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Moolaadé



**WINNER «UN CERTAIN REGARD»
CANNES FILM FESTIVAL 2004**

**Een film van
Ousmane Sembene**

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MOOLAADÉ - synopsis (NL)

De 81-jarige initiator van de Afrikaanse Cinema, Ousmane Sembene, bewijst met zijn nieuwste film nog steeds over een levendige geest te beschikken. Hij werkt het sterk feministisch bewustzijn van zijn vorige film *Faat Kiné* (en voorgaande klassiekers als *Black Girl* en *Ceddo*) verder uit in *Moolaadé*, een film over vrouwenbesnijdenis.

De plaats van handeling is een klein Afrikaans dorpje, waar vier jonge meisjes die het reinigingsritueel wat hun te wachten staat ontvluchten. Ze komen aan bij Collé Ardo Gallo Sy, een sterke vrouw die haar eigen dochter tegen een besnijdenis wist te beschermen. Collé roept een heiligplaats aan (een moolaadé) om de meisjes te beschermen, waarna ze zelf de conservatieve dorpelingen achter zich aankrijgt. Hierdoor komt het aanstaande huwelijk van haar dochter in gevaar.

Ondanks het onderwerp is de film allesbehalve zwaar: Sembene gebruikt een waar kleurentapijt om het dorpse leven te laten zien en hij verrijkt het sociaal-realistische verhaal met een keur aan symbolen en metaforen.

Als winnaar van de Un Certain Regard Award in Cannes 2004, werd *Moolaadé* door veel critici gezien als de beste film van het filmfestival.

MOOLAADÉ

124 min / 35mm / Kleur / Dolby Surround / Julia en Frans gesproken / Senegal, Frankrijk 2004

Theatrale uitbreng in Nederland: Cinemien www.cinemien.nl

Theatrale uitbreng in België: ABC Distribution www.abc-distribution.be

Uitbreng op DVD: Homescreen www.homescreen.nl www.homescreen.be

MOOLAADÉ - synopsis (FR)

Le père fondateur du cinéma africain, Ousmane Sembene âgé de 81 ans, continue d'être l'esprit le plus fougueux et provocateur. Prolongeant la forte conscience féministe qui caractérisait son précédent triomphe *Faat kiné* (ainsi que des classiques comme *Black Girl* and *Ceddo*), *Mooladé* est une vibrante polémique à l'encontre de la pratique, toujours actuelle, de la circoncision féminine.

L'action se situe dans un petit village africain, où 4 jeunes filles faisant face à la « purification » rituelle se réfugient dans le ménage de Collé Ardo Gallo Sy, une femme de caractère qui a réussie à protéger sa propre fille de la mutilation. Collé invoque la coutume sacré de mooladé (sanctuaire) pour protéger les fugitives, et la tension oppose Collé aux traditionalistes du village (autant les hommes que les femmes) et met en danger le mariage prévu de sa fille avec l'héritier présomptif du trône tribal.

Bien que le sujet puisse paraître pesant, ce film enjoué n'en est rien. Sembene place son action au milieu d'une vie villageoise vibrante et colorée et étend le récit bien au-delà des limites de la simplicité, avec un réalisme social employant un déploiement imaginatif de métaphores emblématiques et de sous-entendus mythiques.

Gagnant du Grand Prix dans la catégorie Un Certain Regard du Festival du Film à Cannes en 2004, *Mooladé* fut sélectionné par beaucoup de proéminents critiques comme le meilleur film de tout le festival.

