

BOTSWANA CINEMA & FILM STUDIES

1st Edition

by Neil Parsons © March 2004

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1. Introduction

Cinema studies are a new but not infertile field for Botswana. A major work on African cinema, *Africa on Film: Beyond Black and White* by Kenneth M. Cameron (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1994), was actually written in Gaborone while the author's wife was on a one-year attachment with the University of Botswana English Department. A recent and certainly incomplete film and videography of Botswana and the Kalahari lists almost five hundred titles of feature films and documentaries (relatively few), ethnographic and wildlife films (many), and newsreel clips (numerous) since 1906-07.

Botswana still awaits the making of a major feature film drama with a full complement of actors and film crew. But as of the late 1980s the biggest grossing (in audience receipts) non-Hollywood film ever shown in the U.S. and Japan was a feature film supposedly set in Botswana, *The Gods Must be Crazy* (1986), directed by Jamie Uys and actually filmed in the Northern Transvaal and Namibia. To avoid international sanctions against South Africa, Uys claimed that his company, Mimosa Films, was Botswana-based. Hence many filmographies today repeat the lie that the film originated from Botswana

Cinema came to Southern Africa in May 1896, when the first films were projected for the public at a theatre, the 'Empire Palace of Varieties', on the corner of Commissioner and Ferreira Streets in Johannesburg—just a few hundred kilometres from the Botswana border. At least from 1900-1909, news films were made in the region, and the first known

border. At least from 1899-1900, news films were made in the region, and the first known actuality movie made within Botswana borders dates from 1906-07.

Like almost every other invention, the credit for inventing cinematography is spread among a number of people of different nationalities. But it is generally accepted that the first public cinema show on screen was in France on 28 December 1895--using the Cinématographe projecting machine of the Lumière brothers. The first cinema show in England using the Lumière Cinématographe was a couple of weeks later at the London Polytechnic, followed a couple of months later in March 1896 by a cinema show at the Alhambra theatre in London's Leicester Square using Robert Paul's Theatrograph or Animatograph projecting machine.

The first public cinema show in the U.S.A. was in New York at Koster & Bial's Music Hall on 23 April 1896. It used Thomas Edison's Vitascope projector [actually designed by Edison's employee W.H.L. Dickson, and converted from their Kinetoscope peep-show viewer). The first film projected, really lasting little more than a minute but played as a continuous loop, was Robert Paul's actuality movie of *Sea Waves at Ramsgate*, followed by one of Edison's old Kinetoscope movies featuring a sexy dancer. *Sea Waves* is said to have 'started a panicky commotion among those up front' as the stormy waves came rushing toward them before retreating; then 'the audience went wild and cheered when the dancer Annabelle appeared life-size on the screen.'

So the first cinema show in Africa, on Monday 11 May 1896, was a mere eighteen days after the first one in America. A showman called Carl Hertz had been in London, where he had virtually stolen one of Robert Paul's projectors from the Alhambra. That first cinema show in Johannesburg consisted of five of Robert Paul's actuality films (very short 50-foot films or 'filmlets'): *A Highland Fling* which showed a couple dancing; *A Military Review* of parading soldiers; *A Scene from Trilby*, from a popular play on the London stage; and *Tommy Atkins with his Girl in the Park*, showing a soldier flirting with a girl in Hyde Park, London. What fascinated the audience most of all was *Street Scenes in London*, which showed traffic jams of horse-drawn carriages and omnibuses.

William Dickson resigned from Edison's firm and made his own camera-projector, a very big and heavy machine, which he called a Mutoscope or Biograph. Meanwhile an American called Charles Urban designed another machine in 1897, which he called a Bioscope. When the South African War broke out in 1899-1900, Dickson sailed out to South Africa with one cumbersome Biograph camera-projector, while Paul's company and Urban's company in England (the Warwick Trading Company) sent out a number of film cameramen with lightweight Bioscope machines.

The Bioscope became the most common cinema projector in South Africa, where the Warwick Trading Company also provided the most films up until about the First World War. Hence the name "bioscope" was so well known in Southern Africa, and became the normal word used for cinema in all Southern African languages including English.

Pre-pioneers of Botswana cinema

Early cinema was an outgrowth of the later nineteenth century development of popular entertainment in circuses, popular museums, and music-halls or vaudeville theatres. 'Spectacles' for the masses in the industrial age were created by new machinery and techniques of pictorial reproduction.

Pictorial spectacle *about* Botswana can be traced back to the 1850s, when a Scottish gentleman called Roualeyn Gordon Cumming, famous for his lion hunting as far north as Shoshong, conducted a travelling museum around Britain. The displays included painted dioramas of hunting scenes, as well as Tswana arts and crafts. Spectators stood within the curve of the gigantic screens and imagined themselves transported to Africa.

Pictorial spectacle *within* Botswana can be traced to 1879, when Jesuit missionaries caused a sensation at Shoshong by unrolling in public giant paintings of Christ and the saints. This offended local Christians, with (Congregational) Protestant ideas that such icons were heathen idol-worship, and the Jesuits were urged on northwards to Zambezia.

Possibly some of the pictures shown by the Jesuits were in fact painted lantern-slides. In January 1896 *Kgosi* Khama of the Bangwato lectured his people on his recent mission to Great Britain, using photographic slides of places and of the people he met there, projected onto white sheets strung up in the church at Old Palapye. Because the crowds could not fit inside the great church, the lecture was repeated three more times that same week.

Khama's missionary Rev. W.C. Willoughby seems to have used this slide-projector regularly. His slide collection included a valuable set of hand-coloured slides of Tenniel cartoons from the book *Alice in Wonderland*. Willoughby photographed people and countryside around Old Palapye for a slideshow he gave at many places in England in 1898-99. The slides were published as an illustrated book in 1900 with a rather strange title, *Native Life on the Transvaal Border*. It remains an invaluable photographic record of Botswana life at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Fillis Imperial circus—with its own cinema or 'bioscope'—travelled annually by rail through Botswana to Bulawayo and back from about 1896-97 onwards. The Fillis circus was succeeded by the Pagel circus, and finally by the Boswell Wilkie circuses—one of which still visits Gaborone annually in the twenty-first century.

