

OUSMANE SEMBÈNE'S *Ceddo*: TOWARDS A RENEGOTIATION OF HISTORICAL
IDENTITY

by

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Abstract

Ousmane Sembène uses film as a response to socio-political inequities found within neocolonial Senegal. His articulations in the film *Ceddo* are grounded in the complex use of class terminology which is re-appropriated and renegotiated in order to critique the socio-political systems within modern Senegal. The complexity surrounding *ceddo* reflects not just social fluidity, but a contested interpretation of social status involving historic meanings and the contemporary implications of how these historic interpretations have been renegotiated.

This project discusses the complexities in the renegotiation of the social term *ceddo* through an examination of Ousmane Sembène's 1977 film *Ceddo* and the subsequent political debate between Sembène and Léopold Sédar Senghor, then president of Senegal. The film will be used to reveal the linguistic complexities *ceddo* lends to Sembène's resistance to Senghor's administration through mediated discourse. The film, then, will be linked to resistance as found within African oral literature.

INDEX WORDS: *Ceddo*, Ousmane Sembène, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Islam, neocolonial, renegotiation, socio-political

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Memory is not only the constituting consciousness of the past, but an effort to reopen time on the basis of the implications contained in the present (A. Hannoum, 2001)

The preceding quotation captures the manner through which conscious Senegalese cinema has emerged from the social, economic, and political experiences of specific artists from the sixties to the early nineties. Artists such as Ousmane Sembène express ideas about and responses to class inequities found within neocolonial Senegalese society. His film *Ceddo* is grounded in the complex use of the historical class terminology, *ceddo*, which he re-appropriates and renegotiates in order to critique socio-political systems within neocolonial Senegal. In many ways, the early cinematic productions like *Ceddo* were progenitors of a new artistic form of social critique. They also represented the voice of new generation that used their artistic productions to carry on and expand upon the socio-political ideas, ideologies, and terminologies of previous generations who had expressed themselves through oral literature.

Sembène espouses ideas and ideologies in a language with a distinct sense of historical identity, Wolof, which resonated with many of the Senegalese youth in the neocolonial era. The complex ways in which Sembène employed the term became a politically volatile issue because he used *ceddo* to critique and challenge Senghor's administration.

This project sets out to discuss the complexities in the renegotiation of the social term *ceddo*. The term *ceddo* originally comes from Pulaar/Fulfulde. It was then borrowed by Wolof and simplified by using *ceddo* for both singular and plural. Thus, *ceddo* is both one and many, only distinguishable by the Wolof suffixes. The French began to spell the term with a *ty-* as opposed to a *c-* and went back to the Pulaar/Fulfulde distinctions of singular and plural. This term has gone through not only multiple linguistic transformations, but as *ceddo* was assimilated into other languages, it also began to be used differently. It appears that all uses of *ceddo* reference marginalized people(s), but the reasons peoples were marginalized in a community hold very different political and social implications for the users. Therefore, an examination of Ousmane Sembène's film *Ceddo* from a linguistic and historical perspective reveals the malleability of the term. The subsequent political debate the film spawned between Sembène and Léopold Sédar Senghor, then president of Senegal, further reveals how this term's malleability has political implications. The film will be used to understand how the linguistic complexities of *ceddo* enables Sembène to subversively resist Senghor's administration. Furthermore, the film will be linked to the uses of subversive resistance as found within African oral literature.

In the past few years there has been a proliferation of textbooks and articles on African Cinema. Ousmane Sembène, called the "father" of African cinema and one of the most prolific "French-speaking" African writers in this first century of "creative" writing in francophone Africa, has become increasingly central to discussion of African cinema (S. Gadijo, 1995).

Ousmane Sembène was born in 1923 in the Casamance region located in southern Senegal. His father had previously migrated from Dakar to the coast in order to continue his vocation as a fisherman. However, Dakar would be the city in which Sembène would live and

work after being expelled from school in 1936. In Dakar, a more urban area than Casamance, he lived with relatives and worked as an apprentice mechanic and a bricklayer from 1938 to 1944. Yet, as a French citizen, he was called to serve the “Mother Country”, to liberate France from German occupation in 1944. Sembène was a French citizen because Dakar, Rufisque, Thies, and Saint-Louis were considered French communes. The people who lived there were French. All other colonized peoples were simply “sujets français” (French subjects). Upon being discharged in 1946 at the end of the war, he came back to Dakar in the midst of charged social and political activism for social justice and political change. That same year, he joined the construction workers' trade union and was a part of the first general workers' strike that paralyzed the colonial economy for a month and ushered in the nationalist struggle in French West Africa.

In 1947, unemployed in the thick of a war-ravaged colonial economy, Sembène left Dakar in order to “apprendre à l'école de la vie” (to learn in the school of life), as he many times put it (S. Gadijo, 1995). He migrated to France and lived in Marseilles until 1960, the year Senegal was granted its political “independence” from France. As a literate docker, he was soon enrolled in the Confédération générale des travailleurs or CGT. This organization was the largest and most powerful left wing workers' union in post-war France. Sembène began attending seminars and workshops on Marxism, took membership in the French communist party in 1950, and in Le Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples¹ or MRAP in 1951, a political organization born out of a specific struggle against racism which had to be headed in the global frame of France's liberation from German occupation. During those Marseilles years, he participated in protest movements against the colonial war in Indochina (1953) and the Korean war (1950-1953). He also openly supported the Algerian National

¹ Movement Against Racism and for Friendship between People. Sometimes referred to as, Mouvement contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et pour la paix or Movement Against Racism, Anti-Semitism and for Peace.

Liberation Front or FLN in its struggle for independence from France (1954-1962) (S. Gadijo, 1995).

Ousmane Sembène worked to educate and liberate the community of mostly illiterate and "apolitical" African workers, marginalized by French society. However, he also felt alienated by the absence of "revolutionary" artists and writers from Africa, voices from the masses of workers, women, and all those exploited and silenced by the combined external forces of colonialism and the internal yoke of African "tradition" (S. Gadijo, 1995). Although his activism proved that he was deeply aware of the urgent need for political and social change in Africa, he avoided the political "arena" and threw his hat into the artistic ring, using art as propaganda. He believed that the struggle against colonialism is not solely a fight over who should own the land, but it is also a contest over who should have the right to represent whom (S. Gadijo, 1995). In the historical context and contest of colonization, the terrain of art and cultural representation are a *conditio sine qua non* for the freedom and revival of African societies. Thus, since 1956, while still a dock worker, and upon his return in Senegal in 1960, to these days, Sembène's daily life has been devoted to the production and dissemination of emancipating and restorative images for those Africans disenfranchised and marginalized in their own society (S. Gadijo, 1995). Yet, for Sembène, the work of "art" should not be a mere re-presentation of "reality," but "une pancarte" (a political banner). In order to capture the imagination of a people, an artist must speak to them in a language that is intelligible to them. The language and images of art must reflect the audiences' cultural universe.

Out of his numerous films, four shorts, nine features, and four documentaries, only one has ever been banned, the feature film, *Ceddo*. The body work on the film does not discuss *Ceddo*'s ban in 1977 with much depth. Instead the analyses concentrate on the effects of Islamic

and European colonialism, socialized gender roles, and how Sembène reconstructs history. However, the film was banned in an upcoming election year and details the confrontation between an Imam and the *ceddo*, or commoner class, who refuse to submit to Islam. This political climate begs the questions: Why was the film banned? What were the political implications of the film? Upon further research, one learns the rationale behind *Ceddo*'s ban came to a question of linguistics, which will lead to a discussion of the meanings of *ceddo* and how the fluidity of its usage become a point of political contention between Sembène and Senghor. The answers to these questions illuminate the importance of film on a socio-political level and as an active, living form of oral literature.

With the general growth of Africanist studies in many academic fields, it is not surprising that the relationship between Sembène, his films, and his historical renegotiations of events such as those found within *Ceddo*, have attracted considerable attention. In an attempt to go beyond the assumption of Arab-Islam and Euro-Christianity as active and harmful colonizing forces and Senegalese participation as passive victims of a colonial system, studies have focused on how Sembène constructs a history within *Ceddo*, the implications of imitating oral literature within the film, and how Islam is portrayed as a violent and destructive presence in Senegal. While some of the work has dealt with the descriptions of the film others have sought to show how Sembène's historical renegotiations in the field of cinema both reflect and reproduce social difference. However, although discussions of class difference within the film are available, little research has analyzed the film as it related to the 1977 political climate of Senegal. This is understandable, especially when the film's synopses focus heavily on the *ceddo* as socio-political outsiders because of their rejection of the new Islamic political structures which stand in opposition to the indigenous political institutions. For example, the 1981 FESPACO description

of the film states, “the ‘ceddo’ is a man who says no. In eighteenth-century Senegal, Dior Yacin [sic], the daughter of King Thioub, is kidnapped by a ceddo. This event serves as a catalyst exposing the power relations between people and social groups. The ceddos are those who refuse to be Islamised. Customs die...Islam kills them”.

Much of the earlier work on *Ceddo* emphasized Sembène’s portrayal of Islam as a violent colonizing force. Mbye Cham, in “Islam in Senegalese Literature and Film” cites *Ceddo* as an example of the “impact of Islam on the Senegalese worldview and their approach to the real problems of their society” (M. Cham, 1985). His argument implies that Sembène is an example of the Senegalese artist who undermines religious participation in politics, a participation which “links secular systems to socio-political exploitation, while at the same time glorifying the virtues and promise of practical human action, individual as well as collective” (M. Cham, 1985). Cham’s analysis discusses how *Ceddo* contradicts Islam’s long established claim of indigenous history in Senegal because the film focuses on Islam as the same type of colonizing force as Euro-Christianity. This focus exposes the opposition between the spiritual and material realities of neocolonial Senegal, a reality that is the product of practices that came into Senegal as insidious and violent. Arabo-Islam and Euro-Christianity, then, are two sides of the same colonizing coin. Therefore, the chief focus of this example is to enlarge the culture conflict as no longer as simple as a conflict between Africa and the West, but between Africa and the foreign forces of the West and Islam.

Some studies, however, have taken a different approach by looking at the historical renegotiation of the film through the complexities of oral literature. Manthia Diawara in “Popular Culture and Oral Traditions in African Film” discusses the complexities of orality within *Ceddo* as determining the narration of film. He establishes his discussion by illuminating

the director's role in creating the discursive space through the mise-en-scene. He cites Sembène as the griot in the middle of this story, mediating the discourse between the characters of his tale and his audience. While Diawara brings a new level of analysis to the construction of *Ceddo*, his labeling of Sembène as a griot is problematic. Sembène, indeed, is the storyteller; however, it seems the term griot is used here as it has been appropriated in the West. This is to say, that although a griot and storyteller both tell stories, the roles they play in social contexts are different and one should not be substituted for another. One is born into being a griot. It is a biologically conditioned position in societies. The griot chooses a lifetime of schooling and specialization in specific story forms whereas any one in a community can become a storyteller. Nonetheless, Diawara insightfully points to the director's use of editing as influential to the orality of the film because it allows Sembène to craft his story in much the same way a storyteller self "edits" within his/her dialogue. Interestingly, he goes beyond orality to question the role of the physical presence of the storyteller within the film, as Sembène also portrays one of the *ceddo* who is later renamed Ibrahima by the Imam. The physical presence, then, controls the reading of signs by the audience. Diawara's hypothesis concerning the effect of Sembène's physical presence on the audience becomes very useful in our later analysis of Sembène's *Ceddo* as criticism of neocolonial political institutions. Clearly, Diawara's use of *Ceddo* to illustrate the extent to which film follows the structures of orality within storytelling is important. Yet, his analysis does not incorporate the kind of impact the cinematic appropriation of the rules of oral literature has on a modern movie-going audience.

