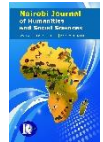




## From the Snows of Kilimanjaro To Nairobi Half Life: Over 50 Years of Film in Kenya



Research article



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### Abstract

This paper, traces the birth, growth and development of Kenyan voice in film since the dawn of film in the country to present. It further interrogates one Kenyan film with a view to establish the extent to which the Kenyan voice imbues Kenyan films with a unique vantage point when presented to the rest of the world. Thus, the question guiding the paper is 'how has Kenyan film incorporated conventions of filmmaking and language that Cinema employ, while at the same time discerning and maintaining the indigenous, Kenyan voice and how has this been achieved over years. Finally, the conclusion reveals that after a period of over 50 years Kenyan films made by Kenyans redefine Kenya; telling Kenyan stories, reflecting the Kenyan life, culture, values and making statements about the Kenyan society without 'aping' westernized storylines which could demean the Kenyan culture.

**Keywords:** cultural values, Kenyan films, Kenyan life, *Nairobi Half Life*, stories



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**Literature review**

Although Kenya has produced or been a location for film since early 1930s when jungle epics were set in the country and produced in Hollywood, the country has, for a considerable period of time, been represented exclusively by Western filmmakers using Kenya as a location to tell their own stories. According to the Kenya Film Commission's website (2008), the first Hollywood productions in Kenya came as early as the 1930s. They included; *African Holiday*, *Stanley and Livingstone*, and *Trader Horn* among others. Memorable adventure films like *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, *King Solomon's Mines*, and *Mogambo* reached wider audiences in the 1950s and showcased Hollywood stars on wild adventures in the rugged Kenyan terrain. The 1985 film *Out of Africa* by the Meryl Streep and Robert Redford which was based on the life of a Danish citizen, Karen Blixen, brought worldwide attention to Kenya by winning Best Picture at the Academy Awards. The film, which retold the story of Karen Blixen's love affair with Kenya and Hunter Denys Finch Hatton, showed that Kenya could also be a beautiful setting for films. These films portrayed black people as products of some hereditary irrationality. The blacks were portrayed as static characters who do not change their modes of operation, no matter how the whites try to civilize them. Parker and Stanley (1996:6) have observed this kind of presentation in television. They say this distorted image of the black '...can be seen in much of the television presentation of Africa by the western media, which portrays Africa in perpetual crisis and continues to fix the indigenous peoples as passive, infectiously smiling or suffering backdrops for white politicians and aid workers.' These films showed how the white colonizers viewed the black Africa not what the black Africa was since a creative artist decides how to represent the society. The artist chooses the angle from which he looks at the world, usually to favor his standpoint. Olago (2002:12) concurs with this saying 'it is the nature of man to alter things to make him or his race look better. We as Africans study history written by other races, often in periods when the African was in the role of slave.' Films produced during these periods were constructed to portray the whites as superior and blacks as savages, barbaric and backward. Young (1996:40) says that "the Africans' skin color became the defining characteristic, and black, from operating at the connotative level, shifted to a denotative plane: to be black was to be hypertextual, to be morally debase, and to be inferior"

Today Kenyan films made by Kenyans tell Kenyan stories making a mark on global audiences and reflecting the Kenyan life, culture, and values. The country can presently boast of award-winning films, garnering attention even beyond Kenya's borders. In 2012 Kenya produced *Nairobi Half Life*; the biggest movie Kenya has ever witnessed-the only Kenyan film that has ever been submitted to the Hollywood Oscars and has literally put Kenya on the film map. The film, *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) was nominated for nine awards at the African Movie Academy Awards. It was the first Kenyan film considered by the Oscars (in the Best Foreign

Language Feature category), won a breakthrough audience awards at two different film awards; the Film Africa Festival London and the Festival di Cinema Africano, won a Best Actor award for Joseph Wairimu from the Durban International Film Festival, won a best Picture at the Kenyan 2012 Kalasha Film Awards, has been an official selection at several international film festivals, has been screened in more than one hundred theaters in the U.S., and has had a long run in Kenyan cinemas.