Music-hall entertainment, like that at the Empire in Johannesburg where the first films were shown in May 1896, was probably rather rare in the Bechuanaland Protectorate except as amateur entertainment among British soldiers and traders. There are photographs of British soldiers in the guise of blackface minstrels, with an enthusiastic young male Motswana dancer on stage, entertaining a crowd during the 1899-1900 siege of Mafeking. One former music-hall performer (a Mr Whittington claiming direct descent from a Lord Mayor of London) became a trader on the railway just south of Palapye Road—at Radisele, where he died and was buried in 1911.

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2. The First Fifty Years 1896-1947

In the words of Thelma Gutsche, author of *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895-1940* (1972), film production in Southern Africa remained 'desultory' up to 1910 or 1913—despite the fact that early 'bioscope' machines were also film-cameras as well as film-projectors. Nearly all the films that have survived were made by visiting cine-cameramen from overseas—notably by W.K.L. Dickson and the other filmmakers who came to record the 'actualities' of the South African War in 1899-1900.

The earliest known surviving film of Botswana is dated 1906-07. It was part of the 'comprehensive documentation' of Southern Africa conducted by a team of cameramen from Charles Urban's company in London, who travelled up the Bechuanaland railway to Victoria Falls in 1906-07.

That film was closely followed by a set of very short films, variously dated 1908 and 1907-09, by the ethnographer Rudolf Pöch, made on Botswana's western borders. These films are remarkable, as not only are they (apparently) partly in colour, but they also have synchronized sound. Pöch recorded the voice and vivid gestures of a sixty year-old Bushman, reportedly a Tsu-khwe speaker, named Kubi. He was Botswana's first film star.

The third film known to have been in Botswana was a similar enterprise to the first, but made in 1910. South African Railways & Harbours and the Coliseum cinema, Johannesburg, engaged bioscope operators to make films of scenic rides, taken from the front of a railway locomotive, as far north as Victoria Falls. However, the quality of the films is said to have been poor, as the movie-cameras jerked up and down. No archival copy is known to survive.

The fourth film, by contrast, was made by cameramen of the well-known London cinematograph company W. Butcher & Son. They filmed at the London Missionary Society college of Tiger Kloof, south of Vryburg, as well as a march of Bangwato foot and horse regiments at Serowe in front of *Kgosi* Khama in June 1911. (Similar actuality films or newsreels were made at Serowe again in 1922, 1923, and 1925.)

The first feature film to touch on Botswana was a photoplay on the siege of Mafikeng in 1899-1900, *Dop Doctor*, made in 1916. It appears to have been entirely made in England, and produced such outrage among Afrikaner white South Africans that it was banned from being shown in South Africa. An attempt to re-make the film as a sound movie in 1930-31 was stopped by the British authorities in response to official protests in South Africa. A similar fate overcame a proposed film of 1934, 'Black Land', a barely disguised account of the 1933 'flogging incident' at Serowe—when the British navy and its marines were sent to the Kalahari to (temporarily) depose Tshekedi Khama.

Colonel Rey, the Bechuanaland Protectorate's resident commissioner at Mafikeng, who requested the Serowe invasion, was also responsible for the deposition of *Kgosi* Gubuamang at Moshupa. Rey was a film fan, hoping that his own novel on Ethiopia would

be made into a movie, and he recorded Gobuamang's deposition in filmic terms:

The thousand Moshupa tribesmen marched forward in single file and at a given spot...dropped their weapons in a pile and walked past my table to a position opposite. It was a wonderful and almost unique sight and it was a tragedy that we had not a cine-camera, for it would have made a grand picture. The sullen sulky natives, the pile of weapons getting bigger and bigger, guns, spears, axes, knobkerries, sticks etc. The deathly stillness only broken by the clatter of the arms falling on the pile. The statue-like immobility of the police standing straight as darts...only their eyes bulging with excitement. [Charles Rey *Monarch of All I Survey: Bechuanaland Diaries 1939-37* Gaborone: Botswana Society, 1988, p.125).

No less than five different feature films on the life of the missionary Davis Livingstone in Africa were made in the 1920s and 1930s. Four of them were actually made on location in Southern Africa, with the cooperation of the London Missionary Society, so it is reasonable to assume that some filming was done at LMS missions inside Botswana. The fifth movie, *Stanley and Livingstone*, was set in Tanzania rather than Botswana, but it was entirely made in Hollywood. It was a great commercial success but completely inaccurate; Stanley was shown as a nice American guy and Livingstone was portrayed as an upper-class Englishman. (He was really a lower-class Scotsman.) A British movie, *Rhodes of Africa* (1936), glorified the life of the colonialist Cecil Rhodes. It was partly shot in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, probably not inside Bechuanaland, but it may have had scenes set in Botswana or nearby.

The honour of being the first local filmmaker in Botswana is believed to be *Kgosi Molefi Pilane* of the Bakgatla at Mochudi in the late 1930s. He picked up the cinema habit in Johannesburg, as well as a liking for township music, and gave popular slide and film shows for paying audiences (notably *The Arabian Nights*) in the Mochudi church hall—much to the disgust of his Dutch Reformed missionaries. Molefi possessed and used a small movie camera, but his films appear not to have survived.

The second known local filmmaker in Botswana was Miss D. Murch, matron of the Lobatse government hospital. She leaves behind her a half-hour silent colour film of 'Bechuana' recruits for the African Pioneer Corps of the British Army being trained at Lobatse in 1943. We see raw recruits dressed in rags arriving at the camp, being trained and accommodated and fed, their passing-out parade before the Resident Commissioner, and their departure by train for the coast. The film includes a very energetic soccer match of officers (all white) against NCOs (black and white).

Another silent, colour film made in the Second War, titled *Bechuanaland Protectorate*, is much longer. It was filmed by an imported cameraman named Graham Young, who was paid £50 a month—apparently by the British Army—to tour the country making films for the troops. Two parts survive, taking us first from Mafikeng via Lobatse and Kanye to Tshane and Ramotswa, and secondly from Gaborone and Tlokweng via Molepolole and Mochudi to Mahalapye and Serowe. A third part, which hopefully will resurface someday, must have gone on to Francistown and Maun and maybe Ghanzi and Kasane. The film was designed to be shown to African Pioneer Corps troops in North Africa, to assure them that things were okay back home.

The plot of the film follows a small group of APC soldiers who have won a trip back to

The plot of the film follows a small group of APC soldiers, who have won a trip back to Botswana from North Africa, peeling off to their home villages. They greet their neighbours, and in each place we see chiefs and district commissioners under open-air shade handing out remitted pounds shillings and pence across a table to APC wives and dependents. Emphasis is placed throughout on evidence of progressive agriculture, especially that under the supervision of chief Bathoen II of Kanye.