MOOLAADÉ

124 min/ 35mm / couleur / Dolby Surround / Senegal, France 2004

Sortie en Belgique: ABC Distribution www.abc-distribution.be

Sortie sur DVD: Homescreeen www.homescreeen.be

MOOLAADÉ - crew

Regisseur	Ousmane Sembene
Scenario	Ousmane Sembene
Camera	Dominique Gentil
Geluid	Denis Guilherm
Montage	Abdellatif Raïss
Muziek	Boncana Maïga
Producer	Ousmane Sembene, Thierry Lenouvel

MOOLAADÉ - cast

Collé Ardo Gallo Sy	Fatoumata Coulibaly
Hadjatou	Maimouna Hélène Diarra
Amasatou	Salimata Traoré
Mercenaire	Dominique T. Zeïda
Doyenne des exciseuses	Mah Compaoré
Alima Ba	Aminata Dao

MOOLAADÉ - Awards

Moolaadé is door Amerikaanse critici tot beste niet-Engelstalige film uitgeroepen.

De toonaangevende website indieWIRE hield een enquête onder voornamelijk Amerikaanse filmcritici en festivalprogrammeurs. Moolaadé werd door de Amerikaanse critici verkozen boven *Uzak*, *Notre Musique* van Jean-Luc Godard, *Blissfully Yours* van Apichatpong Weerasethakul, *Kim Ki-Duk's Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... And Spring* en *Time of the Wolf* van Michael Haneke.

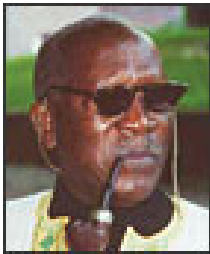
Moolaadé won eerder in Cannes de Un Certain Regard-prijs.

MOOLAADE - over regisseur Ousame Sembene

Ousmane Sembene is geboren in Ziguinchor, Senegal.

Zijn debuut-film *La Noire de...* (66) wordt gezien als de eerste zwarte Afrikaanse speelfilm en werd bekroond met 'Le Prix Jean Vigo'. Nu bijna 40 jaar later won zijn laatste film *Moolaadé* (04) de 'Un Certain Regard Award' op het filmfestival van Cannes.

In 1996 kreeg Sembene de Human Rights Watch International Film Festival's Irene Diamond Lifetime Achievement Award. Zijn werk omvat de korte documentaire *L'Empire songhai* (63) en de korte films *Niaye* (64), *Borom Sarret* (63) en *Tauw* (70). Andere films van zijn hand zijn onder andere *Mandabi* (68), *Emitai* (71), *Xala* (74), *Ceddo* (76), *Camp de Thiaroye* (co-director, 88), *Guelwaar* (92) en *Faat Kiné* (00).



MOOLAADE - Ousmane Sembene Filmografie

2004 *Moolaadé*
2000 *Faat Kiné*
1999 *Daily Heroism*
1993 *Guelwaar*
1987 *Camp de Thiaroye*
1977 *Ceddo*
1974 *Xala*
1973 *Africa at the Olympic Games*
1972 *African Basketball in the Munich Olympic Games*
1971 *Emitai*
1969 *Tauw* (korte film)
1969 *Women and the Trauma of Polygamy* (korte film)
The Afflictions of Unemployment (korte film)
1968 *Mandabi*
1965 *Black Girl*
1964 *Niaye* (korte film)
1964 *Borom Sarret* (korte film)
1963 *L'Empire Songhay* (korte film)

MOOLAADÉ - interview met Ousame Sembene

By Professor Samba Gadjigo April 11, 2004

After more than three years of work, Ousmane Sembene has just completed the final touches on his feature film *Moolaadé*. This film, selected for the Cannes Film Festival (Un Certain Regard section) will be presented to the press on May 14, then to the general public on May 15. A few hours after the completion of the film, on April 11, Mr. Sembene granted me this interview that I conducted in Rabat.

