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The early life of cinema in Turkey: Religious, moral, and social problems arising between 1896-1923 and solutions in the light of the Ottoman archive documents

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Summary

The Ottoman Empire became acquainted with cinema several years after its creation. After its capital city Istanbul and today's Balkan and Middle-East states had cinema halls, the entrance of the cinema into Ottoman society brought along some religious, moral, and social problems. Throughout this study, the early years of the cinema in the Ottoman Empire will be dealt with. Later on, documents containing the religious, moral, and social subjects regarding the cinemas in the Ottoman State Archive, which has information about the history of approximately 40 countries and 100 million documents, will be touched upon. First, in this regard, the petition of Dr. Besim Omer to the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the prohibition announcement, "Forbidden to Young, Forbidden to the Young Girls" will be discussed. Second, the expert report of the Director General of Public Security, Ahmet Bey, telling his opinion about the acceptance of children under the age of 16 to the cinemas, will be analyzed. Third is the inspection and prohibition of films discussed in the correspondences between Ottoman official authorities. Fourth is an evaluation of the public backlash against the entrance of Muslim women into cinemas and of the documents showing the attitudes of Izmir Governor Celal Bey and Beirut Governor Ethem Bey. Fifth is the inspection of advertisements for entertainment and luxurious consumption. Sixth, and last, the cinema and theater regulation documents, on which very fundamental corrections were made, will be touched upon.

Key Words: History of Ottoman Cinema, History of Turkish Cinema, Religion, Religious Education, Morality, Social Order, Cinema Regulation.

Istanbul, Anatolia, the Balkans, and the Middle East became acquainted with the cinema for the first time during the Ottoman Empire period. Until the establishment of the Turkish Republic, it is possible to see the traces of the Ottoman Empire in the cinema history of these states. The Ottoman Empire Archives, having approximately 100 million documents and

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to whom nearly 40 countries apply in order to learn about their history, willingly opens its doors to researchers. It is highly probable that the Ottoman Archives, with its unique features, has the first documents about the history of the cinema of the Balkan States, such as, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and of the Arabian countries, such as, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon.

After the "Language Reform" in 1928, there was a transition from the Arabic alphabet used by the Ottoman Empire to the Latin alphabet, which resulted in the removal of thousands of Arabic and Persian words from Turkish for language simplification. Subsequently, many people could no longer read and understand the Ottoman language. Today, it requires great expertise to read and understand the Ottoman language.

Consequently, only 15% of the 100 million documents in the "Big Ottoman Archive" have been classified.* Four hundred of these classified documents are about the cinema. Other document subjects are taxation and business administration. For the purpose of this paper, only the archived documents concerning religious, moral, and social subjects will be analyzed. However, before examining the archived documents, there will first be a discussion concerning the advent of cinemas in the Ottoman territories.

A. Overview to Cinema History of Ottoman Period

The entrance of the cinema into the Ottoman territories occurred before most other forms of technology and modern art. It is understood that the Kinetoskop, discovered by Edison in 1894, was brought to Istanbul that same year and shown to the public in Beyoglu. The Kinetoskop drew extensive attraction from the public and was shown in Apollon Hall and Luka coffee house in Izmir.²

On December 28, 1895, in the Paris Grand Café, the Louis and Auguste Brothers made a public premiere of a tool which they called the Cinematograph. Several months following this premiere, the cinematograph was brought to the Ottoman territories by the Frenchman Jamin. In September 1896, a report was prepared by the officials of the Ottoman Empire concerning a new invention called the "cinematograph." It was described as "an important tool for the dissemination of information for humankind." This description was effective for the start of the cinema activities in the country, including the entrance of this invention into the palace.³ Additionally, Sultan Abdulhamid II watched cinematograph in 1896 with a French person whose name was Bertrand.⁴

The public premier of the cinematograph in the Ottoman Empire was made on January 16, 1894, by a Jewish Pole, Sigmund Weinberg, in the

² Süleyman Beyoğlu, Osmanlı Sinema Tarihine Dair Bazı Bilgiler, *Simurg: Kitap Kokusu*, (2-3) (2000), 459.

³ Ottoman Archives (BOA). İ., RSM., File No: 6/1314-R-2, 12 Rebiyülâhîr 1314.; Transferred by: Ali Özyar, Osmanlı'da Sinemaya Dair Sansür Notları, *Sinematürk*, (7) (2007), 22.

⁴ Ayşe Osmanoğlu, *Babam Sultan Abdülhamit (Hatıralarım)*, (Selçuk Publishing House, 1960), 75.

Sponeck beerhouse in Galatasaray.⁵ Later, cinemas were opened in Egypt, Iraq, Aleppo, and Damascus.⁶ The Manaki Brothers, working in Abbey, are recognized as the first movie-makers of the Balkans.⁷



Document1: Banner of the Premier Appearance made in Sponeck Beerhouse

Among the public, there were some people against the cinema, but the invention quickly took its place among the people. In fact, it was only a short time until it accompanied the shadow play of the Karagoz and the Encomiast,

⁵ Burçak Evren, *Sigmund Weinberg: Türkiye'ye Sinemayı Getiren Adam*, (Milliyet Publishing, 1995), 33.; Giovanni Scognamillo, *Türk Sinema Tarihi*, (Metis Publishing House, 1987), (I), 12.

⁶ Halit Refiğ, *Sinema'da Türk-Arap İlişkileri, Türk-Arap İlişkileri: Geçmişte, Bugün ve Gelecek: I. Uluslararası Konferansı Bildirileri*, (1979).