A few newsreels (including items in the *African Mirror*) on British royal visits to Bechuanaland, and a few amateur documentaries of car trips from Nairobi to the Cape through Bechuanaland, were in the 1920s-30s. There were three short films made of 'Bechuana' troops serving with the British and American armies, as anti-aircraft gunners etc., in Italy in 1943-45. The only significant ethnographic film in the Kalahari during this period, actually filmed near main roads in Namibia, was a long silent movie made in 1926 by an American museum expedition, titled *The Bushman: An Epic of Wild Beasts and Wilder Men*.

The cream on the cake for the 1940s is a 20-minute silent, good quality colour film made by the professional film-maker Bill Lewis of Cape Town, copyrighted by the Bechuanaland Protectorate Government, of the 1947 *Royal Visit* to the same Lobatse farm as where the African Pioneer Corps camp had stood.

The film starts with the assembling of twenty-five thousand people to meet the royal party, and continues with the arrival near Lobatse of the white train of King George VI, with wife Elizabeth and daughters Elizabeth and Margaret. The formalities that follow include loyal addresses from white, Muslim and African communities, investiture of medals by the king, inspection of soldiers and girl-guides, a racially-segregated tea party, and the royals' return to their train.

Visuals of particular interest are the bright dresses of the two Elizabeths, the resplendent colonels' uniforms worn by Bathoen II and Tshekedi Khama, and the lurking figure of Group Captain Peter Townshend—with whom Margaret was then falling in love. There is a black Rhodesian police band puffing and blowing on brass and clarinets, and the king patting the nose of one of the horses of the smart Batswana mounted-police on parade. There is a very brief shot of schoolgirls mobbing the speeding royal car.

The Batswana troops on parade, to whom the royal visit was by way of an imperial thank-you for their services during the recent war, get rather short shrift, while the camera lingers on a lion-hunt dance among old BaKgatla men in the waiting crowds and on younger white and Indian women at the tea party. But the overall feeling of the moment was summed up by a journalist with the royal party:

While these formalities were proceeding the vast general company were moving on the outskirts of the parade with the freedom of a garden party... the air of general friendliness had not been surpassed in any place visited during the tour [of Southern Africa].

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Chapter 2 The Quiet Years 1948-1965

Chapter 3. The Locust Years 1948-1963

Botswana hit the world headlines in 1950 because of the political complications surrounding the marriage of Seretse Khama to Ruth Williams. At least 21 newsreel clips cover these events of 1949-56. The earliest newsreel item, titled *The African Domain of Ruth Williams* (British Movietone News, 25 August 1949, 3 minutes), made British movie-goers gasp audibly when the well-known voice of Leslie Mitchell told them that thornbush zarebas around households in Serowe were protection against marauding lions. Almost 50 newsreel items on the exile of Seretse and Ruth Khama followed from Movietone, Paramount, Pathé, and Universal News, mostly in 1950-52, and a few in 1956 when the Khama family were able to return home with their children.

Was this, or was this not, one of the great love stories of the twentieth century?:

Seretse, an African prince studying in postwar depressed London, falls in love with bright young Ruth. They marry, but their black-white union alienates Seretse's uncle Tshekedi back home and outrages white racialists in Southern Africa. At a dramatic mass meeting Seretse wins unexpected support from his people for his kingship, and excites a frenzy of press interest in Britain and America, Africa, India and the Caribbean. The white colonial governments of South Africa and Rhodesia demand that the British act against Seretse and Ruth. After much wrangling and even outright lies, Labour and Conservative governments strip Seretse of his kingship and exile the couple to Britain, for life. (Their love, grown strong under common affliction, is put to the test by exile.) The rising tide of British and African public opinion eventually pushes the British government to allow the triumphal return home of Seretse, followed by Ruth with their children. (Seretse reconnects with Tshekedi but loses moral direction until re-inspired by a speech at Tshekedi's funeral in 1959.) [Summarized from Neil Parsons, Thomas Tlou, & Willie Henderson, *Seretse Khama, 1921-1980* Gaborone: Botswana Society & Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1995]

The American scriptwriter William Rose thought it would make a great movie. He lived in Britain from 1948 until 1957, writing a number of classic comedy film scripts. But he failed to interest any British film company in his script based on the stories of Ruth and Seretse and of their friends Joe Appiah (from Ghana) and Peggy Cripps (daughter of a former top minister in the British government). He then moved to Hollywood and eventually 'sold' the idea to producer/ director Stanley Kramer:

Kramer: Bill and I were walking in my driveway, and he was telling me about an interracial marriage in South Africa. It was then the idea hit me. We changed time and place, and...I talked to Katharine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy and Sidney Poitier about it. They were all excited and agreed to do it before a word of script was written.

We took special pains to make Poitier a very special character in this story...Respectable, yes. And intelligent. And attractive. We did this so that if the young couple didn't marry because of their parents' disapproval, the only reason would be that he was black and she was white.

The eventual film cut out all the African and political aspects of the original story. It was set in the California household of two, rich, ageing, white liberals—probably based on Peggy Cripps' parents, and played by Hepburn and Tracy—faced not with an African prince but with a Swiss-based black doctor (Poitier) as their potential son-in-law. The film was eventually screened in January 1967, and was titled *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. It was a critical success, and made lots of money for Columbia Pictures, but in subsequent years it was mocked by young black American audiences as the story of a black 'sell-out' to whiteness. Hollywood valued the young black market, and decided never again to make a love story about a black man and a white woman.

The only feature film made about the Kalahari in this period, *Sands of the Kalahari* (1965), seems to have been actually filmed in the Namib desert. It told the story of a plane crash which strands a handful of people on a hill with many baboons. The 'tough' man or Alpha Male among them (American actor Stuart Whitman, well known for cowboy parts) fails to make love to the woman and, when the rescue comes, chooses to stay behind and fight the baboon king for a *mosadi-tshwene* instead.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Bechuanaland was possibly the poorest country in the world. It was called the 'country without a future', as it became clear that it would become part of neither Rhodesia nor South Africa, while it had no chance of becoming independent on its own. The Seretse marriage put the country in the spotlight, but after 1956 it dropped out of world news. Some press interest was aroused just before independence, largely because of difficulties with Botswana's rebel neighbour, white-ruled Rhodesia. News film could now be flown overseas to be shown on television only a day later, because Africa was linked to Europe and America by jet airliners from the early 1960s.

