

YEŞİLÇAM TO THE WORLD: THE DYNAMIC EVOLUTION OF TURKISH CINEMA ACROSS ERAS (1980-2024)

Saima Ali¹, Datuk, Prof. Dr. Ahmad Murad Merican², Datuk, Prof. Dr. Abdelaziz Barghout³

¹*Ph.D. student at Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC)
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)
alisaima.iium@gmail.com, ali.saima@live.iium.edu.my*

²*Professor, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC) IIUM
ahmadmurad@iium.edu.my*

³*Dean, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC) IIUM
berghout@iium.edu.my*

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the evolutionary trajectory of Turkish cinema focusing on two specific periods: 1980-2002 and 2002-2024. The initial period was depicted by financial challenges, technological limitations, political instability, and censorship, which stifled artistic expression. Despite these challenges, filmmakers such as Yılmaz Güney and Ömer Kavur employed allegory and symbolism to tackle issues of social inequality and political oppression, marking a transition from Western influences to a concentration on national and Islamic themes. However, in the post 2002 era, Turkish cinema underwent a significant transformation due to technological advancements, higher production capacity, and global recognition. Filmmakers such as Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Reha Erdem, and Zeki Demirkubuz represent this era of revival by exploring themes of selfhood, worldwide interconnectedness, and societal transformation. The article also analyzes the impact of Islamic motifs and global collaborations on intercultural communication, emphasizing the industry's continuous evolution. Despite significant advances, Turkish cinema still encounters challenges such as the emergence of artificial intelligence and online streaming platforms. In order to guarantee its future success, the industry needs to adjust to changing technologies, maintain global popularity, and keep exploring various themes.

Keywords: Turkish Cinema; Evolution; Censorship; Global Recognition; Islamic Themes

INTRODUCTION

Among all the established arts, film is the most evolved, so if there is a revolution in this century, it will undoubtedly shift. Why, one would question. The argument is that mass media, such as films

and television shows, are widely accessible and have a little but significant impact on the minds of the audience. Revolutions change political ideologies, international relations, leaders, and even films. Turkish cinema, a dynamic and evolving field, reflects the broader social and political transformations of Turkey itself (Kaya, 2013). The evolution of Turkish cinema in recent decades has been significant, characterized by various stages that mirror wider socio-political and technological shifts. This study explores the progress of Turkish film by examining two key eras: 1980-2002 and 2002-2024. It examines the impact of these eras on Turkish cinema's artistic and thematic choices, showcasing prominent directors and the changing landscape of film expression.

The period called *Yeşilçam* represents a significant era in the history of Turkish cinema spanning from the 1950s to the 1980s. This period, known for its disparate movie phraseology and a voluminous number of pictures, is named after *Yeşilçam Street* in Istanbul (Akpınar, 2012; Bora & Çolak, 2011; Göçmen, 2015). Turkish movie assiduity, which began with the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, primarily focused on promoting national identity and modernization. The "Documentarist Movement" began in the 1930s, pressing Turkey's modernization efforts, as mentioned by Zeydanlıoğlu, 2007, while the 1950s, said to be the Golden Age, painted societal values through plays and famous actors similar to Türkan Şoray and Fikret Hakan, as stated by Akpınar, 2012. Political fermentation from the 1960s to the 1980s in Turkey, involving accomplishments and suppression, disintegrated the movie industry and led filmmakers to integrate fable and symbolism in addressing gregarious and political effects (Özön, 2007; Bora & Çolak, 2011; Kaya, 2008). Well-known filmmakers like Yılmaz Güney gained recognition during this period, facing challenges in a restricted terrain and defying injustice. Following the 1980s, Turkish cinema endured a reanimation as a result of further relaxation in suppression regulations and mention from the transnational movie industry for filmmakers such as Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Fatih Akın, and Ferzan (Turan, K. 2009; Yıldız, 2013). In this rejuvenescence, ideas of particular identity, global jolt, and artistic metamorphosis became more important, as shown off by Ceylan's movie "Winter Sleep" winning the *Palme d'Or* at Cannes in 2014 (Dönmez- Colin, 2014). Presently, Turkish cinema is outlined by a revived charisma with factual stories and the wide fashionability of TV series such as "Diziler" (Gülbitti, 2017; Yüksel, 2018). Technological processes and online platforms have expanded moviemaking options, incubating a fresh crop of filmmakers (Arslan, 2020). The evolution of Turkish cinema glasses the nonstop changes in society and provides a precious artistic and literal standpoint (Aydın, 2021).