⁷ Halit Refiğ, *Osmanlı'da Sinema, Yeni Türkiye*, (701-7), 786.

which are traditional for Ramadan nights.⁸ The charm of the cinema was overwhelming, and it quickly broke through any resistance of the people. In no time, the cinema became widespread in Ottoman society.⁹ It is interesting that the public discountenancing of theatre did not indicate a favorable reaction to this innovation.¹⁰ Thus, night shows made by the manager of the company Hanri in Sehzadebası Fevziye Coffee House were watched with a great deal of attention. The strongest opinion put forth regarding the attitude of the public was the technical similarity of the Karagoz play and the cinema.¹¹ The Karagoz play, which was very common in the Ottoman Empire during those days, actually prepared the people for the concept of a cinema and of meeting publically there. The cinema was accepted.¹²

Initially, women did not have the opportunity to watch films in the palace and mansions because they could not openly be seen in the public. The sessions were for men only during the early period of cinemas. For the cinema which Asadarya opened in Pangaltı, there were some sessions arranged for women on specific days of the week.¹³ However, some of the cinema halls of that period were divided into two rooms—one for men and one for women—by a folding screen.¹⁴ There were people during this time, however, who objected to women going to the cinema at all. Some citizens of İkicesmelik in Izmir petitioned the governor and requested an edict that “Muslim women are forbidden to go to cinema”. Because of the petition, Izmir Governor Celâl Bey restrained the women from going to the public cinemas.¹⁵

Meanwhile, in Beirut, Governor Ethem Bey did not prohibit women from going to the cinema despite numerous telegraphs that were sent to the grand viziership. There was a difference in the attitudes of the public and the state with respect to this. During the years of these arguments, Sultan Resad gathered hundreds of women from the Harem garden and permitted them to watch the cinemas. Moreover, despite the behests to forbid women to enter the cinemas, no Islamic religious law was actually given.¹⁶

Weinberg, the Istanbul representatives of the French Pathe-Freres Cinema Company, opened the first cinema hall in Tepebasi, named Pathe-Cinema, on January 30, 1908, and this cinema hall continued its existence until

⁸ Ali Özuyar, *Sinemanın Osmanlıca Serüveni*, (Öteki Publishing House, 1999), 35.

⁹ Burçak Evren, *Sinemamızın İlk Türk Müslüman Kadınları*, *Sinematürk*, (1) (2006), 22.

¹⁰ Salih Diriklik, *Fleşbek I- Türk Sinema-TV'sinde İslâmi Endişeler ve Çizgi Dışı Oluşumlar*, (Söğüt Ofset, 1995), 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹² Erman Şener, *Yeşilçam ve Türk Sineması*, (Kamera Publishing, 1970), 15.

¹³ Özuyar, 33.

¹⁴ Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Kadın, İslâm ve Sinema*, (Agora Publishing, 2006), XI.

¹⁵ Oğuz Makal, *Tarih İçinde İzmir Sinemaları*, (Günev Publishing House, 1999), 66-67.

¹⁶ Beyoğlu, 469-470.

1942.¹⁷ In the same year (1908), the Pallas and the Parison Cinema Halls were opened for service in Izmir.¹⁸ The first cinema shown in Konya was in 1910 by the "Young Christian Organization" in the hospital of Dr. Dat.¹⁹

There were no Turkish cinemas during these years because a large majority of the businesses belonged to either minorities or foreign nationals. Weinberg was the expert movie-maker of the Pathe Company in Turkey. After the establishment of the Pathe Cinema, the Gaumont Cinema Company was introduced to the Ottoman territories thanks to its Greek representative, Telemakos Sipiridis. The name of the distribution company was Cine Theatrale d'Orient and both German and Denmark movies were run there.²⁰

First Movies

Like the first movie displays, first movies were shot by foreign nationals and minorities. Promio, one of the most famous employees of the Lumiere Brothers, displayed Turkish pedestrians in Istanbul and Izmir, Bosphorus, and the Golden Horn. Between the years 1896-1899, film-makers such as Felix Mesguiceh, Francis Doublier, Charles Moisson, and Perrigot shot films in Anatolia and Egypt. The English, the Germans, the Italians, and especially the French shot many documentaries in the Ottoman Empire. Also, most of these documentaries were watched by the citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Bosphorus displays, Istanbul films, and the "Revolution of Young Turkey" films were shown in the Odeon Theater in 1899, in the Tepebası Theater in 1908, and in the Odeon Cinema (later it was called Éclair Cinema) in 1909 respectively. In 1910, the Pathe Cinema showed films about the maneuvers of the Ottoman troops, and the return of Edirne of V. Mehmet was included in a 1000 meter film.²¹

Although the existence of the first Turkish film shot in the Ottoman Empire is controversial,²² it is a documentary film of 150 meters shot by Fuat Uzkınay on December 14, titled "Ayastefanos'taki Rus Abidesinin Yıkılışı"²³ (Destruction of Russian Monument in Stefano). The Central Army Cinema Office (MOSD), established by the order of Enver Pasa, shot precious films such as Gallipoli Battles, the enslaved English commander General Tounsend, the Galicia journey, and the German emperor's visit of Istanbul.²⁴

¹⁷ Mustafa Gökmen, *Eski İstanbul Sinemaları*, (Turing Publishing, 1991), 19-20.

¹⁸ Beyoğlu, 460.

¹⁹ Sefa Odabaşı, *20. Yüzyıl Başlarında Konya'nın Görünümü*, (Konya Valiliği Publishing, 1998), 177-178.

²⁰ Beyoğlu, 461.

²¹ Beyoğlu, 461.

²² Özuyar, 117-131.

²³ Zahir Atam, *Sosyolojik Bir Yaklaşım ya da Sinemamızın Kentsel Kültür Dönemi*, *Tarih ve Toplum*, (227), (2002) 322.

²⁴ Refiğ, 787.

Weinberg became the head of Central Army Cinema Office (MOSD) and Fuat Uzkınay, known as the first Muslim-Turkish movie-maker, became the vice-president. When Weinberg wanted to shoot narrative films as well as documentaries, the filming of "Himmat Ağa'nın İzdivacı" (Marriage of Himmet Aga) was started with the Benliyan operetta company. However, when the war started between the Ottoman Empire and Romania in 1916, Weinberg, who was a Romanian citizen, was dismissed from his position and his deputy Fuat Uzkınay took his place. The film was completed by Fuat Uzkınay in 1918.

