. The nickelodeons were energized mainly by Edwin Porter's film – *The Great Train Robbery*. But as the movies were attracting so many people, both viewers and filmmakers, a group of filmmakers led by Thomas Edison formed a consortium to regulate it in 1908. The consortium formed was called MPPC – Motion Pictures Patents Company. Their goals were to raise the admission fee, eliminate cheap theatres, and make sure that film stocks do not get into the hands of non-members as well as fight against piracy by cooperating with censorship bodies. But this did not augur well with some independent filmmakers (producers) who were non-members of the MPPC and made them file a case against MPPC in 1915. The US government judged in their favour and declared MPPC an illegal body.

Films continued to be made by all who can, with some of them becoming too long because they are shot in different locations. Shortly after these earlier films, some action movies began to emerge with filmmakers like D. W. Griffith making his mark in the industry. He first began by being an actor in one of the films directed by Edwin S. Porter before going into film directing. He is said to have directed nearly 500 films between 1908 and 1913 and introduced a lot of innovations in shooting and editing of films, such as angle of shots (wide angle or close up angle); shot, reverse shot technique, etc. Among his films were *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which is a 3-hour long film on American Civil War and *Intolerance* (1916), centered on four victims of prejudice. Generally speaking, the history of

the American (Hollywood) film industry can be divided into the following three segments:

- The Silent Period (1895–1928)
- The Sound Period (1928–1990)
- The Digital Era (1990–Present) (See: Cousins, M. 2014, *The Story of Film*. Edinburgh: Pavilion).

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1. The roadside theatres were called 'nickelodeons' after the name of currency called ……..

2. The full meaning of MPPC is ……….

3. ………. formed the MPPC.

## 2.5    The Silent Period (1895 – 1928)

This period refers to the times movies were originally produced as less than a minute production to the time feature films were firstly produced. The distinguishing factor underlying it is that the movies were produced without spoken dialogue, that is, without synchronized sound. Film of this period were made before the introduction of sound in the late 1920s. Even though this does not mean that all silent movies were devoid of sound, it simply means that it was not possible at this stage to capture both action and dialogue on camera while filming on set as it is the case today. Hence, film dialogues were subtitled to tell the stories while actions were mimed. For this reason, films of this period were called silent but also had some kind of musical accompaniment later infused into them without having synchronized dialogue as a component part of the visuals.

## 2.6    The Sound Era (1928 – 1990)

The sound period refers to when sound was introduced into film. Initially sound was thought to be destructive to the movies and most people like Thomas Edison felt it distorted the art of movie entertainment. It was in 1927 that the film, *The Jazz Singers*, an Academy award winning feature film, directed by Alan Crosland, was released and broke the silence of the silent period by introducing the sound era. It is the first film with sound and is the story of a young man who wanted to become a Broadway singer-celebrity whereas his father wanted him to go and work in a Synagogue since they were originally Jewish. The point is that while the boy's father wanted him to use his talent to serve God in the synagogue,

his mother was delighted to see the boy desire to be a famous singer. The boy eventually left the house and started a career on Broadway Street, only to return when his father became sick.

## 2.7     The Digital Epoch (1990 – Date)

The present era refers to when technology has expanded the nature of filmmaking and liberalized everything about the art. It is the era of digital recording and cinematography that has displaced the analogue format. This started in the 1990s and has expanded to include so many features without cancelling out everything about celluloid film production. So, this stage is the digital technology era. For instance, it is an era whereby rather than capture images on celluloid film stripes (as was the case in the olden days), film images are now captured and stored on microchips planted in the belly of the camera. The standard for digital film production and projection today has been set by the Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI) Consortium in the USA which was formed by a conglomerate of studio owners like, Disney, FOX, MGM, Paramount, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Universal, and Warner Brothers in 2002 to ensure a high level of standard in film image quality and projection. This conglomerate uses a Digital Cinema Package (DCP) to store their collection of film files (containing both the audio and visual materials) for easy handling and transfer to distribution points. The digital films are productions shot on 2k or 4k camera formats – that is, 2,000 mega pixels or 4,000 mega pixels as the case may be, with the running speed standardized at 24fps or 48fps. Every film of this nature is encoded as a digital cinema package (DCP) and delivered on a hard drive and is highly encrypted. (See: Bordwell, D. and Thompson, K. (2013). *Film art: An introduction*. Tenth Edition. New York: McGraw Hill).

**Self-Assessment Exercises 3**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1. The Silent Period refers to films produced between ….. and ……..
2. The film that broke the silence of the silent period by introducing sound was called (i) ……….. and it was directed by (ii) ………
3. The Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI) Consortium uses a

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**Scenario/Case Study:**

Compare the era of nickelodeons with the practice of video-film viewing centers in Nigeria?

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## 2.6   Summary

Hollywood is a majestic film industry that every nation looks up to. Being founded in the United States of America, its history helps us appreciate its role in the overall history of cinema entertainment across the globe. As an industry that sets the standards, its practitioners in the present age have once again set the rules for digital cinematography and projection which all stakeholders must abide by.

This unit covered the history of Hollywood cinema. It looked at the contributions of some pioneers in the American film industry. Three outstanding phases of film in the US were also discussed and the unique characteristics of films in the periods were examined.

## 2.7   References/Further Readings/Web Resources

Bordwell, D. & Thompson, K. (2013). *Film art: An introduction*. Tenth Edition. New York: McGraw Hill.

Cousins, M. (2014). *The Story of Film*. Edinburgh: Pavilion.

