



Ousmane Sembene's *Camp De Thiaroye* in the Context of Anticolonial African Literature

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Abstract

Almost all of the countries on the African continent have been under the domination of European powers for a certain period of time throughout their history. As a result, many books have been written on the continent, adopting an anti-colonial rhetoric. Numerous authors have analyzed European colonialism and offered suggestions for getting rid of it. Senegalese Ousmane Sembene is an anti-colonial writer and director. In a way, his films can be considered as a version of anticolonial literature transferred to the movie screen. Sembene is an extremely important name for African cinema. He is the first person directed a feature film (*La Noire de...*, 1966) in Sub-Saharan Africa. His political stance has been a major factor in shaping the identity of the cinema not only of his country Senegal, but of the entire African continent. He has influenced a significant number of directors from the African continent and is very important in the context of political. His pan-Africanist personality and view of cinema as a tool of social transformation allow his films to be evaluated in the context of anticolonialist literature. Anticolonial themes are seen in Sembene's films both in terms of content and mode of production. The movie *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988) also has an important place in this context. In this film, he exhibited the ways in which colonialism produced symbolic and physical violence. He also revealed the stages of Africans gaining consciousness on their way to independence. In this study, Sembene's *Camp de Thiaroye* is analyzed in order to reveal the relationship between anticolonialist African literature and African cinema. As a result of the study, it was seen that Sembene produced a strong anticolonial discourse through his cinema and brought up many issues mentioned by the anticolonial literature.

Keywords: Anticolonialism, Postcolonialism, African Literature, Senegalese Cinema, Ousmane Sembene.

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Antikolonyal Afrika Literatürü Ekseninde Ousmane Sembene'nin *Thiaroye Kampı* Filmi

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Öz

Afrika kıtasındaki ülkelerin neredeyse tamamı tarihleri boyunca belirli bir süre Avrupalı kolonyal güçlerin egemenliği altında kalmıştır. Bu durum, kıtada hayat bulan literatür içerisinde sömürge karşıtı bir söylem ile ön plana çıkan eserlerin kaleme alınmasını beraberinde getirmiştir. Afrikalı ve Afrika kökenli çok sayıda yazar Avrupa sömürgeciliğini analiz etmiş ve bundan kurtulmak için öneriler sunmuştur. Senegalli Ousmane Sembene de sömürge karşıtı bir yazar ve yönetmen olarak sinemasını sömürge karşıtı bir hassasiyet uyarınca inşa etmiştir. Onun filmleri bir bakıma, antikolonyal literatürün beyaz perdeye aktarılmış hali olarak da kabul edilebilir. Sembene kıta sineması için son derece önemli bir isimdir. O, Sahra-altı Afrika'da uzun metrajlı bir filmin (*Kara Kız*, 1966) yönetmenliğini yapan ilk kişidir. Onun bu özelliği ve politik tutumu, yalnızca ülkesi Senegal'in değil, bütün bir Afrika kıtasının sinemasının kimliğinin şekillenmesinde başat bir etken olmuştur. Afrika kıtasından önemli sayıda yönetmeni etkilemiştir ve politik sinema bağlamında da çok önemli bir yerde durmaktadır. Pan-Afrikanist kişiliği ve sinemayı sosyal dönüşümün bir aracı olarak görmesi, filmlerinin antikolonyalist literatür ekseninde değerlendirilebilir olmasına imkân tanır. Yönetmenin filmleri gerek içerik gerek üretim biçimi düzleminde antikolonyal izleklerin görüldüğü yapımlardır. Onuncu filmi *Thiaroye Kampı* (1988) bu bağlamda önemli bir yerde durmaktadır. Bu filmde sömürgeciliğin sembolik ve fiziksel şiddet üretme biçimlerini teşhir eden yönetmen, Afrikalıların bağımsızlık yolunda bilinç kazanma evrelerini gözler önüne serer. Bu çalışmada, Sembene'nin *Thiaroye Kampı* filmi, antikolonyalist Afrika literatürü ile Afrika sineması ilişkisinin ortaya çıkarılması amacıyla ele alınmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucunda, yönetmenin sinema aracılığıyla güçlü bir antikolonyalist söylem ürettiği ve antikolonyal literatürün üzerinde durduğu birçok meseleyi gündeme getirdiği görülmüştür. Film, antikolonyal literatürün sinemaya uyarlanmış hali olarak kabul edilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Antikolonyalizm, Afrika edebiyatı, Afrika, Senegal Sineması, Ousmane Sembene.

