

Cinema of Egypt (1927-1970) *Mısır Sineması (1927-1970)*

Mustafa AYDIN * & Aysel ERGÜL KESKİN**

*Prof. Dr. Lecturer at Istanbul Topkapı University, Department of Foreign Languages, İstanbul, Türkiye.

E-mail: mustafaaydin@topkapi.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7640-7470>

**Prof. Dr. Lecturer at Istanbul Aydın University, Faculty of Education, Arabic Language Teaching Programme, İstanbul, Türkiye.

E-mail: ayselergulkeskin@aydin.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1326-8124>

Corresponding Author/Sorumlu Yazar:

Aysel ERGÜL KESKİN,
Prof. Dr. Lecturer at Istanbul Aydın University, Faculty of Education, Arabic Language Teaching Programme, İstanbul, Türkiye.

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Öz

Sinema, kitlesel popülaritesi ve geniş izleyici kitlesine ulaşması nedeniyle sanatsal tür olarak farklı bir özgünlüğe sahiptir. Sinema tarihinde "Arap sineması" ele alındığında bu alanda en büyük ve en önemli rol Mısır sinemasına aittir. Mısır film endüstrisi, Arap dünyasında türünün en güçlü ve en etkili endüstrisi olmuş ve öyle olmaya da devam etmektedir. Orta Doğu'da sinema filmleri üreten tek ülke olmasıyla bilinen Mısır sineması, "Arap dünyasının Hollywood'u" olarak adlandırılmıştır. Mısır sinemasının başlangıç tarihi hakkında farklı görüşleri sürdürülmektedir. Bazı sinema tarihçilerine göre başlangıç tarihi Lumière Kardeşlerin kısa filmlerinin İskenderiye'de gösterildiği 1896, bazılarının göre Mısır sinemasının ilk kısa belgesel filminin yapım yılı olan 1907, bazılarının göre ise Mısır sinemasının ünlü kadın yönetmeni ve oyuncusu Azîze Emîr'in yönettiği ve senaryosunu yazdığı "Leylâ" adlı ilk uzun metrajlı filmin yapım tarihi olan 1927 yılıdır. Çoğunlukla toplumsal ve ekonomik sorunları ele almak suretiyle Mısır toplumunun aynası haline gelen Mısır sineması kimi zaman yeni yazılan senaryolarla kimi zaman başka ülkelerin filmlerinden ve zaman zaman edebi eserlerden yapılan uyarlamalarla öne çıkmıştır. Mısır sineması, toplumsal değişimleri takip ederek bunları ileri düzeyde bir sanat diliyle ifade etme becerisine sahip sinema eğitimi almış yönetmenler, senaristler ve oyuncular yetiştirme safhasına gelinceye kadar önemli aşamalardan geçmiştir. Bu çalışmada kendine özgü tarzı, tavrı, dili, üslubu ve zengin sözcük dağarcığı ile dünya sinema tarihinde önemli bir yere ve kimliğe sahip Mısır sinemasının, 1927 yılından 1970'li yıllara kadar olan dönemdeki gelişim sürecinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mısır sineması, film yapımıcılığı, Arap sineması, altın çağ, Stüdyo Mısır, sihirli fener, 1952 Mısır Devrimi.

Abstract

Cinema has a distinct originality as an artistic genre due to its mass popularity and ability to reach a wide audience. When "Arab cinema" is considered in the history of cinema, the biggest and most important role in this field belongs to Egyptian cinema. The Egyptian film industry has been and remains the most powerful and influential of its kind in the Arab world. Known for being the only country in the Middle East that produces feature films, Egyptian cinema has been called the "Hollywood of the Arab world". There are different opinions about the beginning date of Egyptian cinema. According to some film historians, the start date is 1896, when the Lumière Brothers' short films were shown in Alexandria; and according to some, it is 1907, the year the first short documentary film of Egyptian cinema was made; according to others, it is the year 1927, the year of production of the first feature-length film, "Leila", directed and scripted by Azîza Amîr, the famous female director and actress of Egyptian cinema. Egyptian cinema, which has become a mirror of Egyptian society by mostly addressing social and economic issues, has sometimes come to the fore with newly written scripts, sometimes with adaptations from films of other countries and sometimes from literary works. Egyptian cinema has gone through important stages until it has reached a level where it can produce directors, screenwriters and actors who have received cinema education, can follow social changes and can express them with a developed artistic language. This study aims to examine the development process of Egyptian cinema, which has an important place and identity in the history of world cinema with its unique style, attitude, language, style and rich vocabulary, from 1927 to the 1970s.