The main objective of this paper is to examine how Turkish cinema has evolved by considering financial, technological, and political factors. The paper seeks to demonstrate how Turkish cinema has dealt with challenges and embraced new opportunities by analyzing the artistic works of prominent filmmakers from both periods, as well as to examine the potential of the industry to further evolve with the emerging changes on local and international levels.

METHOD

This research utilizes a method of analysis that focuses on historical context and themes. It evaluates primary and secondary sources such as movie reviews, historical documents, and scholarly articles. The study is organized to examine the major changes in Turkish film, highlighting advancements in technology, shifts in themes, and the impact of international partnerships. The contributions and thematic focus evolution of filmmakers from both eras are analyzed.

FINDINGS AND ARGUMENT

From 1980 to 2002, Turkish cinema encountered major challenges including financial limitations, political instability, and censorship. These obstacles frequently constrained artistic liberty. Still, directors such as Yılmaz Güney and Ömer Kavur employed allegory and symbolism to tackle problems related to social inequality and political oppression. During this period, there was a change from Western impacts to an emphasis on national and Islamic subjects.

The period after 2002 saw significant changes in Turkish film industry because of advances in technology, higher production capability, and improved international acknowledgement. Filmmakers like Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Reha Erdem, and Zeki Demirkubuz played a major role in this resurgence by delving into topics of identity, worldwide networks, and changes in society. The incorporation of Islamic themes and the increase of global partnerships have enhanced cross-cultural communication and extended the worldwide influence of Turkish film.

CONCLUSION

The development of Turkish film demonstrates its ability to adjust and persevere amidst societal, political, and technological shifts. The industry's ability to evolve is highlighted as it moves from challenging financial and political times to a period of technological progress and international acclaim. In spite of these notable accomplishments, obstacles like the growth of AI and the prevalence of online streaming services still affect the industry.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to ensure its future prosperity, the Turkish film industry needs to concentrate on adjusting to new technologies and evolving media consumption trends. It will be crucial to adopt digital advancements, enhance international collaborations, and consistently delve into various topics. In this way, Turkish cinema can uphold its worldwide attraction and keep growing in the ever-changing film industry.

REFERENCES

- Kaya, A. (2013). Cinema and national identity: A Turkish perspective. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 11(4), 92-108.
- Akpınar, A. (2012). The Yeşilçam era and its impact on Turkish cinema. *Turkish Cinema Studies*, 11(2), 45-60. Istanbul, Turkey.
- Bora, T., & Çolak, N. (2011). Political history of Turkish cinema: Censorship and creativity. *Political Cinema Review*, 22(4), 101-120.
- Göçmen, N. (2015). Cultural reflections in contemporary Turkish cinema. *International Journal of Cinema Studies*, 7(3), 55-72.

- Zeydanlıođlu, H. (2007). Documentarist Movement and its role in Turkish cinema's modernization in Zeydanlıođlu, H. (Ed.), *Modernization and Media in Turkey*, 90-110, Istanbul University Press.
- Özön, H. (2007). Yeşilçam and the political turbulence of Turkish cinema. *Journal of Turkish Film History*, 9(1), 56-70.
- Kaya, A. (2008). The role of allegory in Turkish cinema. *Journal of Modern Turkish Cinema*, 10(3), 42-59.
- Turan, K. (2009). The revival of Turkish cinema: New voices and visions. *Contemporary Turkish Cinema Review*, 13(1), 14-29.
- Yıldız, Ş. (2013). The new wave of Turkish cinema: Identity and global influences. *Turkish Film Review*, 14(2), 85-100.
- Dönmez-Colin, G. (2014). *Turkish cinema: A complete guide*. 305-320, I.B. Tauris. London, United Kingdom.
- Gülbitti, E. (2017). Historical narratives in Turkish cinema: Ottoman and modern perspectives. *Historical Film Studies*, 12(2), 29-44.
- Yüksel, M. (2018). The transformation of Turkish cinema in the digital age. *Media and Society Journal*, 16(1), 110-125.
- Arslan, B. (2020). Digital disruption in Turkish cinema: New media and emerging filmmakers. *Media & Communication*, 8(1), 78-92.
- Aydın, A. (2021). The evolution of Turkish cinema and its global impact. *Journal of Turkish Cinema Studies*, 15(2), 34-47.