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Cinema as the "Weapon of the Enemy":
The Archaeology of an Islamist Film Criticism Discourse

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Abstract

The issue of how cinema should be, the influence of which on the society was indisputable for the intellectuals, became an important subject during especially 1960s in Turkey. During these years, the discourse of Islamism once again made an appearance in Turkish politics and thought in the form of a nationalist religious discourse. This study will examine the reproduction process of Islamist discourse on cinema and analyze the composition of Islamist film criticism. Even though the discourse of film criticism expressed as "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" seemed to come forward with its rejectionist attitude, it actually reflected an attitude toward harmony beyond measure. Redescribing cinema as an area dominated by symbolic violence caused the amorphization and reactiveness of cinema products. On the other hand, a second direction that opened a door for the imitation of the cinematic movements and products considered as rivals brought along the state of being bereft of identity despite its heavy emphasis on identity. The idea of "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" showed a continuity in the perception of cinema as a propagandist and political instrument. It became functional as a discourse activated by Islamists before they entered into the fields such as cinema production and film criticism, fields that were new to them. This understanding is based on a modernization-oriented approach that envisages a rupture with the tradition and distinguishing oneself from the existing cultural accumulation. It produces the content of this understanding by translating the dominant thoughts in the area on which it would like to exert its dominance into religious terminology. In that regard, it is a product of a mimetic cultural stance.

Keywords: Turkish Cinema, Sociology of Cinema, Islamism, Film Criticism, History of Cinema

"Düşmanın Silahı" Olarak Sinema:
İslamcı Bir Sinema Eleştirisi Söyleminin Arkeolojisi

Öz

Türkiye'de özellikle 1960'lı yıllarda aydınlar için toplum üzerindeki etkisi tartışılmaz olan sinemanın nasıl olması gerektiği önemli meselelerden biri haline gelmiştir. Bu yıllarda İslamcılık söylemi milliyetçi mukaddesatçı bir biçimde yeniden Türk siyasetinde ve düşünce hayatında arzı endam etmiştir. Bu çalışmada sinemaya dair İslamcı söylemin yeniden üretilmesi süreci ele alınacak olup İslamcı sinema eleştirisi söyleminin kompozisyonu analiz edilecektir. "Düşmanın silahıyla silahlanma" şeklinde ifade bulan sinema eleştirisi söylemi reddiyeci tutumuyla öne çıkıyor gibi görünse de aslında ölçüsüz bir uyum tavrını yansıtmaktadır. Sinemayı sembolik şiddetin hâkim olduğu bir alan olarak yeniden tanımlamak sinema ürünlerinin de şekilsizleşmesine ve tepkiselleşmesine sebep olmuştur. Diğer yandan rakip görülen sinema akım ve ürünlerini taklide kapı açan ikinci bir yön yoğun kimlik vurgusuna rağmen kimliksizleşmeyi de beraberinde getirmiştir. "Düşmanın silahıyla silahlanma" düşüncesi sinemanın propaganda ve siyaset aracı olarak algılanmasında bir süreklilik gösterir. İslamcıların özellikle sinema yapımı, sinema eleştirisi gibi kendileri için yeni olan alanlara girmeden önce aktif hale getirdikleri bir söylem olarak işlevselleşmiştir. Genel manasıyla gelenekten kopuşu ve mevcut kültürel birikimden kendini ayrıştırmayı öngören modernleşmeci bir tasavvura dayanır. Bu tasavvurun içeriğini de iktidar elde edilmek istenen alana hâkim olan düşünceleri dini terminolojiye tercüme ederek üretir. Bu açıdan mimetik bir kültürel tavrın ürünüdür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Sineması, Sinema Sosyolojisi, İslamcılık, Sinema Eleştirisi, Sinema Tarihi

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1. Introduction

"Arm up with the weapon of the enemy." Often quoted as hadith, this expression is frequently referred to during the 1960s and 70s, a period when film criticism became institutionalized in the Islamist press. First of all, it antagonizes the cinema defining it as a field of war, and eventually suggests the adoption of cinema as a political instrument. This expression extensively affects the criticism and practice of Islamist cinema. But it is not discussed in the rare studies on the relationship between Islamism and cinema so far. In this study, we will try to reveal its origins and the meanings it acquired from the 1950s to the 1980s, which is the period of the emergence of political cinema thought related to Islamism, by doing textual archeology. We will cover Islamist periodicals of the time as a source for this analysis.

Although "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" played a founding role in the relationship of Islamism with cinema since the 1960s, the scope of the expression is not limited to this context alone. A more general use of this expression outside the realm of cinema goes back much further. When the military defeats suffered at the hands of the West made it imperative to adopt the military technology of Western countries, this decision was justified by using the expression "mukabele-i bil-misl" (retaliation in kind). This notion was discussed by Islamic law experts in the context of war and diplomacy as an international law principle and its scope was narrowed down to a large extent (Özel, 2006). The use of this expression outside of its actual context to refer to the different aspects of modernization is a widening of the term's meaning. In the transition from the fiqh principle "retaliation in kind" to "arming up with the weapon of the enemy", which provided the ground of legitimacy for modernization, the actual reference point was presumably Surah Al-Anfal's Ayat 6.[1] The term "war-horses" in the ayat advising one to be prepared against the possibility of enemy attack was interpreted so as to include all the instruments required for war. And the context of war subsumed the entire culture. The responsibility of making preparations for war was ascribed to the cultural adoption of the enemy's instruments.

