

VIEWING  
AFRICAN CINEMA  
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Art Films and the Nollywood Video Revolution

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OHIO UNIVERSITY PRESS ♦ ATHENS

133 - 159

Art, Politics, and Commerce  
in Francophone African Cinema

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**Two decades of film criticism by expatriate academics inured us to** thinking that early African filmmaking was part of an emergent Third World political cinema movement. There are signs that that mindset is changing. Recently David Murphy and Patrick Williams called this view "an excessive generalization."<sup>1</sup> For Kenneth Harrow it is time to draw in on the motifs of desire and fantasy that inspired many of the early or more recent African films.<sup>2</sup> The rise of a video film industry in anglophone Africa is stirring a rethinking. This chapter proposes a new perspective on the pioneering francophone celluloid cinema by highlighting its overlooked diversity and by unraveling the multiple cultural, ideological, and economic influences on its beginnings and early development.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that many African directors assumed a socioeducative function, which encouraged the view of across-the-board political commitment. To this day didacticism remains a central strand in francophone filmmaking, but the predilection to teach should not be confounded with political cinema, because it is also a common feature of commercial cinemas around the world, as illustrated in the strong cautionary and educative qualities of the commercial video films that stream out of anglophone countries. The early francophone directors also strove for international recognition in festivals and foreign markets; and tried to achieve a personal expressive voice or to win local popular audiences. Where many of them fit, more squarely than in political cinema, is

the European tradition of art cinema. This will be the central theme of this chapter. The levels of accomplishment varied, not only with the personal qualities of the artists but also with the limitations of the means available to them. Regardless, judging the record as a whole, it represents a great esthetic heritage bequeathed to the future of the continent, and the world at large, on which the new generations of filmmakers are drawing. As an example, at the end of this chapter I broach current developments in South Africa as it becomes a powerful economic partner for the rest of the continent, and speculate on what they might bode for the future of African filmmaking.

### *The French Colonial Connection*

The standard narrative of francophone African cinema tells us that the French government discouraged colonial filmmaking but once independence was achieved, in 1960, reversed its policy by creating specialized institutions and dedicating money to assist the emerging African cineastes. What this story conceals, however, is the cultural and economic dimensions of French policy, which display far greater continuity than overt politics. During the colonial era, film was expected to help—or at least not to undermine—the immediate needs of political control; but during this same era the French also controlled cinema so as to maintain a maximal degree of economic exclusivity with the colonies and also as a form of high culture that could stem the erosion of France's world influence, especially by U.S. ascendancy.

Between the two world wars French colonial administration was more concerned with harmful propaganda and potential political turmoil than cultural development. A much-mentioned piece of legislation from those days is the conservative 1934 Laval decree, making the production of cinematographic images and sound recordings subject to the authorization of the governor (according to Paulin Vieyra, a response to the introduction of soundtracks).<sup>4</sup> It must have been intended mostly for Frenchmen or other Europeans with subversive ideas; during the 1950s it was invoked against French filmmakers known to hold anticolonial views, although Vieyra and a group of young Africans in Paris who wanted to film in Senegal also fell foul of it. Small filming projects for commercial purposes, however, were allowed in the colonies, and during the 1950s the administration in Ouagadougou routinely issued photography and filming authorizations for advertising or documentation purposes.

To the colonial government, exhibition in theaters was of greater consequence than filming. In the 1950s West African film censorship worked at three levels: the Ministry of Colonies in Paris, the colonial federal capital in Dakar, and the headquarters of the colony. In the case of Upper Volta during the 1950s, the governor appointed a Ouagadougou censorship committee of six, including a

representative of French private enterprise.<sup>5</sup> Two distribution chains possessed one theater each and the managers of these gave the administration the list of all the films to be screened a week in advance: they then again reported every morning on the program for that evening.<sup>6</sup> These films were cleared against the lists of banned films that were dispatched from Dakar. The newsreels that were shown before the feature film frustrated both theater management and the officials, because as they were shipped directly from Paris the local committee had to view and authorize them, sometimes in great haste.<sup>7</sup> While these strict measures reflected in part the more strident opposition the administration faced as the colonies hurtled toward independence, the films that were prohibited give an indication of cultural concerns.

In the 1957–58 season the lists of banned films sent periodically from Dakar were short but apparently included all Egyptian movies. Unlike the other banned items, however, Egyptian movies were not listed separately by title but cited only as an enumerated group, so that we have no way of knowing what they contained.<sup>8</sup> Considering the typical story lines of Egyptian melodramas, it is unlikely that these blanket interdictions were due to their political content. The reason was either France's unfriendly relations with the Egyptian government or the authorities' dislike of the popular style of these films (their repeated banning testifies that they were a constant feature of the repertoire, implying audience demand).

That style was the major consideration is suggested by the efforts of the Overseas Ministry to monitor the taste of colonial moviegoers. A study the ministry commissioned from the French National Cinema Center in the late 1940s included observations like "Muslims prefer musical films" and warned that in a few years Indian films would become "dangerous competition."<sup>9</sup> After that date the film preferences of the public remained under scrutiny. In March 1957 the ministry sent a circular to colonial headquarters asking for reports on local film viewing; the response from Ouagadougou informed Paris that local moviegoers preferred newsreels, westerns, Tarzan, Zorro, and, more generally, adventure and detective movies and that they remained indifferent to dramas or romantic plots.<sup>10</sup> At that time most of the movies brought to West Africa through private distribution channels were American, Indian, Egyptian, and Italian, because the French film industry had not yet fully recovered from the damages of World War II.

Colonial authorities pursued broader aims: they made French dubbing mandatory for the films of other countries, thus keeping the small colonial market an appendage of that in metropolitan France, reserving the largest possible room for French productions and also maintaining the high cultural profile of the French language. In addition, they promoted noncommercial films in the cultural centers

opened in all colonial headquarters. These efforts in the colonies resonated with cultural developments and government policies in the postwar metropole.

### *France and Cinema*

French film policy in Africa can be understood only in relation to France's general position in the world of art and cinema. We may recall that whereas art originally expressed a standoff from the state, European governments soon recuperated it and made it into a symbol of identity and power. France served as pioneer and model both in the creation and state appropriation of art.<sup>11</sup> But something survived from the prior autonomy of art: that overlapping networks of artists and critics had the right to define for themselves the norms of beauty and value, implying a hierarchy in the quality of consumers and a congenital reticence toward the popular. After starting as literature, art extended its realm, absorbing the prestigious craft industries and eventually also expressions developed from recent technologies. As moving pictures became a global mass-entertainment industry, a parallel movement in France redefined them as the seventh art.

After World War II cinema in France achieved its highest degree of prestige, epitomized in Henri Langlois's Paris-based Cinémathèque Française and in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the best known of a number of cinema journals of the period. A ranked repertory of canonized films emerged, watched over and over in club screenings to unlock their technical and aesthetic mysteries; a new generation of directors flourished, reaching celebrity status at a young age and known as the Cinémathèque generation, or Nouvelle Vague (New Wave). *Cinéphilie* (love of cinema) became one of the great French passions.