First Movie Publications

The first cinema magazines to be published²⁵ were *Ferah*²⁶ and *Sinema*.²⁷ Thereafter, during the period of the Republic, cinema magazines and newspapers such as *Le Courrier du Cinema* (1923), *Opera- Cine* (1924), *Sinema Mecmuası* (1924), *Sinema Yıldızı* (1924), *Sinema Rehberi* (1924), *Le Film* (1925), *Sinema Mihveri* (1926), *Artistic-Sine* (1926), *Cine-Turk* (1927), and *Sinatograf Ceridesi* (1927) were published.²⁸ Müdafai Milliye Cemiyeti (National Resistance Organization) started shooting films in order to increase its income in 1916. "Pençe" (Paw) and "Casus"(Spy) are accepted as the first topical films of the Turkish cinema. They were shot and shown to an audience in 1917 by the Organization.²⁹ There is no exact information about the film "Casus." However, "Pençe," has scenes which might be considered courageous given the time in which they were filmed because they dealt with women/men relationships. In the film "Pençe," marriage is portrayed as a paw which hurts, free love is praised,³⁰ and the marriage is considered oppressive for humanity.³¹ In the film "Pençe," the character Feride cheats on her husband, Leman, who plays the field. These two are accepted as the first sexual characters of Turkish cinema.³²

When the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I, the cinema tools in the troop were transferred to "Malûlîn-i Guzat-ı Askeriye Muavenet Cemiyeti," "War Wounded Assistance Organization" for protection. This organization shot three topical films; namely, "Mürebbiye" (Governess)

²⁵ See: Antrak Magazine, (64) (1997).

²⁶ Burçak Evren, *Başlangıcından Günümüze Sinema Dergileri*, (Korsan Publishing, 1993), 13-14.

²⁷ Özuyar, 41.

²⁸ Özuyar, 64.

²⁹ Erman Şener, *İlk Filmlerimiz, Eskişehir Televizyonla Öğretim ve Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi(Kurgu)*, (1), (1979), 83.

³⁰ Mahmut Tali Öngören, *Sinemada Kadın ve Cinsellik Sömürüsü*, (Dayanışma Publishing, 1982), 42.

³¹ Şener, *Yeşilçam ve Türk Sineması*, 13.

³² Diriklik, 11.

(1919), "Binnaz" (1919), and "Bican Efendi Vekilharç" (Bican Efendi Steward) (1921).³³

"Mürebbiye," which is accepted as the third topical film, was completed in 1919, and contains obscene scenes exceeding even those of "Pençe".³⁴ In this film, inspired by Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's namesake novel, and shot by Director Ahmet Fehim for the sake of Malul Gaziler Cemiyeti, a Russia citizen Madam Kalitea acts the role of a French duenna. Full-figured Madam Kalitea, wearing dresses with sweetheart necklines, seduces Dehri Efendi who is working in his mansion. From this role in the film, Madam Kalitea is accepted as the first vamp actress of the Turkish cinema. This film came to the big screen while Istanbul was occupied. Commander Franchet of the French occupation forces in Istanbul was annoyed to see a prurient, immoral French woman in the cinema. He thus prohibited the showing of the film with the explanation that "French people are humiliated (in it)".³⁵

The most important work of the War Wounded Organization is the documentary film dealing with the Sultanahmet meeting which was arranged to protest the Greek occupation of Izmir.³⁶ At the end of the Independence War, when the Greek troops were defeated and had escaped to the Aegean shores, a documentary titled "İstiklal" (İzmir Victory, 1922) was shot with cinema tools transferred to the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM).³⁷

The Turkish cinema's need for Turkish actresses was met by non-Muslim actresses in various theater groups until 1922.³⁸ In the 1922 film named "Esrarengiz Şark" (Mysterious Orient) directed by Frenchman Monsieur Anderes, for the first time a Turkish actress, Nermin Hanım acted in a film.³⁹ This film tells the love story of two foreign adventurers with two Turkish girls and it played to a full house in Beyoğlu. It was also shown in other countries, especially France and Germany, until the end of 1923.⁴⁰

³³ Şener, İlk Filmlerimiz, 83

³⁴ Diriklik, 11.

³⁵ Özuyar, 24.

³⁶ Refiğ, 787

³⁷ Nijat Özön, Türk Sineması, *Türk Dili*, 17(196) (1968), 269.

³⁸ Burçak Evren, Sinemamızın İlk Türk Müslüman Kadınları, 24.

³⁹ Sabahat Hanım, Neyyire Neyyir and Bedia Muvahhit were accepted as the first Turkish actresses. See: Burçak Evren, İddia ve Gerçek, *Sonsuzkare*, (5), (2004), 4.

⁴⁰ Özuyar, Osmanlı'da Sinemaya Dair Sansür Notları, 18. For various opinions on this subject See: Agah Özgüç, *Kronolojik Türk Sinema Tarihi*, (Ministry of Culture and Tourism Publishing, 1988), 11.

Documents about Cinema Containing Religious, Moral, and Social Problems in the Ottoman Empire Archives

1. About the Announcements "Forbidden to the Young – Forbidden to Young Ladies"

The first document is a petition written by Dr. Besim Omer, President of the Turkish Association for Protection of Children, to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on May 9, 1922.⁴¹ Dr. Besim Omer, under the letterhead of the Turkish Association for Protection of Children, wanted help from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At the beginning of the petition, Dr. Omer mentions that one of the duties of the Turkish Association for Protection of Children is to work for the high morality of the children and the young. Dr. Omer extends thanks to the government for the assistance it provides the Association. The petition points out that the films containing scenes against morality have notes saying "Forbidden to Young" and "Forbidden to Young Ladies." These notes are attracting the young who were filling the cinema halls, especially the Beyoglu Cinemas. This situation worried the people who dealt with the moral and spiritual conditions of society. The petition concludes with a request that films against morality be forbidden by the Ottoman security forces and by foreign institutions because no country finds immoral cinemas suitable.