However, the act of preparing the war-horses and other instruments, the legitimacy of which are indisputable in the context of war envisioned by the Ayat does not entirely correspond to the legitimization of modernization's controversial aspects through the metaphor of war. "Retaliation in kind" is a principle that also appeared in pre-Islamic traditions. Experts in Islamic law modified this principle in line with sharia. On the other hand, the expression "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" is the product of a modernization-based line of thought, which refers to a break from the tradition, even though it appears to denote the same meaning with "retaliation in kind." In retaliation in kind, retaliating to the attack of the enemy in equal measure is a meaningful attitude within the tradition while in "arming up with the weapon of the enemy", changing and transforming with modernization by taking the enemy as the model comes to the fore beyond measure.

Drawing attention to the potential problems that "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" logic might engender, İsmail Kara (2005) characterized this thought as naïve in one of his articles in which he discussed the sources of Islamist discourse and stated that it might mean "to be like the enemy, think like the enemy, and speak the language of the enemy." For Kara, "this inclination to be equipped with this weapon that largely emphasizes technical-technological equipment, industry, financial-military power, and science will bring along a perception of a new culture and civilization centered on strength and power, and will debilitate many religious and national sensibilities" (p. 39). Against this understanding based on retaliating to the attack of the enemy in the same way, Kara emphasizes the attitude of reacting to the enemy in a more nuanced manner by referring to Nurettin Topçu (p. 46).

In this regard, "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" is the expression of a cultural attitude that refers to the adoption of the enemy's method in a problematic area, which reveals the necessity for modernization. The approach articulated against this thought is a more self-assured attitude maintaining that the response should be based on one's own moral and cultural foundations.[2] Kara (2006) underlined another problem pertaining to "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" approach in somewhere else. He stated that "for the world of Islam that had to rely upon reform movements for liberation and development, Europe had paradoxically become both the enemy and what was 'imitated'" (p. 149). This dual value attributed to the West in the Turkish modernization and the identity that is derived from here is problematic in itself[3] but historically, it is quite comprehensible. The modernization decision in Turkey was taken upon the defeat of the state by the Western countries in the battlefield. The West also set the example for how modernization could be achieved. At this point, "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" approach is based on a discourse that is woven with religious references so as to justify the process of modernization in the eyes of the people.

The use of "arming with the weapon of the enemy" in the context of cinema performs an entirely different function than its use in the context of modernization. While people resisted to the social changes envisioned as part of modernization, cinema is a cultural practice that has been largely embraced by people. Therefore, the idea of "cinema as the enemy's weapon" reflects neither the perspective of the people nor the perspective of the ulema and those granting fatwa who provide a religious assessment regarding people's reservations about cinema. This idea derives from the perspective of the new Islamist movement, developed within the tendency of differentiating itself from the past Islamist movements especially with the arrival of 1960s, regarding cinema and culture. Contrary to the culturally refined and coherent approach of Islamist thought that relied on the strength of its bond with the society from Tanzimat Era to the Republican Era, the new Islamist thought believed that an extensive revision was required in the culture of the society and this culture should be transformed by a leading group in accordance with an ideologically rigorous thought. The superiority of the Islamism during the Second Constitutional Era that enabled its use as a repository of discourse for Turkists and Westernists alike was not valid for the newly emerging Islamism of 1960s. The visibility of Marxism and nationalism in the press, universities, and on the streets resulted in the intensification and prominence of the reaction given to this visibility in the formation of Islamism in 1960s.

Within such a historical context, the notion of "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" thereby became widespread among the Islamists as a reaction towards the "inside" rather than as a reaction towards the "outside" as it was in the past. Whereas cinema was identified as an arena of struggle since it drew the popular interest of the culture and people in particular and in which Islamists lagged behind, the way to compensate for this was regarded as the adoption of the "weapon of the enemy", considered to exert dominance over these areas.

Responding to Propaganda in Cinema

Cinema became the target of conservative criticism as an element contributing to social degeneration along with other elements of modernization during 1940s and 50s. In Necip Fazıl's brief remarks on cinema in *Büyük Doğu* (Great East), the emphasis on female body in cinema presented continuity as a critical element. Nevertheless, the instrumentalization of Hollywood as American war propaganda, especially during the WWII, gave birth to a political sensibility regarding cinema. In this regard, Necip Fazıl's political criticisms about cinema also highlight its favorable potential in terms of its use in line with his own ideology. However, the social perception of cinema in general as a political instrument developed by 1960s. Yücel Çakmaklı's articles in *Tohum*, gives clues about the dominant approach of this period. In his article titled "Milli Sinema İhtiyacı" (Need for a National Cinema)[4], Çakmaklı (1964) criticized Yeşilçam cinema for being commercial. His criticism echoes the approach of the film critics of the period in many

aspects. Çakmaklı also criticized the "socialist cinema" (toplumcu sinema)[5] approach, which was introduced as an alternative to Yeşilçam cinema, for not embracing a "national" perspective. For Çakmaklı, these films were just examples of "social realism" (sosyal realizm)[6] movement that was developed as part of Soviet cultural policies across the world.