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Introduction

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period in which the European imperial powers changed their policies on Africa. Although Britain already had influence in South Africa and France in Algeria and Senegal, by 1870 Europeans had direct control over only ten percent of the continent. This was due to diseases, the difficulty of transportation to the interior of the continent and the fact that African collaborators gave the Europeans most of what they wanted. However, by the 1870s, Europe's industrial development and the international economic competition led the European powers to prefer to dominate the whole of Africa in order to have direct access to new markets and raw materials. Italy and Germany, having recently achieved national unification, started making their presence felt in Africa, leading to another development that compelled European powers to vie for superiority in the region (Orosz, 2008, pp. 12-13). In order to prevent this competition for dominance from causing greater damage, the European powers organized a conference for the division of the continent, which started in Berlin in November 1884. As a result of the conference, European imperial powers agreed on how they would divide the continent. With this agreement, Belgian King Leopold II's rights over the Congo were recognized and Germany established colonies in Namibia, Togo, Cameroon and Tanzania (Gorman, 2008, p. 83). By 1912, all countries on the continent except Ethiopia and Liberia were under the rule of European imperial powers (Orosz, 2008, p. 12). The political dominance of European powers over Africa weakened after the Second World War. A significant majority of the continent gained independence in the 1950s and 1960s (Spielvogel, 2018, p. 878).

In this study, through the descriptive analysis method, Ousmane Sembene's *Camp de Thiaroye* (Camp de Thiaroye, 1988) is evaluated in the context of anti-colonial African literature. First, the works of writers from the continent are analyzed as part of their anti-colonial attitudes. Then, Sembene's film is evaluated through this literature. This evaluation is important in terms of seeing the impact of anticolonial literature on African cinema. Because Sembene is the first person to shoot a feature-length film in sub-Saharan Africa. He is considered the father of African cinema (Ellerson, 2004, p. 185) and is one of the leading figures who gave African cinema its soul. The film comments on many of the main issues that anti-colonial writers have emphasized. In this way, it will be possible to see the reflection of the ideas of thinkers from the continent on colonialism in the context of cinema. In addition to African anti-colonial writers, the study also utilizes the works of Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, both are Caribbean Africans. This is because both of them identify themselves as Africans. For example, Aimé Césaire, in his book *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, expressed his devotion and longing for Africa (Césaire, 2000). He brought the continent's problems to the agenda and shared them through his works. He also conducted psychoanalytic analyses (Macey, 2012, p. 325) and offered solutions for the mental independence of Africans.

Anticolonial Discourse and Africa

The origins of anticolonial African thought begin with the colonization of Africa by Europeans. Colonization brought with it physical and intellectual resistance. As time passed, Africans questioned the order established by the colonizers and offered solutions to get rid of it. They pondered on the perspective from which they should view the world as Africans. They saw literature as a tool for awakening. The process,

which started in the 1930s (Jenkins, 2021, p.79), continued until the independence and then in the postcolonial period.

Many thinkers from the African continent and the Caribbean region have written on colonialism. They have addressed the phenomenon of colonialism from different angles. Writers who criticized European colonialism argued that Europe had a colonial nature. Albert Memmi stated that a European living in colonial lands would inevitably have a colonial nature. Stating that colonialism is based on economic interests, he says everything, including violence, would be applied to in order not to lose this advantage and added: "A colonizer inevitably asserts and accepts that the colonizer is of supreme virtue and the colonized is lack of it. However, the more the oppressor maltreat the oppressed, the more he simultaneously acknowledge his guilt. This situation continues until the oppressor aims to eliminate the oppressed. Increasingly intensified oppression will turn the oppressor into a tyrant". In the following pages, Memmi states: "Every colonial nation carries the seed of fascist tendencies within itself" (2014, p. 76). Aimé Césaire also stated that Nazism was in fact a part of European culture and it had been practiced by Europeans for centuries. Colonialism was based on not accepting the exploited as human beings, and this approach continues to increase as long as the colonial order continued (Césaire, 2007, p. 74). Fanon also stated that Europeans, who benefited from colonialism, had a generalized attitude of seeing Africans as inferior to themselves and that Europe had a racist attitudes in general (Fanon, 2016, p. 117).