Bechuanaland remained economically impoverished and politically obscure, but this was the period in which some classic ethnographic films were made in Botswana and the Kalahari. The American anthropologist Tom Larson made two documentaries on the lives of HamBukushu people in north-western Okavango, beginning with *Rainmakers of the Okavango* (1948, 38 minutes & 1950, 40 minutes). Another American, John Marshall, began filming the Zhu/'hoansi or !Kung people (Northern San) nearby on the Botswana-Namibia border in 1947.

In 1953 the first 'Bushman' film was produced by the South African government, *Remnants of a Dying Race* (Kalahari Films. 17 minutes). It was not, however, about the Bushmen of South West Africa (Namibia) which was then under South African rule. It was about the people of the central Kalahari in Botswana. It was made by Louis Knobel, an employee of South African Information Services, who came from a white trading family at Molepolole—and who may therefore qualify as Botswana's third local film maker. Knobel's film appears to have been expanded or replaced by *Remnants of a Stone Age People* (1960), also made by the South African government. It told the story of a journey from 'the throbbing of virile' Johannesburg to view 'relics of a bygone and leisurely age' in the Kalahari. A reviewer has called it 'A fascinating and eerie study of the logic of racial superiority'.

The Bushmen of the Kalahari burst on the film and television world in 1957-58 with the *The Hunters* by John Marshall (71 minutes), which has been called the 'classic

ethnographic documentary, and *The Lost World of the Kalahari*, a famous BBC television travelogue hosted by Laurens van der Post (5 parts, 177 minutes). *The Lost World* was cruder and more popular than *The Hunters*, concentrating on Van der Post himself and his prejudices, rather than reconstructing the lives of the Bushmen themselves as Marshall did.

John Marshall was a documentary film-maker in the tradition of Robert Flaherty. The Marshall films receive wide acclaim, though the documentary character of *The Hunters* has been challenged for including dramatic simulations—as did Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*—and other editorial improvements on the storyline. The subjects remained silent as Marshall did not record sound until 1957-58. John Marshall went on to become an important documentary filmmaker on urban American life as well—making a much praised documentary on the operations of the Pittsburgh police, and returning to the Kalahari with enhanced filming techniques. (See next chapter). Between 1947 and 1997 he and his family and assistants were to shoot a million feet of film on both the Namibia and Botswana sides of the Zhu/'hoansi borderland.

Van der Post's television series was shown in the United States at a time when television audiences were rapidly expanding but few intelligent programmes were being made for them. It was followed by the wildlife series of producer/director Marlin Perkins who included 'wild' people as well as Kalahari wildlife in his ever-popular U.S. television series *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* running from the 1960s into the 1970s. The series was shown again and again on American television, and accounts for the widespread though vague knowledge of the Kalahari and its Bushmen among Americans of the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush generations. Perkins' current wife wrote a book to accompany the series titled *I Saw You from Afar* (Perkins 1965). The title refers to the almost universal and rather patronizing folk myth in Eastern/Southern Africa of the vanity of short Batwa or Barwa or Basarwa hunters who claim to be tall.

At the same time as Perkins was filming, Reay Smithers (of the National Museum of Rhodesia at Bulawayo) made short films of Kalahari wildlife, while June Kay (another white Rhodesian) and her husband were making the first wildlife films in the Okavango delta. A man called Marr from Oxfam (the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief) was apparently also filming in the Okavango.

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Chapter 4. Independence 1966-1980

Independence came in 1969, but the weak new republic—desperately poor and almost entirely surrounded by white racist régimes—was regarded as a bit of a joke in the rest of Africa. But in 1969 Botswana emerged from obscurity, and from the image of a helpless hostage of *apartheid*, when President Seretse Khama stood up in international bodies and came out for liberal democracy against racial tyranny in Southern Africa. The economy, exporting beef and increasingly diamonds, took off between 1970 and 1979. Together with Presidents Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, President Seretse Khama became a Frontline leader working for the liberation of Rhodesia.

Six feature films were made on the Kalahari in the period 1966-80, all by South companies benefiting from South African government subsidies. Two films were in Afrikaans; one film was the first feature film made in Setswana—titled *Ngaka* (1976). As part of its adaptation of *apartheid* policies to black urbanization and pseudo-independence for the Bantustans, the South African government set up a cinema network of 16mm sound projectors playing in township halls.

During this period the Botswana government had a number of colour documentaries made, with English and Setswana versions—notably by film-makers from the People's Republic of China for the 1976 tenth anniversary of Independence. (Until the opening of the Capitol cinema in Gaborone's Mall, around 1971, cinema shows were held in the theatre of the town hall.) A 16mm instructional movie, explaining the new Pula currency, was also made in 1976 for showing by Botswana Information Services cinema vans.

The stream of John Marshall documentaries on the Zhu/'hoansi or !Kung Bushmen, made for showing in anthropology classes in American colleges, resumed in the mid-1960s and peaked in 1969-74—using the large library of film he had already shot, to make short films between 4 and 33 minutes long. Marshall now recorded sound, and used colour film stock and a cine-camera with three lenses—enabling him to swap between long shots, medium shots, and close-ups, without moving the camera over rough ground. These new filming techniques led to Marshall abandoning the over-voice commentary by an unseen anthropologist, providing verbal links between scenes and telling viewers what to think. Marshall films could now use the visual links and conventions of sound movies, and subjects could speak for themselves—with sub-titles for translation into English.

Marshall was outraged in the later 1970s after the South African army recruited large numbers of Zhu/'hoansi to be used as trackers in warfare against SWAPO guerrillas and MPLA Angolan government troops in South West Africa and Angola. (Trackers are always the first to be shot by the enemy.) Zhu/'hoansi men from Botswana, such as the later film star known as Xao (really G/aq'o), were induced to cross the border by promises of money and regular food and comforts. (G/aq'o became a cook in an army camp.) John Marshall returned to film-making on the Namibia side of the border to complete the biographical study of a woman called N!ai whom he had been filming since she was a small child. He was forced to retreat back to Botswana by South African official harassment. This can be seen in his widely acclaimed *N!ai: the Story of a !Kung Woman* (1979-80, 60 minutes), which became a feature film shown to American college audiences.