Philip Rosen, on the other hand discusses *Ceddo* as a reconfiguration, renegotiation of Senegalese history in his article, "Making A Nation in Sembene's *Ceddo*". He argues that it is in the construction of histories that a nation is defined. His analysis is concerned with establishing

how a collective is formed and how history is an interplay of collectives. In discussing collectives, he breaks them into categories such as, “Black African power” versus foreign power and influence, religious divisions within the foreigners and within the Wolof, political divisions within the Wolof, and matrilineal versus patrilineal succession. His categories are reminiscent of those already established by Cham, but he takes the analysis further by exploring the socio-political influence these divisions have on societies and on one’s construction of nation. Rosen, like Diawara, also talks about the griot as a central figure of a historiographic project by alluding to the idea that the storyteller controls the interpretation of historical renegotiations in order to create a desired social outcome. In other words, the storyteller changes or manipulates a story in order to fit the current social and political contexts of a time and have his/her audience be able to relate to the story in a way that reshapes their idea of nation or Senegal in the way the storyteller thinks is most appropriate.

Using the guidance of previous scholarly research combined with my own analysis of the film, I pose that the film *Ceddo* can be best understood within the context of the fluidity of the construction of *ceddo*, and the socio-political and historical climate of Senegal under Léopold Sédar Senghor. My hypothesis allows for a treatment of the film as resistance literature designed to reveal the problems in a specific time period in Senegal. This analysis also moves away from a strictly religious conversation to incorporate how the politics, both social and religious, affect the views of Senegalese peoples and how they construct and manipulate identity in a politicized realm.

CHAPTER 2

WOLOF SOCIETY

Wolof Language

Alexis Tocqueville regarded “language (as) perhaps the most enduring link which unites man” (*Democracy in America*, 33). In the same work, he went on to discuss language as “the chief tool of thought” (A. Tocqueville, 1966). Language is used to create a system of common knowledge, a community of understanding, if you will, in order to establish patterns of social order. Therefore, it seems necessary to enter into a brief discussion of language, communication, and group identity in a Wolof context in order to establish how Sembène’s use of the Wolof language in the film *Ceddo* became a tool for changing social structures and political institutions.

“Language has been a major factor in determining ethnic identity among different groups inhabiting Senegal. The main languages spoken north of the Gambia River were Wolof, Pulaar, Serer, and Soninké” (S. Gellar, 2003). These languages, like the ethnic groups themselves, intermingled freely. However, the Wolof constitute one of the largest ethnic groups located predominantly in the western part of Senegal and extending southward into the Gambia. Wolof, Ouolof in the standard French orthography, is the name by which the people refer to themselves, and the label commonly used in scholarly publications. But a large number of orthographic variants occur in the literature, ranging from Chelofes, Guiolof, and Iolof, to Joloffs, Valaf, and Yuloff, which is reminiscent of the orthographic fluidity of *ceddo*, to be discussed in detail later. The indigenous language, the language of the film *Ceddo*, which Sembène chose as the most effective way to relate to his audience, is also called Wolof. By using Wolof, the language of the

film not only becomes identifiable as a spoken language, but also a source of identity for the audience as Senegalese national identity is becoming more and more associated with speaking Wolof. It is rapidly becoming the national vernacular of Senegal as members of other ethnic groups are increasingly learning Wolof as a second language, especially in the urban areas. Moreover, with the advent of colonialism and, now, neocolonialism, the language of politics is reflecting greater use of Wolof as politicians mix French and Wolof in their speeches, particularly those speeches delivered in urban areas where Wolof is the lingua franca (S. Gellar, 2003). “This intermingling of French and Wolof in political discourse creates a blend of concepts related to western-style democracy and pre-colonial Wolof concepts of good governance adapted to more modern political sensibilities” (S. Gellar, 2003). Therefore, by creating films in Wolof, Sembène increases his viewers “immediate access to information on political governance issues and enhances their ability to participate in informed political debate to evaluate the performance of their political leaders and government” (S. Gellar, 2003).

This immediate access to socio-political information is further bolstered by Sembène’s use of film as oral literature for Senegal was an oral civilization where written literatures, especially those in indigenous languages like Wolof, were rare and tales, fables, epics, and genealogies were transmitted orally (S. Gellar, 2003). The griot was responsible for transmitting the genealogies and collective memories of a people. S/he served as “guardians of ethnic linguistic traditions” (S. Gellar, 2003). Here, Sembène as the director of the film, the storyteller, as Manthia Diawara states, “the griot”, is serving the same function of the guardian as it relates to the society in a more modern context, i.e. through the language of the film. And what he does with Wolof echoes how stories are constructed in oral literatures to subvert the social and political power dynamics, in that “French is the language of authority and instruction, the

language in which orders are given. Wolof is the language of collusion and evasion; the language in which the orders are most effectively circumvented” (D. O’Brien, 1991).

Wolof Social System

The film not only uses the Wolof language, but plays with the social system in a more remote time. Sembène uses the Wolof system as an ideal system, one that is a representation of other ethnicities. Wolof is a language of wider communication as its social structure is shared by other ethnic groups. By presenting Wolof language and social systems, Sembène can present conceptions valid for the emerging Sengalese nation. The first solid documentary information on the Wolof dates from the travels of Ca da Mosto in 1455, but according to oral traditions, the Wolof ethnic group may have been in the process of formation sometime around the beginning of the thirteenth century (D. Gamble, 1957). Probably during the fourteenth century, the Wolof were unified into a loose political federation known as the Djolof Kingdom centered in northwestern Senegal. Around the middle of the sixteenth century, this kingdom was fragmented, giving rise to the four major Wolof kingdoms of Walo, Djolof proper, Cayor (Kayor), and Baol, running roughly from north to south. The subsequent history of these kingdoms is rife with political intrigue and exploitation, rebellions, and warfare both against one another and against the Moors or Muslims. As a result, their boundaries fluctuated over time, but their relative locations and the core areas of each remained stable.

European contacts with the Wolof began about the middle of the fifteenth century, but they did not reach any major significance until the nineteenth century. Gradually, a few commercial centers were established along the coast, the principal ones being at St. Louis and Goree. The Europeans were interested in trade and this centered on gum arabic and slaves. In the 1850s, primarily to protect their economic interests, the French launched their first serious

attempts to conquer the Wolof kingdoms. Although the Wolof put up a bitter resistance to French conquest, by the end of the century they were completely subjugated and the French colonial administration fully implanted. During this same period, and probably to a large extent in reaction to French pressures and conquests, the Wolof, who had a long and ambivalent involvement with Islam, became rapidly and thoroughly Islamized (D. Gamble, 1957).

The Wolof manifest a broad range of cultural variation and also share many cultural features with neighboring peoples such as the Lebu, Serer, and Tukolor. As David Gamble has pointed out, "the variability in Wolof culture means that almost every statement made about them needs to be accompanied by a label as to time and place" (D. Gamble, 1957). This is exactly why Sembène's *Ceddo* needs to be examined from a linguistic and oral literature perspective. Sembène does not provide a specific time period for the events in his film. The temporal indeterminacy parallels the varying definitions of *ceddo*. Therefore, the film uses the fluidity of Wolof language and social structure in order to relate to an indigenous audience.

Significant changes have occurred throughout this history. Nevertheless, there has been a basic socio-cultural continuity, some major unifying elements which contribute to the ethnic integrity and continuity of the Wolof. These include a common language, a highly conscious sense of ethnic identity and pride, the persistence of a system of social stratification, a common religion, Islam, along with the retention of crucial beliefs and practices from their indigenous religious system, and common patterns of interpersonal relations (D. Gamble, 1957).

Wolof society is characterized by a relatively rigid, complex system of social stratification. This system consists of a series of hierarchically ranked strata in which membership is ascribed by patri-filiation. Although these strata are usually called "castes" and less commonly, "social classes" in the literature, they can also be referred to as status groups.

The status groups are organized into three major hierarchical levels. The first of these is an upper or dominant level called *geer*, which in pre-conquest times was divided into several status groups including the *gar* or royal lineages, the *dom-i-bur* or nobility, and the *jaambur* or free-born commoners, the majority of whom were small-scale cultivators called *baadolo*. These distinctions may still be alluded to on special occasions, but essentially the different strata have fused into a single status group which retains the label *geer* (J. Irvine, 1979). Second is a lower or artisan level called *nyenyoo*, consisting of several occupationally-defined status groups. These groups include the metalsmiths (*teug*), the leatherworkers (*wude*), the weavers (*rab*), and the griots (*gewel*), who are the lineage genealogists, and musicians. The lowest level is composed of the descendants of slaves (*jaam*), who are still called by that term. The *jaam* are differentiated into subgroups which are named and ranked according to the status of their former masters. This stratification system is a crucial aspect of village social life, and still retains a great deal of significance in the urban areas. Membership in a particular status group coordinates with specific social prerogatives and obligations which are ascribed, and which are manifested in social behavior (J. Irvine, 1979). Each status category tends to be an endogamous unit, and the three major levels are strictly endogamous. In the villages the *geer* usually hold all of the key political offices and most of the dominant ritual roles rooted in Islam.

The two dominant Muslim brotherhoods (*tariqas*) among the Wolof are the Tijaniyya and the Muriddiyya. The basic complimentary religious roles are those of *taalibe*, a disciple or follower, and *marabout* (*serigne*), a kind of religious leader. There is an intricate hierarchy of *marabouts* ranging from those who have only an elementary knowledge of the Qur'an and little influence, up to the powerful *khalifs* who head the brotherhoods.

It becomes obvious that the social structure of the Wolof is rigid and hierarchical, which makes one orient him/herself to another based on social status and the power associated with that status. Thus, the formalized setting of discourse within the film becomes accessible to an audience already familiar with orientations to power.

CHAPTER 3

THE POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF CEDDŌ

Political Climate of Senegal in 1977

In September 1977 Ousmane Sembène released his film *Ceddo* in Dakar, Senegal. Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor immediately banned Ousmane Sembène's *Ceddo*. The film remained banned in Senegal until 1981. This immediate ban presents certain questions such as: what did *Ceddo* mean for Sembène, Senghor, and Senegalese peoples? Why was the film a politically sensitive issue?