Six days after Dr. Besim Omer wrote his petition to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, he wrote an official letter to the Police Department. In this letter, Dr. Omer states that although films containing immoral scenes have been requested to be forbidden as explained in the petition from the Turkish Association for Protection of Children, the situation continues and young people are attracted to films when there are notes saying "Forbidden to Young," and "Forbidden to Young Ladies." Dr. Omer advises that if the Ministry did not take action to forbid these kinds of films, the Turkish Association for Protection of Children would forbid the films and the Ministry would be informed about future outcomes.⁴²

Upon the order of the Ministry, the Police Department answered with an official letter on June 22, 1922. The letter stated that according to the analysis, an immoral film titled "Fahişenin Kızı" (Daughter of the Prostitute) was displayed in Kadıkoy, another film titled "Oires Karnavale" was displayed in the Odeon cinema in Beyoglu, but there were no other immoral films

⁴¹ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.KMS, File: 62, No: 18, Item:3, 1340.N.26, Record:1

⁴² Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.KMS, File: 62, No: 18, Item:3, 1340.N.26, Record:2

1. About 16 Age Limit for Cinema

On October 25, 1916, the Ministry of Internal Affairs requested an expert witness report from Ahmet Bey, the Istanbul Director General of Public Security, about the application of the 16 year age limit for entrance to the cinemas.⁴⁴ Concerning this, the Police Department presented its report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs after a 50 day comprehensive analysis. The report says:

My opinion about the application of a 16 year age limit is as below. As you know, Europeans following the improvements are showing a professional and attentive attitude towards cinema and theater like in every subject. Because of that reason, they discriminated between the cinemas which can be used as a tool for the education, spiritual, scientific, literary and cultural development of people and Café-chantant where dissolute people go. Unfortunately we could not think this. Most of the theaters and cinema halls in the Ottoman Empire that were combined with the Café-Chantant became places for a dissolute way of living. It is seen that these kinds of places went beyond their purpose. These films affect the young girls and boys who are in school and this situation threatens the future of the country. Also, scenes containing violence lead some children to laziness and immorality because of sadness and hopelessness, and also these scenes result with children committing crimes because they imitate these scenes. Because of that reason, and because people under 16 years of age need protection and education, they are to be prohibited from entering cinemas. Some special places should be made where children under 16 years of age can meet with their teachers and watch films that can contribute to their scientific and intellectual improvement. Thus, it will become easier for the Police Department to protect the morality of the public and the next generation.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.EUM.VRK, File: 28, No: 22, Item:5, 1335.P.29, Record:1

⁴⁵ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.EUM.VRK, File: 28, No: 22, Item:5, 1335.P.29, Record:2

“Regulations on the Establishment and Administration of Theater, Cinema and Similar Entertainment Places” dated August 1916.⁴⁶

Upon the proposal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Grand Viziership informed the Council of State to do what was necessary to add the concerning Article to the Regulation with an official writing. The mentioned writing reads:

Murder scenes shown in the cinemas affect the psychologies of children in a negative way. Some of the children are overcome with fear and some of them become desensitized against violence. Since these films effected the children in a bad way, they caused many harms to the morality and future of children. After the Public Police Officer and Ministry of Internal Affairs proposed adding an article to "Regulation on the Establishment and Administration of Theater, Cinema and Similar Entertainment Places", upon the open vote of Istanbul Beyoglu Lieutenant Governor, non-acceptance of children under the age of 16 to the cinemas was reported to Istanbul province. This proposal was introduced to the Council of State.⁴⁷

When we look at the 50 days comprehensive research paper written by Director General of Public Security, Ahmet Bey, it is understood that in other times the cinema halls in European countries had their own places but in the Ottoman Empire, cinema halls could not gain an institutional identity from the beginning. The first public display of cinematograph was made on January 16, 1897, by a Romanian citizen Polish Jewish Sigmund Weinberg in Sponeck Beerhouse in Galatasaray.⁴⁸ Movie-making and display were under the control of non-Muslims and foreigners. During that period, cinema displays - except for some cinema halls - were made at the Café-chantants of Kadikoy and Beyoglu, where mostly non-Muslims lived and sometimes films containing violence and eroticism were displayed there.

In addition to these, the negative effects of violent scenes on children are stated and these effects show parallelism with today's scientific studies.⁴⁹ In the mentioned report and in other related papers, it is stated that violent scenes induce adolescents to violence and cause them to become desensitized, scared, passive, etc. The legitimacy of the report is substantiated by murders that have been committed by those who were affected by the violence from films. Also, it is deserving of recognition that the application for classification of films according to age has been applied in most countries as early as 1916. Five years after the Regulation of the Ottoman Empire, several local

⁴⁶ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.EUM.VRK, File: 28, No: 22, Item:5, 1335.P.29, Record:3

⁴⁷ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.EUM.VRK, File: 28, No: 22, Item:5, 1335.P.29, Record:4

⁴⁸ Evren, *Sigmund Weinberg: Türkiye'ye Sinemayı Getiren Adam*, 33.; Giovanni Scognamillo, *Türk Sinema Tarihi*, 12

⁴⁹ Bilal Yorulmaz, *Sinema ve Din Eğitimi*, (Işık Akademi Publishing, 2011), 105-125

administrators prohibited the acceptance of children under the age of 16 without their parents for Adult class films.⁵⁰

Although the opening of cinema halls for children was proposed for the protection of children under the age of 16 and for raising healthy generations, nothing was done in line with this. The second proposal for this subject came from Marshall Kâzım Karabekir Pasa⁵¹. Five months before the announcement of the Republic, Kâzım Karabekir, with his project titled "Exemplary Halls," proposed the establishment of places where cinema experts would be raised and cinema displays would be made. However, due to financial deficiencies, the project was not implemented. According to him, "In order to expand the public's horizon and comprehension, the effects of scientific, technical, and industrial films are important." But some films which he called "very naked" may undermine the morale of the public. Because of that reason, cultivated films should be spread around the country and obscene films should be taken under control.⁵²

2. Control and Prohibition of Films Containing Immoral Scenes

According to archive documents, a film about the Egyptian excursion of Napoleon was displayed in the cinema in Halep Bazaar in Beyoglu in 1904. The mentioned cinema hall might be Sponeck Beerhouse in Halep Bazaar. Like the ground floor of the Grand Café in Paris in those times, the ground floor of Sponeck Beerhouse was used as a cinema hall.⁵³

The name of the film was not mentioned in the documents. But we can ascertain that it is highly possible that it was "Épopée Napoléonienne/Napoléon Bonaparte"(1903).⁵⁴ First of all, until 1921, mostly French, German, and Italian films were displayed in the Ottoman Empire. American films were imported after 1921.⁵⁵ Accordingly, there is a high probability that the mentioned film was a French film. On the other hand, the film was displayed in July 1903 in France.⁵⁶ And this date is very close to 1904 when correspondence was exchanged. Moreover, in the film, the Egyptian excursion of Napoleon was entreated.