The Kenyan film industry is re-defining Kenya in its productions and making room for a new voice in film; the Kenyan voice. Louis Giannetti (2008) explains this essence of film in his book, *Understanding Movies*. He asserts that "Every nation has a characteristic way of looking at life, a set of values that is typical of a given culture, the same can be said of their movies" (465). Kenya, today, is not only redefining themselves in their films, but is also exploring various themes reflecting its social positions and making statements about the Kenyan societies. *Nairobi Half Life* for example, portray the social conditions in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, with its intense criminal activities and violence and foregrounds the fact that like in most of the world's cities, crime is a problem in Nairobi. Jordache Ellapen (2007) asserts that it is through Township Art that 'the realities of urban life are manifested' (128). The plot revolves around the life of gangsters in Nairobi city and examines the criminal figure as a representation of the urban space and its discourses portraying the 'city space' as a central location of criminal activities. Jean Baudrillard (1988) argues that the city seems to have stepped out of the movies. To grasp its secret, you should not then begin with the city and move inwards towards a screen, you should begin with a screen and move outwards toward the city' (56). His argument implies that cinematic representation of the city reveal much about the urban condition, and as such, the depictions in *Nairobi Half Life* reveal much about Nairobi city. Tosh Gitonga, director of *Nairobi Half Life*, commented about the film, during an interview that "It is an education, because everyone in upcountry always says I want to go to Nairobi, I want to go to Nairobi. Now, maybe they can even prepare better, get a better understanding of the Nairobi they want to go to." (Gitonga, 2012).

*Nairobi Half Life* reflects the Kenyan society and examines the failure of the postcolonial Kenyan regime to uphold the principles that drove Kenya to independence: equal opportunities, equal distribution of wealth, jobs and employments among others. Set in 2012 Kenya, the film majorly deals with the twin theme of crime and violence. This is attributed to the fact that there is prevalence of crime and violence in postcolonial Kenya which parallels a history of crime and violence that is generally attributed to the youth in postcolonial Africa. According to Tom Odhiambo (2007): The prevalence of juvenile delinquents and the related acts of violence and criminality could be read as indictors of the failure of the postcolonial Kenyan State to 'include' their young men (and women) into the mainstream of society--- there is a correlation between marginalization of the youth in society and their adoption of

anti-social behavior as strategies to access material resources (134). In the film, the rural folks have been left behind in terms of development creating a sense of alienation and loss of a sense of belonging; as a result they move to the cities in search of a better life making the cities crowded. In turn lack of jobs and proper housing sets in and as the city gets more and more crowded, lawlessness sets in and the police fail to maintain law and prevent crime, instead they take part in crime by protecting the criminals who share their loot with the police in return. Mwas, the film's main character represents the rural folk and their move towards the city of lights in search of a better life, revealing the problems inherent in the post-colonial governance. The film represents societies that have recently emerged from colonialism and describes the way these societies function in the post-colonial order. It foregrounds the fact that though imperialism has passed and the colonies have attained an independent status, these nations of the Third World face a lot of economic, social and political problems such as bad governance, rural-urban migration, corruption, poverty, crime and violence, among others.

The society in *Nairobi Half Life* is built on different class structures i.e. the high social class and the low social class. Those in the high social class live affluently, drive big cars and fight to maintain their social status as the low in the society fight to survive. Ruth and Amina, for example, sell their bodies in the brothel for as low as twenty shillings in order to survive. Others like Mwas having failed to make it in the village sets out to Nairobi to forge a living. He ends up on the streets of Nairobi jobless and homeless forcing him to join a gang which specializes in snatching motor vehicle parts, both for a sense of belonging and to earn a living. The film further reveal how certain facilities, such as theatres, are only accessible to the urban residents. For Mwas to achieve his dream of becoming an actor, he had to move from his rural home to Nairobi. At the national level there is joblessness, especially amongst the youth which increases the rate of delinquency. According to Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin delinquency can result from differential opportunity for lower class youth. Such youths may be tempted to take up criminal activities, choosing an illegitimate path that provides them more lucrative economic benefits than conventional, over legal options such as minimum wage-paying jobs available to them. Criminal activities thus become 'imaginary solutions' to the problem of belonging to a subordinate class.