As a solution for this problematic state, Çakmaklı proposed the idea of *Milli* Cinema. The technical staff that would make this cinema real was to a large extent present. For Çakmaklı, missing elements were producers and investors. A connection can be established between the place occupied by Çakmaklı in the field, who at the time served as an assistant beside Yeşilçam directors such as Dr. Arşavir Alyanak, Aram Gülyüz, Mehmet Dinler, Osman F. Seden, and Orhan Aksoy most of whom were craftsmen and who aspired to be a director, and his perspective regarding *Milli* Cinema. One of the interesting points of Çakmaklı's article was that it was concluded with the thought that the state should be involved in cinema. During this period, the state's role in cinema caused huge discussions among film critics and filmmakers. The filmmakers that Çakmaklı worked with kept distance toward these sorts of attempts believing that state intervention would prove to be detrimental for Yeşilçam. Çakmaklı on the other hand embraced the critiques of film critics regarding Yeşilçam and also their proposal for a cinema in which state played a more effective role. Çakmaklı's other articles written in this period also supported and enlarged upon this attitude. These articles emphasized the use of foreign films for propaganda purposes and referred to the dominance of leftist ideology in domestic films as a point for criticism. In these articles exemplifying that cinema became an arena in which political struggle was effectively waged, the necessity of a similar struggle as part of *Milli* Cinema was stressed.

In 1960s, while the "social realist" films led to huge discussions, the films that were referred to as "*hazretli* films"[7] became a craze in Yeşilçam. The first group of films was subject to adverse criticism of the Islamist press and the second group of films was not very well received either. A discussion that was somehow triggered by this "*hazretli* films" craze was featured in Islamist journals starting from the summer months of 1967. In the first issue of *İslam Medeniyeti*, in an article that seems to be written upon the request of the journal (Hekimoğlu, 1967), the propagandist function of cinema was highlighted and it was claimed that a similar approach should be embraced with regards to religion. In this article, the request that was previously brought up by Çakmaklı in one of his writings –the request of having an officer in the censor board that controlled the films in the name of state from the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs- was put forward against the potential information pollution that "*hazretli* films" would create. Nevertheless, as the activities of Vatican in the field of cinema (such as having film theaters) were recounted, it was stated that cinema could be an important instrument for religious propaganda. For Pope, it was said that he was the sole authority on cinema. On the other hand, the indifference of Muslims and Islamic institutions toward cinema was criticized.

The identity of the article's author is interesting in that regard. Introduced in the title of the article as producer and director, Yücel Hekimoğlu was largely recognized as the director of adventure films in Yeşilçam at that time. It was also stated in a biography prepared about Şule Yüksel Şenler (Şenler ve Tezcan, 2007) that Hekimoğlu considered giving Şenler, who was popular in the press during this time, the leading role in a film that revolved around Fatimah bint Muhammad. It is rumored that the director talked about Şenler as a modern woman despite her conservative appearance (p. 96). Elsewhere in the same source, it was also recounted that Hekimoğlu wanted to make a film that was scripted by Şenler (p. 216). Therefore, if we are to give credit to these rumors, it can be argued that Hekimoğlu, as a filmmaker, saw potential for popularity in the interest that was vested in Şenler, which could be put to use in cinema. During a period when *Huzur Sokağı*[8] had not been published yet, the vision of the director and the social expectations that this vision accepted as its data are of importance. The goal of Hekimoğlu's article filled with religious references to cinema was an attempt to direct these expectations in a

similar manner. The title of the article, "Cinema as a Weapon", is particularly significant for the subject at hand.

"Cinema at the Command of Islam"

The craze of "*hazretli* films", which can probably be characterized as an unconscious reaction toward the "social realist" films, enjoyed great popularity while there was also the idea to respond to these films in a similar manner. The explicit articulation of this idea took place through the negative devout Muslim and imam representations in the films. Akif Can's article published in *Tohum* (1967b) titled "Cinema at the Command of Islam" was not only an example of this negative film narrative but it was also striking in terms of concluding this narrative with "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" thesis. The author departed from the comparison between the representation of religious functionaries in foreign films and how imams were represented in Turkish films. The article maintained that imams were depicted as traitors in these films. The article implicitly referred to the movie, *Vurun Kahpeye* (Strike the Whore). However, (considering the 1964 version, more current given the date of the article) there was no scene in the film demonstrating that the character of Fettah Efendi, who was depicted negatively in the film, was an imam although he was illustrated wearing a turban and frequently framed with the mosque at the background. (Nevertheless, in the explanation accompanying the video on YouTube, it is stated that Fettah Efendi is an imam at mosque. It is therefore possible that the film was promoted with similar statements when it came to the theaters. Even though it was not promoted in this way, it was most probably perceived in this manner.) In this regard, it is striking that this article expressed the sensibility that it developed through the religious character by relating it to being an imam.

Although this article does not directly give reference to it, it can be predicted that the reaction given to the film *Gavur İmam* (Imam the Infidel, 1967)[9], the subject matter of Akif Can's previous article in the journal (1967a) was intercrossed with *Vurun Kahpeye.* During the period that preceded the article, the characters from the notables who constituted the evil characters in various films that were shaped through the effect of May 27 coup d'état and regarded as part of "social realism" movement (such as *Şehirdeki Yabancı* (Foreigner in the City, 1962) and *Şafak Bekçileri* (Guardians of the Dawn, 1963) were depicted as people who generally did not abstain from exploiting religion for their own benefit. It appears that these representations were perceived as some sort of attack by Islamists and conservatives and with the change of political atmosphere in 1965 elections, responding to these types of representations came to the foreground. In this context, the article mentioned the recommendation of "not falling behind the enemy in terms of equipment" as if it was a hadith. It underlined that the field of cinema should not be neglected by saying that "going to the cinema is a sin." A "flood of people" rushed to cinema theaters. The author was of the opinion that the audience should be saved along with cinema itself.