The press administration inspectors reported that there were improper scenes in this film. But here it is not exactly understood what it meant by improper scenes. It may refer to both the obscene scenes and the war scenes which may have negative effects on the public. Napoleon's enemy was the

⁵⁰ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Dünya Sinema Tarihi*, (Kabalıcı Publishing, 2008), 278

⁵¹ One of the last biggest commanders of Ottoman Empire. For more information see: Kazım Karabekir, *Hayatım*, (Emre Publishing, 1995) and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%A2z%C4%B1m_Karabekir, 05.02.2011.

⁵² Serdar Öztürk, *Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Sinema, Seyir, Siyaset*, (Elips Publishing, 2005), 156-157.

⁵³ Mustafa Gökmen, *Başlangıçtan 1950'ye Kadar Türk sinema Tarihi*, (Denetim Ajans Publishing, 1989), 14.

⁵⁴ Napoléon Bonaparte, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0458213/>, 05.02.2011.

⁵⁵ Gökmen, 18.

⁵⁶ Napoléon Bonaparte, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0458213/releaseinfo> 05.02.2011

Ottoman Empire during the years 1798-1801 when he made his Egyptian military expedition. Although the Ottoman Empire lost Egypt for a while, it pushed Napoleon to withdraw from Egypt with the defense it made in Rakka, Syria, and dominated Egypt again thanks to the assistance of England in 1801. Because of that reason, it is possible that some scenes were offensive to the Turks, and the report might have reflected that these scenes might provoke the public. As a result, National Press Director Mustafa Bey wrote an official paper to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on February 15, 1904, requesting the films be approved by the Press Administration and any films containing improper scenes be prevented by the Police Office.⁵⁷

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ
رِیَاضِ الدَّیْنِیَّیْنَ
لِلْاَدَبِ وَالْاِیْمَانِ
عَنْ
۱۰۷۰

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ
دستاره بی تصور بعضه کشمیری نیز جائز رسد و حق اراء ایطکه برلینین اراءه عجزی مضتری طرفه
درینده رایوره افاره فکمه اولفنه بعدا کوسیدجه ناطرک فطوغرافینله اولر اراءه عجزی اراءه
و تصویبه ایذینک صاحبزاده اعطای و بوجی مضرسدک اراءه نه سیه دیلمی مخصوصله ضبطیه
جلدینه امر و کما بویسی بانده امر و زمانه حضرت سره لم الامرکر
رئیس عمده راجوبدی
مکتوبه
۱۹۰۴

Document 4: Writing of National Press Director Mustafa Bey about the Napoleon film

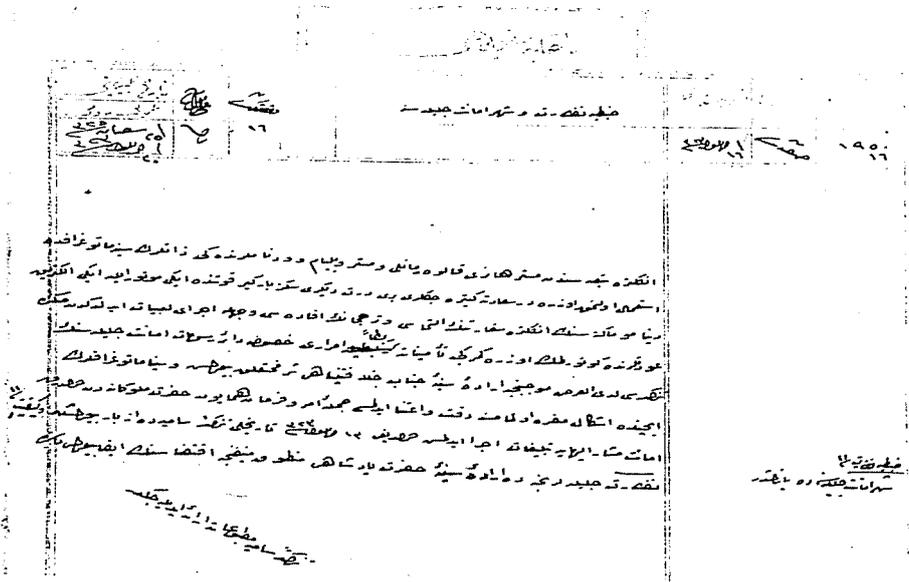
The Ministry of Internal Affairs document to the Police Office to do what is needed about the subject on February 21, 1904. The writing reads:

It is announced that among the films shown in the Beyoglu Halep Bazaar there was a film about Napoleon's Egyptian military expeditions with improper pictures by the inspectors. Henceforward, the National Press Administration requests that films be shown to the Press Administration and

⁵⁷ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.MKT, File: 823, No: 38, Item:2, 1321.Z.4, Record:1

receive approval before the display of any pictures and that improper pictures would not be permitted.⁵⁸

After the incident mentioned above, the Ottoman authorities made small improvements in film inspection. In 1907, two English citizens, Mr. Henry Calverman and Mr. William Wood, wanted to bring to Istanbul one electric generator and two motors, a four horsepower and an eight horsepower, for use in cinematography. Upon the plea of the British Embassy, on October 3, 1907, the Ministry of Internal Affairs wrote an official letter to the Police Office and Municipality saying that the necessary devices were permitted to pass through customs, and attention must be paid that in the cinematograph device there should not be improper pictures.⁵⁹



Document 5: Jerque's note for the devices that Henry Calverman needs

3. Women's Entrance into Cinematograph Sections

Beirut Governor Ethem Bey made the women watch cinema and this situation was not approved by the leaders of Beirut. People who were against the women's watching cinema struggled to prevent Ethem Bey. Scrivener Mustafa Marashi took the first step in line with this. He sent a telegram to Padishah, Grand Vizier, Shaykh-al-Islam and Ministry of Internal Affairs; and in the telegram he expressed his inconveniency of the situation as below:

It is a known fact that Ottoman Empire has showed a great care to the protection of religion and rectitude, and this is an important factor

⁵⁸ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.MKT, File: 823, No: 38, Item:2, 1321.Z.4, Record:2

⁵⁹ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.MKT, File: 1203, No: 80, Item:1, 1325.S.25, Record:1

contributing to its long-lasting life. And yet, the governance permits Muslim women to enter into cinematograph sections; these sections are not suitable for women. And people may object to this situation. In order to remove these objections, I request an enactment for the prevention of the following day's displays.⁶⁰

