

CINEMA AS ARCHIVE OF MEMORY AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: A STUDY OF SELECTED NOLLYWOOD FILMS

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Abstract

This study **examined** how contemporary African films **preserved** memory and **transmitted** indigenous knowledge in a global, digital world. The study **used** a qualitative method and **relied** on textual analysis and cultural interpretation. It **used** two films as case studies: *The Figurine* by Kunle Afolayan and *Taboo* directed by Chris Obi Rapu. The paper **argued** that film **was** more than entertainment, acting as a repository for collective memory and a reflection of belief systems and moral values. Through story structure, images, sound, and symbols, the films **recorded** myths, rituals, history, and indigenous worldviews. They also **showed** the tension between tradition, modern life, and global influence. The analysis **showed** that *The Figurine* **used** Yoruba mythology to explore fate, morality, and human choice in modern Nigeria. *Taboo* **retold** childhood memory, folklore, and heroism in an African city shaped by global media. Both films **demonstrated** that cinema **could** protect endangered knowledge and **showed** how this knowledge **could** be reshaped for today's audience. The paper **placed** film within the humanities as an alternative archive and **highlighted** film's role in cultural preservation and knowledge decolonization. It also **showed** its value for education. Finally, the study **added** to discussions on the relevance of the humanities in the digital age, and it **presented** African cinema as an important space for memory, identity, and cultural continuity in the twenty-first century.

Introduction

Cinema occupies a central place in contemporary culture. It is as much a source of entertainment as it is a powerful medium for the preservation of memory and the transmission of knowledge. Through image, sound, and narrative, film records how societies think, believe, and organize their worlds. In this way, cinema performs an archival function by storing cultural expressions that would otherwise fade with time. For African societies — where history and knowledge have long been kept alive through oral traditions, performance, and ritual — film has become an increasingly important site for cultural memory.

Memory is at the heart of cultural identity. It determines how communities interpret their past and assert their present reality. Jacques Le Goff elaborates on this when he says that memory is fundamentally involved in identity because it helps society maintain continuity between generations (95). When memory dies, culture disintegrates. Cinema counters this by transforming cultural practice into visual form so that it can survive beyond the moment of performance.

African cinema draws heavily from indigenous knowledge systems. These refer to myths, taboos, belief systems, and moral codes that govern social life. According to UNESCO, indigenous knowledge comprises the accumulated wisdom developed over time through close interaction with both nature and community life. African filmmakers often adapt such wisdom into cinematic narratives so as to keep them preserved in ways accessible to contemporary audiences; hence, film becomes a bridge between ancestral wisdom and modern-day experience.

Globalization has increased cultural interaction but also poses threats to the particularities of culture. The rapid circulation of foreign values, aesthetics, and narratives via digital media often eclipses local traditions. African cinema then finds itself in an ambiguous position; it must address global audiences while remaining anchored in local realities. Stuart Hall asserts that cultural identity is not a fixed essence but rather a matter of becoming as well as being — always constituted within, not outside representation (225). Film becomes a crucial space where this process unfolds, allowing African societies to negotiate who they are in a changing world.

Nigerian cinema, popularly known as Nollywood, exemplifies this negotiation. As one of the world's largest film industries, it reaches audiences across Africa and the diaspora. Nollywood films frequently combine modern settings with traditional belief systems, reflecting the lived realities of many Africans. Through this blending, cinema preserves indigenous knowledge while engaging with contemporary life.

This study examines cinema as an archive through an analysis of *The Figurine* and *Taboo*. Both films draw strongly from indigenous belief systems and explore the consequences of spiritual and moral transgression. They reveal how film functions as a repository of cultural memory and a medium for transmitting indigenous knowledge in a globalized world. By focusing on these films, this paper highlights the role of African cinema in preserving cultural identity and contributing to humanities scholarship in the digital age.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the theory of Afrocentricity, as coined by Asantakete Molefi (1980), and Cultural Memory Theory by Jan Assmann and Maurice Halbwachs serve as supporting frameworks. Afrocentricity is an academic theory and approach to scholarship that seeks to center the experiences and peoples of Africa and the African in diaspora within their own historical, cultural, and sociological contexts. Afrocentricity is a theory that places African people at the center of their own history and cultural narratives. It also emphasizes African values, traditions, aesthetics, and worldview. When applied to Nollywood, Nigeria's film industry, Afrocentricity helps us understand how Nigerian cinema reclaims African identity, values, and storytelling from Eurocentric control. Nollywood can be seen as one of the strongest contemporary expressions of Afrocentric cultural production. Afrocentric thought recognizes African spirituality as central to African identity. Films often show the interaction between modern life and traditional cosmology—reinforcing African epistemology rather than dismissing it as superstition.