### *Cinéphilie in the Colonies*

At home all this had an ambiguous relationship to the succession of France's conservative governments (although the Cinémathèque would not have become what it is without state patronage), but in the colonies the 1950s administration did not hesitate to bring the new intellectual craze to the attention of the young elites emerging from the newly expanded school system. In the mid-1950s the empire was dotted with cultural centers, which in turn spawned *ciné-clubs*. According to Vieyra, at independence eighteen of them existed in Africa.<sup>12</sup> Many of the first-generation pioneers of African cinema were drawn to filmmaking in these groups. The club in Brazzaville was especially active and produced the first shorts made in the country.<sup>13</sup> In Kinshasa as well—never a French colony but French-speaking and a site where France became deeply involved after the traumatic first year of independence—the French cultural center and the cinémathèque became a hub of film viewing and pioneer local production.<sup>14</sup> In Senegal, Mamadou Sarr—Vieyra's codirector for the famous *Afrique sur Seine* (1955), filmed in Paris—and Djibril Diop Mambéty acquired practically their

only film training in the ciné-club of Dakar. The excitement was so powerful that in the 1960s in Bamako even a high school teacher organized his students to make a film, which is listed among the country's first productions.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time and independently—but connected to the cinéphilie that reigned in France—Jean Rouch was making movies in Niger and Côte d'Ivoire with a handheld 16mm camera. A prolific ethnographer, he also came to be recognized in avant-garde circles as an innovative film artist. Rouch also stood out for the training he provided to his African assistants and actors, some of whom later made their own films and became leading figures (for instance, Moustapha Alassane and Oumarou Ganda in Niger, and Safi Faye in Senegal). As a consequence of Rouch's personal involvement, in the 1970s impoverished Niger ranked second after Senegal for the number of films produced in a sub-Saharan African country. Other future African directors gained experience working with different European filmmakers (for instance, the Belgian Joris Ivens, who made a film for Mali) as well as with African pioneer cineastes.

Many early filmmakers also received more formal training in European film schools (after finishing education in the colonies), attracted to the profession by the great prestige of cinema in France. The country profiles of Vieyra indicate that in the 1950s and 1960s some African young men earned advanced degrees in cinema but never made movies, or produced only newsreels, because the field did not offer much opportunity to earn a comfortable living.<sup>16</sup>

Thus many factors coalesced into the conditions of the birth of francophone African cinema, some of them already connected at their origin. The promotion of noncommercial film, the filtering of popular culture stemming from other world centers through the French language, and cinéphilie luring many young people in Africa as in Europe, all intersected with French geopolitical strategy. The training of many young people in filmmaking was unplanned but coincided with the moment of decolonization. All these strands were consolidated with the French government's decision to give material assistance to postcolonial African cinema, simultaneously a means and an expression of the new relations that France was forging with its ex-dependencies.

### *The Diversity of Early African Filmmakers*

The short biographies that Victor Bachy compiled in 1983 illustrate the multiple paths through which first generations of African filmmakers arrived at cinema: of the 177 filmmakers from francophone countries (including Zaire/Congo, but leaving out Madagascar), 71 were self-taught or trained on the job but 90 had received formal training in overseas film schools or radio and television institutions (13 from the Conservatoire Indépendent du Cinéma Français, 11 from the prestigious national film school IDHEC).<sup>17</sup> The first two generations of francophone African filmmakers were also diverse in whether they

stemmed from a relatively introverted cultural setting or a rather cosmopolitan milieu, as well as in age, religion, political ideology, and outlook, and these differences strongly marked the films they eventually made. Nevertheless, many of the filmmakers shared a simple modernism acquired in school, reflected in the frequency of themes like arranged marriage, polygamy, superstition, and generational conflict. These subjects were often treated with unabashed didacticism, a propensity often mixed up with political message. True political cinema was rare in francophone film. Its best representative, Ousmane Sembene, has an uncommon intellectual biography, including labor union education during long years spent as an immigrant worker in southern France (although in some of his films he also employed didacticism). Another political filmmaker, Med Hondo, had similarly settled in France before he blossomed intellectually and went into theater and cinema.

Didacticism, in contrast to works of social criticism, often emanates from a conservative worldview and exhorts the individual to self-reform. It is commonly associated with commercial cinemas (including the United States and Nollywood, as Birgit Meyer and Stefan Sereda demonstrate in chapters 3 and 11 of this volume). The preachy cast of many early African films roiled the foreign critics who championed them in Europe, as well as African sophisticates like Vieyra, but in all likelihood few African moviegoers. Guy Hennebelle noted that this socioeducative function in African film did not derive from the European avant-garde (where it was tied to the rejection of naturalism and catharsis) but possibly from habits inculcated in the oral tradition.<sup>18</sup> We can as well trace the ubiquitous sermonizing to the peremptory and patronizing style of the colonial classroom, to the impact of missionary moralism on the outlook of the schooled intelligentsia, and finally to the legacy of heavy-handed indoctrination in newsreel, documentary, and religious filmmaking.<sup>19</sup> The school modernism of many early directors was potentially at odds with the assertion of African identity, an important component of concurrent ideological declarations. This contradiction was not overcome until the emergence in the 1980s of films representing what Manthia Diawara dubbed "return to the sources."<sup>20</sup>

#### *French Assistance to Filmmaking in the 1960s and 1970s*

Independence came in 1960, as the first filmmakers were being formed, and shortly afterward the French government began offering them support as part of postcolonial economic cooperation programs.<sup>21</sup> The institutions set up for film development at that time did not come out of the blue; the old Colonial Ministry also had a Commission of Overseas Cinema, which commissioned the studies mentioned above and regulated exhibition. What was novel was the creation of a consortium to help the new governments with the production

of newsreels, educational films, and documentaries.<sup>22</sup> This included access to a commercial 35mm laboratory and editing tables in Paris. In a few cases these facilities became accessible for work on feature films by African directors (for instance, Ousmane Sembene's *Black Girl* [1966] and Jean-Pierre Dikongué-Pipa's *Muna Moto* [1975]).

In 1963 the French government made its second and more important move by creating the Bureau of Cinema, in the Ministry of Cooperation, headed by Jean-René Debrix, a former director of the IDHEC film school. Debrix turned the focus of this office totally to helping the production of feature films, setting up for the purpose separate 16mm production facilities in Paris. It has been pointed out that the lobbying efforts of influential public figures like Rouch and film historian Georges Sadoul, the pressure exerted by the African film students in Paris, and especially the personal dedication of Debrix, were all effective in steering the ministry in this direction. Yet these voices would not have found a hearing in the French foreign-aid establishment if cinema was not highly regarded in France and if the aid program was not consistent with long-term French international cultural policy objectives.

The funds made available for film production were relatively generous and confined to sub-Saharan Africa (to the exclusion of North Africa and former colonies in other parts of the world) but ultimately modest compared to the task the bureau had set itself. Their limitations convinced Ousmane Sembene, for example, never to apply for the bureau's aid (he could tap other funding sources), and controversy surrounded the noncommercial distribution rights demanded by the ministry as a condition of its grants. Despite these limitations, the Bureau of Cinema's aid had a most significant impact between 1969 and 1977 and became the largest single factor in the explosion of francophone cinema.<sup>23</sup> The technical section (editing lab) of the bureau was closed in 1979 and assistance to sub-Saharan filmmaking suspended, but it resumed a year later under the new Mitterand government through other channels.<sup>24</sup> Altogether, the Ministry of Cooperation helped the production of over 300 long films and 550 short films, most of them by directors from the fourteen sub-Saharan francophone countries.<sup>25</sup> But neither the art orientation, nor Eurocentrism, nor the grants themselves made francophone cinema uniform. It is important to underline that repeated and separate attempts were made in French-speaking Africa to create a profit-making entertainment cinema.

#### *Commercial Orientation in Francophone Cinema*

Commercial efforts took place most noticeably in Central Africa, as well as in Côte d'Ivoire. In Gabon private French capital financed a series of comedies, trying to conquer market share with effortlessly digestible entertainment, derided

among the serious critics as the "Gabonese machinery." Out of Cameroon came erotic thrillers.<sup>26</sup> It seems that these movies were successful, too, in their own terms.