*Nairobi Half Life* holds a mirror against the post-colonial Kenyan society and exposes the social order in the post-colonial society. In the film, Nairobi city is shown as more complicated than an outsider might assume. The film gives a discourse of the city showing how social and economic conditions can reinforce crime culture in the society. Societal factors such as poverty are shown to predispose people to crime. Adolphe Quetelet, (2003) made use of data and statistical analysis to gain insight into the relationship between crime and sociological factors. He found that age, gender, poverty, education, and alcohol consumption

were factors related to crime. Since there are no theatres in his rural village, Mwas goes to Nairobi to jump start his acting career. In Nairobi, he suffers assorted misfortunes and finds refuge in the hands of other jobless youths. Since Mwas and his friends were jobless they were disposed to poverty and poor living conditions in one of the slums in Nairobi. The film takes viewers into the epicenter of life in Nairobi city slums and presents them with a picture of poverty and misery in the slum. The gang live in very pathetic conditions; they share a small room where each member has only a space enough to spread his bedding on the floor. While the men try to survive by becoming criminals, the girls go to an extent of 'selling' themselves for as low as 20 shillings. The film depicts the disastrous effects that poverty has upon the society. It shows how poverty in the land reflects on the mind. It exposes men's vulnerability in the face of poverty leaving them desperate, absurd, and resigned to fate, low self-esteem, and loss of social order. The effect of poverty manifests itself in all spheres; to begin with, adoption of deviant sub cultural norms which may include toughness and disrespect for authority. Criminal acts result when youths conform to norms of the deviant subculture. Albert K. Cohen (1997) in sub cultural theory suggests that delinquency among lower class youths is a reaction against the social norms of the middle class. Some youths, especially from poorer areas where opportunities are scarce, might fragment away from the mainstream to form their own values and meanings about life. Finding life difficult, Oti and his friends, in *Nairobi Half Life*, form a sub-group; a gang which specializes in stealing motor vehicle spare parts.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o observes "the art such as literature is not created in a vacuum, rather it is the endeavour not just of any person, but of a creative writer living in a particular time and space and responding to a community" (Ngugi, 1990) This assertion by Ngugi suggests that art serves a purpose in relation to given society. Achebe affirms this notion when he says that literature whether handed down by word of mouth or in print, gives a second handle on reality" (MYCD, 1975,) Literature helps us to make meaning of societal issues and understand everyday happenings. The same can be said of Kenyan films today. *Nairobi Half life* is a realist postmodern film that is concerned with 'social deviance' in Kenya and how the society defines and shapes it. It goes behind closed doors and reveals the contemporary city as one replete with corruption, robberies with violence, police brutality, poverty, prostitution, alcohol and drunkenness, lawlessness, and hypocrisy of the law among others. It focuses on the consequence of city habitation such as the slums which points to the problems that continue to tear the society apart today. The film like many other African works of fiction has been influenced by the country's cultural and political experiences. It is deep rooted in the economic and social issues touching on the post-colonial Kenya. The film holds a mirror to the Kenyan society reflecting its problems, particularly, the problem of poor governance among other social problems plaguing the Kenyan society today. It satirizes the police force and the ruling elite as integral part of the problems paralyzing the present day Kenya. In the

story the youth falls into crime because they have been marginalized and left out in developmental issues. The film has demonstrated that unequal distribution of wealth may cause the underprivileged to fragment away from the mainstream to form their own deviant sub cultures resulting into crime. According to Henry McKay and Clifford R. Shaw of the Chicago School, neighborhoods plagued with poverty and economic deprivation tend to experience high rates of population turnover. With high turnover, informal social structures often fail to develop, which in turn makes it difficult to maintain social order in a community.