## 2.9   Possible Answers to SAEs

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

1.    Los Angeles
2.    (i)    Universal Pictures,
      (ii)   Paramount Pictures, and
      (iii)  Fox Film Corporation

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

1.    Nickels
2.    Motion Pictures Patents Company
3.    Thomas Edison

**Self-Assessment Exercises 3**
1.      1895 and 1928
2.      (i) *The Jazz Singers* (ii) Alan Crosland
3.      Digital Cinema Package (DCP)

**Self-Assessment Exercises 3**

# UNIT 3      HISTORY OF AFRICAN CINEMA

**Unit Structure**

## 3.1     Introduction

When we talk about African cinema, we have to understand that even though cinema came to Africa as soon as it was invented, what the people saw were films about Africa done by the West and not by Africans themselves. In this kind of films, the imagery of Africa was stereotypically represented. They were always depicted as primitive, poor and barbaric. The roles they were given when they started appearing in film were minor roles. That is to say, while the white man is characterized to be the lord or the white woman made to be the mistress, the black is at best the slave, maid or a plantation worker. In some films the black African is presented as living in the bush like monkeys and very far from civilization. This kind of stereotypes continued up till the time most African countries got independence in the 1950s and 1960s and started establishing their identity as a people through arts and especially through the cinema channel.

## 3.2     Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

•       discuss the circumstances under which film came to Africa
•       state how the west originally treated the representation of Africans in movies
•       discuss the concept and mission of Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE)
•       mention the pioneers of cinema in Africa
•       mention the nature of cinema across Africa presently.

### 3.3    Colonial Period

Once again, the birthday of cinema is the 28th of December, 1895. By this time most African nations were under the administration of their colonial masters. So, film came to Africa through the colonial routes. With the scramble and partitioning of Africa in 1885, the continent was divided between different colonial power-blocks, mainly the British, French and Spanish. So, film entered Africa for many reasons:

(A).    **Entertainment** – The colonial administrators imported films for their own entertainment in order not to lose out from the standard of recreation and relaxation happening in Europe at the time. It did not take time before film exhibitionists started bringing films to Africa to entertain fee paying audiences across the continent.

(B).    **Education/Evangelisation** – When the colonial administrators discovered the power of film to influence mindset, they started producing their own films in Africa to teach them the way of the white man's culture or what they called civilization and how to avoid diseases. The missionaries also started using film to teach and preach to people in order to convert them to Christianity.

### 3.4    The Formation of the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment

When the British who were the colonial masters of the anglophone Africa saw the need to apply film to administrative purposes, they considered giving Africans a different cinematic production than those from their homelands. They established the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment for the purpose of educating the Bantu, that is, the Black or African. BEKE lasted between 1935–1937 and produced over 35 films. It was a project involving the International Missionary Council, Carnegie Corporation of New York who sponsored it and the colonial administrators of Tanganyika (Tanzania), Kenya, Uganda, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi).

BEKE was championed by Major Leslie A. Notcutt, a colonial administrator stationed in Tanzania at that time. He proposed the establishment of the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE) as a way of educating the 'dull' mind of the African and teach him the way of the white man. It was approved and supported by the Colonial Office of the British Film Institute (BFI) in London. It was not charged with producing quality films for Africa but producing films for the education and civilization of the natives in the language they would understand.

Most of the films produced by BEKE revolved around issues of health, agriculture and hygiene and had commentaries in different languages. Some of the films that BEKE produced include those that teach Africans about Europeans and their manner of doing things, such as, *Post Office, Savings Bank, Tax, Progress*. Others like *Coffee Under Banana Shade, High Yield from Selected Plants, Coffee Marketing* were made to teach them about agriculture while films like *Infant Malaria, Hookworm, Anesthesia* were made to teach them ways to prevent diseases occurring in the society. It was based on the success of BEKE that the lead director of the project, Major Leslie A. Notcutt and his team recommended to the colonial government that local film units be opened under the supervision of the headquarters in London. This gave rise to the establishment of what was called Colonial Film Units (CFU) across the regions of Africa in 1939. They were later disbanded in 1955 after the British government declared that its work was done and most countries were warming up for independence. The following is how the regional colonial film units were positioned at the time:

- East African Colonial Film Unit Branch to serve Tanganyika (Tanzania), Kenya and Uganda.
- Central African Colonial Film Unit Branch to serve Rhodesia (present day Zimbabwe, Zambia and Nyasaland (present day Malawi).
- West African Colonial Film Unit Branch to serve Nigeria and the Gold Coast (present day Ghana). (See: Diawara, (1992). *African cinema: Politics and Culture*. p. 3).

Apart from commercial exhibitionists that also brought films, the CFUs continued being the channel through which films made in Europe were brought to Africa. But the films they distributed were re-edited before circulation and most of them were propaganda films. Soon after the Second World War in 1945, the Colonial Film Units began producing their own films for the colonies rather than distributing films from Europe. They produced films like *Mister English at Home* and *African in London* to sell the culture of the white man to Africans.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1. Film entered Africa for many reasons, namely: (a) ………..
   (b) ………
2. BEKE lasted between (i) ……… and produced over (ii)
   ……… films.
3. CFU means ………..