In an article that İsmail Kazdan wrote with the alias Osmanzade (1968), he tried to illustrate the significance of being active in the fields of theatre and cinema through a newly established theatre company. Accordingly, the most significant war instrument for states is propaganda. Stating that what allowed the West to exploit the rest of the world was cultural imperialism, Kazdal included cinema and theatre among the most effective weapons of cultural imperialism. Cinema is the instrument to "conquer" the public while theatre is for "conquering" the intellectuals. In this respect, Muslims should embrace cinema and theatre, the weapons of cultural imperialism, for the same purpose just like they follow and embrace the developments in military technology. Kazdal's article shows that Islamist groups began to be active in the cultural arena and also illustrates that these activities were considered as counter propaganda.

During this period when active performance in the fields of cinema and theater became a current issue, it is seen that these practices were legitimized through an emphasis on their

educational aspects. On the other hand, obscenity in cinema and theatre emerged as a major reservation. In the question & answer section of *İslam Medeniyeti* journal, this issue was raised. It was answered as follows: "Cinema is now the greatest weapon that reflects the ideologies of nations. Islam deems it suitable to retaliate to the enemy with the same weapon. As you have stated, cinema and theatre unfortunately contain certain obscene scenes despite their educational quality. Our scholars think that there is no drawback to the educational films that do not contain such obscene scenes" (Mert, 1969). One can therefore conclude that in the circulation of the notion "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" with a religious reference, the permission request regarding the newly initiated activities in cinema and theatre was effective.

A Film "of Us"

Arrival of *Birleşen Yollar* (Merging Paths, 1970) in the theaters (following the documentary called *Kabe Yollarında* (On the Road to Kaaba, 1969), the first output of the cinematic vision propounded by Yücel Çakmaklı by the name *Milli* Cinema led cinema to become a current issue for the Islamist press once again and influentially. It should be maintained that *Milli* Cinema emphasized by Çakmaklı in the first half of 1960s came to be accepted only with *Birleşen Yollar* and within the general nationalist tendency that took hold of different ideological groups in the beginning of 1970s. In an environment where nationalism also became a common reference for leftist movements in the second half of 1960s, it should be stated that the views regarding cinema in the Islamist press were expressed through a more direct Islamic reference and within a narrower scope as they were in the article "Cinema at the Command of Islam." In this regard, *Birleşen Yollar* enabled the expression of *Milli* Cinema and Çakmaklı's broader and culturally more nuanced approach to gain currency among Islamists. However, even during that period when *Birleşen Yollar* was on the agenda and the eminence of *Milli* Cinema was at its peak, it is possible to identify the latent criticisms of the Islamists with regard to *Milli* Cinema.

The article titled "Our Lines in Turkish Cinema" (Uzun, 1971), which interpreted *Birleşen Yollar* as a "return to the Origin" for Turkish cinema, is interesting in respect to its positioning of the film within the history of Turkish cinema. The article broadly relays the memory of the event that served as the source for the film *Ayastefanos'taki Rus Abidesinin Yıkılışı* (Demolition of the Russian Monument at Ayestefanos, 1914), accepted as the first film of Turkish cinema. The demolition of this monument, which constituted a wound in the minds of Turkish people for long years as an indicator of the '93 War and Russian cruelty, is seen as the symbol of national awakening. *Birleşen Yollar* is compared to this film and then placed at the center of the structure that is wished for Turkish cinema. In a world of mediocre ideas where cinema is perceived through the metaphor of weapon, it is no coincidence that the origins of Turkish cinema were based on a film that could be seen as a recorder of a counter-attack in the context of war.

Throughout 1960s, various names such as Yücel Çakmaklı wrote articles on cinema in Islamist journals. Apart from Çakmaklı, most of these names were interested in different fields, literature in particular. With his transition from cinema to filmmaking, Çakmaklı also stopped writing about cinema. At this point, young writers with an interest in cinema but who did not take any role in the production side of the business emerged. One of these writers, Salih Diriklik came into prominence with his film criticisms during 1970s although he later took a step to become a film director. He actually became the founder of Islamist film criticism. His first article (1971)

addressed *Birleşen Yollar*. This article revolved around the idea of "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" to which Diriklik would later refer in his later writings as well. This expression was mentioned within a religious context with no reference to any source. In parallel with the similar articles published in Islamist journals previously, this article focused on the relations between cinema and propaganda and included ideological film examples from the world and Turkey.[10] Yılmaz Güney's film *Umut* (Hope, 1970) that Diriklik criticized for being an example of socialist propaganda in Turkish cinema but to which he also attached importance for being an example of an alternative film language vis-à-vis Yeşilçam was addressed in detail in the article. In a sense, the film came to the fore as an example of "the weapon of the enemy" approach that needs to be adopted. While *Birleşen Yollar* was lauded as a successful step on the way to *Milli* Cinema, it was also implicitly criticized for its intimate relationship with the Yeşilçam narrative. The criticism with regard to Yeşilçam that was embodied in Diriklik's article echoes the criticism of Sinematek circle that greeted *Umut* as the first example of its own cinematic vision.