*Nairobi Half Life* further depicts a justice system so undermined by corruption that the concept of law and justice holds little meaning. The film examines the post-colonial Kenyan criminal justice system and finds it wanting, most notably in how the police handle the criminals. In the first place, the innocent Mwas is jailed by the county council of Nairobi for a 'crime' he does not commit, which succeeds only in turning a well-meaning boy into a menace to society. His well-meant journey to Nairobi is ironically reversed when he comes out of the cell a criminal, showing how the society can make criminals out of innocent citizens. The police fail to maintain law and order and instead of apprehending the criminals take part in crime by sharing in the criminals' loot and in turn offering them protection from the law. The police get a percentage of whatever the robbers make. While they protect the criminals, they make untrue identifications to deceive the public about unsolved crime cases as revealed by Oti to Mwas when he tells him that Nairobi has several unsolved crimes and as such the police, occasionally, have to round up some youths to deceive the public. They kill them and use their bodies as exhibits and claim that they were killed in a shootout. This satirizes the police force and shows how in a corrupt system, decision can be formed on the flimsy basis of circumstantial evidence and unreliable witnesses. Justice in the post-colonial Kenya, then, is shown to be unjust and unable to grasp the truth of the situation. It is also unable to reform the criminal, who is likely to respond to the reinforcement and protection from the police by becoming more of a criminal and further alienating themselves from the society. The likelihood of being caught, through surveillance, police or security guard presence is effective in reducing crime. When criminals see that the benefits of their crime outweigh the cost such as the probability of apprehension, conviction and punishment, their criminality is reinforced. In *Nairobi Half Life*, the police reinforce crime by failing to apprehend the criminals and share in their loot. Though the criminals ultimately pay for their sins through death, no part of this process is achieved through the criminal justice system. Mwas escapes all together showing that not all criminals face consequences of their crimes.

*Nairobi Half Life* as well as other Kenyan films act as critiques of the society through the actions and events that happen to the characters. Other than entertainment, they embody meanings which extend beyond the cinematic depiction to represent a wider social order.

Kenya's film industry is coming up and other than public attention; there has also been academic attention on Kenyan film. Currently, colleges and universities have established departments and schools of film as part of their curriculum. These include Kenyatta University, Moi University, Daystar University, Kenya Institute of Mass communication, Africa Digital Media Institute, among others. This is due to the fact that other than entertainment, films create and reproduce cultural narratives about social and moral order. Films as narratives generally, deploy a journey as a motif on the screen to address social issues and to underscore serious thematic concerns. Filmic presentations can be narratives for academic concerns and can also influence the public conceptions and understandings of the society since film offers a better perspective than a written work as it can emotionally compel audiences by telling stories through cinematic representation. As a story unfolds on the screen, it captivates the interest of the audience while directly affecting their emotions, and perhaps, set of beliefs or ideological stance. Niyi Afolabi (2009) argues that "The visual medium has always been construed as the most effective tool of mass communication, popularization and propagation of ideas and therein lies its power and potential for the manipulative destruction or construction of the mind" (169).

The Kenyan film industry, has flourished in recent years. Since about the year 2000, low budget independent feature films on DVD, which uses digital technology to shoot films, have increased in Riverwood; a section of Kenyan film industry. Njeri Kihang'ah (2008) explains this rise in production in citing Riverwood in her article *Lights, Camera, Action!* She states: "Riverwood is famed for its racy movies that sell faster than they can be pirated in this one stop-shop of a street...In Nairobi's River Road, they can shoot a movie in a day, edit it in the next one, and release it into the market by sunset, making lots of money in spite of the sloppy product" (2). Kenyan film industry is re-defining Kenya in its productions and making room for a new voice in film-the Kenyan voice. Other than the 2012 heat *Nairobi Half Life* Kenya has produced several other films. Below is a list arranged alphabetically.

## **0-9**

14 Million Dreams (2003)  
6000 km di paura (1978)

## **B**

The Baisikol (1997)  
Balloon Safari (1975)  
Boran Herdsmen (1974)  
Boran Women (1974)

**C**

Chokora (2005)

[The Constant Gardener](#) (2005)

**D**

The Dance for Wives (2009)<sup>[1]</sup>

Dangerous Affair (2002)

**F**

[The First Grader](#) (2010)

Flip Flotsam (2003)

[Forest Chainsaw Massacre](#) (2006)

[From a Whisper](#) (2008)

[Fundi-Mentals](#) (2014)

**G**

Gari Letu Manyanga (Our Hip Bus) (2007)

Grave Yard by Cezmiq Cast (2014)

The Great betrayal (2001)

**H**

Haba na Haba (2013)

The Hammer (by Cezmiq Cast 2015)

Hemingway, the Hunter of Death (2001)

[House of Lungula](#) (2013)