Cultural Memory Theory argues that societies remember their past through media, symbols, rituals, and cultural texts, including film. Film becomes a repository of collective memory, preserving experiences beyond individual lifetimes. Memory here is not purely individual. It is shaped by social groups and communities remembering through shared narratives.

Film as a Cultural Archive

Film, according to Innocent Ebere Uwah, “is a work of art that tells a story by entertaining its viewers. It is a medium of communication used to communicate ideas about persons, societies, and places through a combination of audio and visual elements” (24). Films are more than just stories; they are archives that store our shared culture. Films capture and preserve the values, anxieties, aesthetics, power structures, and day-to-day habits of the societies where they are produced. Even when the stories are fictional, the function is like a time capsule. According to Nkemakonam Aniukwu:

The film medium over the years has proven to be an effective tool in shaping the events of a particular nation. As such, it is important that the contents and intended message(s) are designed to effectively achieve the desired results... Films as a medium of information dissemination deal with theories relating to human lives and behaviours, so the influence of this medium on the audience is very vital to the growth and the development of the individual involved, as well as the development of the nation.(226-227)

Film, therefore, functions as a cultural archive by recording, preserving, and interpreting the social realities, ideologies, and historical contexts of the time in which it is produced. As Elsaesser argues, “Cinema offers visual evidence of how societies imagine themselves”(46). Even fictional films reveal truths about a people's culture through their narratives, aesthetics, and representational choices. According to Sturt Hall, “representation is a process through which meaning is produced and exchanged, making film a key site where cultural values are constructed and circulated. Through this process, films document both everyday life and broader social tensions”(76). As film is said to play a crucial role in shaping collective memory, Ladsberg suggests that “cinema creates 'prosthetic memory' allowing audiences to experience historical events they did not live through” (23). As a result, films do not merely archive history but effectively influence how societies remember and interpret the past. Hence, we can say that film operates as a dynamic cultural archive that preserves social realities while simultaneously shaping cultural meaning.

By choosing what to hide as well as what to show, film archives actively shape culture. Foucault emphasizes that “archives are shaped by systems of power and knowledge, reminding us that what is preserved often reflects dominant perspectives.”(37). Now, to fully understand films as historical and cultural documents, they must be analyzed critically, with attention to ideology, representation, and omission.

Tradition, Modernity, and Global Influence in African Film

African cinema is situated at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, with deep roots in indigenous cultures yet always in dialogue with contemporary realities and global influences. This dynamic interplay profoundly influences both formal and thematic aspects of contemporary African cinema. The Nigerian film industry, particularly Nollywood, provides vivid illustrations of this negotiation between ancestral wisdom and contemporary existence within a globally visible framework.

Tradition in African cinema has its origins in oral narrative, spirituality, and communalism. Long before the advent of cinema, African societies had their own ways of preserving history and knowledge through storytelling, ritualistic performances, and theatrical displays. Film inherits this role. John Mbiti explains that in African worldviews, “The visible and the invisible worlds are inseparably united” (56). This belief shapes many African narratives, where spiritual forces influence human actions and social order. Films that draw on myth, taboo, and ritual, therefore, reflect lived cultural realities rather than fictional inventions. African filmmakers often adapt oral traditions into visual narratives. Achebe asserts that “proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (7). In the Nigerian cinema, proverbs, myths, and symbolic acts replace written explanation. Meaning is communicated through action, repetition, and ritual performance. This narrative style differs from Western linear storytelling and reflects communal ways of knowing where wisdom is shared rather than individualized.