Surprisingly, there appear to be no wildlife documentaries made in this period—only a couple of newsreel stories on wildlife. The lure of the Kalahari and the Okavango delta, and of the Bushmen, was yet to be revealed by a feature film that took the world by storm in 1980-81—*The Gods Must Be Crazy*.

No fewer than 81 newsreel clips mark the 1966-1980 period—mostly made for Britain's ITN (Independent Television News) which during the 1970s offered a superior news service to that of the state-owned BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation). The rate of newsreel production reflects a burst for Independence and then steady increase as the

war in and with Rhodesia was waged between 1975 and 1979. The actual numbers of newsreel clips were 15 in 1966, none in 1967, 13 in 1968-74, 4 just in 1975, 12 in 1976, 13 in 1977, 10 in 1978, 7 in 1979, and 7 in 1980.

This is not to say that foreign newsfilms were necessarily a good reflection of what was going on in Botswana. The most dramatic and traumatic incident in Botswana's twentieth century history—the Leshoma Ridge massacre of 27 February 1978—was completely ignored. Rhodesia was trying to intimidate Botswana from any support for Zimbabwe guerrillas by a 'preemptive' (i.e. unprovoked) attack. Without any declaration of warlike intent, Rhodesian troops crossed the border and ambushed three land-rovers of the newly formed Botswana Defence Force (BDF) three kilometres inside Botswana, killing fifteen soldiers and two young boys with them. A month later Rhodesia and South Africa howled for revenge when three white men were shot dead by the B.D.F. in suspicious circumstances on the border near Fort Tuli. The British press and television joined the outcry, because one of the men was a nineteen-year old visiting Briton, and harassed President Khama (including in a BBC television interview on 1 May 1978) when he made an official visit to Britain some weeks later.

There was a great deal of bitterness and racial enmity generated in Botswana by these events. (The impact can be compared with Rommel's destruction of the greenhorn U.S. army at Kasserine Pass in 1943.) Seretse Khama pointed out that there had been no condemnation in the West of the Leshoma massacre, presumably because 'These were merely Africans that were killed, so their deaths are dismissed as being of no importance.'

There was a noticeable difference between news reports filed by BBC and ITN television reporters resident in Rhodesia or South Africa, and those who came direct from Britain. British reporters based over the border—such as Brian Barron in Rhodesia in the later 1970s, and most notably Graham Leach in South Africa in the early 1980s—tended to swallow and regurgitate the poison given them by officials in Salisbury and Pretoria before making any investigation on the spot in Botswana. Graham Leach characteristically began his reports by quoting a South African government official, and his bias towards White South Africa was so strong that his BBC colleagues in radio eventually declined to broadcast his reports on the BBC African Service.

The tempo of television news presentation was also speeding up, with reports sometimes lasting seconds rather than minutes. When President Seretse Khama died in 1980, the BBC and ITN obituaries—despite the fact that they were using plentiful film library stock—lasted less than two minutes each.

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Chapter 5: Under Attack 1981-1993

After the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the low-intensity war around Botswana's borders with South Africa and Namibia became distinctly hotter from about 1983. The South African government faced a particular difficulty with Botswana, which had developed an international image since the 1970s as a working democracy with the highest rate of economic growth in the world. The example of Botswana gave the lie to the central myth of the *apartheid* state that black majority rule would lead to chaos.

South African attempts to disrupt Botswana by armed raids in 1985-86 were counter-productive. Botswana's goodie-goodie image as a victim of South African violence helped turn United States opinion in particular against *apartheid*. (The beginning of the end for the *apartheid* régime is usually seen as when Chase Manhattan Bank led other international banks into refusing credit to the South African government—and this was on the advice from the World Bank, which by 1994 included no less than 37 employees with experience of working in Botswana.)

Botswana obviously required more subtle 'destabilization' than other Frontline states, where South Africa successfully promoted internal disruption and insurrection. The *apartheid* régime cast around for issues to discredit Botswana internationally, to dissuade Botswana from supporting the African National Congress in exile, and to discredit its government in the eyes of its people. To do so, it had to choose issues that *looked* like they had nothing to do with the South African government.

In 1981 the South African government spread leftist propaganda in Gaborone, pretending to come from the African National Congress, that Botswana was ruled by 'cattle barons'. (The purpose was to infuriate the Botswana government and get it to kick out all South African exiles.) In 1982-83 South African intelligence services printed and distributed leaflets, supposedly coming from 'Bamangwato democrats', that President Masire was betraying the legacy of President Khama.

Around 1984-85 South Africa identified the Achilles Heel of Botswana in government policies towards the Environment and Wildlife. South African secret funds and intelligence services may have had no role in *initiating* international controversy over these policies. But there is every reason to believe that (prior to 1991) the South African government covertly (and extravagantly in financial terms) encouraged anything that would alienate Botswana from Western sympathy.

We know that South African intelligence services were running agents out of Vryburg and Mafikeng, and about obvious 'front' companies set up in Gaborone— including a book distribution agency, a travel agency, and a newspaper publisher. But we do not know what the actual role of South Africa was in promoting film and television production overseas to discredit Botswana government policies or trying to persuade Botswana to adopt other policies.

Standing head and shoulders above a number of South African productions since 1966 purportedly set in the Kalahari was *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980-81). Supposedly set around the Okavango in Botswana, with comically incompetent blacks and whites, and a sage San (Bushman) man in the middle, the film was actually shot in the Limpopo region of South Africa and partly in Namibia. *The Gods Must Be Crazy* became a cult movie overseas and within a couple of years was billed as the biggest grossing 'art-house' movie ever to play in both the U.S.A. and Japan. Two sequels followed: one again directed by Jamie Uys and again filmed entirely in South Africa (1989?); the other a Hong Kong production about Oriental tourists among the Bushmen.

The Gods Must Be Crazy was made, with the regular government subsidy, by Jamie Uys, South Africa's most successful film-maker. The film appealed to Americans and Japanese who had been brought up on television views of Kalahari Bushmen as 'the world we have lost' living in perfect harmony with nature. Uys also wove into his plot the 1977 story of 385 students from Manana secondary school in western Rhodesia who were supposedly kidnapped by liberation forces to cross the border to Francistown. But, given the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the story was moved to the Okavango delta and the proximity of Angola—where cigar-puffing Cuban 'commies' were fighting in support of the MPLA government against UNITA rebels and the invading South African army and air force.