S. Gadjigo: *Mr Sembene, you have just finished the subtitling of your film Moolaadé at the Cinematographic Center of Morocco, in Rabat. Could you tell what this film means to you in particular—to your career, your everyday struggle?*

Sembene: No, I don't know what this finished product means as an object. I can tell you that, based on its content, the film is the second in a trilogy that, for me, embodies the Heroism in daily life. One finds that nowadays war is rampant in Africa, especially South of the Sahara. There's also our life; life continues, after all, with our daily actions that are forgotten by the masses. The people don't retain them. They want to convince us that we "vegetate." But yet, this underground struggle, this struggle of the people, similar to the struggles of all other peoples, that's what I call Heroism in daily life. These are the heroes to whom no country, no nation gives any medals... They never get a statue built. That, for me, is the symbolism of this trilogy. I have already made two, *Faat-Kine*, this one now *Moolaadé*, and I am preparing for the third. In respect to *Moolaadé*, it's a film that takes place in a rural space, a village symbolic of a green Africa. This Africa, while living its life, is in contact with "the others". So, we have some exterior influences which allow the African to gather a better knowledge of himself. In *Moolaadé*, there are two values in conflict with each other: One the traditional, which is the female genital excision. This goes a long way back. Before Jesus, before Mohammed, to the times of Herodotes. It's a Tradition. It was instituted as a value in order to, in my opinion, continue the subjugation of women... The other value, as old as human existence: the right to give protection to those who are weaker. When these two values meet, cross, multiply, clash, you see the symbolism of our society: modern elements and elements that form part of our cultural foundation. On top of these add the elements that belong to the superstructure, notably religion. These are the waters in which this group, this film, sails.

S. Gadjigo: *You have said that Moolaadé was the most African of all of your films. Could you tell more about that?*

O. Sembene: I said it in the sense that, in this film, we are within the African cultural foundation. Certainly, with some elements from the outside, but the whole film takes place inside a language, a culture and its metaphors and symbols. We witness the arrival of two foreign elements. One is an ex-military man. He has, in the name of humanity, participated in all the peace-keeping forces. The other is an exile in Europe (for his own interests), who is the son of the village chief. To me, this is the most African film.

S. Gadjigo: *From the time you wrote your first novel, The Black Docker (1956), in which the first chapter was called "The Mother", you have given a very particular emphasis to*

women, to the Heroism of the African woman. Why does this heroism recur, as a leitmotif, throughout your work?

O Sembene: I think that Africa is maternal. The African male is very maternal; he loves his mother; he swears on his mother. When someone insults his father the man can take it; but once his mother's honor has been hurt, the man feels he's not worthy of life if he doesn't defend his mother. According to our traditions, a man has no intrinsic value, he receives his value from his mother. This concept goes back to before Islam: the good wife, the good mother, the submissive mother who knows how to look after her husband and family. The mother embodies our society... I continue to think that African society is very maternal. Maybe we have inherited from our pre-Islamic matriarchy. That said, to me, every man loves a woman. We love them. Besides, more than 50% of the African population are women. More than half of the 800,000,000 that we are. This is a force that we must be able to mobilize for our own development. There's no one that works as hard as the rural woman.

S. Gadjigo: *Out of the fifty odd African countries, today more than 38 practice the excision. Then, why the choice of Burkina Faso and Djerisso when you could have also made the film somewhere else. Why Djerisso?*

O. Sembene: I could have done it somewhere else, but I would not have had this setting that I searched for and didn't find except here. I simply looked for a village that responded to my creative desire. Why shouldn't I paint a rose black? I traveled thousands of kilometers. I went to Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea and Guinea Bissau. But when I saw this village I told myself: this is the village! But there's more: this hedgehog-like mosque in the middle of the village, its unique architecture in the Sub-Saharan region. This architecture wasn't inspired by outside influences, we owe it to the termite ants, to the anthills, the symbol of *Moolaadé*. That's why I chose Djerisso.

S. Gadjigo: *You have often said: "To me, creation is like the Kora (musical instrument of 21 strings), it has many threads. I play like I hear it, and the essential thing is that I am free." What pleasures did you derive from the production of Moolaadé?*

O. Sembene: The experience is not complete yet. I worked with a team that included people from Morocco, Ivory Coast, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso, France and Senegal. Now that we have just finished the film I wait to see the reaction of my people to it. It won't belong to me anymore after that. The joys, the difficulties, the tribulations and the pleasure that I tasted during its making will leave me at the first screening of the film. Despite my age, I only think about the future, and I would wish it to be a timeless film.