**I**

[I Want to Be a Pilot](#) (2006)

In the Shadow of Kilimanjaro (1986)

The Invisible Workers (2013)

[Intellectual Scum](#) (2015)

**K**

Kampf um den heiligen Baum, Der (1994)

[Kibera Kid](#) (2006)

Kobjes: A Rock for All Seasons (1980)

Kunyonga - Mord in Afrika (1986)



**M**

Malooned (2007)  
The Married Bachelor (1998)  
Men Against the Sun (1952)  
Mo & Me (2006)  
Mzima: Portrait of a Spring (1972)

**N**

[Nairobi Half Life](#) (2012)  
Nangos (2009)

**O**

The Oath Film (2005)  
Our Strength (2012)

**P**

Path of a Nomad: An Explorer's Odyssey (2003)  
Peipa  
Price of a Daughter, The (2003)  
[Pumzi](#) (2010)

**R**

[Rise and Fall of Idi Amin](#) (1981)  
[The Rugged Priest](#) (2011)

**S**

Saikati (1999)  
[Shuga](#) (2009)  
[Something Necessary](#) (2013)  
The Stigma (2007)

**T**

Through Hell (by Cezmiq Cast 2014)  
[Togetherness Supreme](#) (2010)  
[To Walk with Lions](#) (1999) (Canadian product  
ion filmed in Kenya)  
Toto Millionaire (2007)

Toto's Journey (2006)

**V**

[Veve](#) 2014

Although small compared to the western industries, Today Kenya can boast of a number of productions mostly relating the experiences of the people especially in the main cities of Kenya. However, the journey to this 'Kenyan voice' in film was not achieved in a day. Kenya has been a location for film since 1930's when the Hollywood stars used Kenya as a location to tell their stories. In 2005, the Kenyan government made a conscious effort to develop Kenyan cinema as an industry. The government helped establish the Kenya Film Commission (KFC) (which falls under the Ministry of Information and Communication) which came into operation in mid-2006 to curb the challenges facing the industry. The Kenya Film Commission was mandated to promote the industry not only within the country but to raise international awareness and interest from potential investors. It supports the Kenyan film industry by providing facilities for screenings and filming and organizing various workshops to educate local film-makers seeking to enter film production. It is also responsible for advising on licensing and immigration; as well as facilitate the filming process for film makers. Commission is also establishing a database that will list film directors, producers, agents, local talent, stakeholders and service providers to raise the profile of the Kenyan film industry. In April 2008, the World Story Organization (WSO), a non-profit organization, which seeks to provide filmmaking and storytelling education for developing film industries around the world was founded. This group met with the Kenya Film Commission in August 2008 to discuss the current state of the Kenyan film industry, specifically regarding local productions indigenous to Kenya (as opposed to external production companies that use Kenya as a backdrop and setting). As part of its partnership with the Kenya Film Commission, WSO planned to deliver screenwriting and production workshops in Nairobi, I an effort to lay the foundation for a School of Excellence in Film Production in Kenya which would offer a course in film production for Kenyans, by Kenyans.

Some foreign film makers such as Nigeria among others have focused much of their attention on romanticizing their cityscapes, giving an unrealistic picture of the complexity of their countries. They revolve around empowered people going about their fabulous lives in their 'cosmopolitan world.' Their lives are glamorous with the city being portrayed as a place of opportunities and highlife. The films are full of glamour, and is set in the city's up market. These, among others, give a one sided picture of the city. Nezar Alsayyad (1978), commenting about the Metropolis writes that the city of the elite is reflective of many people's shared fascination with the skyscraper as an icon of modernity (278). *Nairobi Half Life* which has some

scenes set in the dingy dark corridors of Nairobi. It show that carnivals, beaches, skyscrapers, glamour and beauty are not the only aspects of the city life, they expose the dark underside of Nairobi that some people do not understand and as such help Kenyan's to better understand Nairobi's crime culture.

### **Film in Educational institutions**

In 2012 the Ministry of Education introduced film production in schools, colleges and universities drama festival. The project, currently coordinated by Simon Peter Otieno of the Department of Literature, University of Nairobi saw schools, colleges and universities attempt film-making in drama festivals starting 2012. Currently Kenyan Educational institutions are producing films dealing with various themes reflecting the Kenyan beliefs, culture, values and aspirations.