Modernity brings new social realities into African film. Urbanization, formal education, technology, and changing family structures have been some of the major forces shaping contemporary African life. These social realities are increasingly depicted in Nigerian cinema. The characters are often shown living in urban environments, speaking English alongside indigenous languages, and pursuing modern professions. However, modernity does not necessarily supplant tradition; rather, it is apparent that modern Africans continue to negotiate their existence within the frameworks of cultural belief systems.

Stuart Hall argues that culture is not fixed but dynamic. He explains that “Cultural identity is a matter of becoming as well as of being” (225). African films reflect this process of becoming. Characters negotiate between inherited values and modern pressures. Tradition is not presented as static or outdated but as something continually reinterpreted within new contexts. This approach allows African cinema to remain culturally grounded while addressing contemporary issues.

Globalization further reshapes African film practice. The spread of global media, foreign films, and digital platforms has influenced production styles and audience expectations. Appadurai notes that globalization creates “a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order” of cultural flows (32). African cinema is a part of this global flow. Nollywood films have wide circulation all over Africa and among the diaspora, introducing indigenous narratives to international audiences. Global influence is apparent in techniques, languages, and distribution channels used for films. But this does not mean that foreign values are simply being imposed; African filmmakers are actively using global forms and adapting them to local content. Musa explains that Nollywood thrives because it “blends local narratives with globally recognizable forms” (3). This blending allows African stories to travel without losing cultural specificity.

Indigenous Knowledge and African Cinema

African films are predominantly based on oral traditions such as myths and legends, folktales and proverbs, as well as ritual. These narratives contribute to the shaping of plot structures, character development, and visual symbolism in African films. This is what differentiates African cinema from Western cinematic conventions. Tyler Jessen and Natalie Ban et al define Indigenous Knowledge “as a body of place-based knowledge accumulated and transmitted across generations within specific cultural contexts” (1). Indigenous Knowledge refers to philosophies and belief systems, oral traditions, ecological practices, and cultural values that are locally situated or rooted in a particular community of people over time. In other words, indigenous knowledge pertains to the traditional understandings, practices, beliefs, languages, and cultural expressions that are specific to some unique community or society. The medium of African cinema has been very important for the preservation, interpretation, and assertion of Indigenous knowledge, particularly against colonial disruptions and postcolonial disruptions. Therefore, African cinema has often acted as a counter-discourse against colonial representations that rendered African knowledge primitive or irrational. Major discourses on African cinemas usually center on the use of the cinema for cultural representation and identity, resistance to colonial narratives, social and political commentary, preservation of oral traditions, development of National and Pan-African consciousness, global influence and recognition and economic and creative industry growth among others.

According to Pauline Uwakweh, “African creative works, including film, are extensions of oral traditions that preserve indigenous philosophies and social values” (13). Filmmakers reclaim indigenous practices as sources of identity, resistance, and moral authority; here, Post theorists argue that African cinema “decolonizes the screen” by centering African ways of knowing, seeing, and interpreting reality. This means confronting the Western gaze that has dominated knowledge production for so long. Nigerian cinema, or Nollywood as it is popularly known, stands out in size among film industries worldwide. It offers not only entertainment but also acts as a cultural archive and transmitter of indigenous knowledge. The context here is Nigerian films where Indigenous knowledge comprises local languages, traditional belief systems manifested through folklore and ceremonies, social values and norms around family and community life—historical narratives embedded within cinematic storytelling. Through its narratives, Nollywood films often communicate ways of life, worldviews, and values that originate from Nigeria's rich ethnic diversity. Hyginus Ekwuazi describes Nigerian films as “cultural mirrors that reflect indigenous realities, including traditional marriage systems, chieftaincy institutions, religious beliefs, and moral codes” (47). He argues that early and contemporary Nollywood films often replicate the structure of folktales, where good and evil are clearly defined, and moral lessons are emphasized.

Contemporary filmmakers are increasingly more engaged in the process of adapting indigenous knowledge to the realities of urbanization, migration, gender relations, and globalization. They present indigenous knowledge as dynamic rather than static. The films synthesize tradition with modernity to illustrate how indigenous knowledge continues to grow and be relevant. As Stella

Enyindah and Onyeka Donli have contended, “Nollywood films function as veritable tools for cultural development” (12); they argue that the very same movies that show traditional festivals and rites of passage alongside those that depict ancestral worship and methods for resolving conflicts help keep indigenous knowledge alive while simultaneously reinforcing a distinct Nigerian cultural identity. Nigerian cinema is thus a vibrant medium through which indigenous knowledge can be sustained alongside cultural identity.