Keywords: Cinema of Egypt, film production, Arab Cinema, golden age, Studio Mısır, magic lantern, Egyptian Revolution of 1952.

Cinema of Egypt (1927-1970)

INTRODUCTION

Although a younger art form than theatre, cinema's influence on the Arab peoples of the Middle East and North Africa cannot be underestimated. From the impression created by the magic lantern, the precursor of cinema, in Egypt in the mid-19th century, one can guess the positive attitude of the local population towards cinema. Two tourists talk about the effects of the magic lantern and one of them mentions how fascinated the spectator is by it. This statement of his was supported by another British tourist who said:

*"When I was in Egypt in 1853, I had a magic lantern with me. The Arabs were very pleased with this. They had never seen anything like it before. One evening I was with a rather aristocratic audience at the house of Mustafa Aga, our honorary consul in Luxor. There was the district administrator, two or three sheikhs, the school principal, and a few others. Mustafa liked the magic lantern so much that he made me leave it to him. In return he gave me a large burial vault that could hold four wooden vases."*¹

The relations of the Arab peoples with Western Europe and America increased at the beginning of the 19th century. Great interest was aroused in Western technical achievements. From 1903 onwards, curious readers of the major Egyptian monthly newspapers of those days asked the editors questions such as the technical characteristics of cinematography, the origins of cinema, the state of development of cinema in various countries, the possibilities of synchronisation, etc., which were often difficult for the editors. Interest in cinema grew even more rapidly during the war years, as well as in the years immediately preceding the First World War. In Egypt and Syria, not only short announcements about cinema but also long articles written locally or translated from the world press were transmitted. However, such announcements and articles reached only a very small part of the population. In any case, enough curiosity was aroused that the public almost completely abandoned shadow plays and flocked to see first silent and then sound films brought to Egypt. Pathé² thus brought many silent films to Egypt, and its activities between 1904 and

¹ John Gadsby, *My Wanderingp. Being Travels in the East in 1846-47, 1850-51, 1852-53* (London: Stereotype Edition, 1857), 351.

² Pathé or Pathé Frères is the name of various French businesses founded and first operated by the Pathé Brothers in France, starting in 1896. In 1901, it abandoned the sale of phonographs and accelerated film production. Charles Pathé made his first feature film, *Les Misérables*, in 1904, accessed 25.03.2024, <https://sinemanaintincagi.blogspot.com/>

1911 attracted great attention. From 1908 onwards, short films were screened at least twice a week in Alexandria and Cairo, and a little later in Port Said, Ismailiyya and Suez. However, the impact of the films brought in to entertain the Allied troops stationed in the Middle East was significant. The centre of these forces was concentrated in Egypt and a large number of cinema halls were built for their entertainment. The influx of foreign films and the establishment of cinema halls were among the reasons that made Egypt the centre of the Arab film industry.³

The Beginning of Cinema of Egypt

Before there was a film industry in Egypt, there was a film audience. As early as 1908, there were 11 cinema halls in the country. By early 1917 their number had grown to eighty. This was an indication of the growing interest of Egyptian audiences in the new invention. Not only the audience but also the journalists of the period showed great interest in this new structure. In their writings, they discussed the technical aspects of film production. The interest of the intellectual minority led to the emergence of film clubs and film magazines.