### 3.5    Le Decret Laval of 1934

While what you have seen above pertains to British West Africa, that is, Anglophone Africa or the areas that speak English language given the colonization of their country by Britain, the story is different in the Francophone part of Africa where the French did not set up film units but administered arts production from Paris. Initially films were brought into the French speaking countries of Africa from France and Belgium. Indigenes of African countries in the French colonies were prohibited from making their own films without obtaining permission from the colonial administrators to do so. In order to make the permission difficult, the French colonial powers promulgated a law for their regional colonies, popularly called Le Decret Laval. This law mandates only the French ministry in-charge of the colonies to be the ones to approve films to be made. The Ministry at that time was led by a man called Monsieur Pierre Laval. It is this that made the law to be called the Laval decree – Le Decret Laval. It grants the ministry the right to examine all film production applications in the colonies by going through the scripts to know the storyline, identify the cast and crew to be involved in the production and take note of their professional expertise in relation to any proposed film before permission can be given to intending filmmakers.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1.  Films were brought into the French speaking countries of Africa from (i) ………. and (ii) ……….

2. Le Decret Laval was named after a man called ………….

3.  Le Decret Laval means …….. in English.

### 3.6    Emergence of African Cinema

The first film to be made by an African is *Afrique Sur Seine* (1955). This was directed by Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, originally from the Republic of Benin, but educated in Senegal and Paris. He was the first African graduate of *L' Institute des Hautes Etudes Cinematographiques* (DEHC) in Paris. Defying the French rules prohibiting the production of films in Senegal, he got permission from Paris and gathered a group of students and produced the first short film ever to be directed by an African. The group he formed was known as *Le Group Africain du Cinema* – The African Cinema Group. Later on, Paulin Vieyra and this group championed consciousness about the preservation of African culture and

arts. At a conference they attended in Rome, in 1959, called the congress of black writers and artists, they met and decided that the time was ripe for Africans to start expressing themselves through arts and especially their own films. In April of 1966, they hosted the first African arts festival in Dakar, Senegal, wherein twenty-six films from sixteen African nations were shown. Being overjoyed, they took some resolutions together and formed FEPACI – Federation Pan-Africaine des Cineastes (Federation of Pan-African Filmmakers). It is an association that incorporates African cinematographers, film professionals, directors, technicians, actors and students of film. Following its establishment, FESPACI created a platform for exhibition of their films which holds biennially at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and called it FESPACO. This was in 1969. The full meaning of FESPACO is Festival Pan-Africain du Cinema, which is translated as Festival of Pan-African Cinemas. It is the biggest film festival in Africa and still holds today.

## 3.7    Pioneers of African Cinema

When Africans started shooting films, their main preoccupation was to correct the kind of impression the West had made about the continent with film. Most of their films therefore were against colonial misrepresentations in order to talk back to the West. Some of the pioneer filmmakers of African cinema include:

- Paulin S. Vieyra, who formed the called African Cinema group and directed the short film, *Afrique Sur Scene* (1955).
- Ousmane Sembene of Senegal, called the father of African cinema, who shot so many films including *Le Noire…. (Black Girl), Camp de Thiaroye*,
- Ola Balogun of Nigeria
- Djibril Diop Mambety of Senegal
- Souleymane Cisse of Mali
- Haile Gerima of Ethiopia and many others.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 3**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1.  The first film to be made by an African is …………

2. The first African film was made in the year ………..

3.  The first African film was directed by ………….

## 3.8   Summary

African cinema was a collective enterprise. The films were focused on one mission or ideology: decolonizing the screen and shooting back to the West. People teamed up from across the continent and used their films to give dignity back to Africa by representing them as a distinct people with their own culture. But today, we can no longer talk of African cinema as a unitary concept because most countries operate their own national cinemas that exhibit different kind of ideologies than the political ideology of decolonisation. Many of the films are commercial films and deal with the popular culture of audiences in order to recoup money spent in producing them. There are even different models of filmmaking culture now across the continent, such as the celluloid-base productions and the new Nollywood model of cheaper digital filmmaking practices. In all, what can be said is that African cinema has grown and expanded from what it used to be and we can today discuss the cinemas of Africa (plural form) rather than African cinema.

This unit dealt with the nature and history of African cinema. It began by looking at the kind of representations that the West originally made about Africa and from there went on to discuss the difficulties Africans faced in trying to enter the business of filmmaking, simply because, the colonial powers did not want it easy for them. But whereas the British started a project of using film to educate and civilise Africans, the French made it very difficult for films to be produced by individuals in their colonies. They used a draconian law to restrict the people's effort. Today, such ugly situations have changed. With independence granted, many African nations and given the availability of video technologies all over the place, most people have taken to making cinema their birthright and filmmakers are now able to make cultural statements about their countries and peoples through film.

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 **3.10   Possible Answers to SAEs**

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

1.      (a) Entertainment (b) Education/Evangelization
2.      (i) 1935–1937 (ii) 35
3.      Colonial Film Units

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

1.      (i) France (ii) Belgium
2.      Monsieur Pierre Laval
3.      The Laval decree

**Self-Assessment Exercises 3**

1.      *Afrique Sur Seine*
2.      1955
3.      Paulin Soumanou Vieyra

## UNIT 4        HISTORY OF NIGERIAN CINEMA

**Unit Structure**

 **4.1     Introduction**

The history of film in Nigeria, like that of Hollywood occurred in phases. We have the first generation of filmmakers sent to Ghana by the colonial administrators and we have the second generation of filmmakers, most of whom studied abroad in Europe and the US and distributed their films through international routes known in the early days of African cinema. We also have another generation of filmmakers who generally belong to the Nollywood film industry. This unit discusses the Nigerian film history by recognizing the continuity stretch that flow from the old African cinema to the new Nollywood. In fact, the timeline for cinema history in Nigeria therefore can be departmentalized according to different eras such as the following:

- Colonial period (1903-1960)
- Pre-Nollywood epoch (1960–1990)
- The Nollywood era (1992–date).