Senghor's decision to ban the film began a debate between two influential African political and cultural figures. The filmmaker and the archetypal political figure tied themselves together with controversial counter-arguments, both playing out the contestation of social labeling on a very public stage. The battle of Senghor versus Sembène is as difficult to unravel as the complex *ceddŏ* is to define. The complexity surrounding *ceddŏ* reflects not just social fluidity, but a contested interpretation of social status involving more than just historic meanings. These interpretations or renegotiations of the term also have contemporary socio-political implications. *Ceddŏ* has been constructed to mean a slave, a member of the army, a court official, a pagan, or a warrior, among many other interpretations. Senghor and Sembène's conflict reflects *ceddŏ*'s fluidity as Senghor was no longer the artist or the writer, but a politician in search of re-election, whereas, Sembène was no longer the filmmaker, but a counter-hegemonic leader seeking to strike a critical blow at his ideological opponent. In other words, the conflict over the film exposed the fluidity of social identity for both Sembène and Senghor as

they were no longer seen as simply a writer or a filmmaker, but as men inhabiting different varied social roles and functions. However, it must be noted that their conflict includes fairly specific and occasionally contradictory interpretations of the term *ceddo*.

The socio-political label *ceddo* is an old term that has evolved to fit and reflect the changing political state in Senegal. Therefore, Sembène's motivation to entitle his film *Ceddo* and Senghor's reaction to prevent the film from Senegalese distribution reveals that the ever-evolving term is code for something much broader and socio-politically based. Sembène's *Ceddo* is a criticism of neocolonial Senegalese politics and its pillars, Senghor and the Islamic fraternities. The film recounts the resistance and transgressions of a people against Arab-Islam and Euro-Christianity as two sides of the same colonizing coin. However, through the course of the film, *ceddo* becomes synonymous with Senegalese societies concerned with the ongoing displacement of indigenous structures and/or the politicizing of religious identities. Sembène wants *ceddo* to be renegotiated by the audience to become the men and women who will vote against Senghor and his alliance to Islamic fraternity in the upcoming election of the year 1978. It is the contending and conflicting ideologies of the Muslims and *ceddo* that are brought into sharp focus in the film, making the film not only a criticism of colonization but a criticism of inner-Senegalese politics. This focus is intended to illuminate the audience to their position as *ceddo* who must challenge Senghor's administration, which is backed by Muslim allegiance and control (M. Cham, 1985).

Politics of Linguistics

The film was to debut in Senegal before the election year of 1978. The student riots, a protest of Senghor's concentration of power, which lasted from January to May of 1973, and the drought from 1973 to 1977 had exacerbated social malcontent. The political period of great

accommodation between Senegalese political leaders and the French government was waning. The election of 1978 was the first one to be held after the re-establishment of a multi-party system by constitutional amendment in 1976. Therefore, the social restlessness, a preferred subject for the self-identified Marxist filmmaker Sembène, became a real threat to a president, Senghor, who needed to seek re-election by the people. Social restlessness and malcontent is what *Ceddo* plays upon and Senghor was already in a position to defend himself against possible degradation of his political persona. Senghor, then, knew he needed to ban the film for its criticism of his administration, but he also used the opportunity that the controversial *Ceddo* set before him to demonstrate his authority on a linguistic and grammatical level and, more importantly, on an authoritative political level.

Senghor asserted he banned Sembène's film for linguistic reasons. Senghor was the first "agrégé de grammaire française". In other words, he was an expert of the French language. Therefore, he had an image to maintain within the public as a president skilled in the linguistics. So, he asserted his linguistic authority to ban *Ceddo* as the title, in keeping with Senghor's published decree on national languages, should have been spelled with one "d" as opposed to two. However, what Senghor's banning of *Ceddo* demonstrates is his lack of knowledge of African linguistics, specifically West Atlantic languages like Wolof, Fulfulde, and Seere. What it reveals is his manipulation of African linguistics to serve his own purpose. French has none of the phonemic gemination required by these languages; thus, Senghor transposed an understanding of French linguistics to manipulate the words of West Atlantic languages to justify his ban of the film *Ceddo*.

The Fulfulde, a variance of Pulaar, spoken in Mauritania, Senegal, and Gambia spells cedďo with two implosive d's as well as its plural sebbë with two implosive b's (S. Niang, 1995).

The Masina dialect of Fulfulde, language of the Fulbe *or* Fulani, also spells ceddo with two implosives d's (Osborn, Dwyer, and Donohoe Jr, 1993). The phonemic writing of this term renders gemination, the consonant doubling typical for the West Atlantic language family already mentioned.

Eunice A Charles, in her work on the Jolof Kingdom, cites the term spelled ceddo as being from the Wolof language (E. Charles, 1977) . While her classification is useful, the linguistic history of ceddo is more complex. As we have said, Wolof, Pulaar/Fulfulde, and Sereer belong to the same language family.² And as noted earlier, the term ceddo originally comes from Pulaar/Fulfulde, which yield the typical “-o” and “-be” as class suffixes for human beings. For example, ceddo becomes the plural sebbe. What happens here is the plural suffix for human beings, -be, is added as well as the initial permutation of c to s. The term was then borrowed by Wolof and d simplified by noting one form for both singular and plural and replacing the implosive with explosive d while maintaining the gemination. Thus, ceddo is only distinguishable by the Wolof suffixes of -bi and -yi for singular and plural. Furthermore, the geminated implosives dd are simplified as only geminated dd. The work of J. Spencer Trimingham demonstrates further confusion in spelling ceddo or sebbe when he discusses the Tokolor terms tyeddo, singular, and tyebbe, plural in his work on Islam within West Africa.³ However, the “ty” spellings were used by the French to transliterate the Pulaar/Fulfulde “c” or “j”. Also of interest is that Trimingham uses the singular and plural forms, ceddo and sebbe, as found within Pulaar/Fulfulde. This demonstrates his own confusion between Tokolor, which is actually Pulaar, for French terminology and the switching back and forth in attempt to rectify his

² Pulaar is the Senegalese name of the language known elsewhere as Fulfulde.

³ Trimingham, J Spencer. 185n. Here one should note that Trimingham does not follow the rule of initial consonant permutation in West Atlantic languages.

misusage. For the purposes of discussing Sembène and the implications of his film, this project uses *ceddo* as discussed within Wolof usage, i.e. for both singular and plural reference.

Senghor and Sembène continued to act out their fight politically. Senghor had previously assigned the responsibility for the development of a grammar for the national languages to the Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Dakar (Applied Linguistic Center of Dakar-CLAD) to the French scholars running the center (S. Gellar, 2003). However, Senegalese nationalists were angered by French management, that perpetuated the marginalization of African languages by making African languages prescribe to French linguistic rules, and it became an explosive political issue. While Senghor may not have cared or known how a word should be spelled within an African linguistic context, the malcontented social body certainly did. Progressive opposition leaders began to publish newspapers with Wolof titles and articles (S. Gellar, 2003). The controversial banning of *Ceddo* reflected the vast political differences between the pro-French Senghor and the Senegalese nationalists who saw French-inspired orthography as still another manifestation of neocolonialism (S. Gellar, 2003). *Ceddo*'s banning, founded in the French inspired linguistics of the national languages decree, exceeds Senghor's authority on all levels.⁴ It demonstrates his insistence of the use of French linguistics to standardize the spelling of Senegal's indigenous languages (S. Gellar, 2003). As previously demonstrated, this cannot work as the French language makes no allowances for consonant gemination required by West Atlantic languages.

Léopold Sédar Senghor resigned from the presidency at the end of 1980 and his successor, Abdou Diouf, came to power on New Year's Day 1981. Soon afterward, the new

⁴ It is of note that Sembène's film was not the only "text" to be banned as Senghor's government refused to allow Cheikh Anta Diop to publish the Wolof entitled newspaper, Siggi due to its lack of conformity to Senghor's French inspired rules of Senegalese languages.

government pledged to do more to promote Senegal's national languages as language is a source of one's sense of identity (S. Gellar, 2003). However, this pledge was not wholly indicative of a change in political tide. President Diouf was Senghor's collaborator, his Prime Minister. He, unlike Senghor, viewed indigenous languages as necessary to nation-building and development (S. Gellar, 2003). A group of government representatives, teachers, parents, as well as others with a vested interest in the progression of Senegal's education system, *Les Etats Généraux de l'éducation et de la formation*⁵, issued a critique of Senghor's stance on indigenous languages shortly after Diouf's presidency commenced. The forum criticized the number of French teachers in the school system and recommended accelerating the implementation of national languages as the medium of scholastic instruction (S. Gellar, 2003). When Diouf left office the only change in the school system was the reduction of French teachers. Thus, the film's authorized release and public showings in 1981 may have more to do with Senghor's absence from the political arena than it does with the political nature of Diouf's administration.

Historical Complexity of ceddo

As previously alluded to through linguistic explanation and the work of historians like Trimingham and Charles, there is much discrepancy between and confusion among Africanists in explaining the etymology of the term ceddo. Its many uses and/or interpretations as a term of social demarcation may have something to do with its complexity.

Ceddo as a socio-political label is complex and multi-layered. Africanists have classified ceddo as warriors, entourages of the Buur, actual and potential holders of power, as well as those chosen from the slave class depending upon which sources one wants to rely. I propose taking

⁵ This group was brought together from January 28th to January 31st of 1981 in order to defuse the potential socio-political disturbance due to a growing alienation of students, teachers, and urban youth during 1979-1980, marked by student unrest and violence and strike by SUDES, the anti-government teacher's union.

each definition or construction of identity found within the complex uses of *ceddŋ* as evidence of how concepts of identity change depending on the social contexts and who is in the position of power.

Martin Klein in *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sin Saloum 1847-1914* states that Wolof refers to *ceddŋ* as “crown slaves” and brings with it a general conception of ruler, member of the elite, or politician (M. Klein, 1968). Charles in her work on the Jolof kingdom, classifies *ceddŋ* as mostly, but not exclusively slaves.⁶ She goes on to note that “ceddos were not paid, but they received a portion of the booty from war and peacetime policing, as well as their maintenance and equipment when they were in battle” (E. Charles, 1977). This description, then, gives the impression that the *ceddŋ* participated in the power structure much like an army. However, Africanists have also classified *ceddŋ* as one holding a position of political power as opposed to a *baadoolo* or peasant, whom, according to Charles, the *ceddŋ* defines as one without power (E. Charles, 1977). Therefore, Charles’ use of the term slave to describe the *ceddŋ* may be guided more by a Eurocentric definition of slave as opposed to how the *ceddŋ* performed in Wolof societies, which is akin to the Manding concept of *tŋjŋn*, where *tŋn* means association and *jŋn* means slave. *Jŋn* means slaves, but more in the sense that one is obedient to the association and not that one is a slave of another person. However, there may have been former slaves among the *tŋjŋn*. What is clear, here, is that Wolof usage of *ceddŋ* is a judgment of one’s vocation, political allegiance, and/or lifestyle.