As a ploy to avoid international sanctions against an *apartheid* film, *The Gods Must Be Crazy* was presented to the world—and is still sometimes represented in filmographies—as a film from the Republic of Botswana. (The Zhu/'hoansi star, G/aq'o or Xao, was Botswana-born, but had been living in Namibia.) The confusion was worse confounded by South Africa setting up an internal shadow territory to bamboozle the world—the U.S. in particular—and by implication to eventually absorb Botswana, dubbed 'the Republic of Bophuthatswana' (i.e. union of all the Tswana/Batswana). Most travel enquiries in the 1990s by Americans to the Botswana embassy in Washington were about an entertainment complex in 'Bophuthatswana' named Sun City.

Anti-apartheid groups overseas demonstrated against *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, and its two sequels. But audiences saw the films as good clean fun—the charming representation of an innocent Bushman abroad in the white man's/ black man's world. In subsequent years its star, G/aq'o or Xao, pointed out that the film was just story-telling and never pretended to be true to life. Writer-director-producer Jamie Uys denied any political motive in making the film. But it is difficult not to see ancient Hollywood stereotypes of buffoonish and brutish blacks among the Botswana officials and African liberation fighters portrayed in the film.

The movie fitted the political propaganda of the *apartheid* state around 1980, engaged in a bitter war with the MPLA government of Angola and allied Namibian SWAPO guerrillas. The film's initial target audience of whites in South Africa (aware of the U.S. *déba*cle in Vietnam) was very concerned about the safety of 'our boys on the border', and was no doubt relieved to see the war portrayed so lightheartedly.

The South African government's master strategy in Namibia was to drive wedges between Khoe southerners and Bantu northerners, between eastern and western Caprivians, between Herero and Ovambo, and between blacks and Bushmen. The corollary of this was the avid cultivation of a genocide myth—that if the blacks were allowed to win the war, they would exterminate the Bushmen. Khoe and San Bushmen in the Kalahari, who more often spoke Afrikaans than Setswana or English, were seen as brown Afrikaners and potential allies for the South African government. *The Gods Must Be Crazy* assisted the propagation of such views.

A number of other films were made in the 1980-93 period with South African government finance or other assistance. Setswana drama movies called *Baeng*, *Whose Child Am I?*, and *Modise*, were first distributed in 1980, 1982, and 1984. The American movie *Red Scorpion*, premièred in 1989, was filmed with openly acknowledged assistance from the

South African army. It was a more militarized and crude version of *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, about a brainless Russian 'Rambo' or 'Tarzan' strongman who is dumped in the desert after swapping sides from MPLA (Russia's ally) to UNITA (South Africa's ally). His life is saved by a passing Bushman. Critics said that the Bushman (played by an unnamed actor) was the only good actor in the whole film.

The newfound fame of the Okavango delta in America was reflected and reinforced by the US television drama series or soap-opera *Okavango: the Wild Frontier*, made by Zia Films of New Mexico (1992, 26 episodes of 30 minutes each; 1993, 13 episodes of 60 minutes each). Described as a mixture of the East African safari movie *Born Free* with *Little House on the Prairie*, a sentimental family tale of America's Wild West, it featured 'An ordinary American family [which] makes the extraordinary decision to give up the urban jungle for the African jungle...in Okavango...protecting the rapidly disappearing wildlife of Africa...with the help of sage local tribesman and Okavango caretaker, Two Days, played by notable stage actor Fats Bookholane'.

The series was studio-recorded in the U.S., with tame wild animals in the studio and film-clips of really wild wildlife in Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. The series was re-run a number of times, because it was considered suitable for children, but was also parodied by a TV comedy show (singing the word 'Okavango' to the tune of the Hallelujah Chorus).

The Wildlife issue in Botswana was first raised internationally in 1984 by an American couple, Mark and Delia Owens, who had been living in the western part of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. They had witnessed a massive die-off of gnu (*wildebeeste*), and blamed the disease cordon-fences erected at the behest of the European Union in the interests of the 'cattle barons' who ruled Botswana and who exported beef at inflated prices to Europe. The Owens' best-selling book *Cry of the Kalahari* (1984) alerted the attention of North American environmentalists.

The End of Eden by Rick Lomba of Johannesburg (Turner Broadcasting System, Atlanta, Georgia 1986. 45 minutes) was the most sensational film ever made on Botswana. It attacked the Botswana government as corrupt 'cattle barons' backed by diamond monopolists, dedicated to draining of the Okavango swamps for diamond mining at Orapa, and to the destruction of wildlife to be replaced everywhere by cattle. (The Johannesburg-based De Beers/Anglo American Corporation conglomerate, which ran the Orapa mine, was under increasing fire from the South African government for cultivating contacts with anti-*apartheid* groups abroad including the African National Congress. But it is not known if Rick Lomba, who died later in Angola, was a South African agent.)

Ted Turner's new national television network, based in Atlanta Georgia, plugged *The End of Eden* for all it was worth, with many repeat showings over the next few years. (The Turner network subsequently became Fox, owned by Rupert Murdoch.)

The End of Eden was followed a year or so later by the documentary film *African Odyssey* (National Geographic Society, 1987-88. 60 minutes), made with Mark and Delia Owens in the western part of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. The film included a scene of the Owens being told to pack and go by intolerant Botswana bureaucrats for campaigning

... being told to pack and go by ignorant Botswana bureaucrats, for campaigning against the cattle-disease fences. *African Odyssey* thus fed into the environmental controversy generated by *The End of Eden*.

The issue of the Okavango was taken up by the World Wildlife Foundation. North American environmental lobbies put pressure on the U.S. government and the World Bank and to withdraw aid personnel and soft loans from Botswana. (At that time Botswana was receiving one of the highest rates *per capita* of non-military foreign aid in the world) There were also rumours of a shadowy California millionairess acting as a front for the South African government. Plans for an Okavango pipeline or canal to Orapa were dropped, and the mine continued to depend on underground water. This compromise also reflected the interests of Botswana's own environmental lobby, the Kalahari Conservation Society, which was headed by the general manager of De Beers Botswana.

The Botswana government was persuaded to employ the Owens as consultants on the future of the Central Kalahari. The Owens' report helped to resolve the government to clear Gwi-khwe (Khoe) and Khalagari residents from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, because such people no longer hunted with bows or spears but with guns and dogs.

The *apartheid* government appears to have trod warily around the issue of 'Bushman' in Botswana, because the issue could too easily blow up into its own face—given the virtual extinction of Southern San Bushmen inside South Africa, and use of Khoe and Northern San Bushmen as scouts and sacrificial 'shields' by the South African army in Namibia and Angola.