 **4.2     Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the beginnings of film in Nigeria
- state the role the British government played in film development in the country
- discuss the pioneers of film in Nigeria
- discuss the differences and connection between African cinema and Nollywood
- discuss the "new" Nollywood.

## 4.3    Colonial Period (1903 – 1960)

By all scholarly accounts, the earliest recorded contact Nigeria had with cinema is August 12, 1903 at Captain Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos, when the first commercial film exhibition took place before a fee-paying audience. The film was the *Coronation of King Edward VII at Westminster* in Britain. Opubor and Nwuneli, citing *Lagos Standard*, a local newspaper of the Lagos Metropolis, in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria at the time said such films as shown included scenes like those of "a steamer moving through water; a conjugal dispute" etc. (Mgbejume, 1989, p. 2). How film came to Nigeria was through the hands of British colonial administrators and some other European merchants. Mgbejume reveals that one Mr. Balboa of Barcelona, in Spain, was the first exhibitor to bring film to the Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos. He worked under Mr. Herbert Macaulay, one of Nigeria's foremost nationalists that fought for independence from the hands of Britain (p. 21). Seeing that Mr. Balboa and company were touring West African countries for silent film exhibitions, he invited him to Lagos, Nigeria, and got the Glover Memorial Hall ready for them. Their exhibition lasted from 12th to 22nd of August, 1903.

Following Mr. Balboa was another European exhibitor; Mr. Stanley Jones who continued showing films to more Nigerian paying audiences at the hall, starting from the middle of September 1904, after Mr. Balboa had left Lagos for other West African countries. Nigerians loved and cherished the medium. Films like *Cinderella* (c. 1902), *Great Fight* (c. 1902) and *Egyptian Wonders* (c. 1902) according to Mgbejume continued to be exhibited for audience's pleasure even at the Saloon of Hotel d' Europe in 1905 when the famous Glover Memorial Hall was undergoing renovation. The exhibitor, Stanley Jones, who originally was disparaged because of the high rates he charged Nigerian audiences for films was to be later praised especially by the Nigerian press for his love and mastery of the business of cinematograph exhibitions despite his discriminatory attitude of "setting aside certain days for the natives and others for Europeans" (Mgbejume, 1989, p. 23). This racist discrimination at that time did not mean much to Nigerians because of the love of satisfying their need for entertainment.

Particularly on August 3, 1904, a newsreel that had a glimpse of the Alake of Abeokuta, (a Yoruba king in the western part of Nigeria), during his visit to England, was shown to the amazement of viewers at the Glover Memorial Hall. As recorded by Mgbejume, when the title "the Alake of Abeokuta", was thrown on the screen, the audience responded with great applause." (p. 23). What this shows is not only the pleasure audiences

elicited from watching films in the early days of cinema in Nigeria but also the kind of participatory involvement they with screen actions.

The success of the commercial exhibitions was what made the colonial government to put film to use in administering the Nigerian colony. They decided to become hugely involved in film production and distribution. Even the missionaries could not afford to be left out in drawing some benefits from the new medium. This is why they used it in the work of teaching about righteousness and evangelizing the people for conversion. This is what Mgbejume acknowledged when he stated that "in 1903, Mojola Agbebi and his fellow missionaries used the magic lantern and the gramophone to instruct the people of Igbotu and their neighbours about Christ" (p. 25).

So, the nature of film production and distribution at this stage in Nigeria was entirely a colonial business. Films were produced abroad and sent to the colony for several purposes which included education, evangelization and later on, propaganda. Following this, it can be said that there were three sources of film in Nigeria during the early days of cinema under the colonial administration of Britain:

- commercial productions which were later to be censored by a film censorship board to avoid embarrassing the colonial administration
- Missionary-sponsored productions
- Government-sponsored productions. (See: Shaka, 2004).

This trend continued up to the period of the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 by the Lord Lugard's administration when more cinema centres opened up in different cities across the country. By the close of 1914 in particular, several cinema houses had opened and by the 1920s, about five halls in Lagos, were showing films every evening. The daily schedule of film shows at different theatres were often advertised in newspapers.

Usually there was an interpreter whose job was to narrate the film story to the audience especially in situation where the language was English as most people then were illiterates. Reporting this scenario, Mgbejume says that "the commentators who were employed to explain the films interpreted the contents according to the desired impact the colonial masters wanted the films to have on a given rural audience" (1989, p. 11). The film medium as a tool of instruction therefore became for the colonialists, a strategy to teach but more importantly, to civilize the people.

When there was an outbreak of a plague in Lagos in 1929, one Mr. William Sellers, the Chief Health Officer at the time initiated the idea of

using film as a medium of public enlightenment and instruction on diseases and their modes of transmission. Such public enlightenment which showed people, through film, how rats spread the disease helped to curtail the false rumours and superstition about causes of the epidemic in the protectorate of Lagos, while at the same time, encouraging people to rid the society of rats by killing them. This worked and became an experiment that "led the colonial administration to adopt film as a medium of instruction in what was then a largely pre-literate society" (Shaka, 2007, p.132).

