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MOVIE REVIEW

LA Times

'Ceddo': An Unholy War in Senegal

"Ceddo" (at the Westland II, West Los Angeles) is a fascinating parable by the distinguished film-maker Ousmane Sembene of Senegal about the origins of slavery and religious strife in Africa.

The word "Ceddo" comes from the Wolof language and means the common people in a feudal society that includes royalty, warriors, artisans and slaves.

The richly ethnologic drama centers on the political kidnapping of an apocryphal 17th-century tribal princess (Tabara Ndiaye) by a champion of the Ceddo (Ismaila Diagne) who abducts her as a protest against the proselytizing of the Moslems and the suppression of the ancient tribal fetish religion. The film also concerns Ndiaye's family's efforts to rescue her and the interference by Moslems and other religious leaders that ultimately triggers a three-way religious war.

"Ceddo" also deals with struggle of the common people from a historical perspective. At one point they have to decide if they will fight, convert or go into exile. Sembene is a masterful conveyor of moral struggles. He criticizes religious fanaticism and the usurpation of power, and stresses the importance of individual action and courage.

The film cuts back and forth between the 17th century and contemporary Africa, which makes it hard to follow at times. The style is very rigorous and "Ceddo" is less accessible than other Sembene films such as "The Black Girl" or "The Money Order."

Individual characters, except for the heroic princess, are well-cast prototypes. Beautiful and convincing Tabara

'CEDDO'

A New Yorker Film release. Director Ousmane Sembene. Screenplay Sembene. Photography Georges Caristan. Editor Florence Eymon. Music Manu Dibango. Featuring Tabara Ndiaye, Moustapha Yade, Ismaila Diagne, Goure, Makoura Dia, Oumar Gueye, Mamadou Dioum, Nar Modou Sene, Ousmane Camara, Ousmane Sembene.

Running time: 2 hrs.
Times-rated: Mature.

Ndiaye is a triumphant heroine who represents future hope and courage.

At his most bitter, Sembene laments how people are tricked into slavery. He also deals with persecution, the low status of women in Africa and with Islamic colonialism.

Manu Dibango has written a fine score that cuts from one century and civilization to another.

Full of irony and sorrow, "Ceddo," Sembene's sixth film, is well photographed by Georges Caristan, who lights the small peasant farming villages of West Africa to make them represent both past and present.

The film is in Wolof with English subtitles, and has some scenes of nudity and violence (Times-rated Mature).

—LINDA GROSS

Cuban Film 'Lucia' to Be Shown

The Cuban film 'Lucia' will show at the Royal Theater, 11523 Santa Monica Blvd., West Los Angeles, on Sunday at 11 a.m. as part of the continuing Women's Film Series. The film was directed by Humberto Solas.