What undoubtedly infuriated South Africa was John Marshall's active return to film-making among the Zhu/'hoansi or !Kung (Northern San). His *N!ai: the Story of a !Kung Woman* (1979-80), which received wide acclaim, was followed by the contentious *Pull Ourselves Up, Or Die Out* (1984-85), *Fighting Tooth and Nail with the Government* (1988), *!Kung San Resettlement* (1988) and *To Hold Our Ground* (1990). Marshall took the view that social change was inevitable and conversion to agro-pastoral life was desirable, but *apartheid* was not. Loss of land and resettlement by South African government diktat was cruel and unjust. This viewpoint was followed up by Richard Pakleppa's film *What the Baobab Heard: A Land Dispute*, produced by New Dawn Videos in independent Namibia in 1991.

The political critique of the Marshall films contrasted with *People of the Great Sand Face* (1986, 52 minutes), a feature for South African and British television, in the tradition of romantic celebration of 'our living ancestors' engaged in hunting and gathering in isolation from the rest of world. It is not known if the South African authorities had any role in its making or distribution. *People of the Great Sand Face* was filmed in Botswana by a white South African named Paul Myburgh and his girlfriend (a blonde pictured scantily dressed in skins for publicity shots), among the !Gwikhwe (Khoe) in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. It is said to have been the product of seven years' filming (i.e. dating back to 1980).

Wildlife films of a high quality previously associated with Kenya began to be made in Botswana during the later 1980s. Tim Leversedge, based in Maun, filmed *Okavango: Jewel of the Kalahari* (BBC TV & WNET/DPS, 1988, 2 x 50 minutes), with a tie-in book by

Jewel of the Kalahari (BBC-TV & WNET/FBS, 1988, 3 x 60 minutes), with a tie-in book by Karen Ross that helped to fuel the anti-cattle/pro-wildlife debate. Liversedge's *Year of the Flamebird* won prizes in 1991, when it was nominated for an Emmy (the U.S. television equivalent of an Oscar).

Dereck and Beverly Joubert in the Savuti game reserve produced *Eternal Enemies: Lions and Hyenas* for the U.S. National Geographic Society in 1991-92, but really made their name in 1993. In that year they produced *Lions of Darkness* for National Geographic (72 minutes) and *The Stolen River* for British TV (60 minutes), and were themselves the subject of a television documentary *A Passion for Africa* (28 minutes).

Invasion threats and actual invasions and incursions by South African military forces into Botswana were covered, more or less, but always from an outside if not from a South African vantage point, by 35 newsreel clips during the 1980s made for British television. The biggest attack was on 14 June 1985. A dozen people were assassinated. One young man had just learned that he was the first student to obtain a first class degree from the newly independent University of Botswana. He died riddled with bullets in a house near the campus, a couple of hours after returning from watching a film (Paul McCartney's *Goodbye to Broad Street*) at the Capitol cinema in the Mall.

Film of the aftermath of the attack was shown the next night by John Bishop on SABC television, which was promptly criticized and censored by the South African government for being too sympathetic to Botswana. (SABC television showed relatively little of the actual newsfilms it made in the 1980s; much of its library holdings may have been confiscated and subsequently destroyed by police and army or national intelligence.)

The specific target of the South African attack was a cultural group called Medu, led by Mongwane Wally Serote, which combined Botswana with South African exiles in jazz performances and writing, art, and theatre projects. Thanks to Medu, Gaborone experienced quite a cultural renaissance in the early 1980s. MEDU's film unit appears not to have taken off, but a documentary was made in June 1982 of Medu's *Gaborone Culture and Resistance Festival and Conference* (eventually shown at the Robben Island Gateway Museum in Cape Town on 11 November 2002). BBC television also made a documentary (shown 6 May 1985) on Hugh Masekela, the jazz trumpeter and Medu member, who settled near Gaborone with his own sound studio ('Technobush') at Crocodile Pools, until forced to move back overseas after June 1985.

Another documentary of the 1980s covered *A New Look for Naledi: Upgrading a Squatter Settlement* (28 minutes). Newsfilms also covered the fleeing of Joshua Nkomo from Zimbabwe into Botswana (reputedly dressed a woman) in March 1983, and a visit to the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in March 1984 by Prince Charles—with his mistress Camilla hidden from the cameras.

After September 1991, SABC TV crews appeared in Botswana as envoys of the New South Africa, to record and show South African viewers what was going on in a friendly neighbouring state.

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Chapter 6: The Last Ten Years 1994-2004

This chapter is based on imperfect research, which does not go much beyond the year 2000.

With the liberation of South Africa, the old system of state subsidization of South African films came to an end. The last such film on our area to appear was *Kalahari Harry* (C-Films, 1994), a light comedy about a 'Crocodile Dundee' type of white bushwacker objecting to a casino being set up.

The Hollywood film of Laurens van der Post's *A Far Off Place* (1994) also reflected changed political realities elsewhere in Southern Africa but not in Botswana. Instead of black guerrillas, the villains were now a multi-racial group of poachers. But the hero who wisely guides the two children (starlet Reese Witherspoon was the girl) across the Kalahari was still a 'Bushman' (played by Sarel Bok). Presumably the producers (Spielberg & Disney) were not given a permit to film in Botswana: the location shots were taken in Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Another feature project that took advantage of changed politics was an 8-part BBC/WGBH-Boston/Canadian television series simply called *Rhodes* (Zenith Productions, 8 parts, 1996). It was the pet project of writer-producer Anthony Thomas, who had become interested in the topic in 1970 when working on Kenneth Griffith's television biography of Cecil Rhodes that was filmed in part at Serowe. The series showed Rhodes as a nice enough young fellow who was corrupted into an old racist by money and power. Though the real story touches deeply on Botswana's history, the television series didn't, and it was all filmed on a farm near Pretoria. Nor was the series a success with viewers overseas. The narrative got bogged down in the continuing story of a woman whom Rhodes refused to marry. The best episodes were about Lobengula and the Matebele (though everyone spoke Zulu instead of Ndebele); there was too little action in other episodes. *Rhodes* appears to have been a source of political embarrassment for the SABC, which declined to show it for some years.