The colonial government in its resolve to continue to make use of film for administrative purposes decided in 1931 to take films to the hinterlands in order to reach the nook and crannies of their colony. To make a success of this venture, they engaged in bringing specially designed Mobile Cinema Vans which were used to take the instructional films to people in rural areas. This move necessitated the creation of Mobile Film Units (MFU). What this means is that it was this successful experiment under Mr. William Sellers that became multiplied and extended to other parts of the British colonies. Not too long the concept of the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) was evolved and established.

Following the setting up of the Mobile Film Units by the government, the production of documentary films began taking place in Nigeria. This was to report to the British in Britain the good work of their expatriates in the colonies and to teach the natives about civilization: health, hygiene, etc. Such films therefore were made with actual footages from the colonies. Thus, under William Sellers, the following films were produced and exhibited non-theatrically but through mobile cinema vans around Nigeria: *Anti-Plague Operations*, Lagos (1937) which sought to instruct the locals about the carriers of the epidemic and how to exterminate the carrier rats. Others were *Empire Day Celebration* (1948), *Small Pox* (1950), *Leprosy* (1950), *Port Harcourt Municipal Elections* (1950), and *Queen Elizabeth II's Visit to Nigeria* (1956) (cited in Shaka, 2007, p.132). In addition to these were also some feature films by both government sponsored agencies and some independent filmmakers.

By the time of World War II, the colonial administration in Nigeria saw the need for propaganda through the film medium. The concerted effort of the colonial government in using film as a medium of propaganda points to the nature of documentary films that once again started flowing in from England.

This idea was to achieve the following:
- Convince the Nigeria and other colonies that Germany was the common enemy so that they can join the war efforts and fight on the side of the British

- Encourage the colonies to embark on communal developments and learn how to solve their own domestic problems;
- Telling the world and especially the British government that the colonial administration in Nigeria and elsewhere was doing a fantastic job in the Dark Continent. (See: Ekwuazi, 1987, p. 2).

When the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) finished its work and got disbanded, the Nigerian CFU became renamed Federal Film Unit (FFU), marking a step towards consolidating it as a possible starting point for having a film industry in the country. As part of this effort, the British colonial government decided to send some people for training in film production in the Gold Coast, now Ghana. The following were among those sent: Adamu Halilu, A.A. Fajemisin, J.A. Otigba and Mallam Yakubu Aina. This, to Nigerians, was a welcome development, especially to cinema lovers who looked forth to home grown stories by the time this team of filmmakers would be back.

The year 1949 saw the formation of the country's Federal Film Unit staff being made up partly by some Nigerians who recently returned from the special course at the colonial film school in Ghana under the supervision of N.F. Spurr, the Chief Film Officer of the Federal Film Unit (FFU). They were charged with producing films for display in Nigeria and overseas (Annual Report, 1949, 107). By 1954, six years to independence, the Nigerian Film Unit once again became reorganised and developed offices (units) at different regions of the country in accordance with constitutional changes in the country at that time. The implication of a film history like this is that the pre-independence films were made by both government and individuals alike; and dealt with the political and socio-cultural realities of Nigeria as a country.

The first notable feature film in Nigeria made by a Nigerian called Sam Zebba, is *Fincho*, and was produced in 1958 (Mgbejume,1989, p. 65). This is not to deny the fact that the first feature film ever made in Nigeria is Palaver in 1926. But the difference is that while *Fincho* is made by a Nigerian, *Palaver* is a film directed by a British filmmaker, Geoffrey Barkas. After these two, is another feature film by a corporate body, the Shell BP Oil Company operating in the country, namely, *Nigeria: Culture in Transition* (1963), which chronicled the history of the country engaged in transition for posterity as well as serve as the first to be made soon after her independence. Of course, Nigeria got independence on 1st October, 1960, meaning that films in the next era were no longer under the colonial rule.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far.
This should not take you more than 3 minutes.

1. The first commercial film exhibition took place in Nigeria on (i)
   ………. at (ii) ………….
2. The first notable feature film in Nigeria made by a Nigerian
   called (i) ………., is (ii) …………., and was produced in (iii)
   ………..

## 4.4    Pre-Nollywood Era (1960 – 1990)

You have seen how film came into Nigeria and how the first generation
of filmmakers were sent to Ghana to learn film production for only six
months. So, filmmaking was ongoing in the country both in the pre-
independence and post-independence eras. Yet, it must be said that it was
not until the 1970s that film production by individuals (not corporate
bodies or government sponsored units) started emerging in the country
with filmmakers like Ola Balogun, Eddy Ugbomah, Francis Oladele,
Sanya Dosumu, Jab Adu, etc. soon after they returned from Europe and
North America where they studied film production. Again, these are their
names:
• Ola Balogun
• Eddy Ugbomah
• Francis Oladele
• Sanya Dosumu
• Jab Adu
• Adeyemi Afolayan
• Adamu Halilu

They represent the second set of filmmakers in Nigeria but are in the main,
the first generation of independent filmmakers to reckon with. Their films
constitute a huge part of what is called African cinema by the West. The
year 1975 in particular was a significant year because it was the year that
the first truly indigenous full-fledged feature films by these gurus
emerged with the release of *Amadi* shot in Igbo language by Ola Balogun
in 1975 and *Dinner with the Devil* by Sanya Dosumu, also in 1975. While
the Afrocult Films Company produced *Amadi; Dinner with the Devil* was
produced by Starline Films Company. Both were indigenous companies
that pioneered film production in the country soon after independence.