S. Gadjigo: *Had you wanted to do the post-production work in Europe, in France, you would have been able to. So why Rabat, why Morocco?*

O. Sembene: It's not my first Moroccan experience. I already did all the postproduction work of *Faat Kine* in Morocco—editing, sound, etc... My pride is in being able to say that this film, *Moolaadé*, was born on the continent and from the continent. That is my personal pride. Maybe I will be able to show African filmmakers, the younger ones, that we can create everything we need within the continent. We are a chosen land. We are not a rich land: we are a chosen land. It's said that the first men were born in Africa, they talk

about Lucy. They tell us also about Egypt: the conflict that we have with the Maghreb and the European world. Cheikh Anta Diop, in his book with which I agree, shows that all civilizations originate from the Egypt of the Pharaohs, which was a black civilization. The same with the excision, it comes from a black goddess. When Herodotus saw her it was the first time the subject of excision came up. It was the 4th or 5th century BC. On this continent, we have Egyptian values, those from Zimbabwe, those born in Nigeria. But what is the origin of the breakdown that we're experiencing now? We must ask ourselves this question. Not to cry about the past, but I think that we can recreate these values from our current African perspective. We have a lot of history. It's our patrimony; we must re-seize it and tell ourselves that we can do it. But it's a psychological problem.

S. Gadjiro: You've been part of worker's unions. You have fought at the dock in Marseille, during the Indochine war; you have actively participated in the demonstrations against the colonial war in Algeria and you were in the ranks during the Korean War. But why, at a given moment, did you decide to take your battle to the cultural terrain, to the arts?

O. Sembene: That I don't know. I can't respond. My father was a simple fisherman; my grandfather was a simple fisherman. All his life, my father only lived to fish. He liked to repeat to me often that he would never work for a white man. All his experience was in fishing. In my family, I was the first to go to school.

S. Gadjiro: Yes, however, at the CGT library in Marseille you discovered the great writers. Later, you yourself decided to go into writing and then into filmmaking.

O. Sembene: No, no! In respect to writing, it was only on the political action level. Because in these libraries, at that time, when I was young, the books told me about the Africa of banana trees, the exotic Africa, the good Blacks, the black child who never grows old. I knew of stories in which people fought, they were not passive. So, I said "No, it's not like that where I come from. True, in Africa there are coconut trees, banana boats; but above all there are men. We are not ants." And now, as for how and why...I leave you to your Freudian disease...

S. Gadjiro: Freud, perhaps. But I am convinced that at a given moment you made a conscious choice and decided to turn more towards art rather than throw yourself towards the political arena.

O. Sembene: Ah, politics... Yes, but it's the emptiest choice. Culture is political, but it's another type of politics. You're not involved in culture to be chosen. You're not involved in its politics to say "I am." In art, you are political, but you say "We are. We are" and not "I am." At each stage of life, the people create their own culture, they mark their era, and advance! So, when I discovered culture, I made use of that. Politics. Not the politician's politics, to become deputy, cabinet head or something else; but to speak in the name of my people. And it's there that I see a contradiction. With what purpose have you come to interview me, to speak about my work? I am not elected, I don't owe you the vote. The reward that one has, as an artist, is when people come to express their encouragement.

S. Gadjiro: In 1975, at the University of Indiana at Bloomington, you gave a lecture entitled "Man is culture." During that whole week that I worked with you, you were

always searching for, I would say, the "right word" to express what is, for you, African culture.

O. Sembene: But, I was speaking to whom? In this area there are those who speak Mandingue, but there are also people who don't speak Mandingue but that also speak French. It's by that exact word that I am going to be able to situate them and show them what's going on. Here, it's not about academic French, academic English... it's about language used in everyday life. It could be also that this worry about the exact word comes to me through literature; the worry of being heard well, understood properly.