Some respected filmmakers of the first generation also showed interest in taking the commercial path. Cameroonian director Jean-Pierre Dikongué-Pipa's masterwork *Muna Moto* (1975), which caused him much hardship and anguish, won many accolades and a series of international awards, including the grand prize at FESPACO that year,<sup>27</sup> but in African movie theaters it was a flop. Meanwhile the comedy that his countryman Daniel Kamwa released the same year, *Pousse Pousse* (1975), made with a truly lavish budget provided by his government, became a popular hit. Dikongué-Pipa released one more serious work (*Le prix de la liberté*, 1978) and then he, too, turned to light comedies.<sup>28</sup> In Côte d'Ivoire, Henri Duparc had a similar career course.<sup>29</sup> The most politically conscious of all filmmakers, Ousmane Sembene, was not categorically against entertainment films. Revealing more cultural nationalism than socialism, he famously said, "Rubbish for rubbish, let's make African rubbish" (*Navet pour navet, faisons des navets africains*).<sup>30</sup> He never engaged in this direction himself, but toward the end of his career he made *Faat Kiné* (1999), a soft drama that could have provided the model for the organic art form of the bourgeoisie, had West Africa possessed a stronger and more assertive class of that sort.

Why is it then that these attempts at commercialism had so little effect within the larger scheme of African cinema? It is tempting to think that this outcome was due to French authorities' promotion of noncommercial cinema.<sup>31</sup> Insofar as cinéphilie was fostered in the cultural centers and ciné-clubs, this is true. But the supposition makes no sense in terms of the Bureau of Cinema, or the subjective dispositions of the editors and technicians whom it hired to work with the African filmmakers. Debrix found the "message" movies that came out of the bureau's funding line stifling, and he openly admired, of all things, Kamwa's *Pousse Pousse* (winner of the bureau's best-script award), a preference for which he was blasted by other African filmmakers.<sup>32</sup>

The limits of francophone African commercial cinema need to be sought largely in the economic circumstances, which have been at least as strong an inhibitor as the values of the filmmakers or the metropolitan models that molded them. Even the films that turned a profit could not reach beyond narrow regional markets, and businessmen did not rush in to provide capital for other, similar ventures. Kamwa's *Pousse Pousse* stands, once again, as an exception; it had a run in all francophone African countries and ended up being seen by seven hundred thousand ticket-paying moviegoers.<sup>33</sup> In most other cases what excited Central Africans did not appeal to West Africans. Moreover, paradoxically in Cameroon, Gabon, and Kinshasa commercial film survived less for its

market profitability than thanks to government support, because high-handed local leaders preferred these kinds of movies. French businessmen invested a little in francophone commercial film, but not enough to turn it into real business. One factor that may have hindered transferability was that Central and West Africa parted company in the languages used for dialogue; West African films used national languages, whereas those from Central Africa and Côte d'Ivoire remained wedded to French.<sup>34</sup> For whatever reason, the popular comedies of francophone Africa did not achieve the cross-border appeal that Nigerian video dramas now enjoy.

Because of low critical esteem, popular francophone African cinema also lacked the prestige of the festival circuit and the resulting revenue from foreign art house and academic markets. What remained to them were the few existing African theaters with low ticket prices, a market in which even a popular success could not produce much profit (in the 1980s French observers never tired of repeating that the entire West African film market did not add up to the gross receipts of a fraction of the theaters on Boulevard Montparnasse in Paris).

The high cost of making movies made this narrow economic base even more limiting. Even the shoestring budgets of most African filmmakers amounted, under prevailing francophone production standards, to significant sums, hard to amortize in two or three countries. Many filming projects employed highly paid European technicians, rented European equipment, and had to send the rushes to Europe for processing and postproduction. Video did not yet exist and the 16mm stock used for the bureau-funded projects doomed a film in the local commercial circuit, where theaters had only 35mm projectors. It was not imaginable that films could be made in any other way.<sup>35</sup> We see this as a limitation now only because of the recent example of Nigeria. As early as the 1980s, still in the era of celluloid, Nigerian Yoruba traveling theater companies could commission profitable films out of their own capital. The key to their commercial survival was the cutting of production costs by going from 35mm to 16mm film, then to (nonreproducible) reversal film stock, or shooting on video and blowing it up to 16mm (with degrading image and sound quality at each step), and their distribution via special showings of the single copy, organized by the company itself along the routes of its previous live-performance circuits.<sup>36</sup> The francophone African film had standards different than "popular art," being perhaps both a beneficiary and victim of French film culture.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Categorizing Francophone Film:*

#### *FEPACI, European Criticism, and the Problem of Distribution*

If we now remain within the auteur terms of mainstream African francophone cinema, we can perceive a range of diversity that remains invisible in much of

the interpretive literature. One finds immense stylistic variation right from the beginning, from Desiré Ecaré's poetic and individualistic *Concerto pour un exil* (1967) through fellow Ivorian Bassori Timité's psychoanalytic-surreal *The Woman with the Knife* (1969), Med Hondo's innovative political montage *Soleil Ô* (1971), Djibril Diop Mambéty's exploration of avant-garde form in *Touki Bouki* (1973), Moustapha Alassane's more representative forced-marriage-tradition and ruin-by-modernity drama *FVVA* [standing for *femme, voiture, villa, argent*] (1972) to Sembene's first full features, *Black Girl* (1966), *Mandabi* (1968), and *Emitaï* (1971), which are strikingly dissimilar among themselves. And let us not forget the plurality in the medium itself. The immensely versatile Alassane made his first animation short in 1962, the year before Sembene's celebrated *Borom Sarret* (1963), made two other animation movies in the mid-1960s, and after completing remarkable short and full-length features, returned to the genre in the 1970s.

Why is it, then, that a monolithic image of francophone African filmmaking prevailed over a more "complex genealogy of African cinema," as Lizelle Bisschoff and David Murphy put it?<sup>38</sup> This skewed view results less from the content and style of the films themselves than from the discourse that surrounded them. A group of filmmakers produced part of this discourse through a couple of manifestos of FEPACI (Fédération Panafricaine des Cinéastes). This self-representation echoed the predilections of European progressive film criticism, which privileged them over other expressions by the filmmakers and linked African movies to the largely unrelated Third Cinema movement emanating from Latin America during the 1970s.

The idea of a federation of African filmmakers (along with much of the ideology with which it became associated) originated in North Africa, first at the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, and then the 1970 Carthage (Tunisia) Film Festival, where FEPACI was formally created, with a Tunisian as president and Senegalese filmmaker Ababacar Samba-Makharam its very dynamic secretary general.<sup>39</sup> At a 1975 second meeting, again in Algiers, the federation issued its famous charter, a six-hundred-word document with strong Third Worldist accents. After this initial burst of activity, FEPACI went through a long period of dormancy.<sup>40</sup> In 1983, when the organization was "completely defunct," the charismatic leader of the new Burkina Faso government, Thomas Sankara, brought it back to life by granting it funding and other forms of support. The FEPACI congress held during the 1985 FESPACO festival elected a new team of Burkinabè officials, with Gaston Kaboré as secretary general, and transferred the headquarters to Ouagadougou with a resident treasurer general, infusing new energy into the organization.<sup>41</sup>

FEPACI developed a two-pronged strategy. For its own constituency of filmmakers, it assumed the role of ideologue, advocating a cinema with a mission.