The period between 1975 and 1985 can be described as the great moment
of cinema in Nigeria. This was because of so many films produced by
them. Many of the filmmakers were from the Yoruba Travelling Theatre
group and made a transition from stage to film. The films Ola Balogun

directed in the wake of the crossover of the Yoruba Travelling Theatre productions to screen media include *Jaiyesimi* (1979), *Aiye* (1979), *Aropin N'tenia* (1982) and *Ayanmo* (1982) which were all part of Hubert Ogunde's stage (play) classics. The other films he directed also include *Ija Ominira* (1982) and *Kadara/Destiny* (1982) for Adeyemi Folayan (Adelove Films). He also directed *Orun Mooru* and *Mosebolatan* (1984/85) for Moses Olaiya Adejumo's production company, Alawada Films. Following him is Eddy Ugbomah, another notable filmmaker whose production company, Edifosa Films, came out with *The Rise and Fall of Dr. Oyenusi* (1979), *The Boy is Good* (1979), *The Mask* (1979), *Oil Doom* (1980), *Bolus '80* (1982), *Vengeance of the Cult* (1982) and *Death of a Black President* (1983) (cited in Shaka, 2007, p.133).

But before the 1975 films, there were other films in the country with Nigerian themes and actors, directed by foreign directors which attracted negative reviews as most people felt that their narratives were influenced by stereotypical impressions and misguided ideological position on the African. Such negative criticisms greeted *Kongi's Harvest* directed by Ossie Davies in 1970 for example, as well as *Bullfrog in the Sun*, directed by Hans Jurgen Pohland in 1971.

The Decree No. 4 of the Military era of 1972 popularly called the 'Indigenization Act' was significantly drafted to give "exclusive monopoly for the distribution and exhibition of feature films to Nigerians" (Opubor and Nwuneli, 1979, p. 9). What this means is that it was the intention of the military government of the day to develop a proper film culture and use it extensively to benefit the citizens. Following this was the General Olusegun Obasanjo's Decree 61 of 1979 that statutorily established the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) for the development and promotion of film in the country. Although NFC could not take off until three years after it was instituted, that is in 1982, when the civilian government of President Shehu Shagari inaugurated its board; the main reasons for establishing it were in favour of strengthening the nation's film industry. Among other things, it was charged with:

- The production of films for domestic consumption and for export
- The establishment and maintenance of facilities for film production
- The encouragement of the production by Nigerians of films through financial and other forms of assistance
- The encouragement of the development of cinematograph theatres by Nigerians by way of financial and other forms of assistance
- The acquisition and distribution of films
- The establishment and maintenance of national film archives
- The provision of facilities for training and advancing the skills of persons employed in the Nigerian film industry generally and the

conduct of research into matters pertaining to film production and the film industry as a whole; and

- The pursuit of such activities as may be necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all or of any of the functions assigned to it under Decree No. 61 (1979) (Ekwuazi, 1987, p. 36).

All of these were important steps to possibly foreground a robust film industry in the country at the time, but like some scholars argued, the Nigerian government did not take the proper steps in implementing the set goals it mapped out in establishing the NFC. The reason for this is that the government positioned itself at the centre of the board, meaning that bureaucracy would interfere with creativity in the execution of duties (Opubor and Nwuneli, 1979, p.20). Administratively therefore, the NFC could not achieve much in the area of film production, regulation and censorship until a new steam came on board with the emergence of Nollywood in 1992 and the Federal Government establishing the Nigeria Video, Film and Censors" Board by Act No. 85 of 1993.

Adamu Halilu, one of those trained by the British colonial administration at the Colonial Film School in Accra, Ghana, shares in the glory of the filmmakers of the post-independence Nigerian cinema industry. He is credited to have produced such films as *Shehu Umar* (1976), *Kanta of Kebbi* (1977) and *Moment of Truth* (1978). With Halilu in this strand is another veteran filmmaker, Jab Adu who also made his mark in the historic period with *Bisi, Daughter of the River*, which was produced by Cineventure. It must be said too that except the works of Adamu Halilu, who had government sponsorship, all the films produced in the historic period of early celluloid filmmaking in Nigeria were independent productions that received no government grants or international sponsorship. The filmmakers of this era relied on personal savings or borrowed money from relatives and friends, or mortgaged family/personal properties to sponsor their productions which were mainly shot on celluloid. This is why the economic crunch, which started in 1986 with the General Ibrahim Babangida's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), effectively sapped the life out of their businesses and frustrated most of them out of the arena of film production.

From 1985 till the threshold of the 1990s, filmmaking in Nigeria can be said to suffer a serious setback. Especially with the devaluation of the Nigerian currency, the naira, the cost of film stock and production equipment at this time, became too prohibitive for the Nigerian independent filmmakers to procure. It pushed most of them out of the way. One of them, Sanya Dosumu is an example of those who suffered the economic hardships under SAP. He had finished the production of his *Dinner with the Devil* and "felt the only way out was through owning his own processing laboratory. So, he set about building one at Ikeja and had

even acquired some equipment before he was frightened off the project by a galloping inflation" (Ekwuazi, 1987, p.34). In other words, the development of cinema suffered in its earlier stage due to lack of financial support; to the extent that most pioneer practitioners could not continue to sacrifice their earned income in the industry. This paved way for so many experimentations on the medium starting with the importation of some Euro-American based motion pictures like the *Bruce Lee, Dracula* films to those of the Chinese films like the *Kung-Fu* types down to a few internally generated soap operas that eventually gave birth to Nollywood.