S. Gadjigo: *You have often said that cinema is somewhat mathematic, unlike literature. It's also, at the same time, an art and an industry. Where does African cinema sit today? What direction is it taking?*

O. Sembene: I can't tell you. But one thing is certain: we are close to our success. How, when? I have no idea! Will the path be straight, twisted, uphill, downhill? But we are forced to succeed. Because, in this century, a people who cannot speak of itself is bound to disappear. A whole continent, 800,000,000 people disappear? No! We cannot and we should not.

S. Gadjigo: *We have gone through the experience of slavery; we have gone through colonization; now it's the experience of globalization and neocolonization. Every time, the people of Africa arise every time from their wounds. Ousmane Sembene, where do we get our strength from?*

O Sembene: I don't know, I can't say. But, we must pay a lot of attention to what you have just said. Until now Africa has always risen, but this new century is the most dangerous century, this present phase is the most dangerous one for the continent. Slavery was blessed by the Church, and accepted by the Europeans. You can find it in the Bible, the Koran and even the Talmud. With colonization, it was Europe that divided Africa for its riches. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Europeans got together again several times to carve up Africa. France, Italy, England, Germany divided and shared Africa. Even during slavery each of these countries had their area on the African coast. Now, Europe is in the process of uniting, of regrouping. This same Europe that divided us; that same France who, in 1789, spoke of liberty, of man's rights, for them, but not for the Africans. They continued to practice slavery and then colonization. Globalization isn't so. Once again we find ourselves squeezed for our primary riches that Europe wants. We are, one more time, the object of the battles. What is thought nowadays in Africa is even more worrisome. Since 1960, Africans have killed more Africans than a hundred years of slavery and colonization. Now people speak of globalization, and it's enough to just take our area called "francophone." Our leaders, I'd say almost all of them, have houses in Europe, ready to retire to Europe as soon as the smallest problem comes up in their country. We are not concerned by globalization, we are not even in tow. The problem is more mental than economic. When Africans cannot exchange between themselves, between neighboring countries, that is a problem right there. They speak about the market constituted by the European Union, about 250,000,000 people. In Africa we are a potential market of more than 900.000.000! The economic laws and laws of physics are the same everywhere, in all cultures, all languages.

S. Gadjigo: *Since 1960, you have also fought for the rehabilitation of our national languages. In the 70's, with some other people, you created KADDU, a newspaper in Wolof. Very recently, this year, Doomi Golo, by Boubacar Boris Diop, became the first novel ever published in Wolof. In private radio people are doing extraordinary work in Wolof, Pular, Soninke, Bambara... If the political will existed today, couldn't we generalize the teaching of our languages?*

O. Sembene: You say "if." You, a professor of French, tell me what "if" means. Our leaders don't want to. Imagine for a moment that South of the Sahara, an African language became the official language of the country. The majority of our leaders would not lead anymore. It's the farmers that are going to lead, because the current leaders don't speak their mother tongue.

S. Gadjigo: *We have spoken earlier about the trilogy. You have made Faat Kine (2000), Moolaadé (2004), what will the third be?*

O. Sembene: This time it takes place in the city, it has to do with our government. The title of this next film is *The Brotherhood of Rats*.

By Samba Gadjigo

From the forthcoming book Ousmane Sembene: The Life of a Revolutionary Artist. Reprinted with permission from California Newsreel and the author. Samba Gadjigo is a Professor of French at Mount Holyoke College and the official biographer of Ousmane Sembene.