Its pronouncements provided grist for the interpretive apparatus of academic criticism, suggesting, more than anything else, a militant African cinema; but these edicts had almost no effect on the kinds of films that were made in Africa. The second facet of its strategy was more effective. FEPACI worked through its national committees as a lobbying force in separate countries, trying to influence their governments to pass legislation that would help the development of national cinemas according to its own prescription, and also as an international political pressure group. In this last respect it was very successful; it won an observer's seat in the sessions of the Organization of African Unity. The French government as well paid heed to its demands, by trying to improve the distribution of African films (see below).

The FEPACI program had three aims, laying bare its true character as a genuine producers' union: to convince the African governments to nationalize film distribution and exhibition, in order to find better outlets for African productions; to reduce the ticket taxes, which were deemed very high, creating with part of the revenue from remaining taxes a national fund to provide assistance to African filmmakers; and to found an intra-African film distribution company.

The emphasis on film distribution was largely the brainchild of the Tunisian film critic (and founder of the Carthage Film Festival) Tahar Cheriaa and became the centerpiece of FEPACI policy. No efforts were made, however, to follow the Algerian model and nationalize film production. Many important directors, including Sembene and Samba-Makharam, had their own small production companies, and they wanted to maintain this independence. The question of film distribution, on the other hand, presented itself as a more generally acceptable anticolonial argument. The same two private firms that had dominated West African film exhibition during the colonial period still remained in place after independence, and they also owned most of the theaters.

In eliminating this duopoly, FEPACI demonstrated its political clout during the 1970s, but the outcome did not provide the desired audience for African films. Responding to the outcry, the French government first convinced the aging managers of the two established firms to retire and to turn over their stock to a newly created mixed-economy company. But facing nationalist demands, the new enterprise could not maintain solvency. In 1980 francophone African states established the Consortium Interafricain de Distribution Cinématographique (CIDC), a collective agency both controlling distribution and committed to supporting local filmmakers. The CIDC included fifty titles by African directors on its lists, transferring many of them from 16mm to 35mm stock at great expense. But this company, too, failed financially and dissolved amid court cases in 1984. A subsidiary of American film corporations benefited from the void and became for a period the principal supplier, until another

French company entered the market in 1989. In any case, the successful competitors on the resulting more open market turned out to be Indian, Hong Kong, and U.S. movies.

The second aim of FEPACI, the creation of a national cinema fund with a portion of ticket tax revenue, was implemented in only one country: Burkina Faso (Upper Volta before 1983). In one of the most amazing stories in African filmmaking, these decisions catapulted the government of a very impoverished country into being the most magnanimous benefactor of cinema on the continent, and the country itself into a hotbed for film creation.

### *The Nationalization of Theaters in Burkina Faso*

From 1969 to 1970 the government of then Upper Volta engaged in protracted negotiations with the two distributor-theater operators of the country about ticket prices and municipal revenue taxes. The confrontation concluded with the government nationalizing the theaters and the distributors agreeing to supply the films on contract for a fraction of the receipts.<sup>42</sup> Although not achieving a total triumph, the government succeeded in asserting national sovereignty and gaining significant funds, because the volume of business turned out to be much larger than what the firms had been declaring.

The incident provided an example to other African governments that tried nationalization, including Senegal in 1974.<sup>43</sup> More important, strong government support attracted to Upper Volta/Burkina Faso the FEPACI headquarters and the main offices of the regional distribution consortium, the CIDC. In 1976 a film school, the Institut Africain d'Éducation Cinématographique de Ouagadougou (INAFEC) opened its doors, promoted by FEPACI and partly sponsored by UNESCO and France. INAFEC was meant to become a regional institution receiving financial backing and students from different African countries, but it never achieved that goal. While a few students from surrounding West African countries did graduate, 80 percent of its funding was supplied by Burkina Faso, and after ten years of operation the school proved too costly to maintain and was shut down. In this short period it gave initial training to some well-known Burkinabe directors, including Idrissa Ouedraogo and Fanta Nacro. The stimulus of government initiatives even inspired a Burkinabè businessman to start a fully equipped private film studio in Ouagadougou (Cinafric), hoping to capture some of the processing that was sent abroad. After its 1979 opening a few full-length feature films were finished in this facility but it, too, became moribund by the 1990s, in part because its prices proved to be no cheaper than those of European alternatives.<sup>44</sup>

The government of Burkina Faso dutifully set aside a portion of its ticket revenue for cinema projects, including not only INAFEC and productions by

Burkinabè filmmakers but also the work of other West African directors, the purchase of finished films for screening in its theaters, the building and maintenance of movie theaters, and the staging of conferences on African cinema.<sup>45</sup> But undoubtedly its most significant contribution to African cinema was sponsoring the Ouagadougou film festival, FESPACO, now an institution with its own permanent directorate and film and print archives.

### *FESPACO and Cultural Valorization*

What eventually became FESPACO started as a whiff of cinéphilie, occurring in advance of the struggles between the Upper Volta government and the French distribution firms or the production of local films. In 1968 a group from the French cultural center in Ouagadougou and the president of the local ciné-club met with the executives of the national TV station, officials from the information and education ministries, researchers from the local branch of the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, and other public personalities to think about how to provide the city's population with access to the new African films. The resulting 1969 Semaine du Cinéma Africain [African Cinema Week] was modestly titled but brought together the necessary elements for a recurring festival: a supply of films from the Paris Ministry of Cooperation; the enthusiastic participation of African filmmakers, including especially Ousmane Sembene; and the promise of continuing support from the national government.<sup>46</sup>

In the following three years the setting up of a national film import and theater management company and the consolidation of a periodic international African film festival went hand in hand. In 1972 the festival acquired permanent structures, included competition and a grand prize, and assumed its present name, FESPACO (Festival Panafricain du Cinéma et de la Télévision de Ouagadougou). The same year the first full-length feature film of the country, *Le sang des parias* (The blood of the pariahs) by Mamadou Djim Kola, was finished, to be screened at the festival the following year. The recently created FEPACI put its support and its contacts fully in the service of the festival, even reconciling it with the established film centers of North Africa by arranging for FESPACO to take place only in odd-numbered years, so as to alternate rather than compete with the festival in Carthage. Over the years FESPACO has become more than a showcase for African filmmakers, or a place where foreign distributors meet filmmakers and critics view recent movies. Filmmakers themselves see each other's films during the festival, become acquainted with one another, discover reactions to their collective work, and get fired with inspiration. The festival created a cinema community in sub-Saharan Africa, and a site from which cinematic influences and fashions radiated.