In the beginning of its usage it appears that *ceddŋ* did not indicate one’s particular religious affiliation; however, in the nineteenth century, the Wolof terms *ceddŋ yi* and *seriñ si*

⁶ The ambiguity present in a term like slave is of note. Charles does not define what is meant by the term slave in her work.

referenced “traditionalists” as opposed to Muslims (E. Charles, 1977). But, *seriñ si* is an Islamic title for marabout or Islamic scholar. Therefore, we must again note, the confusion associated with these terms. The term *ceddŏ* was introduced into Pulaar/Fulfulde by Fulbe Muslims. In addition, *ceddŏ bi* is a notation of singularity in Wolof while *ceddŏ yi* is plural. Yet, the ambiguity of the orthography and definition of *ceddŏ* leads scholars like Charles to misinterpret not only the *ceddŏ* but their relationship to Islam.

French colonial forces employed the term *tyeddo* as a reference to all members of the indigenous power structures (E. Charles, 1977). Although essentialist, one can understand this rationale by noting that *ceddŏ* have been classified as *entourages* of the Buur and other major chiefs, chosen from the slave class. The Buur, members of the matrilineage of Mandinka conquerors, were the highest political rulers and personifications of the ancestors, the embodiment of state power (E. Charles, 1977). Buur is also considered a Wolof term for the rulers of Siin or Saalum (E. Charles, 1977). In theory, the *ceddŏ* were dependent on the Buur, but they were quite powerful. Vincent Monteil provides an example of their power from Cayor where the *ceddŏ* had the power to choose or depose of a Buur and exchanged their political support for the right to pillage the peasantry, the *baadoolo* (M. Klein, 1968).

Even as Islam continued to expand into Senegal and the slave trade began to have an increased effect on the state of the economy, the *ceddŏ* remained most resistant to outside influence. Yet, the pillaging frequented upon the peasantry by the *ceddŏ* caused an influx in Islamic conversion as the peasantry frequently sought both economic and political protection with the marabouts, Islamic scholars oftentimes associated with seers, who were beginning to have an increased influence on the monarchy. Thus, as Muslims and the *ceddŏ* were more and more frequently in conflict, the term *ceddŏ* came to denote “pagan” (E. Charles, 1977).

By the nineteenth century, due in part to Islamic accommodation of French colonial forces, the French term *tyeddo* evolved from a general member of the power structure to an “immoral parasite who lived off the labor of the peasant” (E. Charles, 1977). Yet, this seems like a misinterpretation of tributes, paid by the peasantry to the *ceddo*. As the conflict continued to arise between the two groups, the constructions of *ceddo* identity, as conceived by the French, continued to evolve to include attributes such as drunkenness, thievery, and, generally, a group of oppressive people. These evolving constructions of identity were later used to legitimize the conquest of the *ceddo* by French forces, backed by Islamic support, in order to free the peasantry from oppression. This collaboration heralds the beginnings of increased Muslim collaboration in Senegalese politics, a collaboration and accommodation found in Senghor’s presidency.

However, if the *ceddo* participated in the power structure as an army, we must ask what happens to an army when the power structures begin to decompose. This will explain how the *ceddo* have been classified by some scholars. Indigenous power structures started their decomposition, as Sembène shows in his film, with accommodation with Euro-Christianity in the slave trade. King Demba War Thioub sells slaves to the Catholic priest who controls the circulation of goods within the community. However Thioub’s power falls into complete decay under the guidance of the Imam, forcing conversion to Islam on the community. So, once the power structure decomposes, its “army” disintegrates. When the central power falls away, the army becomes autonomous and brutal. Disintegration of the central power is expected to bring a lack of social control. Sembène uses the disintegration of social power to show resistance, which is manifested in the kidnapping of Princess Dior Yacine by the *ceddo*. Their resistance involves a level of sacrifice that leads to pillaging and making slaves out of others in order to sell them for goods. The *ceddo* sell women and children in the film in order to get guns with which to fight

the new power structure as run by the Imam. Thus, the social decomposition leads to new configurations of *ceddo*. The *ceddo*, within the film, are “pagan” and *baadolo*. The film illustrates how the *ceddo* are context dependent. The poor inhabitants who wonder if they should stay are the *baadolo*. Yet, to the Imam, they are nothing but *ceddo*, “pagans”.

Furthermore, Sembène uses this term to refer to a person who refuses submission and whose action is defiant, even in its sacrifice. The men who sell their wives and children for weapons along with the *ceddo* who kidnaps Princess Dior Yacine are such *ceddo* for they know they might lose their lives and those of their loved ones for their defiance. Their actions reflect what happens when a group of people who maintained original control of the community are now dominated by another group. Sembène is interested in what happens in situations of socio-political domination and how the new configurations of *ceddo* are used in a modern context.

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE AND COMMUNICATION

Ceddo As A Political Allegory

Sembène's *Ceddo* is a political allegory concerned with Senegalese responses to Islamic cultural imperialism. The film provides an interpretation of ceddo identity defined by resistance to Arabo-Islam and Euro-Christian domination. Islam is a prevalent hegemonic force in the film as, in its time, it displaced and marginalized the indigenous religions of Africa and agrarian strategies of identity, self-conception, and self-consciousness (S. Wynter, 2002). In a 1977 Cannes interview, Sembène discusses Islamic expansion and its effects on the ceddo:

At the beginning of Islamic expansion, the people who hesitated to accept the new religion were called 'Ced-do', that is 'people from the outside', outside the spiritual orders of Mohammad. They were the last holders of African spiritualism [sic] before it became tinged with Islam or Christianity. The Ceddo from Pakao resisted Muslims who wanted to convert them with suicidal opposition. Their wives and children drowned themselves in springs in order to remain faithful to African spirituality (F. Pfaff, 1984).

The important fact here is that according to Sembène, the film is inspired by actual events. It is historical fact with which he is able to reconstruct a specific history. The ceddo are not only those who refused to accept a new religion and therefore were known, by specific groupings of people, as those from the "outside". Sembène, in fact, chose two definitions of ceddo upon which to focus, among the many we have previously discussed, the warrior ceddo and the "pagan" ceddo. He reconstructs history using the two interpretations of ceddo in order to go beyond the individual. He wants to shatter the Arab-Islamic myth espoused by Muslim

brotherhoods and their clerics to reveal Islam as the obstacle to the true integration of individual and society in Senegal (M. Cham, 1985).

In *Le FESPACO 1969-1989: Les Cinéastes africains et leurs oeuvres*, the entry for the film *Ceddo* reads:

Two years after *Xala*, Ousmane Sembène presented *Ceddo*, a Fulani word signifying ‘the outsiders’. The ‘ceddo’ is a man who says no. In eighteenth-century Senegal, Dior Yacin [sic], the daughter of King Thioub, is kidnapped by a ceddo. This event serves as a catalyst exposing the power relations between people and social groups. The ceddos are those who refuse to be Islamised... Their power steadily decreases. The kings and chiefs convert. And the marabouts want to go farther, extending the Islam of the chiefs to the whole population, even if that means resorting to assassination. Various rivals for the princess, and to the title of chief, confront one another. Customs die... Islam kills them. The matrilineal inheritance of power is said to be contrary to the teachings of the Prophet. Men kill other men, men betray their brothers. In the village, the world of the whites consists of only two people: the merchant and the priest. The merchant trades slaves and commodities for his imported goods. The priest tries to save souls. Islam achieves power by assassinating the chief. It will have the ceddo murdered in order to free Dior Yacin [sic], the schemers having decided that she will be the Imam’s bride. The ceddos are killed, sent into slavery, or converted... But where men were defeated, a woman will succeed (FESPACO, 1987).

This entry enforces a definition of ceddo that is particularly socially resistant; yet, it also alludes to the notion of Islam as a political force that can only be overcome by a woman. It is here Sembène commits the ultimate socio-political criticism through his sacrilege by setting up a woman to challenge Islam. However, the *Dictionnaire du cinéma africain* locates the film in this way:

The film is set in the 17th century, where Islam and Christianity penetrated West Africa. To both religions, all means fair or foul are acceptable to fill the mosques or the churches: firearms, alcohol, and trinkets of all kinds. Having converted the royal family and the leading dignitaries, Islam comes up against the refusal of the ‘ceddo’. To them, adherence to a foreign religion means renouncing African spirituality. In order to achieve his aims, the Imam usurps the throne and reduces the recalcitrants to slavery. The princess, incarnating her people’s resistance throughout the film, kills the marabout-king. A thought-provoking film deploying actual events spread over several centuries (Dictionnaire, 1991).

The temporal conflict between these two passages reinforces *Ceddo* as political allegory whose intended audience was the Senegalese peoples of the late 1970's. The temporal indeterminacy introduces identity indeterminacy as well, which one finds in how the ceddo say, "No" to Islam. These indeterminacies delimit the possible fields of interpretation. Sembène is able to inscribe his reflections into a general cinematic framework. His inscription or reinterpretation of history enables the audience to interpret the film as a criticism of the present while still providing other ways of imagining the past. He constructs a discursive terrain, which opposes and/or disrupts/reorganizes the nationalist discourse. Therefore, this is not simply the ceddo, but all "les hommes de refus" (men of refusal), who are mislabeled, misidentified, and therefore oppressed by those who occupy the positions of power. The criticism, then, is placed within a particular historical context, but aimed at Senghor's Senegal.

The temporal indeterminacy allows for an enlarged framework in which Arab-Islam and Euro-Christianity are depicted as violent forces of colonization in indigenous Senegal, their sole aim to eradicate existing systems and replace them with their own cultural and religious practices. The FESPACO entry situates the film in the eighteenth century while the *Dictionnaire du cinéma africain* cites the seventeenth century. The fluidity in time is further complicated by props such as guns in the film, many of which could not have been manufactured let alone purchased by the ceddo during either of these time periods. *Ceddo*, then, is a reconstruction of the past to talk about the present as it relates to the culture specific socio-political consciousness. Memories play a central role in creating a story with present day implications (O. Barlet, 2000). In an interview with Olivier Bartlet, Sembène refers to memories as they relate to the film when he says, "Ceddo sont basés sur une memoire populaire et une oralite" (Barlet, 2000).⁷ *Ceddo*,

⁷ Ceddo was based on a popular memory and an orality.

then, is an intentional staging of history and a willful, critical formulation of contemporary identities in Senegal based on collective memories of a community. Thus, the film is formulated in much the same way a storyteller and/or griot constructs a story based on collective memory and genealogy of a people.

The willful formulation of the anti-establishment *ceddo* as our model for a behavioral code based on “*les hommes de refus*” is appropriate for Sembène to use to make his criticism. The protagonist in storytelling is important as s/he is one indicator of who we are and what we stand for. Therefore, regardless of the stress Sembène places on the warrior *ceddo* construction over “pagan”, the *ceddo* are anti-establishment men and women. They are oppressed by the new power structure and in their oppression develop an ethics of refusal. Thus, those malcontented by Senghor’s leadership of Senegal can identify with the *ceddo*. The tendency an audience has to embody an ideal like that of the *ceddo* is related to transcendental concerns: the meaning of life, religiosity, and most importantly cultural disenchantment (D. Porpora, 1996). The *ceddo*, whether warrior or “pagan”, stand in opposition to the Imam because of the new socio-cultural agenda he brings to politics.