Initially, cinema documented real-life scenes, such as the famous French black and white short documentary film *"Workers Leaving the Factory (La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon)"* from 1895. Later, filmmakers began to adapt short stories to produce short films in the form of theatre performances. Many directors began to show interest in international classics that could be adapted into short films. When cinema began in Egypt, short silent films similar to Shakespeare's plays were made, but most of them were lost. Film historians and Egyptian film critics differ on the exact date of the first cinematographic exhibition in Egypt. While some consider the Lumière Brothers' cinema show in Alexandria on 6 January 1896 as the birth of cinema in Egypt, some place the beginning of cinema in 1907 with the short documentary film about Khedive Abbas II of Egypt's visit to the al-Mursi Abu'l-'Abbas Institute in Alexandria and Some date it to 1927, when Azîza Amîr 's "Leila" was made, the first feature-length film of Egyptian filmmaking financed by local capital. 28 November 1896 the first cinematographic screening in Cairo was organised by Henry Dello-Strologo, the Lumière Brothers' Italian representative in Egypt. Various venues in Alexandria and Cairo hosted some of the earliest known screenings of the world's first short film directed by the French Lumière Brothers. Film demonstrations were organised without interruption and received wide coverage in the newspapers of the period. It attracted the attention of different segments of the society and the place where the films were shown started to be called "cinema film

³ J. M. Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge Library Editions: Society of The Middle East, Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), 156-157.

exhibition" or "moving photograph". In the advertisements in the newspapers of the period, it was stated that the performances were open to the public between 16.00 and 23.00, and that local and foreign women were given a two-hour show every Friday between 16.00 and 18.00. Tickets were priced according to children and adults. The success of the first shows led to the opening of several small cinema halls in different neighbourhoods of Cairo and Alexandria. The proliferation of these cinema halls led to competition among non-Egyptian cinema owners. For example, a movie theatre owner created a competitive environment by offering a free lottery ticket for every movie ticket in order to attract more spectators to the cinema. The Lumière Brothers were not content with exporting their films, they also dared to make films outside France. On 9 March 1897, they sent their cameramen Eugene Promio and Francis Delie to Egypt to make the first shots. In addition to promoting new films in Egypt, Promio announced that he was going to shoot authentic Egyptian scenes to be shown all over the world. These first shots included the family of the Italian consul, cityscapes, important places and monuments. On 3 April 1897, Cairo's first real cinema opened in the house of Halim Pasha. The Lumière Brothers could not benefit from the cinema industry for a long time. In 1906, the French Pathé Company and the Italian Irpanora companies entered the Egyptian market. In 1907, more cinemas opened in Cairo and Alexandria. Lumière, Pathé, Mondial, Irpanora, Cosmos, Olympia, Saint-Clair, Ideal and Aziz/Dorès were the best known of these theatres. In 1911, when the first decree of the law regulating the opening of cinemas in Egypt was issued, there were eight cinemas in Cairo and three in Alexandria, all regularly showing European or American films. From the beginning, Egyptian cinema was a means of entertainment. For those who worked in it, mostly non-Egyptians, it was also a means of getting rich quickly. The French and Italians dominated the Egyptian cinema market for a long time, with Lumière and Pathé films imported or shot on location to entertain the masses and encourage the locals. In 1912, Leopoldo Fiorello, an Italian living in Egypt, introduced Arabic subtitles to accompany the dialogue of foreign films on transparent slides projected on a small screen placed next to the big screen. The subheadings were written on transparent glass and made visible by mounting a magic lantern. Such new inventions, together with local scenes, contributed as a novelty to the cinema competition between cinema owners to attract audiences, initially foreigners and soon Egyptians.⁴ The enthusiastic participation of the public in these shows caused some foreigners to show more interest in the cinema industry. After a period of repetition of

⁴ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," (Doctoral Thesis, The University of Leeds Department of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies, 2002), 12-14, 17-18; https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/films/Early_Filmp.html (The Early Years of Documentaries and Short Films in Egypt (1897-1939), accessed 18.04.2024; <https://goldenglobep.com/articles/century-egyptian-cinema/>, accessed 26.05.2024; Dina Al-Mahdy, "The golden age of Egyptian cinema," accessed 24.05.2024 <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/366778.aspx>; <https://rawi-publishing.com/articles/startupcity>, accessed 12.07.2024.