Overview of the Selected Films

This study focuses on two Nigerian films, *The Figurine* and *Taboo*, because of their strong engagement with indigenous belief systems and cultural memory. Both films demonstrate how Nigerian cinema functions as a cultural archive, preserving traditional knowledge while responding to the pressures of modern life. They provide rich material for examining the relationship between film, memory, and indigenous knowledge in a globalized world.

Figurine (2009), a movie directed by Kunle Afolayan, is a supernatural thriller that blends myth, suspense, and drama in Nigerian cinema. The story centers on two friends, Sola and Femi, who discover an ancient mystical sculpture in an abandoned shrine during their National Youth Service. The sculpture, Araromire, represents a goddess in Yoruba mythology who grants seven years of good fortune followed by seven years of misfortune. Araromire, according to their mythology, was said to have been wronged by a King and later became a deity associated with destiny and retribution. The Figurine discovered by Sola and Femi represents this goddess and carries the supposed blessing-and-curse cycle.

Their lives obviously improved after taking the Figurine. Sola becomes successful, gains wealth, and falls in love with Mona, the woman both friends care about. His friend Femi, on the other hand, experiences positive changes in his own life too. However, as the years of prosperity pass, their lives begin to be mysterious in the sense that strange things start to happen in their lives, as jealousy, betrayal, and suspicion set in. The friends try to search out if their misfortune is caused by the curse of Araromire or by their choices and hidden actions. Hence, the movie explores the themes of fate versus free will, greed, friendship, ambition, and the psychological power of belief. In the end, *Figurine* leaves viewers in suspense, as they question themselves whether the supernatural truly dictated the characters' destinies or whether they were faced with human flaws and decisions that brought about their downfall.

The Figurine is deeply anchored in Yoruba cosmology and mythology. The film is set within the context of Araromire's myth; Araromire is a deity who grants years of prosperity to an individual, after which suffering follows. This reflects an African worldview in which spiritual forces actively engage with human destinies. According to Yoruba cosmology, the physical world and the spiritual world are intimately related, and human activities elicit metaphysical reactions. Even though the characters in *The Figurine* are educated and live in a modern urban setting, their lives continue to be governed by traditional spiritual laws. This is another reality of Nigerian culture: modernity does not obliterate indigenous belief but co-exists with it. The discovery of the Figurine in a sacred forest reinforces this worldview. In Yoruba culture, forests have always been associated with deities and ancestors as sacred spaces. By representing the forest as a place of spiritual power, the film preserves indigenous spatial memory and its cultural meaning.

The Figurine is also powerful as a cultural symbol. Sacred objects in Yoruba belief are not just possessions; they are carriers of authority over spirituality. The film reinforces such understanding by showing that misuse or ignorance about sacred power brings imbalance and suffering. John Mbiti says that “African cosmology views life as a continuous interaction between the visible and invisible worlds” (56). It is this cosmology that *The Figurine* makes visible by way of cinema, translating oral myth into modern narrative archives for contemporary audiences.

Taboo offers another, equally important, cultural context. It focuses on what is forbidden within a traditional African community while probing how taboos work as moral and spiritual laws. This film dramatically explores cultural, social, and romantic taboos set within a traditionally Igbo environment. In many Nigerian cultures, taboos are not mere social norms but sacred codes that protect the harmony of the community, often supported by ancestral authority and spiritual sanction. The film *Taboo* takes this perspective on taboos. *Taboo* is a film by Chris Obi Rapu, made in 1993, which presents an intense and culturally sensitive community setting. It revolves around family conflict and moral boundaries in forbidden actions that challenge deeply held social norms. The plot centers on love across social castes, specifically between an Osu and a freeborn, creating great tension for the community. This film depicts how people struggle with decisions to break established traditions and values, leading them into both emotional and communal upheavals. Its narrative examines the impacts of violating taboos within a traditional society that expresses such conflict between personal wishes and general moral obligations.