The idea that Sembène cast Senghor as the Imam to the peoples’ *ceddo*, may be far fetched, but is worth exploration since this film has been established as a useful critique for the present. Muslims in the film come across as scheming fanatics. Their belief in the supremacy of Islam moves them to systematically eliminate the Christian mission, the indigenous secular power structure and a significant mass of the *ceddo* and their “pagan” beliefs. Senghor’s belief in the supremacy of France and his misuse of French linguistics marginalizes indigenous forms of communication. Furthermore, his alliance with Islamic brotherhoods perpetuates the privilege of Islam in the society at the expense of other forms of worship, with particular impact on the

practice of indigenous forms of worship. The Imam's plan culminates in the establishment of social rules based on the principles of Islam with the Imam as head of the society. His agenda is clear from the beginning. He persistently attacks "paganism" among the *ceddo*, which in turn is an indirect attack on Wolof secular authority, the king who is now a convert but who tolerates the presence of "pagans" in his society. The Imam's attacks reach a militant level as he declares jihad on all non-Muslims. The *ceddo* complaint of harassment by the Muslims and their questioning as to whether religion is worth a man's life leads the Imam to usurp the duty of King Thioub and renew his threats against the *ceddo*. Here we see the relationship of the Imam to the community, one that brings about the rule of Allah through jihad. The Muslims burn down the Catholic mission and kill the priest. The King is "bitten by a snake" on the same night; therefore, there are allusions that the Imam and his followers commit regicide. The *ceddo* are then forcibly subdued and converted to Islam. It is in the Imam's ascension to power that Sembène most poignantly conveys the radical and violent process of cultural transformation on Senegal. King Thioub has been killed. The Imam ascends the throne and declares that everyone must convert to Islam. If one does not convert willingly, one will be forced. It is in the scene of the forced conversion of the *ceddo*, "les hommes de refus", that Sembène echoes Leni Riefenstahl's images of the Holocaust. Sembène depicts the *ceddo* separated in to two lines: women/children on one side and men on the other⁸. They are bathed and then each has his/her head shaved and cleaned before undergoing a new baptism by receiving a new Arabic name like Momadou, Sulayman, Ibrahim, or Ousmane. The violence of the cultural transformation continued with Senghor in office, not only with his accommodation to the previous colonizers, the French, but with his

⁸Upon returning to Senegal after having visited other countries in the region, Sembène had to face the endemic level of illiteracy among his intended audience and the paralyzing effect it was having on the dissemination of his work. He had already realized the power of cinema in conveying messages, ironically, from the viewing of Leni Riefenstahl's, one of Hitler's favorite filmmakers, *Olympiad*, a documentary on the 1936 Munich Olympic games.

political compromises with Islamic fraternities. The parallels between Senghor and the Imam reveal that forced and violent cultural transformation remains at the continued expense of indigenous peoples, further marginalized by Senghor's tactics to stay in office. To suggest that Islam is the obstacle to the integration of individual and society in Senegal may be extreme; however, Sembène does illustrate this point for as long as the Senegalese government was being run to accommodate two colonizing fronts: the French and the Muslim, the *ceddo* or their modern equivalent would always be on the margins of socio-political discourse.

Film is, indeed, a powerful place in the media through which one can generate resistance to dominant social structures. Sembène articulates and practices a cinema primarily concerned with cultural imperialism, a cinema, which sets itself in opposition to dominant political ideas (M. Landy, 1984). One should not forget that Sembène was aware of socialist intellectuals such as Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin. In the spirit of Brecht's radical dramaturgy⁹, Sembène intends to make his audience self-conscious. He wants his audience to know they are watching a film in order to eliminate the possibility of an easy appropriation of film as pure entertainment. Therefore, when the indeterminacy of time, place, and the people, bring the question of identity and social construction into a public discourse, his audience will be able to actively participate in the discussion of social reform. Sembène's concern with cultural imperialism is examined via the role of the *ceddo* in the film. The *ceddo* becomes a prototype whose main opponent is colonialism. The next section uses critical discourse analysis to explore the subversive resistance of the *ceddo* within the film. I will use the resistance of Diogomay, a *ceddo*, to compare how Sembène uses the film as resistance to Senghor. This discussion will then lead into the next chapter on film as oral literature.

⁹ I use radical dramaturgy to describe a drama of social relevance that brings the socio-political struggle to the working class in a way in which the audience is distanced and not absorbed into the story in order to derive a critical analysis on a social level from the text.

Critical Discourse Analysis of Ceddo

The critical use of discourse analysis or CDA in applied linguistics has led to the development of a different approach to understanding media messages. Robert Kaplan expressed some of these new concepts when he wrote, "the text, whether written or oral, is a multidimensional structure," and "any text is layered, like a sheet of thick plywood consisting of many thin sheets lying at different angles to each other" (Kaplan, 1990). Critical discourse analysis has made the study of language into an interdisciplinary tool which can be used by scholars with various backgrounds, including media criticism (Dellinger, 1995). Moreover, it offers the opportunity to adopt a social perspective in the cross-cultural study of media texts. As Gunter Kress has pointed out, CDA has an "overtly political agenda," which "serves to set CDA off...from other kinds of discourse analysis" and text linguistics, "as well as pragmatics and sociolinguistics" (Kress, 1990). This perspective is a critical examination of social and cultural practices taking into account socio-cultural variables such as race, gender, class, and, above all, power. CDA focuses on social change using pragmatics, what language is used to achieve, the social meanings and intertextuality, which shows the relatedness of sequences through form and function. CDA is sensitive to the grammar of social life, both in the metaphorical or model sense and in the way social meanings or pragmatics are grammatically encoded. More specifically, according to Kress's definition, CDA treats language as a type of social practice among many used for representation and signification, including visual images, music, and gestures (Dellinger, 1990). Texts are produced by "socially situated speakers and writers" (Kress, 1990). The relations of participants in producing texts are not always equal. There can be a range in the interaction from complete solidarity to complete inequality. Meanings come about through interaction between readers and receivers and linguistic features come about as a result of social

processes, which are never arbitrary (Dellinger, 1990). In most interactions, users of language bring with them different dispositions toward language, which are closely related to social positionings (Dellinger, 1990).

The study of discourse as it applies to the text of *Ceddo* is important as it allows one to focus on linguistic communication as a transaction between the speaker and the hearer, as an interpersonal activity whose form is determined by its social purpose. Within *Ceddo*, discourse analysis enables one to focus on the transaction between the spokesman for the ceddo, Diogomay, on the one hand and the king, King Thioub, on the other. The analysis will show how their interaction is mediated by the King's intercessor, Jaraaf. This exchange will later allow us to understand the larger socio-political implications as we view Sembène's statements to Senghor as mediated through the film itself. Within the text of the film, critical discourse analysis will be used to explore how power is exercised in the formalized interaction of the ceddo and king. This exploration of power will allow an examination of power in discourse and how power is exercised through politeness.

Power in Discourse

In order to understand the magnitude of this film's message as a threat to the established political system, a discussion of power in and power behind discourse within the context of the film is necessary. Emerging from critical discourse analysis one can begin a discussion of formal situations characterized by exceptional orientation to and the making of position, status, and 'face' or public self-image where power and social distance are overt, and consequently have a strong tendency toward politeness (N. Fairclough, 1989). Power, for the purposes of this study, is differentiated as power in discourse and power behind discourse.

Power in discourse, on one hand, functions in two ways. It is discourse defined as a place where relations of power are exercised (N. Fairclough, 1989). Yet, it also includes face-to-face discourse where unequal participants meet and, although they alternate between being producers and interpreters of text, the powerful participant controls and constrains the contributions of non-powerful participants. In other words, it can be seen as a site where power can be held, won, and lost (N. Fairclough, 1989).

Power behind discourse, on the other hand, allows for an examination of the constraints within discourse, in this case, the formality of audience with the King, in which one speaks in order of rank and a strict routine lays down stages in fixed sequence. Power behind discourse is used to describe how people forget or ignore uncomfortable or inconvenient data because it highlights the power of the implied and unspoken to suppress information, which comes to be taken for granted. It is concerned with relationship between discourse and the whole social order, and it may be viewed as a stake in power struggles that offers the potential for control over orders of discourse (N. Fairclough, 1989).

The face to face spoken interaction reveals power in the discourse and the constraints within the formal situation, which drives the conventions of the discourse in question. The political implications of the film are based on a literary or a more moral, value relevance.¹⁰ The intention behind examining the effects of this film is to enter into a discussion of discourse and social change through the hidden power of mass forms of media like cinema.

Power relations are exercised in *Ceddo* through the face-to-face interaction of unequal participants. Sembène opens his film with the *ceddo* having audience with King Demba War Thioub. Thioub initiates the conversation by heralding his intercessor Jaraaf.

¹⁰ By value relevance I mean: how are we constructing versions of persons? What is this doing through discourse? What are the consequences of these constructions?

King: Jaraaf!
Jaraaf: Tioub.
King: Ask Diogo why the samp¹¹...
Jaraaf: Diogo, the King asks the meaning of the samp (O. Sembène, 1977)

It could be assumed that King Thioub controls the contributions of non-powerful members of the community, the ceddo, due, in part, because of the socio-political implications of his status as ruler. In addition, the ceddo represented by Diogomay, seem to be constrained in their responses by having to speak through Jaraaf, a physical manifestation and acknowledgement of a power difference. However, the mediation of Jaraaf enables Diogomay to resist the power structure while working within it as the King is also constrained by the presence of Jaraaf. Diogomay uses or abides by the formalized aspects of the power structure and uses Jaraaf to resist the new socio-political agenda of the King's administration, i.e. accommodation with Islam. The channeling of Jaraaf fulfills the function of the power of Diogomay's words. Jaraaf is not a spokesman. He is the one within the gap between speech and enunciation. Without him, there is no communication because he occupies a space in which the speech of others comes in and he transforms it into something reported, even written.

Diogomay:...Jaraaf!
Jaraaf: Yes.
Diogomay: The King is right. Although I didn't convert because of my age...he exempted me. Jaraaf!
Jaraaf: Yes.
Diogomay: Tell the King that privileges...I repeat what I said. (O. Sembène, 1977)

Sembène functions for the audience in the same way as Jaraaf functions for Diogomay and the others who address the king. He mediates speech in the film in order to give power to his criticism. What is even more telling about the importance of the functioning of Jaraaf is that once

¹¹ Samp is a ceremonial staff is used when a challenge has been issued. It is also known as scepter, symbolizing the identity of the community.

the Imam gains political authority he sends Jaraaf away in favor of a devout follower, Babacar, who speaks only on the orders of the Imam. With Jaraaf now absent, the ceddo have lost the ability to speak. Herein is another criticism of how the artist functions as the mediator between the idea and the utterance of said idea, but can be censored by a new cultural and economic system, as symbolized in the Imam. By using the styles inherent in oral literature and rewriting the ending of the story, which will be discussed later, Sembène can give voice back to the ceddo.

Politeness

Politeness is an essential element in human communication. Politeness strategies are used as a result of one's recognition and construction of power difference. The approach to the discourse in the film is from a critical discourse analytic perspective that focuses on how one uses politeness strategies or ways of redressing threats to "face" or one's public self image to make the interaction more polite and therefore conducive to social constructions of status.