Following the article where he reviewed *Birleşen Yollar* as a first step, Salih Diriklik (Gökmen, 1972) expressed his views regarding what cinema actually should do in his article titled "Cinema from the Point of Religious View". In this article, he departed from the claim that there was a public reaction to cinema due to religious sensibilities. He stated that the discourse regarding the prohibition against the images in the religion constituted one of the sources for this reaction and commented that this discourse had an impact on how cinema was viewed. On the other hand, he talked about the great impact cinema had on the public at the risk of conflicting with what he emphasized beforehand. He referred to *Birleşen Yollar* as the only film that one could see in theaters with a clear conscience. By also referring to the expression "arming up with the weapon of the enemy", he portrayed the cinematic scene in Turkey as follows:

> Yes, considering that a film is at times watched by millions and reaches even to the smallest towns, the public destruction that it leads to is much greater than the destruction that a bar, nightclub or something else, and even the high society newspaper with the highest circulation can create. And it currently creates this destruction. Without a doubt, such a cinema like the second type of painting we have referred above should be rejected and opposed for the sake of our national and religious feelings. However, they have the upper hand. If we are to reject them, we do not have a favorable work to present to the masses in this regard. In other words, we do not have the luxury of choice in this field at the moment. This will go on until we become aware of these realities and wake up, until we realize that one cannot become an actual Muslim by being withdrawn to his/her own shell, and until we make the most appropriate decision under the light of hadiths such as "those who do not want what he wants for himself for his Muslim brother…" and "arm up with the weapon of the enemy" (p. 34).

Diriklik, who regarded *Birleşen Yollar* as an exception only for the sake of its being a leading work and who considered the cinematic accumulation up to that point entirely worthless in regards to the cinema he envisioned, interestingly mentioned Alp Zeki Heper as another exception. He defined the films of those directors embracing the *Milli* Cinema approach as "works that do not completely follow the values that we understand" and he excluded them from consideration.

Following the articles that he wrote with the influence of *Birleşen Yollar* and that preach the necessity of a cinema that is aligned with "religious view", Diriklik was offered an assistantship from Yücel Çakmaklı and also took part in the foundation process of National Turkish Student Union's (MTTB) Cinema Club. During this period, Diriklik, who addressed Çakmaklı's films with a waning interest and praise, also began to write less. According to Diriklik's statement, the Cinema

Club organized an open session that brought together the *Ulusal* Filmmakers and the club members who defended *Milli* Cinema, especially Çakmaklı upon the proposal of Halit Refiğ. Referred to as *Milli* Cinema Open Session, this organization contributed to the recognition of the cinema club while the discussions carried out during the session and the reflections from the session in the press culminated in the development of an attitude against the club members by Refiğ and Erksan. Diriklik later expressed that they mended fences with Refiğ with the publication of what transpired in the session and the reflections of the session in the press in the form of a book as a publication of the club. As can be understood from this book, Diriklik preferred to remain in the background during these discussions in the session. The article titled "Domestic and Foreign Film Audience in Turkey" written by Diriklik (Gökmen, 1973) during this time included important insights regarding the sociology of Turkish cinema. Stating that the opposition between the people and the intellectuals in Turkish society was also reflected in the field of cinema, Diriklik was surprisingly tolerant in his judgments concerning Yeşilçam cinema.

From *Milli* Cinema to Militant Cinema

In 1974, Diriklik took part in the foundation of a journal called *Yeni Sanat* (Seventh Art). In a series of articles, he wrote for this journal, he addressed "Turkish Cinema Environment" (Gökmen, 1974a). These articles continued the calm tone that he adopted in his article titled "Domestic and Foreign Film Audience in Turkey". The art-oriented approach of this new medium in which these articles were published seem to have led Diriklik's political ideas to recede into the background. And this allowed a culturally more nuanced discourse to be dominant in his articles. However, the political tension in Diriklik's articles once again increased at the end of the year. It was probably because Diriklik began to write in a different medium. The tone of his article titled "Cinema Scales" that he wrote for *Milli Gençlik* (Gökmen, 1975a) was quite harsh. It explicitly proposed a militant cinema. The judgment that cinema was a weapon was the predominant idea running through the article. This militant style of the article could be considered in parallel with the increasing rigidity of the Islamist politics of the period in keeping with the general political atmosphere.

Diriklik's article titled "The Triad of Television, Youth, and Cinema" (Gökmen, 1974b) published in the previous issue of the same journal actually demonstrated the indications of this rigidity. Addressing the effect of television on cinema, Diriklik argued that this was not something as negative as it was assumed. "Because, above all one should not forget that television gives people an option by saving them from the distastefulness of cinema." In another article of the journal titled "Evaluation of *Milli* Cinema", Diriklik (Gökmen, 1975b) criticized Çakmaklı's approach to cinema and his films. He defended the idea that *Milli* Cinema should be "engaged" in a different way from its wide-ranging connotation up until then. This cinema did not only have to assume a militant tone. However, even in the dramatic films to be made in this regard, an ideological aspect should be sought. For Diriklik, the significant thing for *Milli* Cinema was that it relied on "an Islamic way of thinking and living." This definition is narrower compared to Çakmaklı's understanding of *Milli* Cinema in which he counted religion among the sources of national cinema along with science and culture.