Crossing the geographical and national borders of his native Senegal, Ousmane Sembene's literary and cinematographic output places him today as the father of African films and as one of the most prolific French-speaking African writers. From the publication of his first poem in Marseilles in 1956 to *Guelwaar* (1996), his latest novel, Sembene has produced five novels, five collections of short stories, and directed four shorts, nine features and four documentaries. He has granted hundreds of interviews to teachers, researchers, students and dozens of film and literary critics from around the world. Scholarly articles on his work have appeared in scores of international journals. Of Sembene's ten published literary works, seven have been translated into English, and all of his films are subtitled in English, French, German, Japanese and Chinese. Undoubtedly in Africa, more ostensibly in Burkina Faso (the African capital of motion pictures), Ousmane Sembene's name has also captured the popular imagination. Some five years ago, while attending a festival in Ouagadougou, I discovered a restaurant menu labeled "Ousmane Sembene," and I smiled at a green-and-black taxi cab self baptized *Le docker noir* (1956), the original title of Sembene's first published novel. In the U.S., in 1996, his literary and film work also inspired Florence Ladd's novel *Sarah's Psalm*, which tells the story of Sarah Stewart, a young black Harvard graduate whose yearning to go to Africa arose from reading and viewing the work of a character named Ibrahim Mangane, a Sembene prototype.

Of modest birth in 1923 in Casamance, southern Senegal, where his "crazy" fisherman father had migrated from Dakar around 1900, Sembene has inscribed his name in world history. Expelled in 1936 for disciplinary reasons, his formal education ended in middle school. Chronic seasickness prevented him from adopting his father's trade, and in 1938 he was sent to relatives in Dakar, headquarters of the territories of French West Africa. From 1938 to 1944 he worked as an apprentice mechanic and a bricklayer. Even without a formal education, Sembene developed a love of reading — mostly comics — and discovered cinema in the segregated movie houses of Dakar. He spent his days doing manual labor and his after-work hours reading, watching movies or, along with his neighborhood mates, attending evenings of storytelling, wrestling and other traditional Senegalese cultural events. As a French citizen, Sembene, like many young Africans of his generation, was called to active duty to liberate France from German occupation in 1944 and subsequently was dispatched to the colony of Niger as a chauffeur in the 6th Colonial Infantry unit. Upon his discharge in 1946, he returned to a Dakar and joined the construction worker's trade union. He witnessed the first general strike that paralyzed the colonial economy for a month and ushered in the nationalist struggle in French Africa. In 1947, unemployed in the thick of a war-ravaged colonial economy, Sembene left Dakar in search of a better living and the opportunity to feed his unquenchable thirst for learning. He migrated to France and lived in the Mediterranean city of Marseilles until 1960, the year Senegal was granted independence. As a black African docker who knew how to read and write, he was soon identified by labor union leader Victor Gagnère and enrolled in the Confederation generale

des travailleurs (CGT), the largest and most powerful left-wing workers' union in post-war France. After backbreaking work unloading ships during the day (containers did not exist then), at night and on weekends Sembene enthusiastically attended seminars and workshops on Marxism and joined the French Communist Party in 1950. In 1951, while unloading a ship, Sembene broke his backbone. After a long recovery and unable to sustain the physical effort required by the work of a docker, he was given a post as a switchman and the opportunity to advance from a laborer into a well-rounded intellectual. As his comrade and friend Bernard Worms put it: "He rose to the status of the intellectual aristocracy of the labor movement; he became "un honnête homme." Sembene spent most of his free time roaming public libraries, museums, theatre halls, and tirelessly attending seminars on Marxism and Communism. He read everything: Marxist ideology, political economics, political science, and works of fiction and history. During those Marseilles years, with the passion and obsession of a new convert, Sembene also participated in the protest movements organized by the French Communist Party against the colonial war in Indochina (1953) and the Korean War (1950-1953). He also openly supported (and later wrote about) the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) in its struggle for independence from France, and he vehemently protested against the Rosenberg trial and execution in the United States in 1953. Dreaming of the universal freedom and brotherhood promised by communist ideology, Sembene also worked to educate and liberate the community of mostly illiterate and "apolitical" African workers shipwrecked at the margins of French society. It was also in the midst of such intense political activism that Sembene discovered other communist artists and writers: Richard Wright, John Roderigo (Dos Passos), Pablo Neruda, Ernest Hemingway, Nazim Hikmet. He also came into contact with the works of the Jamaican Communist writer Claude McKay