TELEGRAMME  تَلْغْرَافِنامَه

دولت علیہ عثمانیہ تلغراف اداره سی

ADMINISTRATION DES TELEGRAPHES DE L'EMPIRE OTTOMAN
L'Etat n'accepte aucune responsabilité à raison du service de la télégraphie

Retransmission ou Expédition			RECEPTION			
No. d'expédition	transmis à	Date	Signature de l'employé	Date	Reçu de	No. d'ordre
		11/1/1313		11/1/1313		

De: Mustafa Maraşlı à: Beirut

Date: 11/1/1313

حضرت شیخ صدر المدنی

دولت علیہ عثمانیہ تلغراف اداره سی
 قضاة العادة غیرت ایدہ مستند اہل ہدایت علیہم علیہم کہ شریعہ پر عادت و عادت و عادت و عادت
 مفاد صورتہ غایت مرتط و مرتط و مرتط و مرتط و مرتط و مرتط و مرتط و مرتط و مرتط و مرتط و مرتط و مرتط
 یا تردید نہ محلاہ عورتہ نہ نا و غرضاً حد مسلمہ کہ وہ سیرا پتہ لڑنے بالمساعده نہ عجمان
 لادہ دلائیہ شہود نہ تولد ایدہ جہل محاذیر لہ اولیٰ ائمہ حضرتہ یا ربکہ نہ حضرتہ
 سروراً کما کہ مستند ادارہ درصحاہ یور لہیہ جب التیہ مستند قرآن

Document 6: Telegraph of Mustafa Maraşlı

Telegraphs sent by Maraşlı to four offices at the same time were answered immediately. On January 7, 1913, the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent a telegraph to the Beirut Governance, expressing his opinions about the claims.⁶¹

Upon the continuance of cinema displays, there were two telegraphs, one containing 14 signatures and the other containing 21 signatures, from Ulema and Gentry on January 7. These two telegraphs were sent to the Padishah, Grand Vizier, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Shaykh al-Islam separately in order to increase the pressure.

The telegraph, containing 14 signatures, includes:

The Beirut Governor lets the Muslim women under his care watch cinematography. Although he has received many requests to give up his mentioned behavior against the religious and customary rules, he refused these requests with military forces. This attitude of the Governor is politically wrong

⁶⁰ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.ID, File: 65, No: 27, Item:19, 1331.P.12, Record:1,2,3,4
⁶¹ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.ID, File: 65, No: 27, Item:19, 1331.P.12, Record:5

in a period when some foreign ships exist in Beirut Harbor. We request the necessary orders to be given in order to change the Governor's attitude.⁶²

The other telegraph, containing 21 signatures, is written in Arabic. The telegraph, translated into Ottoman Turkish in the Ministry of Internal Affairs Directorate of Political Affairs Translation Branch, reads:

All of the Ulema and Gentries of Beirut do not want Muslim women allowed into the cinematography section; however, Beirut Governor Ethem does not comply with their request. Whereas, Muslims' order Hz. Omer b. Hattab prohibits the women from entering the mosque in consequence of the necessity. As the women's entrance into the cinematography section in Beirut is religiously obligatory and statesmen are responsible for the application of these religious provisions, we ask for the application of these religious provisions.⁶³

Ethem Bey, oblivious to the telegraphs containing 14 and 21 signatures, states his opinion to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on January 8:

In the Cinematography Theater in Beirut, the cinema displays are made especially for women. So, scrivener Mustafa's objection does not have any validity or value.⁶⁴

After the Governor stated his opinion, the subject was investigated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the result was announced to the Beirut Province with an official writing dated January 15, 1913:

As we mentioned (regarding special cinemas for women), there is no objection to having women watch cinematography. However, when we look at the received telegraphs, most of Ulema and Gentries do not approve of this situation. Since acting against public request and causing unrest, especially in such a time, will not be suitable; we need to solve this nicely with the order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs⁶⁵

The Ministry of Internal Affairs asked for the opinion of the shaykh al-islam Mehmed Cemaleddin Efendi in order to justify its decision on the subject. In his response, Mehmed Cemaleddin Efendi did not make a statement that women were not permitted to enter the cinematography, but he remarked they should do what would be necessary to satisfy the public. These statements of shaykh al-islam were reported to Governor Ethem Bey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁶⁶

⁶² Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.İD, File: 65, No: 27, Item:19, 1331.P.12, Record:6,7,8,9

⁶³ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.İD, File: 65, No: 27, Item:19, 1331.P.12, Record:10

⁶⁴ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.İD, File: 65, No: 27, Item:19, 1331.P.12, Record:11

⁶⁵ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.İD, File: 65, No: 27, Item:19, 1331.P.12, Record:12

⁶⁶ Ottoman Archives(BOA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, DH.İD, File: 65, No: 27, Item:19, 1331.P.12, Record:13

women to watch the cinematograph. Also, Sultan Resad watched film in the palace with Şeyh Sünûsi, and Şeyh Sunûsi did not oppose watching the film.⁶⁸

There are some reasonable grounds for establishing special cinemas for women. For instance, men and women sat separately in the first years of cinema in Ottoman Empire. The cinema halls were duskish and pubs were used as cinema halls, and this situation was worrisome for people.

The duskish atmosphere of the cinema halls was not only worrisome for the Ottoman Empire but also for Europe and the USA where the situation was the same during first years. During that period in the USA, the cinema halls were considered to compose a dangerous situation. According to the Chicago Committee, cinema halls are the places where immorality is most seen. These halls create an atmosphere where men are likely to molest women. Researcher Dr. Anna Howard Shaw stated that 23 young girls were entrapped in cinema halls and kidnapped in Texas for immoral purposes, and she advised a women police officer to be at the entrance of and also inside the cinema halls.⁶⁹ These concerns, also reflected in the USA, were experienced in the Ottoman Empire. Their solution was to produce special sessions and cinema halls for women.

The second reason triggering the opening of special cinema halls for women is that cinema displays were made in the Cafe-Chantants and pubs around Kadıkoy and Beyoglu. Because the cinema displays were made in improper places for Muslim women, there arose a need to find different places for women.