Diriklik's articles defending the idea for "an engaged cinema" heralded the emergence of a new and young group that could be accepted as part of *Milli* Cinema but who also criticized Çakmaklı's cinema. According to Diriklik (1995), this group was established in July 1975. While the group on the one hand made their film called *Genclik Köprüsü* (The Bridge of Youth, 1975), they also announced their coming together with a manifesto. In the manifesto that was added to the end of one of the group members', Mesut Uçakan's book *Türk Sinemasında İdeoloji* (2010), it was stated that this group emerged against the capitalist and Marxist doctrines "with the resistance of Muslim sensibility and the understanding of the responsibility of *tebliğ* (calling to Islam)." The

goal of the group was announced as "forming a community of faith." The manifesto, which attached the salvation of third world countries to the resurrection of such a society and was thereby reminiscent of the socialist discourses of the period, continues as follows:

We condemn all types of factionalism, trivial party calculations that impede   our resurrection and we swear to turn the wheel of time in our favor, which   has been turned against us with rotaries, television, and radio that work non-stop to enslave our society and cinemas that become full and then empty "five times a day."

Today, we use the camera in our hands at times as a rifle to whose barrel we put our anger and in order to prevent the gradual disappearance of kindness, to stop the time or reflect the world we idealize with assumptions and criticize the events (pp. 185-186).

Like the third-worldism in the manifesto, the understanding regarding cinema, which is referred to with the "rifle" metaphor, echoed the militant cinema rhetoric that the socialist circles of the period translated from the political cinema movements in the third world countries.[11]

The film *Gençlik Köprüsü*, which was started to be screened with the manifesto, did not create the expected impact as can be understood from Diriklik's article dated December 1975. In this article, Diriklik admitted that the film was an amateur work. He nevertheless accused the cinema sector of sabotaging the film. Despite all of these, he characterized the film as a significant film within Yeşilçam cinema that he depicted in negative terms. He described the film "as the story of a war waged in Turkey both with its subject and actual existence." At the end of the article, he included a different version of the manifesto that Akın Group wrote. The solution for the social problems mentioned in this version of the manifesto was articulated in the following manner: "Saying stop to this state of affairs is only possible with the coming together of all the nationalist and religious conservative circles at the command of 'arming up with the weapon of the enemy'." In this way, the discourse based on "rifle" metaphor, which had leftist connotations, was replaced by a more religious discourse. In both texts, while the discourse of arming up contributed to the scene of civil war that was drawn probably unwittingly, the logic of front also tried to prevent the possibility of separation with the nationalistic groups in this war (again in such a way to remind one of the left). On the other hand, the expression "cinemas that become full and empty five times a day" is striking in both texts. According to the manifesto, cinema is a sort of worship for people who have been enslaved by modern life. Cinema, which has turned into such a potent weapon at the hands of the enemy, should definitely be taken out of its hands.

Consequently, the idea of "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" presents continuity in the perception of cinema as an instrument of propaganda and politics. It has become functional as a discourse activated before the Islamists have become active in new areas such as cinema productions and film criticism in particular. It largely depends on a modernizing envision foreseeing a break with the tradition and separating oneself from the existing cultural accumulation. It produced the content of this envision by translating the thoughts that are dominant in the area on which they would be like to exert power into religious terminology. In this regard, it is the product of a mimetic cultural attitude. In a sense, it actually resembles to the modernizing envision of Yeşilçam, which has been the main target of many criticisms. Just like the characters coming from a traditional, rural, and poor social background and who receive their moral superiority from these traits in Yeşilçam melodramas and arming up with their weapons such as the indicators of modernity, urbanity, and wealth in order to compete with the modern, urban, and wealthy characters in the social realm, Islamist cinema criticism also chooses to adapt the discourses of the political cinema movements that it would like to compete with into its own discourse.

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Notes

[1] "Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses, awing thereby the enemy of Allah, and your enemy, and other beside them, whom you do not now, but Allah knows them. And whatever you spend in the way of Allah will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged" (Karaman, 2003, pp. 702-703).

[2] Regarding the subjects of cultural change, transformation, and influence, the issue of which elements are specific to a culture and which elements are supracultural has been one of the fundamental discussions. The approach maintaining that weapons, equipment in general and technology are supracultural elements and that they are the objective elements of intercultural exchange leads to the unproblematic adoption of these elements. On the other hand, the idea that technology, considered objective in cultural terms, material culture (or civilization) will bring its own morality demonstrates that the influence of such cultural adoption will be much more extensive than previously assumed.

[3] Outside of the modernization context, resemblance to the enemy is mentioned as a negative attitude in the discussion concerning the limits of "retaliation in kind" principle. It is reported that Prophet Muhammed swore to inflict the same torture that Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib underwent in Uhud to the polytheists and later atoned for his oath when the Ayat forbidding this arrived. It is also reported that Abu Bakr did not approve it when the head of an enemy leader was brought to him and when they said to him that they did the same to the Muslims, he answered: "Should I imitate the Persians and Byzantines?" (Özel, 2006).

[4] "Milli" is one of the translations of "national" in Turkish alongside "ulusal". Milli comes from "millet", an earlier translation of "nation", which is also used as "millet system" to define Ottoman social organization based on confessional communities. On the other hand, "ulusal" is a derivation of "ulus" which is a new word for "nation" after The Language Revolution (Dil Devrimi). In the 1960s, religious conservatives prefer milli for national which has a connotation that religion is a dominant part in the national culture while leftists, and secularists in general, prefer "ulusal" for national which does not give a privileged position to religion in the national culture if it gives any. In the late 1960s, Yücel Çakmaklı led Milli Sinema movement while prominent directors of Turkish cinema were forming a loose group around the term Ulusal Sinema countering Sinematek circle, a group of intellectuals who are mostly literary figures, promoting Western style cinema against Turkish cinema practices. Milli Sinema and Ulusal Sinema movements come together in a meeting against "the common enemy" but they cannot resolve their differences.