It emphasizes communal responsibility as a fundamental value in many Nigerian societies. The actions of individuals have collective consequences because of the African belief that society exists as an interconnected whole. This belief system is particularly strong among the Igbo and Yoruba peoples, where moral order is sustained by shared values reinforced through collective discipline. As Achebe says, “proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (7), thus drawing heavily from oral tradition in *Taboo*. Indigenous knowledge is conveyed through proverbs, warnings, and ritual instructions by elders in the film to reinforce their position as custodians of cultural memory. Ritual plays a central role in *Taboo*. When sacred laws are broken, ritual becomes necessary to restore balance between the human and spiritual worlds. This reflects a deep African belief in spiritual correction rather than punishment alone. The film's visual representation of ritual preserves practices that are rarely captured in written records. By doing so, it functions as a living archive of indigenous moral systems and spiritual responses to transgression.

Taken together, *The Figurine* and *Taboo* demonstrates how Nigerian cinema operates as a cultural archive. While *The Figurine* places indigenous belief within a modern setting shaped by education and urban life, *Taboo* situates tradition firmly within communal and ancestral structures. Both films reveal that indigenous knowledge remains active and relevant despite globalization. By translating myths, taboos, and oral traditions into cinematic narratives, these films preserve Nigerian cultural memory and transmit it to both local and international audiences.

Film Memory and Cultural Preservation in *The Figurine* and *Taboo*

Film plays a central role in preserving cultural memory in contemporary African societies, and this role becomes clearer when examined through specific cinematic texts such as *The Figurine* and *Taboo*. These films do not merely tell stories; they store, transmit, and reactivate indigenous knowledge through narrative, image, and performance. In doing so, they function as living archives that protect cultural memory against erasure in a rapidly globalizing world. Cultural memory, as Jan Assmann explains, “Preserves the collective knowledge from the past that is relevant for the present and the future” (24). Both *The Figurine* and *Taboo* operate within this framework. They retrieve belief systems that predate modernity and translate them into visual narratives that contemporary audiences can engage with. Rather than presenting tradition as distant history, the films make memory active and consequential. In *The Figurine*, memory is preserved through myth. The story draws from the Yoruba belief in Araromire, a deity associated with reward and retribution. This myth is not explained in abstract terms but embodied through the narrative experiences of the characters. The forest where *The Figurine* is discovered functions as a site of memory. It represents a sacred space where the past remains present. Pierre Nora argues that

memory “takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects” (9). The *Figurine* itself becomes such an object carrying historical and spiritual meaning across time. The film preserves cultural memory by showing how traditional belief continues to influence modern lives, even though characters are educated and urban; their fate is shaped by an indigenous spiritual system, which reflects a Nigerian cultural reality where modernity does not erase belief but exists alongside it. By dramatizing this coexistence, *The Figurine* records a living cultural condition rather than a nostalgic past. Memory here is not static; it actively shapes the present.

Taboo records cultural memory by emphasizing moral order and communal enforcement. It presents a narrative centered on acts deemed as forbidden and their repercussions within a traditional society. In several Nigerian cultures, taboos serve as historical instruments for sustaining social equilibrium; they are not perpetuated through codified law but rather through collective adherence and ritualistic practice. By focusing its narrative around taboo, the film effectively documents indigenous systems of ethics and justice.

As John Mbiti puts it, in African societies, “wrongdoing is never a private affair but affects the entire community” (203). This worldview is visually reinforced in *Taboo*, which shows that when a taboo is broken, the whole community responds: elders come in, rituals are performed, and balance has to be restored. Such scenes become cultural memory by demonstrating how justice and morality work in an indigenous context; the film becomes an archive of what the community values and how it holds its members spiritually accountable.

Language and performance further bolster this preservation of memory in both films through proverbs, chants, and ritual dialogue that carry cultural meaning difficult to translate into another context. Achebe has observed that “language is not just a means of communication but a carrier of culture” (81); thus, in *Taboo* the speech of elders preserves ancestral wisdom while in *The Figurine*, silence, gesture, and ritual atmosphere communicate belief as powerfully as words do. These expressive forms keep alive knowledge that would otherwise perish in entirely written records. Both films also preserve memory by dramatizing consequences since indigenous African storytelling teaches more through outcome than explanation; actions have visible results, reinforcing moral lessons. This narrative logic finds expression in *The Figurine*, where prosperity turns to suffering and even more so manifests within *Taboo* when violation incurs punishment requiring ritual cleansing—these outcomes inscribe cultural memory into narrative form, making belief systems memorable as well as emotionally resonant.