Anti-colonial African writers have pointed out that colonialism has not only economic and political but also mental dimensions. Frantz Fanon is undoubtedly the name who discussed the mental dimensions of the exploitation experienced by Africans the most. Using the method of psychoanalysis, Fanon analyzed the mental disorders experienced by Africans. He stated that the identity division was caused by colonialism. According to him, a person living under colonial rule has an inferiority complex towards Europeans. While Africans tend to humiliate and despise people from his own region and race, they find Europeans and every object and idea of European origin powerful, beautiful and irresistible; "Black and mixed race... The first has only one option and concern: to be white or to become whitened. The concern of the second is not only to become whitened but also to avoid returning to the hell of blackness. In this situation, can anything be more absurd than a mixed-race person choosing to marry a Black person?" (Fanon, 2016, p. 75).

Colonialism causes alienation on a personal and social level. This alienation results accepting European bourgeoisie and its standards as the supreme value; "The result of this was what we might call colonial alienation, the isolation of the child's sensibility from its natural and social environment. Alienation was ossified in the teaching of history, geography, music, where the European bourgeoisie was always the center of the universe" (Thiong'o, 2017, p. 45). Albert Memmi has also stated that inferiority complex develops in the colonial environment. He stated that this situation occurs when the colonized compares the deficiencies that he and his people have with the riches that the colonizer has. The colonized envy the colonizer. He hates everything that makes him who he is and wants to be like the colonizer. Because the colonizer has exactly all the deficiencies that the colonized wants to have (Memmi, 2014, pp. 126-127).

Erving Goffman stated that in everyday life, people tend to pretend, consciously or unconsciously. Showing oneself in a different way for daily interests is a common

behaviour (2014b, p. 31). The author also stated that people can internalize their personas over time. In another study, the author says that people who are outside the accepted standards will feel inadequate and shame (Goffman, 2014a, p. 36). The individual who has a stigma for whatever reason will think that the respect he does not receive is due to the stain he has and will consider himself as problematic in terms of his essence. Anti-colonial African writers have also carried this phenomenon to the colonial situation. Since all traits coded as good in the colonial context are symbolized by the colonizer, the colonized considers himself problematic and this results in the emergence of psychological problems in him.

For Fanon, the phenomenon of language is both an important component of colonialism and an principal cause of the mental division experienced by Africans. Stating that speaking a language does not only mean communicating, but also participating in the world of meaning of that language, so the notion of language is therefore important for Africans (Fanon, 2016, pp. 33-34). The issue of language is also on the agenda of Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. He conveyed the message that Africans are distancing from their own universe of meaning by speaking the language of the colonizer rather than their own language (Thiong'o, 2017, pp. 44-45). Memmi said that the colonizer's language is spoken in many areas in the colonies, and this creates a problem of belonging for Africans. According to the author, the bilingualism of the colonized also creates a spiritual and cultural duality, and these two areas do not create harmony, but rather result in conflict (Memmi, 2014, pp. 115-116).

Another issue emphasized by African anti-colonial writers is education. South African Nelson Mandela opposed the shaping of education policy according to the dynamics of colonialism (Mandela, 1990, p. 39). Albert Memmi has also noted that the colonized have little opportunity to go to school, and those who have access to this right learn not their own culture and history, but rather the values of the colonizer. According to the author, a colonized African cannot connect with his school and teacher and this education returns to him as identity fragmentation (Memmi, 2014, p. 114). Thiong'o also states that the colonization of the continent started with the Berlin Treaty of 1884, but the continuation of colonialism became possible through education. One of the biggest factors in the existence and maintenance of a colonial situation is cultural imperialism. He says that colonizer not only change colonized's name and language, but also their unity, solidarity, power of resistance and belief in itself (Thiong'o, 2017, p. 24).

Beyond the colonial situation in Africa, the physical and mental barriers faced by Africans who go to Europe are also among the topics covered in these books. Frantz Fanon, for example, states that it is very important to go to colonizer's mainland for a person living in a colonial situation. An African who goes to Europe will be discriminated by Europeans, even though African person try to adapt to that society. Europeans always remind Africans that they are different, communicate with them as if they were children. When the African tries to communicate on an equal level, he is immediately reminded of his inferiority (Fanon, 2016, pp. 49-53). In such a situation, the African begins to question what he has been taught by the Europeans. As he realizes the truth, he becomes conscious (Fanon, 2016, p. 184). Memmi has a similar thought with Fanon. He states that the African who is not accepted by the colonizer will inevitably meet his own history and culture, confront it and adopt it (Memmi, 2014, pp. 128-129).