Brown and Levison have defined face as:

referring to the respect that an individual has for him or herself, and maintaining that "self-esteem" in public or in private situations. Usually you try to avoid embarrassing the other person, or making them feel uncomfortable. Face Threatening Acts (FTA's) are acts that infringe on the hearers' need to maintain his/her self esteem, and be respected. Politeness strategies are developed for the main purpose of dealing with these FTA's (Brown and Levison, 1987).

The strategies or ways of redressing threats made to one's public self image include: bald on-record, positive, negative, and off-record or indirect politeness. Bald on-record politeness involves making statements that provide no effort to reduce the impact of the FTA. Most likely the receiver will be shocked or embarrassed or made to uncomfortable. Positive politeness tries to minimize the distance between speaker and receiver by expressing friendliness and solid interest in the receiver's need to be respected. Positive politeness minimizes FTAs not only by

acknowledging the receiver but avoiding disagreement by assuming agreement or hedging opinion. Negative politeness strategies assume there is an imposition on the receiver or an intrusion on their space. Therefore, there is an assumed social distance or awkwardness in the situation. This politeness strategy uses indirect statements and forgiveness before making a statement. Off-record or indirect politeness removes the speaker from any implication whatsoever through tools like vagueness, sarcasm, and hinting. Within the film, one finds many politeness strategies such as bald on-record remarks, hedging, pluralizing responsible person, and off-record uses of metaphor. These politeness strategies can then be linked to how the participants in the interaction relate to one another in a situation where power and social distance are overt.

This examination of the political implications of politeness strategies uses the opening scene of the film. This scene was chosen because it is the first position the filmmaker, Sembène, takes as an interlocutor with his audience and requires an immediate and significant negotiation by viewer to the film. In addition, this scene spans social and political strata, providing input from representative members of the power structure: King Demba War Thioub and Diogomay of the *ceddo* being the most significant power players.

As seen in these passages, social life requires us to carry out a variety of acts that threaten face or the public self-image every member wants to claim for him or herself. For example, one can threaten face through criticizing. To accomplish a criticism with the least amount of damage to another's face, here the face of the King, Diogomay employs a variety of politeness strategies such as metaphor and expressions of personal view points, e.g. *we believe*. Diogomay, then, uses politeness strategies to show the extent of *ceddo* social power. Diogomay uses metaphor for its negotiable meaning to make an off-record or non-literal criticism of the political establishment.

In the following example the metaphor of the baobab seed not only questions the King's knowledge, but makes clear the interdependence of the King and the ceddo.

Diogomay: The King should know that the seed is the mother of the baobab tree.
(O. Sembène, 1977)

However, Diogomay, within the formal confines of his discussion with King Thioub, also threatens the face of the King by using on-record or literal face threatening strategies, where communicative action is clear and there is no redress to the King's image. For example, Diogomay states:

We want this iniquity to cease. **Our crops** belong to us. You must put an end to the plundering...Demba War! As King, you must decree that no one will be persecuted, no one will be enslaved. The obligation to be Moslem is abolished. No faith is worth a man's life. (O. Sembène, 1977)

Diogomay's use of "we" and "our" is a form of hedging used in politeness strategy. Hedging marks the statement as provisional in some way. The statement awaits acceptance by the receiver and thus does not impose upon him. This kind of strategy indicates the impositions inherent in the act. That is, the dialogue itself shows that Sembène as script writer is aware of the threat to face the statement causes (M. Meyer, 2002). Sembène is aware that Diogomay's dialogue is a criticism not only of King Thioub's new accommodation with the Imam or Arab-Islam forces, but also a criticism of the actions of this new administration which is taking away the crops of the ceddo and threatening to persecute or enslave the non-Muslim.

However, Sembène complicates the face or public self-image the ceddo are claiming for themselves. The ceddo are those who refuse to convert to Islam and are subsequently disenfranchised; yet, the on-record statements of King Thioub lump the "pagan" ceddo together with the warrior ceddo who have taken his daughter:

Biram will confront the Ceddo. Each of my adversaries...will fire twice. Let the bearers unload! The wood will give light Imam's disciples tonight. **Diogomay, you hear me?** Such is my desire! (O. Sembène, 1977)

The face threat to Diogomay and the ceddo is further reinforced in the reduced question form of "Diogomay, you hear me?" It is reduced because it lacks the "Do you" portion of the question. What becomes clear is that despite the overt criticism of the ceddo, the administration remains in a position to make them serve the Imam. However, the criticism of the ceddo remains. Their resistance is acknowledged and can be seen in the King's phrasing of the question above. His phrasing illustrates that the ceddo criticism of his ruling could be a threat to the success of the new agenda of the administration. As king, Thioub needs to make his position of power secure.

The most important aspect of this analysis of politeness is the use of negative politeness, which operates on social deixis. Diogomay's first entry in the film's dialogue immediately positions him at odds with the power structure.

Diogomay: **I speak in the name of the ceddo.** (O. Sembène, 1977)

The pronoun "I", identifying Diogomay, stresses belonging with the ceddo and not with the power structure. Sembène, by making the film and performing as a ceddo renamed Ibrahima, he too stresses belonging with the masses. Sembène uses his film as the intercessor, the Jaraaf figure, in order to speak in the name of those unhappy with Senghor's administration. Diogomay has used Jaraaf as the intercessor to claim belonging with the ceddo. This form of negative politeness impersonalizes the argument and Diogomay's further contributions to conversation become indicative of a third party "ceddo voice". Sembène, like Diogomay, impersonalizes his own argument with Senghor in order to give voice to a third party malcontent in 1977 Senegal. He hedges the discussion with the members of the power elite by using the social deictic "we" as

an exclusive “we”. The relationship between interlocutors becomes hostile as each member now functions on forming solidarity based on an exclusive social deictic use of “we”. Diogomay and Sembène use “we” as a reflection of the new epistemological paradigm of Islam that created a negative concept of the cultural other, the *ceddo*.

The exclusive use of “we” becomes all the more politically entangled when the Imam, associated with the ruling family, combats Diogomay’s request that conversion to Islam be abolished and begins to use the pronoun “us” in reference to all Muslims. For example,

Imam: May Allah forgive **us**! (O.Sembène, 1977)

“Us” in this example is used to denote those who have converted to Islam as Allah will not forgive non-Muslims. The King aligns his political power with the religious faith, “**We are** Moslems. The laws of Islam **govern us**” (O. Sembène, 1977). Here, “we” speaks to the converted and devout Muslims; however, “us” speaks to those who are converted, but also implies an all inclusive “us” as members of society who will have to deal with the laws that Islam decrees through the power structure. This orients power to an exclusive and elite few by politicizing religious identity and placing the non-converted *ceddo* in opposition not only to the new religious convictions but political ideology.

Implications of CDA Analysis

Based on the discussions of the film using critical discourse analysis and the power and politeness strategies found therein, it is obvious that *ceddo* opposition to Islamic conversion was not grounded in a difference of religious belief systems, but in opposition to a competing socio-political and economic system which threatened to eradicate the power of the aristocracy. Therefore, *ceddo* is an ever-evolving conscious stance by a political class who desires to put distance between themselves and Euro-Christianity and Arabo-Islam in order to maintain a sense

of social, political, and economic autonomy. The *ceddo*, by their very existence, are a destabilizing force for power structures.

The film, *Ceddo*, becomes not only about the *ceddo*, but all the people who are oppressed. Therefore, how does an audience approach the film? Here we can begin to see how critical discourse analysis illuminates Diawara's earlier perception that an active audience will be influenced by the physical presence of the storyteller, Sembène. Sembène's ideal subject is anti-Senghor, so the viewer has to negotiate him/herself with Sembène's ideal subject. The effects of media are cumulative and work through repetition of ways of handling causality and agency. The viewer is then positioned to the media in a particular way through image building (N. Fairclough, 1989). Sembène positions his reader by intentionally repeating the exclusive "we" discourse to create a divide between those who come to the movie theater and the political establishment. Whereas Diogomay speaks for the *ceddo*, Sembène represents the audience. The repetitive use of the exclusive "we" positions the members of the audience on the side of the *ceddo* because they, too, lack power in political discourse and are able to build upon the images of *ceddo* solidarity through their own self projection. The potential result is an audience resisting Senghor's regime, thus accomplishing Sembène's goal.

The issue of identity and sub-identity that is the question of "who is Muslim?" or more useful to this discussion, "who is not?" is important in grasping the historical contexts of the film and of Senegal developmental histories. Senegalese politics in 1977 was, to a degree, Muslim politics due to Senghor's reliance on the Islamic brotherhoods. Islamic institutions are central to the country's political life and a large Muslim community is a significant player in West African politics because they provide popular support and legitimacy. The relationship between the government and the brotherhoods is symbiotic and ambiguous in that the government needs them

because they are powerful and efficient whereas the brotherhoods rely on the state for political and economic patronage. This relationship, evident in *Ceddo* in the accommodation of King Thioub with the Imam, has existed since the colonial era. Islamic agents of expansion into Senegal began with merchants, scholars, and clerics and evolved into religious specialists functioning also as political and moral guides in the forms of judges, healers, and diviners. Islam amalgamated Koranic belief with strongly held local traditions, thus providing a legitimacy and power, an accessible system of governing, a framework of law, and a broader field of contact. From the 17th to 19th centuries Islam moved to a minority cultural status, entering the 19th century with an aggressive reform movement, which has been called the “jihadist era”. The Islamic opposition to “pagan” or *ceddo* societies and economic upheavals brought about by the slave trade created the anxiety for the “jihad” fought against non-believers. This opposition and “jihadist” mentality is what Sembène emphasizes in *Ceddo* once the Imam comes to power, burns the Catholic mission, kills the priest, and fights the *ceddo* who refuse conversion.

According to Martin Klein the Islamic accommodation of the Catholic, French colonial forces due to the mutual benefit between conquering power and conquered people allowed Muslims, as traders and negotiators, to manipulate the French. The French, eventually, drafted a policy known as “Islam Noir”, which accommodated the commercial and religious activities of the Sufi brotherhoods as long as they did not oppose France. This is crucial to Sembène’s discourse of resistance in the film as the Islamization of the Wolof village is by an Imam who has continued working with the Catholic priest, a missionary from France as well as the slave trader. Both religious men benefit economically from the slave trade as the priest works with the trader who trades goods for people while the Imam enslaves those who refuse conversion before it is forced upon them with the Imam’s ascension to political power. The characters of the Imam

and Catholic missionary, demonstrate the kind of accommodation that ushers in cultural exploitation that leads to economic exploitation Sembène wants to criticize.

If we look at the construction of the socio-political identity of *ceddo* as a vocation, political allegiance, and lifestyle, what becomes apparent is *ceddo* opposition to French or Islamic conversion was not grounded in a difference of religious belief systems, but an opposition to a competing socio-political and economic system which threatened to eradicate the power of the aristocracy. Therefore, *ceddo* can be viewed as an ever-evolving conscious stance by a political class who desires to put distance between themselves and Euro-Christianity and Arabo-Islam in order to maintain a sense of social, political, and economic identity.