Stuart Hall reminds us that memory is not static but dynamic when he states that “the past continues to speak to us, but always from a position of difference” (236). *The Figurine* and *Taboo* are cases in point. They reinterpret tradition for contemporary audiences without denuding it of meaning, thus permitting indigenous knowledge to survive change rather than be annihilated by it. In the digital era, the role of these films as preservers is exacerbated. Through their incessant circulation on television, DVDs, and streaming platforms, they extend cultural memory beyond physical communities to Diasporas and global audiences. Film makes sure that rituals, myths, and moral systems do not become confined to practices that are fading away, but remain visible and accessible. Through *The Figurine* and *Taboo*, Nigerian cinema shows how film can keep cultural memory alive while being relevant at the same time. These films tell us that indigenous knowledge is not out-of-date; instead, it is something that can adjust itself. By putting memory inside cinematic narrative, African film acts as a living archive that keeps cultural identity safe while letting this identity change in a new world.

The outcome is cultural hybridity. Films merge indigenous belief systems with modern settings and global aesthetics. This hybridity mirrors African social reality, where people constantly move

between different cultural worlds every day. It does not weaken tradition but often reinforces it by putting indigenous knowledge into contemporary frameworks so that younger audiences can reach and understand it easily. At the same time, African cinema fights against total cultural homogenization; even when films take on global styles, they often come back to indigenous moral logic. Themes of community, spiritual consequence, and collective responsibility stay very important. This kind of resistance proves Hall's point about "identities being constructed through memory, narrative and myth" (4). Film becomes the space where these constructions are continuously performed and preserved.

African cinema, therefore, stands as a contemporary art form and a cultural repository. It documents the interplay between global transformations and indigenous legacies: tradition provides ethical and spiritual values; modernity creates challenges and opportunities; globalization expands the horizon but does not erase the local. Through this dialectical process, African film asserts its cultural presence in a world that is increasingly globalized—showing that tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive but rather interdependent. The cinema becomes the channel through which African societies remember, reinvent, and future their identity.

Implications for the Humanities in the Digital Age

The increasing recognition of film as an archive has far-reaching consequences for the humanities in the age of digital technology. As oral transmission, ritual practice, and community storytelling are disrupted by modernity and digital culture, cinema becomes a critical site for both the preservation and reinterpretation of indigenous knowledge. African cinema, therefore, does not simply showcase culture; it stands as an important repository from which any humanities scholarship on memory, identity, or systems of knowledge may draw materials. The humanities have always privileged written texts as their primary vehicles of knowledge. Much of Africa has historically been non-literate or semi-literate and still depends on performance, speech, and ritual to create meaning. Film provides a bridge by recording embodied knowledge; as Assmann puts it, "Cultural memory is embodied in symbolic forms that are passed on and reactivated across generations" (38). The *Figurine* and *Taboo* are such symbolic forms; they conserve knowledge that would otherwise vanish in a digitally accelerated world. Indigenous knowledge finds preservation through cinematic re-enactment of myth in *The Figurine*. The narrative is not found in a written archive; it survives through belief and storytelling. By translating this myth into film, Afolayan creates a digital record of Yoruba cosmology. This has major implications for history, anthropology, religious studies, and philosophy. Film can thus be considered a valid source to understand how systems of belief operate within actual social realities.

Taboo also preserves indigenous systems of law and morality that are seldom captured in formal legal or philosophical texts. The film records how justice operates within communal and spiritual frameworks rather than institutional courts. Mbiti states that "African morality is deeply rooted in the religious universe" (211). For the humanities, this presents a challenge to Eurocentric frameworks that make sharp distinctions between ethics and spirituality. Film provides access to alternative moral philosophies that expand global humanistic inquiry. In the digital age, access and circulation redefine archival power. Digital platforms allow films to travel beyond their original cultural spaces. This circulation transforms African cinema into a transnational archive. Hall explains that "representation is one of the central practices which produce culture" (28). When African films circulate digitally, they produce culture on a global scale. Indigenous knowledge becomes visible not only to local communities but also to international scholars, students, and audiences.