Some of the films so far produced by Educational Institutions include : *Conflicted Successions*(2012) by the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication, *Time* (2012)by Elimu Academy, *A Time to Cry* (2012) by Chogoria Girls' High School, *Benji* (2012) by Lions Primary School, *Flashback* (2012) by Karima Girls' high school, *The First Drop* (2012) by Kayole One Primary School, *A Story is*(2012) *Told* by Nyagatugu Boys' High School, *Angel* (2012)by Kakamega High School, *The Contest* (2012) by Kenya High School, *Anne-Brittah* (20112)by Bulimbo Girls' High School, *Dreams of Tomorrow* (2012) by OLM Mugoiri Girls' High School, *Last Friday at Ten* (2012) by Gitwe Girls' High School and *Pressure Points* (2012)by Menengai High School were major highlights. The film festival report indicated that 'Being the first year of the festival the quality of productions was surprisingly high with a few of the presentations were experimental and lacked the technical quality'.

By 2013 the Educational institutions film festival had grown to a great height. The year saw what would be arguably the second Science Fiction story in Kenya after *Pumzi* (2010). *Messenger* (2013) by Rwathia Girls' High School presented a story of an alien that steals the identity of a form one student. Other highlights in the secondary school category included *A Rose for Salome* (2013) by Chogoria Girls' High School, *The Red Rose* (2013) by Nyagatugu Boys' High School, *A Letter to Auntie* (2013)by TumuTumu Girls' High School, *Sins and Scenes* (2013)by Our Lady of Mercy Mugoiri Girls' high School, *Black Rose* (2013) by St. Annes Secondary School Lioki, *The Portrait* (2013) by Kangubiri Girls' High School, *Tumours of Bitterness* (2013) by Othaya Boys' High School and *Kosa La Mwisho* (2013) by Kajembe High School. The primary school category saw the screening of *Words* (2013) by Elimu Academy. In the colleges and universities category the film to mention was *Remember the Name* (2013) by the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication, *Love Taken to a Mysterious Place* (2013) by United States International University, *The Twist* (2013) by Mount Kenya University, *Let's Play Pretend* (2013)by Moi University.

In a bid to promote participation in this new genre in the drama and film festival, the Ministry of Education introduced genres like documentary, cinematic poetry, screen-narrative, screen-dance and adverts. In 2013 many Early Childhood institutions participated in the screen poetry category. The screen-dance was presented by Kangubiri Girls' High School, Kayole One Primary School and Nkamathi Primary School.

In 2014 the secondary school category was won by Kangubiri Girls' High School with the film *Bury My Bones But Keep My Words (2014)*. A story about a girl who was warned by her mother not to take free gifts as she headed out to high school but who encounters a gift she cannot resist; of attaining supernatural powers). The Universities films had United States International University and the University of Nairobi winning top awards. The University of Nairobi produced a film titled *The Epitaph (2014)* (A story about a traumatised girl who is in campus but who cannot forget that she lost her brother in a violent students' strike in high school in which she participated unwillingly). The primary schools were led by Elimu Academy that won top honours with their film *Maya* which was a true story featuring how several pupils of a school died on the road due to neglect by the school administration. Nairobi Primary School had a very well done documentary on the school. St. Eugene's Primary School from western Kenya also presented another winning documentary titled *Future Between the Rocks* featuring how the pupils in the school face challenges of poverty by making the difficult choice of either going to school or going to break rock in a nearby quarry to get money for their poor families. Kayole One Primary School produced an interesting screen dance titled *Mutuku* about a child who is enticed to drugs but who comes back to his senses and returns to excel in school.

