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## TAUW

Waking up to his brother Oumon's sobs, and his father's angry harangue, Tauw rouses himself and stretches his long, dark body. His father, having finished spanking the boy, turns on Tauw. While Tauw washes himself, the older man shouts at him - "How do you expect to find a job, getting up at this hour? Say something...answer me...speak!" Tauw is silent.

A new day begins in the life of a young African; and a new motion picture, produced by the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches, makes its debut. But this film is not like any other church-produced mission film because it is the first such film about another country made by an artist native to the country.

When the Department of Education for Mission of the NCC first met to consider a film resource for the interdenominational study, "The New Generation in Africa," they examined research that suggested that most American churchmen knew very little about the African people. Even though the churchmen felt that their mission programs could help solve Africa's problems, they did not understand what the problems were. On the other hand, most church-produced films in the past had centered on mission programs generated by churches of the western world, and conveyed only an external, lack-of-depth view of the African people. What seemed to be called for

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was a film by an indigenous filmmaker, viewing the African people from an African perspective.

Tauw was made in Dakar, Senegal by a man most critics count as Africa's outstanding filmmaker, Ousmane Sembene. Sembene is the first African whose films have achieved international acclaim. Apart from being a filmmaker, he is also a novelist of some note, and he has gone through the working-man ranks as a fisherman, plumber, bricklayer, apprentice mechanic, dock worker and trade union leader. This background puts him in close touch with the people Tauw is about, Dakar's rapidly increasing population of semi-skilled and unskilled laborers and their families. The actors in the film come from the same milieu: they are not professional performers. They are the people who struggle to live in Dakar's slums, and who know the drama of Tauw intimately since they live it everyday. Sembene used only one professional actress in a bit part.

Tauw immerses us in the swirl of sights and sounds that are Dakar: the steel and glass of skyscrapers gleaming in the hot sun, and automobiles cruising down the wide boulevards; the port, full of the gigantic motions of machinery and the straining of men's muscles in the steaming heat of midday; the green and strangely cool homes of the well-to-do. Tauw's little brother carries produce home for two elegant ladies, who complain about the smell of fish in the market.

In the slum of tumbled wooden shacks where Tauw and his

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brother live, the voices of children and the clucking of chickens mix; the women, in brightly colored dresses, talk together and prepare food. On a sidewalk, idle young people form groups like the "Groupe sans Travail," the "Out-of-work Club", where they dance or stand around in small clusters talking about each other, or about what to do with the day.

Tauw's day is a long, frustrating effort to find a job. It's clear that he's spent many days like this one - running from one end of the city to the other, only to discover that he had run down all those hot streets for no reason. Despairing, he dreads a future that must, he reasons, lead him to stealing. He would be ashamed to beg. And if he cannot get a job...?

Tauw is caught between two generations, and two worlds. He cannot accept his father's dictatorial ways nor his mother's uncomplaining submissiveness, a marriage relationship that was the ideal in the past, but to Tauw, is old-fashioned. His relationship to Nafi his fiancée, is very different from the traditional way: he and Nafi have chosen each other; their families had nothing to do with it, and don't even know of their feelings for each other.

At the same time, Tauw can neither earn the respect of his father, nor come into his own manhood, because he cannot find a job. Senegal has very little industry; like many other young African states it cannot find employment for many of its educated youth, much less for its many unskilled young men.

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In the rural areas of the young African nations, where the traditional structures of African society still prevail, a young man's position is assured. He may be poor, but because of his situation within his own lineage group, (that is - the "expanded family", including uncles, cousins and ancestors), his vocation and his place in society are assured.

Dakar's bureaucracies, like those of other modern cities, seems impervious to the individual's needs. Tauw must pay money he does not have to look for a job that does not exist; he cannot rest on a park bench without subjecting himself to possible arrest as a vagrant. He is rootless, but just as there is no opening to the future.

But the old Africa too has institutions that cut off the individual at his point of need. Oumon, Tauw's younger brother, is spanked by his father in the film for playing hooky from Koran School. The vast majority of Senegal's people are Muslim. (Only ten percent are Christian.) The Wolof Tribe, in particular, has been Muslim for many years. The film Tauw does not look kindly on the institutions of Islam: the Koran teacher is not only not helpful, he is exploitative. Ouman is taught Arabic phrases we suspect he does not even understand; he is taught Arabic phrases we suspect he does not even understand; he is taught to beg "in the name of Allah" to raise fifty francs for the Koran teacher. On an odd job, he picks up three francs for himself, money his mother borrows from him to feed the jobless Tauw.

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Elaine Magalis.  
article on Tauw

For Christians it may be a relief to see another religion's institutions critically assessed. But if Tauw is to be used as a film study of Islamic culture and faith, it must be viewed on a profounder level than this. Perhaps the life vision that permeates this film is best summed up in religious terms when Tauw insists on looking for a job, despite the fact that there is little hope of finding one, because "you never know what Allah will bring."

Tauw is a film full of that kind of faith. Sembene put it in humanistic terms when he said in a recent interview, "the greatest courage for man is to struggle to live honestly, to earn a living for his family, to be at peace with his soul... this is greater courage than any soldier's act of bravery on the battlefield." The film sums it up when Tauw declares himself a man, takes responsibility for a wife and child, and goes off to try to make his way in an uncertain and unpromising future.