foreign shows, audiences became bored and gradually began to leave the cinemas. In 1912, De Lagarne, the owner of the French cinema in Alexandria, who was disturbed by this, brought a camera and a photographer from France to produce local scenes in accordance with the Lumière movement. De Lagarne's aim was to increase attendance at his cinema. When his initiative was successful, other cinema owners started to make short films to attract the attention of the audience. De Lagarne's initiative and many others like it gradually turned into ordinary news films. However, newsreels were not enough for the Egyptian audience in the cinema halls where European and American films were shown. The audience's need for a cinema of its own and the producer's expectation of financial success led to the creation of the first Italian-Egyptian Cinematographic Company on 30 October 1917, managed by Italians and financed by the Banco di Roma. The company was owned by the famous photographer Umberto Dorés, owner of the Saint and Dorés Cinematography in Alexandria. The aim of the company was to make short fiction films. This was a giant step forward in the history of cinema of Egypt. The company opened a studio in Alexandria in 1917. He made two films in the first two years. However, the fact that the two films were produced, directed, and acted exclusively by Italians played an important role in their failure. The audience showed more interest in the newsreels than in the films of the Italian-Egyptian company. The bankruptcy of the company caused Banco di Roma to withdraw from the venture. When the company was liquidated, his studio was not used and most of his equipment was sold to the Italian cameraman Alvis Orfanelli. Foreigners have now realised that Egyptian audiences are not keen on foreign films, neither in terms of style nor subject matter. Until then, they had made films with foreign capital, foreign actors, and foreign technical staff. Orfanelli was one of the first to realise the reason behind the collapse of this company. Instead of giving the enthusiastic Egyptians the cold shoulder or exploiting them as before, using them as extras, he decided to approach them. The young Italian, who wanted to win the support of audiences eager to see their favourite actors on the big screen, used the famous Egyptian theatre groups of the time for film productions. Their theatre works were represented in cinematic form. Orfanelli limited European expertise only to technical subjects such as cameramen and film directors. This method of Egyptian actors and foreign technicians dominated Egyptian cinema for a long time. Orfanelli's strategy was well received by the public and audiences were happy to see theatre stars on screen.⁵

Between 1917 and 1926, despite the lack of film equipment, attempts to make films greatly increased. Various local theatre groups started film production. The first regular Egyptian newsreel film was launched. The Egyptians were the first among the Arabic-

⁵ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s-1960s)," 19-20; https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/cinematographers/Alvise_Orfanelli.html; Jane Gaffney, "The Egyptian Cinema: Industry and Art in Changing Society," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 9, No.1 (Winter 1987): 54. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41857918>

speaking peoples to start their own film production. This happened in 1917 at the height of the war. After several short films, all silent, were produced and presented in Alexandria, the feature-length silent film "*al-Bahr Biyidhak lîh?*"⁶ was made as a bolder initiative. This film was a comedy starring some Egyptian theatre stars of the time. The well-known comedian Ali al-Kassâr starred in the lead role. Despite being a mediocre film at the beginner level, it was a great success. These early experiments stirred emotions and the emergence of cinema took on a deeper meaning, generating greater enthusiasm than in other countries. Cinema clubs began to appear one after the other. The members enthusiastically exchanged views on mastering the technique of film acting.

Work on Egyptian short films began in 1919 and continued until 1926. These films were about 30 minutes long, and although they were not films in the strict sense of the word, but were shot as theatre productions, they represented the first attempts at real Egyptian filmmaking. In addition to short films produced, directed and shot by non-Egyptians, various small feature films and documentaries were made with the participation of Egyptian actors from 1919 onwards. Orfanelli's method of foreign technical expertise, combined with the direct involvement of Arabs in acting, helped to excite Arabs towards cinema, this new art form. For the Egyptians, the post-war period was regarded as a phase of experimental training and preparation. They had a tendency to imitate Europeans in this new type of art, which they found quite attractive. The Egyptians were the first among Arabic-speaking countries to start their own film production. Inspired by Orfanelli's rule, some Egyptian actors followed the same path, seeking foreign technical assistance for the production of their feature films. For example, Najîb al-Rîhânî, famous for his role in *Keshkesh Bek*, hired many foreigners to direct his films. Foreigners proved to be the driving force in the Egyptian film industry. Egyptian pioneers such as al-Rîhânî and Azîza Amîr sought foreign technical assistance for their productions.⁷ However, it was not until 1925 that serious, well-planned attempts were made to make films in Egypt under the guidance of some foreigners, notably American experts. About two years later, the preparations led by Vedâd Orfi resulted in four films. The first and best of these films was "*Leila*" (1927) starring Azîza Amîr. The costs were modest. This simple film, most of the scenes of which were shot on the streets of Cairo, was not a real film, but a play photographed and even divided into acts. These shortcomings did not prevent the film from having a six-week run. 16 November 1927, due to the success of the screening of this feature film, it is considered to be the beginning of true Egyptian cinema. The brothers Ibrahim and Badr Lama, founders of the Mînâ