Ceddo as Oral Literature

Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike in “African Cinematic Reality: The Documentary Tradition as an Emerging Trend” cited that “since the inception of African cinema oral tradition has formed the basis of its cultural and aesthetic grounding” (N. Ukadike, 1995). Mary Jean Green in “Reconstructing the Father’s Voice: Oral Transmission in Allah Tantou and Keïta” continues the link between African cinema and orality because “the medium of film, which can reproduce the oral and visual dimensions of the performance of a traditional African storyteller or griot, seems to lend itself to the continuation of an oral tradition that is considered by many to contain the essence of African pre-colonial culture” (M. Green, 2000). Oral transmission or *la parole* contributes to the specificity of African cinema, articulating the connection between directors using cinema as a storytelling turned toward modernity and those rooted in indigenous forms of storytelling (A. Gardier and P. Haffner, 1987).

The spoken word is inevitably a part of cinematic representation. Some directors call attention to explicit grounding in oral literature by retelling tales or legends familiar to an

audience. Others explicitly stage the scene of storytelling, foregrounding the process of oral transmission, as well as reenacting the narrative (J. Green, 2000). Sembène differs in that he grounds *Ceddo* in oral literature by mapping a history. He restores intelligibility to the story of the ceddo, but in his re-telling hides and confuses the events to question what happened. The intentional hiding and confusion of narrative details is a common tool of storytellers who “edit” their stories to match the audience. For example, if a person related to the bad guy in a story is in attendance, the storyteller will acknowledge the actions of the characters but downplay the extent to which the bad guy is bad. Storytellers may also “edit” by eliminating or conflating elements in a story for the benefit of a Western audience member. Sembène uses temporal confusion to open up the meaning of the events to argue with and contest not only the historical events, but modern Senegalese politics. Guising stories in historical contexts or using non-human protagonists to carry the story allowed storytellers to communicate their criticisms productively but subversively. This is why the temporal indeterminacy of Sembène’s film is so important. He uses elements from various centuries in order to comment on current Senegalese politics without being overt. In other words, he locates his criticism of Arab-Islam and Euro-Christianity as it informs modern politics within a historical context in order to guise it. His style echoes oral literature in that stories in oral literature can confuse events and focus on an indeterminate time and place in order to open up the story to become a modern social critique. This is why stories start with statements like “once upon a time” and scholars who have written on *Ceddo* do not agree on the century in which the action takes place.

Sembène’s pedagogical goal is achieved through his narrative style. He wants to make his audience use the story to question their world. For example:

Emitai et Ceddo sont basés sur une mémoire populaire et une oralité. Je dois m'approcher de mon public qui comprend ces références. Le Cinéma africain doit avoir une pédagogie, être une école du soir, ce dont le cinéma occidental peut peut-être se dispenser. Ce qui m'intéresse est de trouver le langage qui me permettra de toucher le paysan du Limpopo quand je suis sur les rives du fleuve Sénégal (O. Barlet, 2000)

[Emitai and Ceddo were based on a popular memory and an orality. I have to approach my public who can understand these references. African cinema has to have a pedagogy, to be a night school, which the Western cinema may not need. What interests me is to find a language that will permit me to reach the people of Limpopo when I am on the banks of the Senegal river.]

“L'école du soir” or night school is Sembène's intention behind his films. He, like other storytellers, chooses evening as the time of instruction. It is a culturally specific time of day in which stories are told. Furthermore, the environment of the cinema, like the communal environment of storytelling, allows Sembène to reach a large audience as opposed to the individual, who is reached through written literature. In this form of night school, he is able to take the responsibility of the storyteller and guide the people. His role becomes one that is in contrast with the lack of guidance provided by contemporary African political leaders.

There is an introductory formula to the narrative in both folktales and cinema. This introduction varies from region to region, but marks the point at which the story begins, thereby divorcing the orator from what s/he says. For example, stories are avenues used to talk about taboo subjects because once the author frames the story s/he is free from the social conventions that drive daily life. By constructing a tale that is projected in an environment accepted as one of escape, fantasy, etc, Sembène can divorce himself from the social constraints that may otherwise prohibit his criticism. Nonetheless, criticisms of political figures in either stories or *Ceddo* are potent and carry social implications. Storytelling provides an environment where young people are encouraged to talk because it is an important learning tool and arena. The author also works on images that use teamwork, cohesion, respect for one another, etc. The

children, then, learn these attributes and combine them with the environment designed to help them overcome shyness and learn to speak out in public. Sembène accomplishes this with *Ceddo*. Because he values the Brechtian form of cinema, in which the audience is active and self-consciousness, the night school becomes an education in which the solidarity of the *ceddo* is repeated to convey the importance of social and political cohesion. Then, this environment fosters discussion among audience members, which makes them start talking about *Ceddo* in public, linking Sembène's filmic political criticism to the current intolerable social reality of 1977.

Yet, Sembène's desire to educate hinges on using an accessible language, Wolof, which, makes political issues immediately accessible to the urban masses. He grounds the film and his socio-political critique in familiar oral and linguistic ethnic traditions. He adapts the form of storytelling to cinema and chooses to communicate with his audience in Wolof, making both the form and the language of his argument immediately accessible to the "pupils" in his audience. In choosing this tactic of communication, Sembène plays with Senghor's perception that pre-colonial culture is primarily folk-lore whereas Sembène clearly asserts that oral traditions should be prized and the collective memory of the people should be transmitted through the national languages, especially Wolof (S.Gellar, 2003). He wants his audience to be able to criticize neocolonialism in Senegal and be able to articulate powerful arguments against the socio-political institutions that perpetuate the intolerable neocolonial industry.

Sembène represents the richness of the language of proverbs and sayings and the power of the *ceddo* spoken word and the *ceddo* speaker (M. Diawara, 1988). The discursive terrain in the film is controlled by Jaraaf, who mediates the conversation between the King, Imam, and *ceddo*. However, Sembène, as the storyteller, is ever present because he is behind the camera,

editing the film to reveal the directions of speech, much like position of Jaraaf. And because Sembène asserts his storyteller/directorial presence in the film, he determines how we, his audience, read the signs, much like the village storyteller determines how his audience receives his signs within his story.

However, much like in oral literature, the storyteller leaves the construction of meaning, the interpretation of the political message, to the spectator, whose participation is solicited, like that of the audience of a griot. Here is a problem. Oral literature clearly involves a negotiation of the text between storyteller and audience. It is a way of passing on traditions, a way of explaining the world and/or phenomena. The speaker and the receiver/audience are both active in constructing a culture specific world view; therefore, oral literature is negotiated and defined by society itself. Cinema, however, is a faking of reality. It is a modern form of storytelling that requires the audience members to approach the text, but no negotiation is possible because the screen cannot communicate. However, it is still important for Sembène to make this story, *Ceddo*, available to the public. Much like oral literature, it is in the performance of a story where communities are not only created and social codes and expectations taught, but pre-existing communal “way of being” are solidified as people come together to claim their definition of self and community. It is also through the performance that the storyteller can convey his or her social and political criticisms and grievances.

In *Ceddo*, the characters, especially Princess Dior Yacine, kidnapped by the warrior ceddo, reach a new level of socio-political consciousness. This new socio-political consciousness, though, is reached by types. In other words, the characters in the film as in oral literature have no psychological depth. They are used by the storyteller as types or ideals with whom the audience can relate to, if not project a self-image upon. For example, the two white

people, a priest and a trader are symbols of two forms of Euro-Christian colonization. Diogomay is a symbol of the *ceddo*. The King is a symbol of the dying indigenous power structures. Dior Yacine is Sembène's symbol of social change. She realizes the cultural and economic exploitation of the *ceddo* and is brought back to the village with this new knowledge in order to change her community. Her travel also adheres to a fundamental element in oral literature.

It is through travel that protagonists acquire knowledge and is one of the structural forms of the story. But, here Sembène deviates from the structure of oral literature. Typically, protagonists in oral literature go outside of the village, acquire knowledge, and return to the village with a new level of consciousness, without disturbing the status quo. This demonstrates that although the storyteller may not be bound by social mores while reciting the story, one returns to reinforce indigenous values in the end. Princess Dior Yacine, however, returns to the village only to kill the Imam in part of her solidarity with the *ceddo*. There can be no return to the status quo now, only the opening for new possibility. The film's conclusion puts into parallel the physical and moral accomplishment of Princess Dior Yacine, about to lay claim to her heritage, with the equally demanding struggle of the contemporary men and women to reclaim autonomy (M. Green, 1995).

Sory Camara has said that stories are old words. They are like seeds you plant in the hot soil and the sun continues to heat them until the seed germinates and produces food. The stories are seeds planted in you, which you must let the water of life nourish. In other words, the story speaks to you according to your need. Story tellers know their people. They know what needs to be communicated and when. Sembène knew the needs of the people in 1977 Senegal and attempted to make a statement, using a familiar and accessible language in a stylistic vein they could understand: proverb, music, temporal indeterminacy, etc. As Sembène himself said and

achieves, “It (cinema) is a question of allowing the people to summon up their own history, to identify themselves with it. People must listen to what is in the film, and they must talk about it” (P. Rosen, 147).

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

The film *Ceddo* is symptomatic of the emergence of socio-politically consciousness Senegalese cinema. The historical class term *ceddo* is renegotiated and re-appropriated by Sembène for the specific purpose of criticizing neocolonial political and economic systems controlled by the accommodation of Léopold Sédar Senghor and Islamic brotherhoods. The degree of socio-political importance of the term is revealed in the very public and political debate between Sembène and Léopold Sédar Senghor. Moreover, Sembène's use of Wolof language and social structures provided a direct sense of historical identification with *ceddo* for many Senegalese young people. The potential political fall out from identification with an anti-establishment ideal like the *ceddo* was enough for Senghor to prohibit screening within Senegal until 1981. This more modern form of socio-political resistance is grounded in the tools of the storytellers in African oral literature. These tools include: temporal indeterminacy, usage of accessible indigenous language like Wolof, and the portrayal of types of characters as symbols for a much larger ideal. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis allows us to analyze the characters interactions. These interactions and how the characters negotiate themselves to one another are interpreted by an active audience as signals. The audience already identifies with the historically and culturally situated *ceddo* and "read" the *ceddo* resistance as an ideal avenue of social change in a malcontented social present.

In chapter one, it is clear that the relationship between Sembène, his films, and his historical renegotiations of events such as those found within *Ceddo*, have attracted considerable attention. After WWII, Sembène returned to a socially and politically charged Dakar. It was in this place that his social and political activism began to form. He joined many political organizations, eventually concluding that the best way to liberate disenfranchised and marginalized African communities was through education. His awareness of the urgent necessity of social change led him to use art as stage for social and political issues. Thus, his production of the film in an election year and his choice of language and historicized terminology had a political message for the community.