(whose 1929 novel *Banjo* would influence Sembene's first novel) and the novels of Jacques Roumain, another Communist writer from Haiti and author of the classic *Masters of the Dew* (1947). Sembene also became involved with the international Communist youth organization Les Auberges de jeunesses and discovered the Communist theater Le Théâtre Rouge. However, as Sembene struggled along with millions of others for revolutionary change at the international level, he also felt alienated by the absence of "revolutionary" artists and writers from Africa. Sembene was deeply aware of the urgent need for political and social change in Africa and strongly believed that the struggle against colonialism is not solely a fight over who should own the land — it is also a contest over who has the right to represent whom. For Sembene, the terrain of artistic and cultural representation and the need to invest in Africa became a passion for him, what Albert Camus called "Une valeur," that which transcends one's own life. Since 1956, Sembene's daily life has been devoted to the dissemination of emancipating and restorative images for those Frantz Fanon named "the Wretched of the Earth," the disenfranchised Africans whose unsung struggles are a "daily heroism" (the title of Sembene's latest trilogy of films). Yet for Sembene, in both literature and film, the work of "art" should not be a mere representation of "reality," or "une pancarte," a political banner. In order to capture the imagination of the people they "speak" to and for, those symbols first must be intelligible to them. They must stem from and reflect their cultural universe. At work in Sembene's art is to project a genuine African film language that also entertains a dialogical relationship with other world cultures.

Nowadays, in the U.S. and around the world, Sembene is best known as a filmmaker. However, it should be clear that he uses cinema to bring home what the widespread illiteracy in the continent does not allow him to accomplish through his writing. Sembene came to filmmaking as a last resort, and most of his film works (except *Xala*, 1973, and *Guelwaar*, 1993) are adaptations of earlier novels or short stories. Already in 1938, when movie-going had become a passion, Sembene realized the magical power of cinema in conveying messages. Ironically, the spark came from the viewing of Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympiad*, a documentary on the 1936 Munich Olympic games by one of Hitler's favourite filmmakers. Touring the continent in 1961 — he was sailing along the Congo River in the middle of the short-lived vitality of the Patrice Lumumba era — Sembene is said to have had a vision: there are landscapes, people, movements and sounds to which no written document can do justice. Then it dawned on him the necessity and desire to make movies — the technology and art of motion, color, and sound. He was not thinking of movies for escapism and dream-making in the Hollywood paradigm, but movies as "école du soir" (night school). His efforts became aimed at educating the people, in the language of the people, following in the millennia-long tradition of many African oral cultures in which people gathered around a wood fire and listened to stories told by either the griot (a professional storyteller) or by the elders. Although Sembene maintains a strong preference for literature, he also sees motion pictures as a necessity, the only medium that could reconcile the African artist with the millions of peasants, workers, and women, whom Aimé Césaire called "les bouches qui n'ont pas bouches" (those mouths without a mouth). Sembene was nearly 40 when he decided to seek scholarships, return to Europe and learn the technique of filmmaking. In the context of the Cold War, the Soviet Union (hoping to extend its influence over Africa) was eager to oblige. In 1962, Sembene spent a year learning cinematography at the Gorki Studios in Moscow under the tutelage of Marc Donskoi. At the end of 1962, Sembene returned to Senegal with new knowledge and an old Soviet camera. In 1963, his short *Borom Saret* ushered Senegal and Africa into the landscape of world cinema, 68 years after the invention of cinematography, and 63 years after the Lumiere brothers' *L'arroseur arrosé* was screened in Senegal. Sembene's films transformed Africa from a consumer of images made elsewhere to a "producer" of its own images. As *Borom Saret* shows, Sembene was urgently concerned with pointing his camera at present-day, post-colonial Senegalese society and its conflicts between the old and the new, the powerful and the powerless. In 1964, he adapted his short story *White Genesis* with *Niaye*, a story of incest in a village noble family. These first two shorts were followed by *La noire de...* (*Black Girl*) in 1965, a prizewinning feature. However, it was with *Mandabi* (*The Money Order*) in 1968, that Sembene's dream to reconnect with Africa's masses came through. For the first time, an African filmmaker used an African language (Wolof, the dominant language in Senegal), hence setting a trend to be followed by all filmmakers on the continent. In 1969 he released two shorts: *Taumatisme de la femme face à la polygamie* (*Women and the Trauma of Polygamy*), and *Les dérives du chômage* (*The Afflictions of Unemployment*). Two years later, Sembene would adapt the short story *Tauw* into *Emitai* (1971), his first historical film, a dramatization of the forced conscription of Senegalese soldiers during World War II. He followed it with *African Basketball in the Munich Olympic Games* in 1972, and *Africa at the Olympic Games* in 1973. In 1974, *Xala*, an adaptation of his earlier 1973 novella was released, followed by a controversial and internationally acclaimed historical film *Ceddo*, a rewriting of the history of Islam in