Thus, among the debilitating factors that made the early celluloid filmmaking practice in the country to collapse, were issues like:

- Lack of finance
- Lack of laboratory equipment
- Non-availability of post-production services in the country
- Poor distribution network within the country and outside
- Looming shadow of foreign productions
- The challenge of television.

If we can say that the above six factors affected the filmmakers directly because they are listed in relation to the industry, more factors that contributed to the collapse of the celluloid era have to do with the nation as a hostile environment for arts generally at the time. Some of these factors include:

- The rise of urban crime rate
- The dilapidation of cinema theatres
- Poor electricity power supply in the country.

With these factors in place, cinema was bound to collapse. But people needed to be entertained. Everybody resorted to watching television which invested much on soap operas in the 1980s, leading to the 1990s. Some of the soap operas that made waves amongst Nigerian audiences during the pre-Nollywood era include *Dynasty, Good Times, Dallas, The Cosby Show, Another Life*. Later in the 1980s Nigerian soap operas also became popular. According to Shaka (2007), the experiment began with Lola Fani-Kayode's *Mirror in the Sun* (1985), followed by *Victims* (1988) created by Mabel Oboh, *Ripples* (1988) created and directed by Zeb Ejiro, *Behind the Clouds* created and directed by Matt Dadzie, *Supple Blues* (1988) created by Paul Emeru and directed by John Ndanusa, and *Checkmate* (1991) created by Amaka Isaac Igwe and directed by Bolaji Dawodu, *Blossom* (1991) created by Kenneth Amanze and directed by Danladi Bako, *Fortunes and Shadows* created and directed by Dan Emeni and *Basi and Company* created by Ken Saro-Wiwa. These Nigerian soaps faced competition with imported Mexican soaps like *The Rich also Cry, The Bold and the Beautiful,* The *Lady of the Rose*, and *Wild Rose*. The

Nigerian soaps had sponsors from across the nation such as corporate bodies that placed adverts in them but as the days went by, the sponsors such as Lever Brothers, UAC, AG Leventis and others began preferring Mexican soap operas to the Nigerian brand. Their makers started looking elsewhere for survival. What happened was that most notable directors of the soaps like Zeb Ejiro, Chico Ejiro, Amaka Isaac (Igwe) and Bolaji Dawodu crossed over to video-film production after the example of Kenneth Nnebue with *Living in Bondage* and so helped to give audiovisual audiences in the country, the popular Nigerian video-film industry.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far.
This should not take you more than 4 minutes.

1.  The first set of Nigerians to study film production in Europe and North America are (i) ………. (ii) ………. (iii) ………. (iv) ………… (v) ………… (vi) ………… (vii) …………

2.  Decree No. 4 of 1972 gave exclusive monopoly for the distribution and exhibition of feature films to Nigerians. (True/False)

3.  The soap opera *Mirror in the Sun* was created by …………

**4.5    The Nollywood Epoch (1992 – Date)**

We have seen the factors that led to the collapse of the celluloid cinema industry in Nigeria and how the television took centre stage in the audiovisual entertainment of the people. That was the days of *New Masquerade* and *Things Fall Apart* by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). The huge patronage that the consumption of audiovisual stories on television had was what led Kenneth Nnebue to experiment on shooting story with a video camera and that was how he gave Nigerians *Living in Bondage* in 1992. Even though he had done some video-films before then, it was *Living in Bondage* that popularized the new kind of films shot with video-cameras, hence they are called videofilms. He believed that since Nigerian audiences enjoy soap operas on television screen, they will certainly enjoy similar storylines packaged on video tapes for consumption at home on television screen and it worked.

Of course, the high cost of producing wide screen movies was a factor in scarring people away from celluloid production as well as a pointer in driving him and others who followed after him to video-filmmaking culture in order to surmount the economic constraints of the celluloid film

practice. Significantly with the production of *Living in Bondage*, a deluge of other video-films came to be released such as: *Circle of Doom, Glamour Girls, Taboo, Jezebel, Evil Passion, Nneka - the Pretty Serpent, Rattle Snake* and *Fatal Desire*. Since then the art of movie making especially by means of digital equipment has continued to grow and expand.

Seeing how well the industry was doing, even though left in the hands of individual filmmakers, the Nigerian government established the Nigeria Film and Video Censors" Board (NFVCB) in 1993 to regulate and classify screen productions. In 2005 alone, the Board approved a total of 1,292 films that are locally made for release to the market, hence it is rated the second highest employer of labour in Nigeria, after the government and the second largest film industry by number of annual productions in the world by UNESCO.

## 4.6    The 'New' Nollywood

While Nollywood was making waves across the globe in 1990s, most of its video-films were often being criticized for being poorly produced, technically speaking. This is because most of them are hastily shot with unprofessional digital cameras which result in low resolution density and poor picture quality after mass production processes. Amateur lighting crew with little or no knowledge of camera operation and lighting for screen are often used to save cost and this too does not help the situation. To make matters worse, even some directors are driven by their love of film and have very limited knowledge of screen narration since what obtains in the industry is a poorly structured free-for-all game where one's production is sold and bought depending on its entertainment value. This was the situation that created the concept of New Nollywood.