Many institutions participated in 2015 in the festival that was held in Nakuru town at Menengai High School. The total number of films was 152. Very remarkable in this venture was the film production by Early Childhood Learning centers also known as ECDs. These are institutions that admit children of the pre-school going ages between 4 years and 6 years. Kamandura Girls' High School stole the viewers hearts with a witty script titled *Anti-Dre(2015)* which won many awards including the overall winning film. It is the story of a drug peddler who is employed as a teacher in a school. He finds fertile ground to do his business among the students until events catch up with him. Moi Nairobi Girls' High School produced a film *No Behaviour (2015)* about a girl who is befriended by a young man, made pregnant and dumped. Rwathia Girls' High School came up with yet another science fiction film *Guardian Angel (2015)* of an angel who assumes human identity to come and save a girl from her evil habits. Kiaguthu Boys' High School, being among the few boy-schools that ventured into film production explored the rights of the boy-child in *The Intricacies of a Boy Child*. In the short film category of the oral narrative genre Loreto Msongari Girls' High School amused the viewers with *Dabo Tap*, a story about a girl who dates a man in the social media only to realize

it is her high school teacher. In the colleges category the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication dominated with quality productions. The college teaches film production and broadcast journalism. Their most remarkable film in the year was their documentary titled *Omurogi(2015)* that explored the practice of witchcraft in Kisii county (region around Lake Victoria). Even though very few colleges participated in film/video production with Asumbi Teachers College being a sole participant among the teachers' colleges.

In the university category, St. Pauls' University produced a thriller action-packed film titled *My Testimony* (2015) about crime and drugs. Moi University, which had consistently participated since 2013 produced *Cycle 28* a story about difficulties and intrigues of relationships in campus life.

In 2016 the festival was in Meru School in Meru county where the participation increased with an entry of 218 films. Films in Educational institutions were remarkably high; an indication that film in Kenya is on the rise. The standard of the films in 2016 was reported to be amazingly high. Kangubiri Girls' High School had a winning thriller Science fiction story titled *The Return to Planet Earth 2016()*. Astory about a generation of African children who were evacuated to a planet in the Andromeda galaxy before the third world war broke out. Four hundred years into the future their great grandchildren, who are at the time very advanced in technology return to learn from the unfortunate planet. State House Girls' High School produced *The Principal's Daughter* (2016) a story about a girl who is bashed by teachers, students and even workers because she is the principal's daughter which leads her to joining a clandestine underground movement. Kagumo High School was judged the best boys' school coming third with a film *Fire of Passion* that explored how parent's irresponsibility can lead to distracting the child's attention at school.

The documentaries were much improved with Maryhill Girls' High School taking the top judges award with *The Unspoken* a film about how sexual abuse affects the girl child. Many institutions invested well in the documentary. The screen dance and the screen choral verse were however weak needed more skilled input.

The primary schools improved in 2016. Elimu Academy won top honours with their film *Tamasha* about the pain of a girl whose father, a soldier, has to go to Somalia for peace-keeping. Rockside Academy explored the effect of absent parents on children in *Absent Again*. Kayole One Primary School produced *Unknown Angels* about a child who is poor in mathematics but who is taught the secrets of mathematics by two unknown boys who happen to be angels.

In the colleges category in 2016. Asumbi Teachers' College, Tambach Teachers' Training College, Machakos Teachers' Training College and Shanzu Teachers' College dominated the teacher's colleges with good quality films. The universities posted acceptable standards with Moi university, Maseno university, Mount Kenya university and the University

of Nairobi presenting films. The full list of all the institutions that participated are in wiki table 3 and 4 on the right side of this page : (Secondary School films)

The Ministry of Education is currently exploring possibilities of distributing the films by professional companies in the Kenyan market. The management committee also launched a film magazine, The Edufilmer, which is in circulation in schools through the University of Nairobi. This schools film festival gives the opportunity to start nurturing academically schooled film-makers through the thousands of students who get introduced to film production at the school level.

### **Conclusion**

The paper has demonstrated that film in Kenya has travelled across time to achieve a Kenyan voice and has carved a space for Kenya in the global film map; Kenyan films are being shown and celebrated beyond Kenyan borders and are receiving national and international attention for revealing some of issues affecting the Kenyan society. Film production in Kenya has flourished over years with the films currently being produced by Kenyans reflecting the Kenyan society. The paper has traced the Kenyan journey from the dawn of film in Kenya to its present state and has revealed that the film industry in Kenya is rising very fast with the films produced reflecting the life, culture, and values of Kenya and that other than the entertainment industry, film production in learning institutions is coming up with the number of film/video productions, many of which have attained the professional quality, is going up yearly.

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