[5] The Turkish phrase for this movement is "toplumcu sinema" where "toplumcu" is a permissible alternative for socialist which is a taboo word in the early 1960s.

[6] It refers to socialist realism. The term "toplumcu gerçekçilik" was used by critics to avoid "socialist". And also, the main source of inspiration was Italian Neorealism. But the films put under the social realism umbrella were actually reminding socialist melodramas.

[7] Hazretli films, which can be thought parallel to saint films in Western cinemas, begins in 1961 with Nejat Saydam's Hazreti Ömer'in Adaleti (Justice of Hazrat Umar Ibn al Khattab) and Asaf Tengiz's Hazreti İbrahim (Hazrat Ibrahim). However, it turned into a film cycle after Hazreti Yusuf'un Hayatı (The Life of Hazrat Yusuf), directed by Muharrem Gürses in 1965. These films, which attract great public appeal, usually tell the past lives of prophets, saints, or religious elders based on legends that are already common among the people.

[8] Huzur Sokağı (Peace Street) is one of the forerunners of a novel genre in Turkish literature, published in Yeni İstanbul newspaper which has a liberal-conservative political attitude. Yeni İstanbul was the voice of dissidents of the May 27 movement. Ali Fuat Başgil, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Peyami Safa, Nurettin Topçu and Arif Nihat Asya were among the writers of the newspaper. Şule Yüksel Şenler was a young writer who represents a new trend of urban religious conservatism, and a controversial figure with her headscarf. Huzur Sokağı was a melodramatic story in the vein of former popular sentimental novels but with political content.

[9] It is also known as İmamın Gazabı (The Wrath of the Imam). It tells the story of a grifter disguising himself as an imam.

[10] During this period, literature was also considered within a similar instrumental approach in Islamist magazines. In the literary discussions conducted in Mavera journal, the idea maintaining the necessity of literature as an instrument for political struggle came to the forefront (Koytak, 2019). Mustafa Miyasoğlu, who would also take part in Akın Group, which proposed a more "engaged" approach in cinema compared to Milli Cinema, grounded the expression of "arming up with the weapon of the enemy" on the legitimacy of taking an interest in literature. However, he also emphasized that we should not "be like the West" (Çayır, 2015, pp. 32-33). It can thus be stated that a parallel tendency was also influential in literature during 1970s.

[11] Yalçın Lüleci (2020) draws attention to the similarity in the usage of the weapon metaphor in the manifestos of the two cinema movements (p. 509). It is possible to talk about a general tendency to redefine the field of culture as a battlefield among political groups in general. A comparative analysis on this subject can help to understand political group behavior in Turkey.

"Düşmanın Silahı" Olarak Sinema:
İslamcı Bir Sinema Eleştirisi Söyleminin Arkeolojisi

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Türkiye'de sinemanın geniş kitlelere yayılmasıyla sinema aydınların gündemine daha güçlü bir şekilde girmiştir. Özellikle 1960'lı yıllarda aydınlar için toplum üzerindeki etkisi tartışılmaz olan sinemanın nasıl olması gerektiği önemli meselelerden biri haline gelir. 1960'lı yıllar aynı zamanda siyasi ideolojilerin farklı ve yeni şekillerde ortaya çıktıkları bir dönemdir. İslamcılık da milliyetçi mukaddesatçı bir biçimde yeniden Türk siyasetinde ve düşünce hayatında arzı endam etmiştir. İslamcılık yeni özelliklerinin yanı sıra geçmişte modernleşme ideolojisinin ana meşruiyet kaynağını oluşturduğu dönemlerdeki birçok özelliği de yeni döneme taşımıştır. Sinemaya dair İslamcı söylem yeniden üretilmesi süreci bunun bir örneğidir. Geçmişte Batılılaşmaya meşruiyet sağlayan misliyle mukabele fikri sinema alanında iç ve dış rakiplere karşı devreye sokulmuştur.

"Düşmanın silahıyla silahlanma" şeklinde ifade bulan sinema eleştirisi söylemi reddiyeci tutumuyla öne çıkıyor gibi görünse de aslında ölçüsüz bir uyum tavrını yansıtmaktadır. Bağlamı çok farklı olan geçmiş referansların sinema bağlamına taşınması da ayrıca bir başka soruna işaret eder. Sinemayı sembolik şiddetin hâkim olduğu bir alan olarak yeniden tanımlamak sinema ürünlerinin de şekilsizleşmesine ve tepkiselleşmesine sebep olmuştur. Diğer yandan rakip görülen sinema akım ve ürünlerini taklide kapı açan ikinci bir yön yoğun kimlik vurgusuna rağmen kimliksizleşmeyi de beraberinde getirir. "Düşmanın silahıyla silahlanma" fikri "düşmana benzeme" tehlikesini de her zaman yedeğinde taşımaktadır. Bununla birlikte düşmanı taklit merci konumuna taşıyan bu düşünce askeri ve siyasi düzlemde anlaşılır görünse de sinema gibi bir kültür alanı için rakip akım ve üsluplara gereğinden fazla bir paye biçmektedir. Böylelikle de iddialı görünümüne rağmen pratik düzlemdeki başarılı örneklerin de taklide indirgenerek değersizleştirilmesinin önünü açar.