Senegal. *Camp de Thiaroye* (1987) a sequel to *Emitai*, centers on the massacre by French authorities of African soldiers returning from World War II. The award-winning *Guelwaar, a Legend of the 21st Century*, was released in 1993. Sembene would close the century with two films devoted to the struggle of African women, *Daily Heroism* (1999) and *Faat Kine* (2000), and open the new century with *Moolaadé* (2004), a crusade against the century-old practice of female circumcision that still plagues half of the African states recognized by the United Nations. At the international level, Sembene, unequivocally recognized as the father of African cinema, has received countless awards and distinctions. His images are intended not only for entertainment and profit (Sembene adheres to Lenin's prescription that "an artist must make money in order to live and work, but not live and work in order to make money"), but also as an educational tool. His work is aimed at promoting freedom and social justice and restoring pride and dignity to African people. First, using African languages (*Moolaadé* includes Wolof and Diola, two Senegalese languages, and Bambara, a language spoken in Eastern Senegal, in Mauritania, Mali, Burkina, and Côte d'Ivoire) allows Sembene to specify his public: "Africa is my 'audience' while the West and the rest are only targeted as 'markets.'" Sembene also borrows from the rich heritage of African oral narratives, handed down by the griots. Rejecting a mere imitation of Hollywood's narrative techniques, Sembene's cinema ushered in genuinely African film aesthetics. Counter to the hegemonic "official" history of Senegal, produced by its local elite, Sembene's filmography has given voice to the millions of marginalized and voiceless African peasantry - workers, women, and children - while often putting him at odds with his country's powerful. Indeed, most of Sembene's films were either banned or censored under former president Leopold Senghor's regime.

For the financing of *Camp De Thiaroye*, Sembene performed a symbolic "economic integration" by building a co-production between SNPC (Senegal), ENAPROC (Algeria), SATPEC (Tunisia) and his own production company. For the first time, Sembene also called on the services of a Tunisian lab for post-production of his film. For his *Faat Kine*, the production was the result of a truly international cooperation (France, Germany, Switzerland, U.S., Cameroon and Senegal) and the post-production was done in Morocco. With *Moolaadé*, Sembene has made his first film outside Senegal's national borders, in Burkina Faso. The technical crew was French, the set designer from Benin, the production managers from Burkina Faso and some machinists were from Senegal. The cast was selected in Burkina Faso and includes Malians and Burkinabe as well as actors from Côte d'Ivoire. Thus, in his project as an artist-filmmaker, Ousmane Sembene has realized the dream of a unified Africa that its political leaders have yet to produce.