Nelson Mandela stated that Africa had its own form of government and social structure before colonialism. According to him, people in Africa lived in prosperity and Europeans destroyed this system with their colonial activities (Mandela, 1990, pp. 36-37). Aimé Césaire also dwells on African civilizations destroyed by Europeans. But he does not advocate a return. He suggests moving towards the future with an awareness of this civilization and history (Césaire, 2007, pp. 86-87). Fanon also emphasizes the richness of Africa's indigenous resources, stating that Europeans have depleted them. He specifically cites manpower as an example; "Whenever and wherever an uprising or resistance movement emerges, the military authority pushes black soldiers to the forefront. Thus, once again, 'colored people' become the ones undermining the freedom struggle of other 'colored people'" (Fanon, 2016, p. 130).

Along with colonialism, African writers also criticize the local bourgeoisie, whom they see as local collaborators. According to them, these people ensure the continuation of the colonial situation even if independence is gained. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o stated that the African neocolonizers owed their existence to tools such as police boots, clergy, barbed wire and the judicial system (Thiong'o, 2017, pp. 22-23). Aimé Césaire also said that Europeans got along very well with Africans who chose to serve them. The author stated that this situation contributed to the continuation of exploitation (Césaire, 2007, p. 79).

As can be seen, African anticolonial writers have adopted a writing practice that exposes colonialism. They emphasized that colonialism was not only about governance, but also about the cognitive aspects of human beings and societies. These features are also emphasized by Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembene.

Senegalese Cinema and Ousmane Sembene

Senegal gained independence in 1960 (Harney, 2004, p. 56). Until this date, the country was a colony of France. Since France dictated that cinema in its colonies was an activity that could only be enjoyed by people from the French mainland, the people of the region's relationship with cinema was limited to mere spectatorship (Turégano, 2004, pp. 77-78). Benin-born Paulin Soumanou Vieyra's experiences in this regard are important in terms of showing the French cinema policy in the region. Vieyra wanted to shoot a movie in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, in the early 1950s. But the colonial administration did not allow it. Vieyra, who was a student in Paris, then shot *Afrique Sur Seine* (Africa on the Seine, 1955) in Paris, showing the social environment of Africans living in this city (Lovejoy, 2021, pp. 5-6).

The achievement of independence paved the way for the recognition of the importance of cinema and the adoption of this technical and artistic innovation (Smith, 2003, p. 791). Senegal became one of the most important film centers not only in West Africa but also in Sub-Saharan Africa. The first fictional short film shot in sub-Saharan Africa, *The Wagoner* (Borom Sarret, 1963), and the first feature film, *Black Girl* (La Noire de..., 1966), were both shot in Senegal. Both films were directed by Ousmane Sembene. Sembene is therefore considered the father of African cinema (Ellerson, 2004, p. 185).

Along with Sembene, Djibril Diop Mambéty and Safi Faye built Senegalese cinema in the 1960s and 1970s. Mambéty made films that questioned the postcolonial situation and created a surreal cinematic language (Thackway, 2003, p. 10). Safi Faye, the first female filmmaker not only in Senegal but also in sub-Saharan Africa, made

documentary films depicting the post-independence situation of her country (Namaz, 2016, p. 5). These three filmmakers continued to produce films in Senegal until the 1990s. Except for a few examples such as Ababacar Samb-Makharam and Mansour Sora Wade, there were not many new names in the field of cinema. The number of films produced was quite small (Niang, 2021, p. 202).