A Hollywood film in this period that was actually filmed here in Botswana was *Whispers, An Elephant's Tale* (2001, 72 minutes). It was a very strange hybrid between a wildlife documentary and a Walt Disney children's film. It used remarkable wildlife footage filmed by Deryck and Beverly Joubert in Chobe national park, but gave the animals human voices. It featured a baby elephant dubbed with a squeaky child's voice, and corny dialogue by assorted American and British female voices (Angela Bassett, Joan Rivers,

dialogue by assorted American and British female voices (Angela Bassett, Joan Rivers, Joanna Lumley) that ill-fitted the older elephants. The film was a commercial flop.

Apparently closer to the Van der Post than the Marshall style of ethnographic film, the Danish traveller Jens Bjerre produced *San Bush People of the Kalahari* (1995, 57 minutes), using materials from his tours of the Kalaharin the 1940s-50s and a return visit in 1987.

The year 2000 saw the culmination of the Marshall ethnographic documentaries on the Zhu/'hoansi people in the 5-part *A Kalahari Family* (2000: Documentary Education Resources, Watertown, Massachusetts: <<http://www.der.org>>). It ran from Part 1 'A Far Country' (90 minutes) through three 60 minute parts to Part 5 'Death by Myth' (90 minutes)—the latter being an attack on the like of Van der Post who want to freeze the Bushmen into a mythical past life that never existed except in the imaginations of the beholder.

The same year, 2000, saw the art-house cinema release (blown up from digital video to 35 mm film) of a feature documentary, *The Great Dance: A Hunter's Story*, which falls between the romantic and realistic schools of Van der Post and Marshall schools. *The Great Dance* was widely acclaimed for its remarkable cinematography, with mini-cameras attached to the backs of running animals and even to a spearhead. With an overvoice by a black South African actor reading translations of the hunters' words, it told the story of hunters who reject guns and dogs, but wear trousers and listen to ghetto-blasters. *The Great Dance* was filmed in 1995-1998 by two brothers, Craig and Damon Foster. Accounts vary as to whether the hunters were Gwikhwe (Khoe) near the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, or Nharo (Khoe) and !Xo (San) in the south-west.

In June 2001 the new Botswana Television (BTV) station flighted a homegrown 45-minute historical documentary on *The Story of Sir Seretse and Lady Khama* (directed by Billy Kokorwe). It was notable for its interviews with Ruth Khama before she died, but was criticized in the local press for its limited coverage of Seretse Khama himself—whose voice was never heard. But the advent of BTV did not lead to any florescence of television documentary production. *El Negro: Someone Named Mulihaban* (2001-02), initially made in German by the Gaborone branch of a German firm (Looks), told the story of the return of an ancient African corpse from Spain to be buried in Gaborone.

Tim and June Liversedge have continued producing wildlife films and clips indefatigably for television channels, including *Botswana Land of Contrasts* made for the Botswana government, *A Herd of Their Own* (2000) for the Discovery TV Channel, and *Roar!: Lions of the Kalahari* (2002) for National Geographic—the latter being a digital production designed like *The Great Dance* to be blown up to 35mm for a feature film on the big screen.

Derek and Beverly Joubert followed up *The Stolen River* of 1993 with *Journey to the Forgotten River* (date?). Their *Wildlife Warriors: Defending Africa's Wildlife* (National Geographic Society, 1997) made unlikely heroes of the Botswana Defence Force anti-poaching patrols, and won a documentary award in Los Angeles. Their co-production with Buena Vista/Walt Disney, *Whispers: An Elephant's Tale*, has already been

mentioned.

No less than 69 television news films, most of them from the SABC and some maybe not edited or transmitted, can be listed for the period up to August 2001. SABC mostly used its former Bop TV news branch at Mafikeng to cover events in Botswana. News teams from South Africa's e-TV have also been occasional visitors. Overseas television networks have evidently rely on SABC for material on Botswana. International television news teams only come to Botswana for events such as the visits of American presidents Bill Clinton (1999) and Dubya Bush (2003), and the return of El Negro's body parts from Spain [2001].

Botswana Cinema & Film Studies, 1st Edition is being written in February-March 2004. At the present time the big speculation is on when and where and in what form, and with which leading actress, the best-selling *No 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, by a former University of Botswana & Swaziland lecturer, Sandy McCall Smith, will be filmed.

Conclusion

Why bother to study films on Botswana when they have nearly all been made by foreigners for foreigners? Besides appreciation of any artistic value the films have in themselves, three answers come to mind:

First, the study of such films exposes the sort of ideas that Westerners have had when dealing with Botswana and its people over the past hundred years. Filmic images were a part of the ideological baggage those Westerners carried inside their heads—while earlier imperialists and colonizers had images derived only from the written or spoken word. We are all to some extent 'Westerners' now, inheriting such images and ideas from global culture.

Such preconceptions could and can be used by Westerners not only to understand Botswana and its people, but also to change them. In the words of Lenin—or was it Trotsky?—art (in this case film) can and should be a hammer to change society, not just a mirror reflecting it.

Second, the study of film is growing more important in Botswana as television and videotapes and DVDs become more commonly watched, and the number of cinemas increases. All senior secondary schools, and soon most junior secondary schools, now have video players as well as television sets. All of us must have seen satellite television dishes on some small houses in remote rural areas, where people can watch Movie and History as well as Sports and News and 'Discovery' channels. Gaborone has two new multi-screen cinemas, and Southern Africa may still follow Nigeria with a proliferation of small video or piped-digital cinemas in towns and villages—like the 'nickelodeons' for poor people that sprouted all over America in the early twentieth century.

Films and videos offer an imaginative leap into the present elsewhere and the past

Films and videos offer an imaginative leap into the present elsewhere and the past anywhere—though they also always carry the burden of their producers' and presenters' ideas. We therefore need to know how to analyze and question the assumptions of films and videos, rather than to accept them as gospel truth. Films and videos already shape many of our ideas about the present elsewhere and the past anywhere. But films and videos should be used to stimulate our ideas, not to stifle them.

Third, the study of cinema is broader than just the study of individual films and genres of films. It is a study not only of patterns of production and distribution, dominated by big capitalist combines and governments, but also patterns of consumption by audiences.

The study of cinema and television audiences in Botswana is in its infancy—certainly less developed than the study of radio audiences and newspaper readership, where there are already some M.A. and Ph.D theses. As an encouragement for more audience research, an Appendix follows this Conclusion dealing with the [Kanye Cinema Experiment of 1944-1946](#).