The enthusiasm of cinephiles, filmmakers, and government officials was not initially shared by the intended beneficiaries of the festival, the Ouagadougou population. Sembene drew a conclusion with humility: "The public saw our movies, with all their insufficiencies, and was perhaps disillusioned, because perhaps they do not conform to its wishes. But if government authorities all over Africa gave us some consideration, we may reach the point of fulfilling its expectations." Mamadou Djim Kola communicated greater frustration: "Over the course of the years our public underwent the influence of images and developed . . . a passion for cinema [but] their minds absorbed some of the most negative aspects of a certain kind of cinema. . . . The public often remains indifferent to the African film, even apathetic, if it doesn't reject it outright."<sup>47</sup>

In anticipation of this reaction, outreach activities were organized as early as the 1969 African Cinema Week to teach the population to like African movies. Eventually audiences embraced the festival; viewers went from ten and twenty thousand in 1969 and 1970 to a hundred thousand in the late 1970s, when they were still mostly locals, and to about four hundred thousand in 1987.<sup>48</sup> The twenty-first edition of the festival, in 2009, had an estimated attendance of five to six hundred thousand. This reminds us that the anticommmercial reputation of francophone films needs some modification. Sembene's films *Mandabi* and *Xala* (1974) were extremely popular in Senegal; Kramo Lanciné Fadiga's *Djeli* (1981) beat all box office records when it opened in Abidjan; Gaston Kaboré's *Wend Kuuni* (1982) remains an all-time hit in Burkina Faso.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the concern for audience, it remains true that from its beginnings FESPACO was guided by an art conception of cinema and cultural nationalism rather than by entertainment or market value. In the words of the festival's official 1969 communiqué, "We intend to affirm the existence of an African cinema, made in Africa, by Africans, on African topics. These recent works . . . allow one to understand that cultural values are part of the African heritage just as much as traditional values."<sup>50</sup> These words accord with the opinions of Paulin Vieyra, namely that African cinema would contribute a critical new voice to universal art, provided European audiences could be open-minded enough to welcome diversity. Nourished by African values, African film would at the same time stimulate the growth of a new African civilization.<sup>51</sup>

Filmmakers and critics aspired to works of lasting value, which meant that even the release of a picture did not relieve the burden of improving it. Vieyra reports, for example, that Alassane's *FVVA* won the OCORA Prize at the 1972 FESPACO, but its poor sound track dismayed his friends and film buffs, and the director promised them to use the prize money to redo the sound.<sup>52</sup> The direction of peer pressure here is revealing, considering the general dearth of film funds; an important sum of money was given to the director for his



FIGURE 8.1. Entrance to FESPACO headquarters, Ouagadougou, 2003. Photo by Mahir Şaul



FIGURE 8.2. The new headquarters of FESPACO in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, as seen during the twenty-first staging of the festival (February–March 2009). Despite the growing prominence of Nollywood video media, FESPACO's continuing commitment to celluloid film is manifested in the shaping of this building as a giant film reel. Likewise the monument to filmmakers in the Place des Cinéastes at the center of the city represents two stacks of reels, and the FESPACO logo displays a film camera. Photo courtesy of Tom Pointon

accomplishment, and he was encouraged to spend it not on a new filming project but to correct a flaw in the already finished one (and not because anyone thought that would increase the film's prospects in the market). Besides this commitment to creating works for posterity, the director was expected to represent African culture. The French art influence was not the only reason for this commitment; it also grew out of the decolonization ethos, as can be appreciated in accounts by Onookome Okome and Birgit Meyer of Nigerian and Ghanaian intellectuals accusing their video film industries of presenting Africa to the world in the degrading terms of superstition, crime, violence, and magic (chapters 2 and 3 of this volume).

In the beginning the search for a proper African aesthetic encompassed both the desire to "contribute to universal art" and an effort to reach the local audience. Vieyra opted for medium-length static shots of long duration, which research (of colonial origin) suggested would help the viewers comprehend the story.<sup>53</sup> Sembene held a contrasting opinion: "We looked at our films, and discussed them . . . often in our films there is too much talk and the rhythm is slow. We have to change that. Films with less talk, more rapidity, and much more explicitness are needed."<sup>54</sup>

Today these words resonate with a certain irony since established critical opinion sees in Sembene's films just the reverse of what he wanted to do, a view that Peter Rist reexamines carefully (chapter 10 of this volume). There was some ambiguity in the value assigned to cinema itself in the larger struggle for an African high culture. Sembene, on the heels of his first great triumph with *Black Girl*, said in a French radio interview, "I would have preferred for us, for Africa, that there were more readers than film buffs. I consider literature a more complete art where you can really plumb a person. With cinema, in our country, things stay at a very elementary level."<sup>55</sup>

#### *FEPACI: Culture as Politics*

This brings us back to FEPACI and the worldview it mirrored. In its formative years the guiding lights of the organization advocated a program of cultural rejuvenation rather than political anti-imperialism or class-based revolutionary change. This cultural orientation is totally missed when the 1975 Algiers charter or the towering presence of an artist like Sembene become the exclusive focus. A 1974 Ouagadougou seminar, for example, was called "The Role of the African Film-Maker in Rousing an Awareness of Black Civilization." After a preamble on avoiding the temptations of commercialism, the main task was described as a "civilization project": helping Africans develop an awareness of their own worlds, values, attitudes, and hold a mirror to their proper identity.<sup>56</sup> The arguments basically hark back to the Negritude movement, although now

partly couched in Pan-Africanist language, with a few nods to anticolonialism. Samb-Makharam, the general secretary of FEPACI, declared, "The cultural takes precedence over the political"; Férid Boughedir, who for many years served as an informal spokesperson for FEPACI, called for "mental detoxification" and "a cinema revalorizing African culture."<sup>57</sup>

There was a disconnect between this culturalist position of FEPACI leaders (and other front-stage Negritude-influenced intellectuals) and the practical ideology displayed in many francophone films. Describing the alienation of students or immigrants, denouncing endogamous caste or forced marriages, ridiculing polygamous seniors, or warning against ritual imposters, those films could not be upheld as illustrations of the essential values of African civilization. As the colonial period receded, criticism of retrograde practices in film became less frequent, or more nuanced.

In 1981, when French cultural aid to Africa was being reorganized, a representative of the Ministry of Cooperation announced, "We intend to try to stop all kinds of cultural erosion that is likely to happen because of the multiplication and standardization of the means of mass communication . . . we will favor to the greatest possible extent the knowledge of the cultures and identities of the Third World in general, and of Africa in particular."<sup>58</sup> The objective was to promote national film traditions that have an affinity with the art sphere of France (and Europe) but that can stand in juxtaposition to it as a cultural other. Later in the 1980s the French assistance philosophy shifted to funding fewer projects but more fully, to help produce "prestige" works of high quality, likely to achieve international visibility (selection to the Cannes Film Festival was a frequently stated purpose). In the 1990s, in accordance with the reigning economic paradigm, economic viability was added as a consideration, and ties with television promoted. These new priorities may be creating now a bifurcation in African cinema. On the one hand, directors who are based in Europe (organized in the Paris-based African Guild of Filmmakers and Producers) are able to benefit from a wide set of funding sources and can thus combine a personal artistic vision with the greatest technical accomplishment afforded the independent filmmakers in the First World (such as Abderrahmane Sissako and Mahamat-Saleh Haroun). Other filmmakers working in Africa follow the earlier pattern of hybrid francophone cinema, often incorporating a self-ascribed educational mission. But in either case the strong emphasis on an aestheticized and essentialized display of African difference endures.

The two projects, FEPACI's and the French one in its various guises, dovetailed, but the objective of creating highly accomplished works of cinema that do honor to Africa conflicted with that of creating a movie industry. From this perspective, one future for francophone cinema lay not in national film

funds replenished with ticket revenue and invested in filmmaking—although the Burkina government still does that—nor in a commercial entertainment sector and star system, as it is happening in Nigeria. It lay in splendidly artful displays of local color and “identity,” produced thanks to expanded subsidies from France and the European Union.<sup>59</sup> Serendipitously, a new generation of filmmakers of superlative education and talent are carrying through this culturally sensitive and technically polished cinema, but it is not one tuned to local audiences or concerned with African cinematographic language, as the first two generations’ partly was.