As of the second half of the 1990s, a new generation of filmmakers emerged who completed their film education outside their home country, mostly in France. These filmmakers, like their predecessors, continued to make films questioning the post-colonial situation. But they did so in the light of their own experiences. In their lives, issues such as migration, displacement, identity and belonging are extremely important. Most of them live in two different countries, one of which is Senegal. For example, Paris-born Dyana Gaye focuses on the phenomenon of migration through three immigrants living in New York, Dakar and Turin in her film *Stars* (Des Etoiles, 2013) (Connolly, 2015, p. 30). French-born and Sorbonne-educated Alain Gomis' *L'Afrance* (2001) is an important production in this context. The film centers on the struggle of a Senegalese man living illegally in France (Petty, 2019, p. 431). *Atlantics* (Atlantique), shot by Paris-born Mati Diop in 2019, was also a very important production. In this film, Diop addressed the issue of migration in a surreal context centered on the theme of ghosts (Budor, 2020). As can be seen through the sample films, filmmakers who live and receive their education in France constitute an important part of the country's cinema.

Ousmane Sembene was born in 1923 in the Casamance-Ziguinchor region of Senegal to a poor family (Nevins et al., 2019, p. 108). He had to leave his education unfinished. He worked in various jobs. He educated himself. Afterwards, he went to the capital Dakar to work, and with the outbreak of the Second World War, he served in the French army and been in Italy and Germany. After the war, he went to France to work (Diala-Ogamba, 2021, p. 215). He first worked at the Citroën factory in Paris, then went to Marseille and became a dockworker. During his time in France, he participated in political protests and strikes (Curto, 2012, p. 54).

Sembene is not only a filmmaker, but also a man of letters. He published his first book of poetry in 1956. In this book, *Black Docker* (Le Docker Noir), he focused on the problems faced by African dockers. In *O My Country, My Beautiful People* (O Pays, Mon Beau Peuple!, 1957), he wrote about the experiences of a person returning to his city after a long absence. *God's Bits of Wood* (Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, 1960) centered on an attempted rebellion under colonial rule (Yosté, 2008, p. 721). Published in 1962, *Voltaïque* consists of short stories. The book includes stories about the exploitation of workers' labor, the influence of Senegalese clergymen marabouts on the people, polygamy, and other issues that Sembene focused on throughout his artistic life. The story of Sembene's first feature film, *The Black Girl* (La Noire de...), was also taken from a story in this book (Tshikumambila 1986: 488). *L'Harmattan* (1964) is about the 1958 referendum on France's future in Africa. *Impotence* (Xala), published in 1973, narrates the political and social corruption of the black elite that emerged after independence. *The Last Empire* (Le Dernier de l'Empire, 1981) centers on a corrupt country in postcolonial Africa (Irele & Jeyifo, 2010, p. 325). *Niiwam and Taaw* (1987) is about moral decadence in Senegal (Yosté, 2008, p. 722). *Guelwaar* was published in 1996, four years after the movie of the same name. In this work, Sembene wrote about the struggle between the Christian and Muslim community in Senegal (Syrotinski, 2007, pp. 71-72).

As seen in his works, Sembene is an artist who focuses on colonial and postcolonial issues. He questions the past and present of his country Senegal, its state of dependency and its position on the global context. In the early 1960s, he thought that as a writer his works were not reaching a wide enough audience due to the low literacy rate in his country and decided to become a filmmaker. In 1962, he went to Moscow to study cinema (Hicks, 2016, p. 133). He completed his first film, *The Driver* (Borom Sarrret), in 1963. The film establishes a center-periphery and rich foreigner-poor Senegalese dichotomy through a day in the life of a cart driver living under difficult conditions in Dakar. The director's films shared similar themes with his novels; the humiliation, inferiority complex and lack of belonging experienced by Senegalese in the postcolonial period (*La Noire de...*, *Mandabi*), the injustices of the colonial time (*Emitai*, *Camp de Thiaroye*), the problems faced by women in traditional society (*Faat Kiné*, *Moolaadé*), the belief systems in Senegal and the problems caused by this difference (*Ceddo*, *Guelwaar*).

In his films, Sembene not only depicted the culture and traditions of his country, but also discussed the problems and conflicts experienced by Senegalese and Africans as a whole. His films are highly realistic and didactic (Smith, 2003, s. 762-763). He portrayed the problems experienced by his country and his continent in a straightforward, linear way that he thought the audience would understand. His importance lies not only in initiating film production in sub-Saharan Africa and raising important issues. He produced films for nearly fifty years in a country and region where the average annual film production is at most one, and where most filmmakers cannot make a second film due to economic problems.