Although Sembène and his films have been a heavy focus for many scholars focusing on African cinema, *Ceddo* is the only film ever to be banned within Senegal. Yet, most scholarly work has glossed over the ban of the film to focus on the social effects of Islamic and European imperialism, cinematic reconstructions of history, and film as oral literature. Scholars like Mbye Cham, Manthia Diawara, and Philip Rosen have all addressed the text of *Ceddo* from varied and insightful points of views. Mbye Cham asserts that Sembène wants to undermine religious participation in politics by depicting Islam as a violent colonizing force. This depiction, he concludes, sets up a culture conflict no longer between Africa and the West, but between Africa, the West and Islam. Manthia Diawara uses the film as an example of modern story telling, a renegotiation of oral literature. His focus relies on Sembène's editing and physical presence in the film as evidence of the influence a storyteller has over his/her audience, especially if the audience is an active one. Philip Rosen also positions Sembène as a storyteller but only in the sense that a storyteller controls the interpretations of history in order to provide a desired contemporary social outcome. He goes on to say that the storyteller manipulates the historical

contexts to fit the current socio-political environment. It is clear that Sembène does behave in this capacity. He is a storyteller. He renegotiates the history of the *ceddo* to make contemporary criticisms of a government with a malcontented social body. He does depict Islam as a negative political force within the community. Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the gap in the discussions of the film: why was the film banned?

In chapter two, background to Wolof language and society was discussed to provide an appropriate cultural lens to the film. It is important to grasp the depth to which the Senegalese communities can identify with Wolof. The audiences' deep, intrinsic identification with Wolof language, communication, and group identity makes this film a potent tool for social change.

Language helps determine identity. The main languages spoken around the Gambia river intermingled. This linguistic intermingling was reflective of intermingling between the Wolof, Pulaar, Serer, and Soninké. Wolof, however, is one of the largest ethnic groups and is not only a label for language but also a name by which people refer to themselves. Here again, we see how the language becomes a source of identity for an audience, particularly in a time when national Senegalese identity was becoming more and more associated with Wolof. Language of politics also began reflecting a greater use of Wolof. This makes the film's political criticism more accessible and useful for an audience who is able to participate constructively in political debate.

The representation of Wolof social systems also presents concepts that are identifiable and valid for Senegalese peoples and their concepts of an emerging nation. This touches on the ideas of Philip Rosen who discusses the construction of nation and how this construction gets created through story to achieve a positive outcome in the community. Wolof society is also rigid and hierarchical. The delineations between people and then the Muslim brotherhoods allow the audience to understand the formalized power relationships within the film.

Thus, the common language, conscious sense of ethnic identity, the persistence of a system of social stratification, and Islam as part of the political infrastructure, allow an indigenous Senegalese audience to relate fully to *Ceddo*. This cultural understanding makes his criticism more powerful because it reveals itself within the cultural context of Wolof. Sembène uses his renegotiations of *ceddo* in a language and culture which has a distinct sense of historical identity, Wolof. His choice is intentional. The language resonates with many people; thus, creating solidarity or belonging within the audience.

Chapter three used the politics of linguistics to reveal the political climate of 1977. The film was banned by Senghor. We know he justified his ban on linguistics reasons, in that the film's title did not conform to his decree on national languages. So, here we have another question that moves beyond why the film was banned to: what does the term *ceddo* mean? Clearly, there are implications in the terminology itself and its usage in the culture that make the term threatening to Senghor. The term, grounded in historic meanings, must have some contemporary implications. It must be code for something much broader and politically based.

Ceddo originally comes from Pulaar/Fulfulde and was spelled *ceddo* for the singular and *sebbe* for the plural. Wolof borrowed the term and simplified it by using *ceddo* for both singular and plural, distinguishing between the two using suffixes. The French use the Pulaar/Fulfulde classifications for singular and plural, but spell the term *tyeddo* and *tyebbe*. Of course, the multitude of spellings has led to confusion and discrepancy among Africanists. *Ceddo* has also been classified in a number of ways: as slave, member of an army, court official, pagan, warrior, etc. The film depicts the *ceddo* standing in opposition to the King and his accommodation with the Imam. *Ceddo* becomes synonymous with those who are opposed to the displacement of indigenous structures and/or the politicizing of religious identity. The construction of *ceddo* is

not as simple as one who is pagan or a warrior. The term's construction is complicated by the political context. The accommodation between the King and the Imam threaten the indigenous infrastructure. So, if the *ceddo* stand in opposition to the political establishment, they are not simply anti-Islamic, but citizens concerned for their indigenous rights.

The citizens of 1977 Senegal were also concerned with their rights. Student riots protested Senghor's concentration of political power. A long draught added to social malcontent. With the film *Ceddo* about social malcontent that erupted in physical protest and overthrow of the head of the government, Senghor felt threatened. He used the only tool he had at his disposal without making the ban of the film an overt example of his fear: linguistics. He declared that the film should have been spelled with one d as opposed to two. However, what he demonstrated through this rationale was a lack of knowledge about West Atlantic languages like Wolof. Senghor's French inspired linguistics of the national languages continued to anger Senegalese nationalists and what better way to channel their anger than by using an indigenous form or storytelling.

In chapter four *Ceddo* is discussed as a political allegory. Ousmane Sembène responds to inequities found within neocolonial Senegalese society by using *ceddo*. What becomes necessary, then, is a discussion of the term as it relates to a modern Senegalese context and how it has been renegotiated by this more modern form of story telling. *Ceddo* is a reconstruction of the past, its social categories, the language, and the literature, to talk about the present. The re-appropriated tools of the past allow the audience to relate to the culture specific order of consciousness, to ground themselves in a collective memory, which Sembène can then subvert by confusing the historical contexts of that memory. In many ways, the early cinematic productions like *Ceddo* were progenitors of a new artistic form of social critique.

Sembène reconstructs *Ceddo* based on historical fact. Yet, the classifications of the film reveal a temporal indeterminacy through which Sembène can inscribe and reinterpret history enabling him to criticize the present while providing other ways of imagining the past. Thus, Sembène reconstructs the past to talk about the present as it relates to socio-politically conscious issues. His intentional staging of history makes *ceddo* a willful and critical formulation of contemporary identity based on the collective cultural memories of the Wolof. His willful formulation of the anti-establishment *ceddo* because the *ceddo* as part of the collective memory, articulated in Wolof, becomes an indicator of who one is and for what s/he stands. Thus, one views the *ceddo* as the anti-establishment ideal. They are rooted in the oppression of the power structure. Those oppressed by Senghor's leadership of Senegal in conjunction with the socio-political power of the Islamic brotherhoods clearly identify with these characters. The construction of *ceddo* as an "homme de refus" lets the audience renegotiate and re-appropriate the *ceddo* identity to become a prototype whose against the neocolonial political establishment as it stands under Senghor. But, how does the audience understand the *ceddo* as an anti-establishment ideal? Discourse analysis reveals the resistance of the *ceddo* through the dialogue with King Thioub.

The socio-political implications of the film are best revealed through critical discourse analysis because this perspective sees the audience in the role of subject, that is, a role of "active agent" in television production, one capable of constructing meanings from the language of the media (Dellinger, 1990). Critical discourse analysis looks at texts as produced by socially constructed relationships. Within *Ceddo* discourse analysis can focus on the interaction between Diogomay, the spokesman for the *ceddo* and King Thioub. Their interaction is mediated by the intercessor Jaraaf. Power in discourse, power behind discourse, and politeness are emerging

factors in critical discourse analysis which allow us to look at specific ways the interlocutors negotiate themselves to one another and the political implications inherent in their negotiations.

Power in discourse involves face-to-face discourse where unequal participants meet and, although the alternate producing and interpreting text, the powerful participant controls and constrains the contributions of the less powerful. The formality of Diogomay's audience with King Thioub indicates that King Thioub controls the contributions of his subject. Diogomay does use and abide by the constraints the situation presents; however, the mediation of Jaraaf does allow Diogomay room in his contributions because the King is also constrained by Jaraaf.

Power behind discourse is concerned with the relationship between discourse and social order. The film, itself, is representative of power behind discourse. The discourse of the film can shape definitions, social roles, and social identities. The role of the film's discourse as it effects audiences' decisions can have major effects on social and political issues such as the rights of indigenous people.

Politeness strategies come from recognition of power difference. Diogomay uses metaphors with the king as an example of indirect politeness. This removes him from any implication because his statement, while a strong criticism of the king, comes across as vague and/or hinting. Diogomay and the king both use direct politeness where their communicative action is very clear and neither makes any apology for the resulting discomfort their statements may cause the receiver. Hedging is also important in this analysis of the film's discourse because by hedging with specific pronouns like I, we, and us, the relationship between interlocutors becomes hostile as each member now functions on forming a solidarity based on an exclusive we. Therefore, the factions become: the ceddo versus the king and the Imam. This politeness strategy has larger implications.

The factions the discourse reveals make it obvious that the *ceddo* opposition to Islamic conversion was not about a religious difference, but an opposition to a competing political and economic system that threatened the culture of the community. And based on power behind discourse, these factions in the film can shape definitions, social roles, and social identities of factions within Senegal. Senegalese politics during this time was Muslim politics and the contemporary audience viewing Sembène's film, already grounded in cultural identification, could identify with the *ceddo*.

Chapter four ends with a discussion of film as a modern re-working of oral literature. Sembène is a storyteller. He is able to ground *Ceddo* in oral literature by mapping out a history. Yet, he confuses the events in the story to make the audience question what has happened, to question what the story is really saying. In this sense, he guises the story of the *ceddo* in a historical context of the entrance of Arab-Islam and Euro-Christianity into this Wolof community to communicate his contemporary criticisms productively and subversively.

Sembène refers to cinema as a night school. His classification reflects not only the cultural practice of telling stories at night, but his desire to use art/media as activism and educate the diverse African public. Because cinema mimics the communal environment found in the evening storytellings in villages and compounds Sembène can educate his audience in a setting familiar and comfortable to them. This setting continues the immersion into the cultural and social practices of Wolof society and language use, making his criticism of the government all the more palatable for the audience.

In order to have the audience continue to relate to his critical message of Senegalese government, Sembène uses types or ideals to convey a new level of socio-political consciousness. Characters like the king represent a dying power structures, Diogomay is the

ceddo, Dior Yacine is the social change, etc. By using ideals instead of fully developing the psychological depth of the characters, the audience can see themselves in the ideals and actively assume the roles set forth by the cast as opposed to seeing the actors as distinct and separate characters with no relationship to them, the audience. This technique then allows the audience to leave the theater and rejoin the community with these ideals, which will be used to perpetuate social change because they can now actively and knowledgeably participate in political debate.

Sembène's film is a critique of neocolonialism. The indeterminacy of time, place, and the people themselves, brings the question of identity and imposed social constructions into a public discourse. His position as director-storyteller allows him to mediate his criticism much like the Kings' mediator Jaraaf in the film. He uses the mediation of oral literature not only in the primary visual action of the film which is presented to the spectator as dramatic re-creation, but in a larger, more modern social context. Sembène's concern with cultural imperialism is taught to the audience through the negotiation of ceddo identity and discourse in the film to illuminate the current political issues of Senegal.

This topic merits further research and discussion as the term ceddo continues to be re-appropriated and renegotiated by artists today, specifically by young artists in the music industry. Therefore, this topic should be looked at again for a larger, more descriptive analysis.

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