Sinema 1940'lı ve 50'li yıllarda modernleşmenin diğer unsurlarıyla birlikte sosyal yozlaşmanın bir unsuru olarak muhafazakâr eleştirinin hedefi olur. Ancak sinemanın genel manasıyla siyasi bir araç olarak algılanması 60'lı yıllarda gelişmiştir. Bu dönemde yabancı filmlerde olduğu kadar yerli filmlerdeki siyasi propagandaya karşılık verme tavrı belirgindir. Ancak ilginç bir şekilde "düşmanın silahıyla silahlanma" düşüncesini tetikleyen ideolojik rekabet içerisinde olunan ve siyasi propaganda yönüne dikkat çekilen toplumsal gerçekçi sinema örneklerinden önce "hazretli filmler" adıyla anılan menkıbevi filmler olmuştur. Dolayısıyla söylemin çıkış noktasında zaten hazretli filmler şeklinde somut ürünleri ortaya çıkmış bir tepkiselliği kendince doğru yola yöneltmek niyeti etkindir. Sonraki dönemde Milli Sinema fikri etrafında ifade edilen bu tepkisellik rakip ideolojik gruplarla yan yana gelmeyi göze alırken Yeşilçam karşıtı tavrını her zaman muhafaza edecek İslamcı sinema eleştirisinin temellerinden birini oluşturmuştur.

Sinemada dini sembol ve temsillerin olumsuz değer yargısıyla yansıtılması arızi bazı örnekler biraz da abartılarak mevcut tepkiselliğin beslenmesini mümkün kılmıştır. Böylelikle Yeşilçam sineması kadar rakip siyasi film akımlarının da düşman olarak tanımlanmasının yolu açılmıştır. Böylelikle mevcut sinema pratiklerinin tümüne alternatif bir sinema için destek talep edilmiştir.

Vurun Kahpeye filmi bu bağlamda sıkça atıf yapılan ve bir anlamda İslamcı sinema eleştirisinin Türk sinemasının geri kalanına dair muhayyilesinin mühürleyen film olmuştur. Diğer yandan 1970'li yıllardan itibaren Yücel Çakmaklı'nın gerçekleştirdiği filmler öncü örnekler olarak görülüp benimsense de bu filmlerin Yeşilçam'la ilişkisi alttan alta bir eleştiri konusu olmuştur. Yani bir bakıma "düşmanın silahıyla silahlanma" düşüncesinin Yeşilçam bağlamında başarılı bir uygulaması olarak da nitelenebilecek bu filmler de aynı eleştirel söylemden kurtulmayı başaramayacaktır.

Yücel Çakmaklı'nın yönetmenliğe geçiş yapmasıyla birlikte Türk sinemasındaki mevcut sinema pratiklerine yönelik tavrı daha olumlu hale gelirken sinema alanındaki sinemacı eleştirmen ayrımı İslami muhafazakârlar arasında da oluşmuştur. Çakmaklı filmlerine de belirli ölçüde ve örtük bir biçimde eleştirel yaklaşan eleştirmenlerin rakip ve taklit mercii bu noktada Devrimci Sinema olmuştur. Umut filmi hem olumsuz yönleriyle hem de öykünülen yönleriyle bu dönemde sinema eleştirmenlerinin dikkatlerinin odağında yer alır. Diğer yandan Milli Sinema ile Ulusal Sinema arasındaki bir uzlaşı ihtimali ise yapılan bir açık oturuma rağmen, ya da bu açık oturum yüzünden, rafa kaldırılır. Hem Milli Sinema'nın hem de Ulusal Sinema'nın Türk sinemasının tamamı adına konuşma tavrının bütüncüllüğünün yanında Devrimci Sinema'nın kısmiliği eleştirmenlerin tavırlarıyla daha uyum içerisinde olmuştur.

1970'lerin ortalarından itibaren siyasi atmosferin daha çatışmalı bir hale geldiği bir ortamda İslamcı sinema eleştirisi de daha sert bir hale alır. Milli Sinema'nın daha dengeli siyasi vurgusunun yanında eleştirmenler "dini görüş"ü merkeze alan daha mütecanis bir sinema anlayışını savunmaya başlar. Soldaki militan sinema akımlarına benzer şekilde İslamcıların sinema anlayışları da militanlaşır. Silah metaforu yeniden ve gerçek anlamını da çağrıştıracak şekilde devreye sokulur. Düşmanın silahıyla silahlanmak artık "güdümlü sinema"yı savunmak anlamına gelir.

Sonuç olarak "düşmanın silahıyla silahlanma" düşüncesi sinemanın propaganda ve siyaset aracı olarak algılanmasında bir süreklilik gösterir. İslamcıların özellikle sinema yapımı, sinema eleştirisi gibi kendileri için yeni olan alanlara girmeden önce aktif hale getirdikleri bir söylem olarak işlevselleşmiştir. Genel manasıyla gelenekten kopuşu ve mevcut kültürel birikimden kendini ayrıştırmayı öngören modernleşmeci bir tasavvura dayanır. Bu tasavvurun içeriğini de iktidar elde edilmek istenen alana hâkim olan düşünceleri dini terminolojiye tercüme ederek üretir. Bu açıdan mimetik bir kültürel tavrın ürünüdür.