Anticolonial Discourse in *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988)

Ousmane Sembene's tenth film *Camp de Thiaroye* is about the experiences of a group of West African soldiers who fought in the Second World War. They stay for a short period of time in the military camp Thiaroye on their way home. In fact, the African soldiers in the camp were forcibly removed from their villages after the outbreak of the war and fought for France on many fronts. The French authorities have decided that West African soldiers will wait in this camp before being demobilized, each coming from a different West African region.

Although they fought the enemy on an equal footing with French soldiers, the colonial relationship was re-established after the war. French commanders establish their relations with African soldiers according to this hierarchy. African soldiers are provided with less food, and any potential security situation is dealt with harshly. This is a demeaning attitude for African soldiers who fought for France. A decision taken by the French authorities leads to unrest among African soldiers. The soldiers returned from Europe with French Franc, but in the region, African Franc is used. French commanders decided to exchange the French Franc for a significantly lower amount. African soldiers opposed this decision and initiated a rebellion in the camp. Subsequently, they captured a high-ranking French commander. After the situation got out of control, French authorities announced that the money would be given at its value. In response, African soldiers ended the rebellion. The next day, the camp was bombed by French tanks, and African soldiers were killed by their French comrades. The film is based on a true event. The bombing incident mentioned in the film occurred on December 1, 1944 (Neba-Fuh, 2021, p. 203). France killed its own soldiers, citing their disruption of order and

disobedience. While the French army officially stated the death toll as thirty-five, African soldiers claimed it to be three hundred. France formally apologized in 2012 (Moshiri, 2013). Here the director shows that colonialism was built on an unequal social order. The issue that the authors particularly emphasize is also brought to the movie screen through Sembene.

Camp de Thiaroye is built upon a strong anti-colonial discourse. A fundamental concern emphasized by anti-colonial writers is the imposition of specific identities and obligations on individuals in a colonial situation. This holds true for individuals on both sides of the colonial situation. We can easily observe this through the character Diatta, who is in the lead role of the film. Diatta is forcibly taken from his village to be conscripted into the Second World War. To better understand his story, one needs to look at the director's third film, "*Emitai*." In *Emitai*, the forced conscription of young men from the Effok village in southern Senegal due to the war is narrated. Diatta is also one of those taken from his village in Emitai. He has received legal education, is interested in music and literature, has married a French woman and had children in Europe. He does not tend to interpret himself through traditional point of views.

Although the colonial situation forces individuals to make specific choices, Diatta resists it. Colonialism is not built on equality; it involves a powerful-oppressor and a powerless-oppressed binary. This compels individuals to live their lives within certain patterns. However, Diatta has resisted this. Even after learning from visiting relatives upon his return to Senegal that his family had been killed by the French, he tried to maintain his fortitude. He believed that the fault did not lie with the French as a whole, but only with the commanders who gave the order. Anticolonial writers have imagined a world where all peoples (blacks and whites) live together in harmony. Global happiness is seen as an achievable goal for them. However, especially Frantz Fanon, although he shares this belief, has expressed that in situations where there is resistance to global happiness, the oppressed (blacks) may revolt. Violence is a way for the oppressed to engage in a struggle for equality. Other authors do not say that violence can be directly resorted to, but that this is inevitably the end. In this regard, Diatta also participated in the revolt against the French commanders, like his friends, to ensure justice prevails.

Albert Memmi has expressed that the colonial situation will eventually come to an end. The reason for this is the colonizer's increasing reliance on violence to sustain the unjust flow of resources, ultimately impoverishing the colonized further each day. The colonized will eventually stop this course of events because, at some point, they will have nothing left to lose. In the film, World War II becomes a channel that allows Africans to resist colonialism and put an end to the status quo. As the French engaged in an all-encompassing struggle against the Germans, they also sought to maximize the benefits from their African territories. They put African men to the front lines of the war and transported agricultural products to the mainland. Consequently, Diatta's relatives and, by extension, the soldiers in the camp had a highly negative attitude towards the French. At one point, the soldiers, have nothing left to lose, rebelled against the French commanders. Although the film concludes with colonial violence, African countries began to gain their independence after the war. Another important aspect of the emphasis on World War II in the film is that it marks a significant turning point for Africans. Many Africans left their countries and continent during the war, gaining a

broader understanding of the world and experiencing what it means to fight for their homeland (Neba-Fuh, 2021, p. 203).