Going to the cinema and watching films is not inconvenient for either Muslim men or women. It depends upon the context of the film.⁷⁰ And yet, the critical political situation of Beirut in those times had an important effect on the request of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Shaykh al-islam on the Governor for stepping back. Italy did not achieve the success it desired in North Africa, although it sank two Turkish ships in Beirut Harbor and bombarded Beirut. The war ended with the intervention of the western states.⁷¹ During the period in which petitions were delivered to Istanbul, this incident protected its effectiveness; however, foreign ships waited on Beirut shores, and big countries such as England and France desired to occupy Beirut. Thus, in such a critical situation, the Ottoman Empire wanted the Governor to please the people.

Şeyh Sünûsi is North African religious scholar, who took part in Turco-Italian war and Anatolian defense.

⁶⁸ Cemil Filmer, *Hatıralar*, (Emek Printing, 1984), 90.

⁶⁹ Rekin Teksoy, *Dünya Sinema Tarihi*, (Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2005), 66.

⁷⁰ For the place of various subjects concerning cinema in İslam, see: İsmail Güllük, *İslam Hukuku Açısından Sinema ve Problemleri*, Marmara University Institute of Social Sciences, (Unpublished doctoral thesis, 2010).

⁷¹ İsrail Kurtcephe, Rodos ve Oniki Adanın İtalyanlarca İşgali, *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, (2), (1991), 209.

In 1918, the Ottoman Empire passed through many military, political, and economic troubles. Towards the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire got into hot water economically. As a result of this economic trouble, the soldiers in the war fronts could not receive adequate nourishment and the necessary assistance for the relatives of the martyrs and war veterans' relatives. As the students of some high schools, such as Galatasaray, Konya, Izmir, and the students of the Istanbul University Medical Faculty were martyred, these schools could not produce graduates. One of the biggest losses of the Ottoman Empire was at the Gallipoli front, and this loss profoundly affected the capital of Istanbul. Although the Ottoman Empire eventually won the Gallipoli Battle between the years of 1915-1916 against England, France, Australia, and New Zealand, it sustained an approximate loss of 250,000 lives. There were many high school students among this number.

The soldiers struggled in the frontiers in difficult circumstances, and the martyrs' and war veterans' relatives were grieving. Under such circumstances, the Ottoman Security General Directorate did not find it suitable to present advertisements demonstrably containing entertainment and thus requested their prohibition. In order for the continuance of the entertainment industry, these advertisements were allowed only in the buildings they used.

5. Cinema and Theater Regulation

According to the archive documents we could reach, regulations on the establishment and management of the cinema, the theater, and similar types of entertainment places by the Ministry of Internal Affairs Security General Directorate in August 1916 and on September 17, 1916, these regulations were presented to the Grand Vizier. In the coming years, they were accepted by the Grand Vizier. Among the regulations from the articles concerning each of the entertainment places, only the articles concerning the cinema would be taken. Also, articles containing the technical subjects about the management of cinema halls would not be touched upon.

“Articles About the Cinema of Establishment and Management of Theater, Cinema and Similar Entertainment Places:

Article 33: Cinema managers will send the display program to the Security General Directorate in Istanbul, and the biggest civil servant out of Istanbul 24 hours before display time.

Article 34: Movies which will be displayed for the first time should be displayed and approved in the presence of a person appointed by Security General Directorate in Istanbul, and the biggest civil servant out of Istanbul.

Article 35: Writings that explain the movies must be in Turkish, but explanation may be done in other languages after Turkish.

Article 36: Display of any movies that humiliate religions and sects known in the Ottoman country are prohibited.

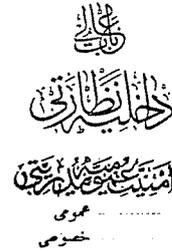
Article 37: Display of any movies with obscene scenes inappropriate for public safety and peace are prohibited.

Article 38-39: Pursuant to Supplementary 3 of Article 99 of the Criminal Code, investigation will be conducted on any cinema managers acting against the articles 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, and 37.⁷³

Document 9: A document from the Theater and Cinema Regulation

All of the above-referenced articles are a result of prior incidents and from demands of the public. As stated in Article 33 and 34, with an initial inspection of the films, there was an attempt to eliminate public backlash beforehand.

The Turkish explanation for this obligation, as stated in the Article 35, can be seen as a result of a protest started in Aydın in 1914. At the beginning of 1914, approximately 100 students went to the cinema halls and wanted subtitles in Turkish. When their request was denied, they organized a protest in front of the cinema halls. This caused the audience inside to be unable to watch the film because of the outside noise. Thus, the cinema authorities informed the young people that they would check with Europe and find out what would be the additional cost for adding