Digital technology also reshapes how memory is studied and taught. Film archives now exist

alongside libraries and museums. Humanities education increasingly relies on audiovisual texts to teach history, culture, and ethics. Films such as *The Figurine* and *Taboo* become teaching tools that make abstract concepts tangible. Students encounter indigenous knowledge not as distant theory but as lived experience. At the same time, questions about interpretation and authority also arise in the digital age. Who controls cultural memory when films move around the world? Which interpretation takes precedence? African cinema seeks to answer this by granting communities the right to represent themselves. Ngugi wa Thiong'o states that "the domination of a people's language by the language of the colonizer was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (16). Film resists such domination through its ability to keep indigenous languages, symbols, and worldviews in digital space. For humanities scholars, this necessitates an expansion of their methodological toolkit. They must read film as text, archive, and performance all at once. Cinema demands interdisciplinary approaches that reach into history, philosophy, anthropology, and media studies. Film memory studies push humanities scholarship toward embodied and visual knowledge systems instead of written archives.

In a world where digital media often serve the interests of global capitalism by encouraging cultural homogenization, African cinema insists on cultural specificity. Movies like *The Figurine* and *Taboo* assert that indigenous knowledge can be successfully digitized without losing its depth; they prove that tradition can live comfortably within modern media forms without turning into spectacle or folklore. Ultimately, cinema as archive transforms how humanities scholarship should function in a digital age—film becomes a site for preservation, critique, and renewal; it holds memory; it transmits indigenous knowledge; it asks for reinterpretation over time and across space. In African cinema, the humanities find dynamic visual living cultural archives through which indigenous ways of knowing can take part in global intellectual discourse.

Conclusion

This study has examined cinema as an archive with particular attention to film memory and indigenous knowledge in a globalized world. Using *The Figurine* and *Taboo* as case studies, the research has shown that African cinema functions as more than entertainment. It serves as a cultural repository that preserves belief systems, moral values, and communal memory that might otherwise be lost in the face of rapid modernization and digital change. The analysis demonstrates that film is uniquely suited to preserving indigenous knowledge because it records culture in its lived form. Rituals, myths, taboos, language, and performance are captured through image and sound, allowing memory to remain active rather than static. In *The Figurine*, Yoruba cosmology is preserved through mythic narrative and symbolic objects, showing how traditional belief continues to shape modern life. In *Taboo*, communal morality and spiritual justice are archived through narrative emphasis on forbidden acts and ritual restoration. These films confirm Mbiti's assertion that "African religion and morality are inseparable from everyday life" (211).

The study also highlights how African cinema negotiates tradition and modernity without positioning them as opposites. Rather than portraying indigenous belief as obsolete, the films examined reveal its continued relevance within contemporary social contexts. Global influence and digital circulation expand the reach of these narratives, transforming African films into transnational archives. As Hall notes, "representation is central to the way culture is produced and exchanged" (28). Through film, African cultures represent themselves on their own terms within global media spaces. Furthermore, the research underscores the growing importance of film for the humanities in the digital age. As oral traditions decline and written archives remain limited in capturing embodied knowledge, cinema emerges as a critical scholarly resource. Films such as *The Figurine*, *Taboo*, *Saworoide*, and *October 1* demonstrate how visual narratives can preserve

historical memory, indigenous philosophy, and cultural ethics. They challenge Eurocentric knowledge systems by asserting alternative ways of knowing grounded in African worldviews.

In a globalized world where cultural homogenization threatens local identities, cinema offers a means of cultural survival and continuity. African films do not merely document the past; they reinterpret it for the present and project it into the future. By functioning as living archives, these films ensure that indigenous knowledge remains visible, meaningful, and transferable across generations. Ultimately, this study affirms cinema's central role in cultural preservation and intellectual discourse. Film memory sustains identity, reinforces cultural values, and expands the scope of the humanities. In recognizing cinema as an archive, scholars acknowledge film as a powerful medium through which African societies remember, negotiate change, and assert their place in a globalized world.

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