The concept of 'New Nollywood' films refers to high budget films in Nigeria shot for widescreen cinema releases as is done in first cinemas of the world. Recalling the philosophy behind such productions, Jonathan Haynes argues that it is a phrase that started in 2010 signaling the intention of some Nigerian filmmakers to shoot films with higher budgets and screen them locally or internationally first of all before presenting them on DVD formats (2014). This, in a way, is in the poise to change the negative comments of critics on Nollywood. Such films as *The Amazing Grace* (Jeta Amata, 2006), *Black Gold* (Jeta Amata, 2006), *Through the Glass* (Stephanie Okereke, 2007), *Ije, The Journey* (Chineze Anyaene, 2010), *The Mirror Boy* (Obi Emelonye, 2011), *Last Flight to Abuja* (Obi Emelonye, 2012), *Phone Swap* (Kunle Afoloyan, 2012), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Biyi Bandele, 2013), *Onye Ozi (The Messenger)* (Obi Emelonye, 2014) *October 1* (Kunle Afolayan, 2014) *30 Days in Atlanta* (Robert Peters, 2014), *Invasion 1897* (Lancelot Imaseun, 2014) are typical

examples of the 'New Nollywood' brand of films. They are mostly films co-produced with non-Nigerian nationals especially people of Europe and American origin and by the merits of their standard help to propel the Nigerian industry to higher heights.

The form of the 'new' Nollywood films is superbly different from the video-films of the 'old' Nollywood – meaning those produced to be consumed on television screens. This is basically because images are hugely magnified in cinema setting with higher resolutions that make the digitally generated larger-than-life visual effects create more realistic photography. *Onye Ozi, The Mirror Boy*, and *30 Days in Atlanta* are good examples of films where digital technology is used to amplify not only imageries but key cinematographic aspects of narratives to enhance the entertainment quality of the cinema experience unlike the 'old' Nollywood video-films that is produced in an ad hoc fashion without paying attention to details. *Onye Ozi* for instance is a Diaspora film shot in the United Kingdom, starring both British and Nigerian artistes. Its use of world class cinematographic equipment no doubt helped to bring out its scenic aesthetics in terms of lighting, shot techniques and sound synchronization.

Presently the consumption of films in Nigeria is no longer done only on television screens but also at cinema complexes all over the cities. This is unlike the scenario in the 1990s when there were no big cinema centres in the country or the old ones were moribund due to the kind of setbacks mentioned earlier. Today, cinema houses such as Silverbird Cinema, Genesis Deluxe Cinema, Film House Cinema, etc. are common place in big cities like Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Uyo, Warri and even in Accra, Ghana as night life once lost in Nigeria, is becoming vibrant with their return.

**Self-Assessment Exercises 3**

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Attempt these exercises to measure what you have learnt so far. This should not take you more than 5 minutes.

1. The first Nigerian to shoot a story with video camera was (i) ……….. and the title of the film was (ii) ……… produced in (iii) ……….
2. In 2005 alone, the Nigeria Film and Video Censors Board approved a total of ……. films that were locally made for release to the market.
3. Good examples of films where digital technology is used to amplify not only imageries but key cinematographic aspects of narratives to enhance the entertainment quality of the cinema experience are (i) ………… (ii) ………… and (iii) ………..

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**Scenario/Case Study:**

Watch two old and two new Nollywood films and outline the differences between them.

## 4.7   Summary

The attempt here has been to chronicle the nature of the Nigerian cinema industry. This is done by tracking the three major timelines of film development in Nigeria starting with the colonial era down to the present 'new' Nollywood film practices. What is seen is that whereas the industry has moved on and is now more liberalized than when it was in its earliest period, the art of filmmaking in itself is still at its infantile stage in the country. This is because so many movies produced from the stable of Nollywood still leaves much to be desired. Even though the 'new' Nollywood project is speculated to be an attempt to rescue the situation, the problem with its unique brand is that only a few get to see it at cinema houses. The poor are left behind since they cannot afford it and are therefore condemned to such films that are poorly churned out for monetary reasons rather than for artistic entertainment. This is what the Nigerian movie industry needs be aware of if quality assurance and control is to be guaranteed in it.

In this unit, we discussed the Nigerian film industry. We began by looking at how the colonial masters brought film to Nigeria and therefore branded it a colonial inheritance. From there, we discussed the nature of films that were produced under the colonial administration in Nigeria at the time and saw that they considered film as an administrative tool not only to teach about civilization and good manners but also for propaganda. We saw the efforts of the British to train some people in Ghana and from there saw the films of the post-independence period. It was soon after independence that most Nigerians can be said to have involved themselves in film production. It is this kind of people that we call the independent filmmakers of the celluloid era. The austerity measures of the military junta in the 1980s could not allow them to keep pace with the needs of the industry. Hence many of them left the art for good. It was soon after that the availability of video camera made the consumption of visual stories possible on cinema screens and that was how Nollywood was born. Presently in the country, we are witnessing an avalanche of new Nollywood films as well the re-emergence of cinema complexes for film distribution and consumption.

## 4.8  References/Further Readings/Web Resources

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 **4.9    Possible Answers to SAEs**

**Self-Assessment Exercises 1**

1.      (i) August 12, 1903 (ii) Captain Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos
2.      (i) Sam Zebba (ii) *Fincho* (iii) 1958

**Self-Assessment Exercises 2**

1.      (i) Ola Balogun (ii) Eddy Ugbomah (iii) Francis Oladele (iv) Sanya Dosumu (v) Jab Adu (vi) Adeyemi Afolayan (vii) Adamu Halilu
2.      True
3.      Lola Fani-Kayode

**Self-Assessment Exercises 3**

1.      (i) Kenneth Nnebue (ii) *Living in Bondage* (iii) 1992
2.      1,292
3.      (i) *Onye Ozi,* (ii) *The Mirror Boy* (iii) *30 Days in Atlanta*