ماده ۳۸ اوردمین ماده ۹۹ تکمیلی ۳ ندره ایضاً جرمی کورده یازدی مدیری تنظیمه قانونی مازک (۱۹۰۹) نکی ماده ۳۲، ۳۳، ۳۴، ۳۵، ۳۶، ۳۷، ۳۸، ۳۹، ۴۰، ۴۱، ۴۲، ۴۳، ۴۴، ۴۵، ۴۶، ۴۷، ۴۸، ۴۹، ۵۰، ۵۱، ۵۲، ۵۳، ۵۴، ۵۵، ۵۶، ۵۷، ۵۸، ۵۹، ۶۰، ۶۱، ۶۲، ۶۳، ۶۴، ۶۵، ۶۶، ۶۷، ۶۸، ۶۹، ۷۰، ۷۱، ۷۲، ۷۳، ۷۴، ۷۵، ۷۶، ۷۷، ۷۸، ۷۹، ۸۰، ۸۱، ۸۲، ۸۳، ۸۴، ۸۵، ۸۶، ۸۷، ۸۸، ۸۹، ۹۰، ۹۱، ۹۲، ۹۳، ۹۴، ۹۵، ۹۶، ۹۷، ۹۸، ۹۹، ۱۰۰، ۱۰۱، ۱۰۲، ۱۰۳، ۱۰۴، ۱۰۵، ۱۰۶، ۱۰۷، ۱۰۸، ۱۰۹، ۱۱۰، ۱۱۱، ۱۱۲، ۱۱۳، ۱۱۴، ۱۱۵، ۱۱۶، ۱۱۷، ۱۱۸، ۱۱۹، ۱۲۰، ۱۲۱، ۱۲۲، ۱۲۳، ۱۲۴، ۱۲۵، ۱۲۶، ۱۲۷، ۱۲۸، ۱۲۹، ۱۳۰، ۱۳۱، ۱۳۲، ۱۳۳، ۱۳۴، ۱۳۵، ۱۳۶، ۱۳۷، ۱۳۸، ۱۳۹، ۱۴۰، ۱۴۱، ۱۴۲، ۱۴۳، ۱۴۴، ۱۴۵، ۱۴۶، ۱۴۷، ۱۴۸، ۱۴۹، ۱۵۰، ۱۵۱، ۱۵۲، ۱۵۳، ۱۵۴، ۱۵۵، ۱۵۶، ۱۵۷، ۱۵۸، ۱۵۹، ۱۶۰، ۱۶۱، ۱۶۲، ۱۶۳، ۱۶۴، ۱۶۵، ۱۶۶، ۱۶۷، ۱۶۸، ۱۶۹، ۱۷۰، ۱۷۱، ۱۷۲، ۱۷۳، ۱۷۴، ۱۷۵، ۱۷۶، ۱۷۷، ۱۷۸، ۱۷۹، ۱۸۰، ۱۸۱، ۱۸۲، ۱۸۳، ۱۸۴، ۱۸۵، ۱۸۶، ۱۸۷، ۱۸۸، ۱۸۹، ۱۹۰، ۱۹۱، ۱۹۲، ۱۹۳، ۱۹۴، ۱۹۵، ۱۹۶، ۱۹۷، ۱۹۸، ۱۹۹، ۲۰۰، ۲۰۱، ۲۰۲، ۲۰۳، ۲۰۴، ۲۰۵، ۲۰۶، ۲۰۷، ۲۰۸، ۲۰۹، ۲۱۰، ۲۱۱، ۲۱۲، ۲۱۳، ۲۱۴، ۲۱۵، ۲۱۶، ۲۱۷، ۲۱۸، ۲۱۹، ۲۲۰، ۲۲۱، ۲۲۲، ۲۲۳، ۲۲۴، 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subtitles. After waiting a long time to learn the results of such an investigation, the students witnessed no change; so, they started the protests again. Thereupon, the cinema authorities took the students' complaint to the Aydın Province Governor, Rahmi Bey. Rahmi Bey advised that if the students caused any financial damage, he might make them compensate for any damages; but otherwise, he could not prevent the protests. Also, the Governor wanted to know why Turkish subtitles were not available when they were currently available in Istanbul. When the Governor did not prevent the students from protesting, the French and Austrian Consulates intervened and tried to inhibit protests.⁷⁴ As can be understood from the Governor's question, although Istanbul added Turkish subtitles, other provinces like Aydın did not, in order to avoid the additional cost. Naturally, this situation caused various problems. In order to solve the problem, Turkish subtitles became obligatory under Article 35.

Within the Ottoman Empire, Turkish, Kurdish, Arabian, Rum, Armenian, and other nations with various sects of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism lived in harmony. One of the reasons for this harmony is that the Ottoman Empire respected all minorities and allowed them to protect their own cultures. It was also important to the Ottoman Empire that the rights of minorities be protected and defended, and because some of the films imported from Europe included scenes insulting races and sects to which Ottoman citizens belonged, Article 36 was added to the Cinema Regulations in order to protect the rights of the insulted minorities. This occurred at a time when "The Birth Of A Nation" (1915), a racist film, was released in the USA, although it was prohibited in several states⁷⁵ and even censored in European countries.⁷⁶ The attachment of Article 36 to the Regulations was considered a fundamental step for minorities' rights and for public security.

One of the complaints causing the attachment of Article 37 to the Regulation has been religious provision in this study. This document is the correspondence which the Ministry of Internal Affairs made with the Police Office concerning the film about Napoleon's Egyptian military expedition. In this correspondence, it is stated that the mentioned film contains improper scenes. Moreover, it can be understood from the correspondence that there had been complaints about films containing violence and eroticism, and this is why there were restrictions for not allowing those under the age of 16 into the cinema.

⁷⁴ Beyoğlu, 466

⁷⁵ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 566.

⁷⁶ Rekin Teksoy, 71

Result

Edison's Kinetoscope was brought to Istanbul in 1894 when it was invented, and the public watched it. Cinematography, which was invented by the Lumiere brothers, was watched by Sultan Abdulhamid in the palace several months after its invention and in time it became one of the inevitable entertainments of the palace. The first public display was made by Sigmund Weinberg in Sponeck Beerhouse, Galatasaray in 1897. After this, various provinces of Anatolia, the Balkans, and the Arabic regions such as Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon were introduced to the cinema.

In its first years, the cinema, which was considered a non-Muslim entertainment, captured the interest of the Muslim public. The underlying reason for this interest was the technical similarities between the cinema and the traditional Turkish shadow play Karagoz.

Like every innovation, cinema brought along various problems to the societies where it became widespread. The Ottoman authorities created solutions to these problems within the framework of their own values. While finding solutions to these problems, the delicacy of the society was considered.

One of these problems concerned the women's sections entrances into the cinema. The Ottoman society, having always regarded women as well-behaved, elegant, and precious, could not tolerate having women's entrances into cinemas that shared sections with pubs. Therefore, because the Ottoman society wanted women to benefit from the cinema, they solved this problem by opening separate cinema halls for women.

One of the problems created by the cinema was its negative influence on young people, especially with regard to sexism and violence. The Ottoman authorities witnessed that scenes of sexism and violence had destructive effects on young people. Thus, they added an article to the Cinema Regulation that prohibited children under the age of 16 from entry into public cinemas.

The Ottoman Empire's institutions tried to prevent the cinema from damaging society. For that reason, the cinema was not allowed to have advertisements of entertainment and extravagancy that were presented in insulting ways. In addition to this, any films insulting any minorities of the Ottoman society were forbidden pursuant to Article 36 of the Cinema Regulation.

Besides the documents mentioned in this article, there are many other documents about the cinema waiting to come to light. When, in fact, all of the documents in the Ottoman Empire Archives are indexed, many important documents about the first years of the cinema in many countries will be exposed. However, because waiting for this discovery will take a long time, cinema historians should go to the Ottoman archives now and take advantage of this treasure.