Colonialism is not built solely on physical violence. The exploitation of the mind is also involved in colonialism at the same rate. A hierarchical order was constructed within colonialism, surrounded by strict rules, and this was applied to the exploited people. Hierarchical classification has been based on color. White Europeans are considered superior, while black Africans are seen as subjects to be governed. In the film, such a colonial order is depicted. In the camp, French soldiers receive ample portions of meat in their meals, while African soldiers receive very little. However, the film portrays this as one of the justifications for resistance as it symbolizes the awakening of Africans. The issue of awakening is important. The director's main aim is for Africans to realize that they have been exploited. The story of an awakening and transformation is shown through the protagonist. The representation of Africans who do not make this transformation is shown through the soldier called Pays.

There is a black soldier named Pays who remained a prisoner in German camps for a long time during the war, resulting in him losing his sanity and becoming unable to speak. Pays means "country" or "homeland" in French. The specific African country from which Pays originates is not mentioned throughout the film, thus making him a symbol representing the entire continent of Africa. Pays symbolizes Africans who have lost consciousness, become speechless, and lost their communication with the world as a result of exploitation.

Camp de Thiaroye stands out not only in terms of its subject matter but also on the mode of production, distinguishing itself from popular cinema conventions. Although it has a central character, the use of wide shots and the focus on the stories of many different characters demonstrate that the film tells the story of a larger community. In this way, the film does not become a production that epicly deals with the events happening to a single character but rather transforms into an allegorical narrative representing the experiences of an entire people. The film maintains this approach even on the economic level. In doing so, it proves that its effort to be independent is not only evident in content and form but also in the mode of production. Despite African cinema is part of an international production, distribution, and exhibition network, and films being largely shot with European support, Sembene did not receive support from European funds for this film. The film came to life as a joint production of Senegal, Algeria, and Tunisia (Arenas, 2011, p. 243). As Martin Roberts pointed out, if the film had been made with French support, it could not have been such an independent production and would not have been able to generate a powerful discourse (2005, p. 243).

Conclusion

In this study, Ousmane Sembene's *Camp de Thiaroye* has been evaluated through the lens of the anti-colonial discourse that has emerged in the literary field. Colonialism has led a significant number of African writers to engage in intellectual struggles within their respective fields. Writers have approached colonialism from different perspectives and have analyzed it. They have theorized about how colonialism could come to an end and have played a significant role in raising awareness among the people of the continent.

Anti-colonialist writer and director Ousmane Sembene has struggled with colonialism through his own experiences in his works, seeking solutions to post-colonial issues. As

his primary concern was reaching the citizens of his country and continent, he has not only been involved in literature but also in cinema. Recognizing the power of cinema early on, he became one of the first filmmakers not only in his country but also among the filmmakers of Sub-Saharan Africa, producing the first narrative films. Since he did not separate his artistic creations and aesthetic concerns from the political, economic, and social independence of his country and continent, he approached each of his films with a Pan-Africanist spirit. He adopted the motto of exposing the system established by the colonialists.

Sembene discusses anti-colonial themes throughout *Camp de Thiaroye*. He addresses many issues that anti-colonial writers have emphasized. One of these issues is the establishment of a hierarchical order in the context of race. Likewise, in the movie shown that despite Africans and French fought together, the European-African dichotomy is reinstated after the war. However, soldiers those carrying both European and African genes, are considered more respectable by the French.

Anti-colonial writers emphasize that Africa's resources are exploited by Europeans. In the film, this is vividly portrayed. While Diatta's family is being killed by French soldiers, their sons are simultaneously forced to fight for the French army against the Germans. Colonialism does not only involve physical occupation or political governance. There is a perception management through educational policies. Inferiority complexes arising from the gathering of social ownership in a specific class and hysteria resulting from poverty constitute the mental aspect of colonialism.

The regime established by colonizers is exposed by anti-colonialist writers, who also provide solutions to this situation, primarily through rebellion and uprising. This is largely an act of defiance and revolt. In the film, the uprising of a group of soldiers seeking equality is depicted in the same way. The film exhibits an anticolonialist stance not only in its content but also in its mode of production. While European funds are extensively utilized in almost all stages of production, distribution, and exhibition in African cinema, the film consciously avoids relying on such support. The director emphasizes the importance of independence not only through the message but also within the context of production relations.

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