### *The Opening of South Africa and the Future of African Film*

The newest development in African cinema is the eruption of South Africa, previously isolated from the rest of the continent, as a film industry giant. In 2005, South Africa made a strong showing at FESPACO, with a large number of visitors and four feature films in the competition, one of which (*Drum*, Zola Maseko, 2004) took the grand prize. In 2006, South Africa’s Department of Arts and Culture hosted an African Film Summit in Pretoria-Tshwane, including a congress held by FEPACI. At this meeting the members voted for the creation of a full-time secretariat in South Africa, though the headquarters remains in Ouagadougou, and elected Seipati Bulane Hopa, a South African woman producer, as secretary general. The decision has been hailed as a watershed in the history of FEPACI, and no doubt it serves as an emblem of the shifting center of gravity for the African film world.

On the commercial front, the South African media company M-Net, already broadcasting to the rest of the continent via satellite and a subscription-based online TV service, began compiling its African Film Library by purchasing exclusive electronic rights to the films of the major francophone and anglophone directors. M-Net’s pay-per-view entertainment channel, Africa Magic, airs daily Nollywood dramas and is starting to have an impact on both the finances and technical services of Nigerian video production.<sup>60</sup> Another South African company, Nu Metro, operates theaters in several African countries, produces and distributes films and TV programs, and sells videos, DVDs, and video games for home entertainment.

This new configuration is bolstered by two different imperatives stemming from South Africa: the local film industry’s desire to reach a new market and the struggle of the formerly disadvantaged groups within the country to find proportional representation in postapartheid society. The South African film industry, one of the oldest in the world, intermittently produces features that triumph at the international box office—for example, Academy Award winner *Tsotsi* (Gavin Hood, 2005) and *District 9* (Neill Blomkamp, 2009)—but suffers

from a narrow domestic market, which observers attribute in part to the lack of exhibition theaters and filmgoing habits in the black townships. Adjustment to the realities of majority rule after the 1994 elections created a temporary lull in production, which was softened but not totally offset by the small flurry of antiapartheid films. At the same time the Cape Town World Cinema Festival and the simultaneous Sithengi Film and Television Market, promoted by the South African film industry, have now become major showcases for African cinema, on a par with FESPACO and Carthage.<sup>61</sup>

The rise of a new generation of young black South African producers and directors is the second crucial element in the opening of South Africa. The latest crop of filmmakers is different from the small numbers who matured in the underground film scene during apartheid. Young filmmaker Carmen Sangion distinguishes “two generations of filmmakers, the younger generation that is focused on fantasy, entertainment and commercial work, and the group from the old school with political and social baggage about the country.”<sup>62</sup> The younger cineastes may wish for work in a normalized commercial film sector, but they find it hard to break into the existing professional circuits. The studios around Johannesburg, and the major broadcast companies and distributors as well, are dominated by white capital and employ an old coterie of producers, directors, and technical personnel. Government aid administered through the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) prods this establishment to integrate the new black professionals, but progress has been slow.

Policy debates turn around a contrast, the “independent filmmakers” on one side, who establish start-up companies or operate informally, and “industry organization” on the other. During the 2008 Gauteng Film Commission conference, which was an “industry” event, Bulane Hopa said that “10 percent of the population continue to determine the nature of cultural content production . . . only by creating and sustaining more opportunities for black filmmakers will the industry be able to meet the changing demands of South Africa.”<sup>63</sup> The barriers to entry are decried sometimes under polite terms such as “faith in young talent” or “commitment to transformation,” at other times in the harsher tones of “means of production” and “transfer.”

This ongoing strife has impelled black film professionals to latch onto francophone African cinema and its FESPACO legacy. South African audiences met this African cinema after the 1994 elections, and now it stands as a major argument for local government assistance against both the commercialism of Hollywood-style entertainment and the past glory of the white Afrikaner art film. The francophone model shapes the restructuring of incentives in the new South Africa. The NFVF focuses on short films as a training ground and its program for first-time producers and directors receives funding from taxes on

nondomestic film showings, videos, and TV advertising, following the model of Burkina Faso, which itself followed the example of the French National Cinema Center.<sup>64</sup> The translocated FEPACI in Johannesburg is now financially sustained by the Department of Arts and Culture through the NFVF. The prestige of African cinema prompts support from the private sector as well. M-Net set one of its New Directions training programs in Gorée Island, Senegal, under the leadership of Gaston Kaboré.<sup>65</sup>

The developing cinematic ties between these two African regions have also generated new challenges. Huge economic disparities exist between South Africa and the rest of the continent. The hard-fought new incentives scheme put in place for South African cinema may look modest to its proponents, relative to the wealth circulating in their country; the film industry itself struggles and remains dependent on government subsidies. But from the perspective of tropical countries, these same resources appear as inexhaustible bounties. South African black intellectuals understand that their claims to a rightful place in both their home film industry and the continent as a whole bring correlative obligations vis-à-vis the cinematic institutions of the rest of Africa. The FEPACI secretariat in Johannesburg, now that it has secured its own budget, is trying to raise money for the headquarters in Ouagadougou, to allay the misgivings of the Burkinabè and other francophone colleagues. But certainly the filmmakers place larger hopes on South African connections. As noted by FEPACI secretary Bulane Hopa, "Huge expectations put on us by 54 countries in Africa . . . call for enormous finances, infrastructure support and human resources."<sup>66</sup>

To the extent that black South African producers, directors, and technical professionals gain a more secure foothold in the cinema and broadcasting industries of their country, the linkages to other sub-Saharan countries may well produce a general amelioration in production conditions. Collaboration has already started on a small scale. Souleymane Cissé, Jean-Pierre Bekolo, and Idrissa Ouedraogo completed feature films in Zimbabwe and South Africa, with South African crews and cast and soundtracks in English.<sup>67</sup> The development of such relations will not necessarily cast a shadow on the existing ties with France and the European Union. French cultural aid, now administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is no longer tied exclusively to *francophonie* and embraces a global strategy of support for all national alternative cinemas; the South African link may be welcomed as a bridge to English-speaking countries. In South African festivals and cultural events, French cultural centers enthusiastically promote the independent cinemas of the global south that have benefited from grants from Fonds Sud Cinéma. *Zulu Love Letter* (Ramadan Suleman, 2005), a South African film lauded as a possible artistic forerunner of a new, Africa-oriented

style, received French and European Union funding, and Suleman himself had worked in the past with Med Hondo and Souleymane Cissé.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, television programming achieves a better mix of imported fare and local productions than theater distribution. Local dramas capture more airtime not only because of the quotas that the government incentive schemes impose but also because they receive higher ratings from audiences. This is true in South Africa and in the other countries of sub-Saharan Africa (as well a broader trend worldwide).<sup>69</sup> This development provides a framework for understanding the growth of Nollywood; it had started with the desire to emulate TV soap operas and flourished when, for a variety of reasons, theaters closed down and TV programming declined in Nigeria. Seeing these video dramas as ersatz TV also points to possible scenarios in the future. Digitalization is leading to the convergence of all communication into a single platform. The internet has created Web TV, film distribution is moving to the phase of broadband delivery, cell phones are turning into mobile TV sets. All these changes are well advanced in sub-Saharan Africa. Industry representatives in South Africa are calling for a niche of extra-low-budget films that rely more decidedly on DVD sales—in effect, the Nollywood model. Will the genre distinctions we know survive when African Film Library and Nollywood dramas become available as choices made at the touch of a button?

African francophone cinema emerged from intricate historical connections, including the colonial heritage, the local and global postcolonial experience, and the economic and technical exigencies of celluloid film production. Now in a transformed world it is moving ahead in uncharted ways: from the new generation of high-end, internationally successful (and supported) filmmakers, to locally funded projects responding to anchored sensibilities of what may become national cinemas, to the new internationalism emerging from collaboration with South Africa and the English-speaking world. One artist presages perhaps the hybrid meeting point that may be one aspect of the foreseeable future. Jean-Pierre Bekolo's spirited camp has an undeniable affinity with the video products coming out of Nigeria and elsewhere, though clearly it also incorporates a different kind of discernment and artistic intelligence. It may nonetheless be the prototype for a kind of film that will be finished on a laptop, receive the imprimatur of a new FEPACI, be delivered by broadband, and viewed on a mobile TV.

#### Notes

This chapter has greatly benefited from the suggestions of Ralph A. Austen.

1. David Murphy and Patrick Williams, *Postcolonial African Cinema: Ten Directors* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 5.

2. Kenneth W. Harrow, *Postcolonial African Cinema: From Political Engagement to Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).
3. Two other recent authors who inform this effort are Teresa Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema and Europe: Close-up on Burkina Faso* (Florence: European Academic Publishing, 2004); Roy Armes, *African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).
4. Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 22. The minister of the colonies Pierre Laval became prime minister in the Vichy government and after the war was executed as a Nazi collaborator. Charles Sugnet, "Film," in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of World Popular Culture*, vol. 5, *Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Gary Hoppenstand (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2007), 65.
5. G. Bichon, Chef de Cabinet, to theater managers, March 27, 1957, Centre National des Archives, Ouagadougou (3V 72).
6. Commissaire de Police (J. Vial) to the managers of the theaters Olympia (COMACICO) and Nadercine (SECMA), February 27, 1957, Centre National des Archives, Ouagadougou (3V 72).
7. Haut Commissaire, AOF, to the Governors, no. 644 6, February 28, 1957, Centre National des Archives, Ouagadougou (3V 72).
8. In 1957 six Egyptian movies were banned on the September 28 list and twenty-four on the December 11 list. The following year another twenty-one Egyptian movies were banned on the February 21 list. Haut Commissariat de la République en AOF, Interdiction de projection de films, Centre National des Archives, Ouagadougou (3V 72).
9. Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema*, 79. See also Abdalla Adamu and Laura Fair on the popularity of Indian movies in Kano and East Africa, chaps. 4 and 7 of this volume.
10. Circular no. 275, Rapport sur l'activité cinématographique en Haute Volta, Centre National des Archives, Ouagadougou (3V 72).
11. Pierre Bourdieu has written at length on how art became an autonomous field in nineteenth-century France, in a double rejection of the market and state patronage. Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).
12. Paulin S. Vieyra, *Le cinéma africain des origines à 1973* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1975), 48. According to Farida Ayari's recollection, the first of these centers was created in 1954 in Libreville. Philippe Maarek, ed., *Afrique noire: Quel cinéma?* Actes du colloque Université X Nanterre, December 1981 (Paris: Association du Ciné-Club de l'Université Paris X, 1983), 49.
13. Vieyra, *Cinéma africain*, 48.
14. See the biographies of Kiese Madenda, Luzolo Mpwati, and Manzanza Wa N'Gavuka in Victor Bachy, "Dictionnaire de 250 Cinéastes," *CinémAction* no. 26 (1983): 186–201.
15. Vieyra, *Cinéma africain*, 124; Bachy, "Dictionnaire," 189.
16. Vieyra, *Cinéma africain*.

17. Bachy, "Dictionnaire."
18. Guy Hennebelle, "Les cinémas africains en 1972," special issue, *L'Afrique Littéraire et Artistique* (Paris: Société Africaine d'Édition) no. 20 (1972): 216, 221. Evidently, we need to exclude the rare examples of conscious connection to Bertolt Brecht's esthetics, as in Sembene's *Mandabi* (1968), or Diop-Mambéty's *Hyenas* (1992).
19. Brian Goldfarb, "A Pedagogical Cinema: Development Theory, Colonialism, and Post-Liberation African Film," *iris* 18 (1995): 7–24; Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 84–96.
20. Diawara, *African Cinema*, 159–66.
21. Ibid., 24–28, 52–57.
22. Consortium Audiovisuel International (CAI).
23. Claire Andrade-Watkins provides an account of the bureau's work based, uncommonly enough, on oral history of its technicians. Andrade-Watkins, "France's Bureau of Cinema," in *African Experiences of Cinema*, ed. I. Bakari and M. Cham (London: British Film Institute, 1996), 112–27.
24. The official ideas guiding the 1980 reorganization are expressed in a 1981 colloquium organized by the Ciné-Club of the University of Paris X (Nanterre): Maarek, *Afrique noire*. In 1980, ATRIA, a Paris NGO created by film editor Andrée Davanture and a few other promoters of African filmmaking, inherited the editing tables of the technical section and started providing postproduction services to African films selected for assistance, and also served as producer for these projects under the new guidelines. This private organization lived on meager budgets, mostly on government grants, until those grants were cut in 1999 and it had to close.
25. Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema*, 88.
26. *CinémAction*, no. 26 (1983): 176, 184. Férid Boughedir, "African Cinema and Ideology: Tendencies and Evolution," in *Symbolic Narratives/African Cinema: Audiences, Theory and the Moving Image*, ed. by June Givanni (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 114–15. The Cameroonian Alphonse Beni, known for his "erotico-disco thrillers," made his first feature in 1974 and his last in 2005. The Gabonese Pierre-Marie Dong codirected films commissioned by President Omar Bongo and his wife. Françoise Pfaff, *Twenty-five Black African Filmmakers* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1988), 79–87; Roy Armes, *Dictionary of African Filmmakers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 45, 60.
27. Pfaff, *Twenty-five Filmmakers*, 70–71; Andrade-Watkins, "France's Bureau," 123.
28. Film editor Davanture, who worked closely with him, reveals that there may have been additional reasons for Dikongué-Pipa's change of heart. During the shooting of the 1978 film a serious conflict developed between him and the French camera crew assigned to the job, and he was deeply wounded by their arrogance. Davanture, "Entretien d'Olivier Barlet avec Andrée Davanture, chef-monteuse, animatrice d'ATRIA," Paris, October 1995, *Africultures* 19, <http://www.africultures.com/php/index.php?nav=article&no=2539>.

29. Pfaff, *Twenty-five Filmmakers*, 87–94. For the filmography of these and other filmmakers, Roy Armes's *Dictionary of African Filmmakers* lists all full-length features by country and filmmaker. For shorts and documentaries, which give better the pulse of African filmmaking during its first two decades, one can check the country profiles in Vieyra's *Cinéma africain*; Patrick G. Ilboudo, who lists 177 names in *Le FESPACO, 1969–1989: Les cinéastes africains et leur œuvres* (Ouagadougou: Editions La Mante, 1988); and the brief entries in Bachy, "Dictionnaire."

30. Maarek, *Afrique noire*, 69.

31. See Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema*, 85–86.

32. Diawara, *African Cinema*, 31, 42.

33. Pfaff, *Twenty-five Filmmakers*, 186–87.

34. French dialogue in Central African films has been ascribed to language fragmentation, or to the prevalence of city culture. But the main explanation may lie in ideological orientation. After Sembene's *Mandabi* and Ganda's *Cabascabo*, both released in 1968, the use of local languages became standard in films from Senegal, Mali, Burkina, and Niger.

35. In the 1960s some filmmakers rejected the conventions of both art and commercial trends for a popular cinema, but their call had little echo in francophone Africa. Jean Rouch, for example, thought that the 35mm format and the tripod were not only expensive but also led to fetishizing the medium and crippled the aesthetics. Besides using 16mm cameras, he experimented with Super 8. African filmmakers reproached him for trying to institutionalize substandard norms (Claire Andrade-Watkins, "Portuguese African Cinema," in *African Experiences of Cinema*, ed. I. Bakari and M. Cham, 136–37.) These directors who "dreamed large" must not have been sympathetic to theoretical work that made a virtue of impoverished means of production, such as Glauber Rocha's "aesthetics of hunger" or Julio García Espinosa's "imperfect cinema," or perhaps in a general way were not familiar with the arguments of the Third Cinema movement.

36. Jonathan Haynes and Onookome Okome, "Evolving Popular Media: Nigerian Video Films," in *Nigerian Video Films*, ed. J. Haynes (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 55; Nwachukwu F. Ukadike, *Black African Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 141–65.

37. Pierre Barrot explains how the art film habits of francophone directors bloat their budgets when compared to what Nigerian filmmakers expended, even in their celluloid phase, thus hampering their efforts to compete for funds when using the same DVD technology. Barrot, *Nollywood: Le phénomène vidéo au Nigeria* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 14.

38. The diversity of 1960s and 1970s sub-Saharan filmmaking was the theme of the first Edinburgh African Film Festival, October 2006, and Bisschoff and Murphy call for greater scholarly attention to such previously neglected issues. Bisschoff and Murphy, "Africa's Lost Classics," introduction to a special section of *Screen* 48, no. 4 (2007): 493–99. See also Harrow, *Postcolonial African Cinema*, 22.

39. In a 1977 interview Sembene said that he and Tahar Cheriaa together created FEPACI. Annett Busch and Max Annas, eds., *Ousmane Sembène: Interviews*

(Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 83. Officially, the two associations of Senegalese and Tunisian filmmakers became the founding members. The 1969 Algiers festival had turned into a riposte to the 1966 First World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar, an international celebration of harmony between the former colonized and colonizer, and a display of President Léopold Senghor's philosophy of Negritude. In contrast, the Algiers gathering had highlighted the intersection of art and politics and the ongoing struggles of decolonization; it generated a document advocating, among other things, the establishment of a Pan-African film institute. Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 76–77. I thank Jonathan Zilberg for this reference.

40. Diawara, *African Cinema*, 35–50; Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema*, 65–68; Ilboudo, *FESPACO*, 148–55. Boughedir makes very frank comments on why FEPACI foundered in those years in Maarek, *Afrique noire*, 59–67. The 1975 charter of FEPACI is reproduced in Bakari and Cham, *African Experiences*, 25–26; for the French text, see Ilboudo, *FESPACO*, 153–55.

41. "FEPACI: A Legacy Unsurpassed," *FEPACI Newsletter*, no. 2 (August 2008), <http://www.fepaci-film.org/Newsletter/FEPACILegacy.html>.

42. Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema*, 53–54.

43. Guinea and Algeria had nationalized their theaters and film industries earlier, following their eventful independence, but the Burkina case supplied a more realistic approach for countries that were not in revolutionary conditions.

44. Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema*, 45–46; Paul Michaud, "Breaking the Chains of Hollywood," *African Business*, April 1, 1999, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Breaking+the+chains+of+Hollywood.-a054422573>.

45. For example, President Sankara very publicly committed funds and provided a filming location for Med Hondo's *Sarraounia* (1986) at a time when political pressures had nearly doomed the production of this work. See Hondo's own account in Ibrahima Signaté, *Med Hondo: Un cinéaste rebelle* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1994), 44–47. But in the privatization drive of the 1990s many theaters have been sold to local investors.

46. Ilboudo, *FESPACO*, 114–19; Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema*, 62–65. The then military ruler of Upper Volta, Maj. Gen. Aboubakar Sangoulé Lamizana, was won over in part by the choice for the opening screening, Oumarou Ganda's *Cabascabo*, a film about a soldier who returns to his native Niger after fighting (as Lamizana himself had done) for France in Indochina.

47. Both quotes in Ilboudo, *FESPACO*, 116.

48. *Ibid.*, 139.

49. Maarek, *Afrique noire*, 69; Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema*, 255; Mahir Şaul, "History as Cultural Redemption in Gaston Kaboré's Precolonial-Era Films," in *Black and White in Colour*, ed. V. Bickford-Smith and R. Mendelsohn (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 26–27. For other popular FESPACO films see Melissa Thackway, *Africa Shoots Back: Alternative Perspectives in Sub-Saharan Francophone African Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 11.

50. Quoted in Ilboudo, *FESPACO*, 115.
51. Vieyra, *Cinéma africain*, 245–46.
52. Ibid., 143. OCORA (Office de Coopération Radiophonique) was created in 1955 by the French state radio and TV company (RTF) to promote radio programming in the colonies.
53. J. M. Burns describes colonial research conducted in British Africa to discover native viewing habits and help develop a simplified film language that could lead to effective educational and propaganda films, including the work of L. A. Notcutt and G. C. Latham. Burns, *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 37–59.
54. Ousmane Sembene, "Interview with Ousmane Sembene," by Teshoma H. Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 115. Compare this opinion of Sembene's with the remarks of a freelance editor whom the Bureau of Cinema often hired to work on African films: "I often reproached those young people, for their cinema was a cinema of dialogue; for me cinema is . . . images. . . . But for them it was dialogue. Even Sembène. I believe that dialogue is part of the African *mentalité*." Andrade-Watkins, "France's Bureau," 124.
55. Reproduced in Paulin S. Vieyra, *Sembène Ousmane, cinéaste* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972), 188.
56. "Dossier: Séminaire sur *Le rôle du cinéaste dans l'éveil d'une conscience de civilisation noire*," *Présence africaine* 90, no. 2 (1974): 3–203.
57. Ibid., 127–29.
58. Maarek, *Afrique noire*, 20–21.
59. See Armes, *African Filmmaking*, 143–57; Hoefert de Turégano, *African Cinema*, 226–46.
60. Barrot, *Nollywood*, 41, 61.
61. Lucia Saks, "The Race for Representation: New Viewsites for Change in South African Cinema," in *To Change Reels: Film and Film Culture in South Africa*, ed. Isabel Balseiro and Ntongela Masilela (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 148–49.
62. Willem Kerkhoven, "Making Cinema in South Africa: Interview with Five Young Film Makers," *Kunst*, November 20, 2007, *Africaserver* magazine, <http://www.africaserver.nl/magazine.htm?taal=nl&art=a20071119171322505>.
63. Gauteng Film Commission, 2008 *Gauteng Film Indaba: Summary of Proceedings*, 36, [http://www.gautengfilm.org.za/live/content.php?Item\\_ID=754](http://www.gautengfilm.org.za/live/content.php?Item_ID=754).
64. Saks, "Race for Representation," 134.
65. Ibid., 144. New Directions is a significant training program organized by M-Net to foster new directors and screenwriters from among the disadvantaged (Coloured and black) groups.
66. Seipati Bulane Hopa, "The Challenges of Formalising Cinema in Africa," interview by Ogova Ondego, Southern African Curriculum Symposium, July 31–August 1, 2008, <http://artmatters.info?p=601>.

67. Mbye Cham, "African Cinema in the Nineties," *African Cinema Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1998), <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v2/v2ira4.htm>.
68. Jacqueline Maingard, *South African National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2007), 166.
69. Saks, "Race for Representation," 144–45; Peter Davis, review of *To Change Reels: Film and Film Culture in South Africa*, ed. I. Balseiro and N. Masilela, *H-SAfrica*, H-Net Reviews, February 2004, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=8906>.