⁶ In Arabic, colloquially, "*al-Bahr Biyidhak lîh?*" (meaning "Why is the Sea Laughing?") For information about the film, see https://www.bibalex.org/alexcinema/cinematographers/Alvise_Orfanelli.html, accessed 15.09.2024.

⁷ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 21-22.

Film Club, had shown the less successful feature film "*Qubla fî al-Sahrâ*' " (1927) three or four months earlier. Later in 1929, the films "*Ghâdat al-Sahrâ*' " and "*Bint al-Nîl*" were shot. Cinema in Egypt was born in the hands of an Egyptian woman. Azîza Amîr, who presented "*Leila*", the first feature-length film of Egyptian cinema, on the big screen in 1927, was the producer and lead actress of this film. In 1929, another woman, Assia Dagher, produced and starred in the film number "7" in the history of Egyptian cinema. "*Ghâdat al-Sahrâ*' " was released on the first day of May 1929 and ranked seventh in the list of Egyptian feature films. However, when the Lama Brothers made their first film "*Qubla fî al-Sahrâ*' " in Alexandria in 1927, it was a sign of the growing interest in the silver screen. The scripts of these films took their material from Egyptian or Arab history, as well as from everyday life, following the examples of Arab theatre. The warm reception of these silent films by the public encouraged Youssef Wahbî, a famous theatre artist, to experiment with sound films. Thus, he took the Arab film "*Awlâd al-Zawât*" (1932), in which he played the leading role, to Paris for synchronisation. The film was an adaptation of one of his successful plays for which he wrote the screenplay.⁸

When the Lama brothers Ibrahim and Badr, originally from Bethlehem, decided to return to Palestine from Chile in 1924, they fell in love with the city when they landed in Alexandria. The brothers, who were keen on film production, founded their own film production company, Condor Film (Kûndûr Fîlm), in 1926. In imitation of American Western films, they began to make films about the desert life and adventures of Arabs. Films about adventure, desert life, and racehorses had a noticeable impact on Egyptian audiences. The audience showed the same positive reaction and enthusiasm to the presentation of national heroes in newsreels as it did to the presentation of Arab costumes and traditions in the films of the Lamas. Experienced writers, directors, and actors from many theatre groups soon realised that it was impossible to ignore this new cinema competitor. They wrote, directed, and acted in scripts influenced by Rudolf Valentino's films. The younger brother Badr played the lead role in the film "*Qubla fî al-Sahrâ*' ". In 1930, they founded the Lama Studio in Cairo. In 1941, they made a historical film with a weak script called "*Salâhuddîn al-Ayyûbî*". In 1963, Youssef Chahine directed the magnificent film

⁸ Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 158-159; Cûrc Sadûl, *Târîhu's-Sînemâ fi'l-Âlem*, Trans. İbrahim el-Kilânî, Fâyiz Kem Nakş (Beirut: Menşûrât 'Uveydât, 1968), 523-524; <https://www.alqabap.com/article/409817>, accessed 09.08.2024; Khémaïs Khayati, "Les fondements culturels du cinéma égyptien", À propos du cinéma égyptien, *Les dossiers de la cinémathèque* 13, Juillet 1984, accessed 03.03.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/les-fondements-culturels-du-cinema-egyptien/>; Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)", A propos du cinéma égyptien, *Les dossiers de la cinémathèque* 13, Juillet 1984, accessed 15.04.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/naissance-et-developpement-du-cinema-egyptien-1922-1970>

"*Al-Nasser Salah Ad-Dîn*". Youssef Chahine was born in Alexandria to a Lebanese father and a Greek mother. Both Alexandria and Cairo featured prominently in his films. Youssef Chahine studied editing in Hollywood and then returned to Egypt to concentrate on directing. He gained legendary status in the Arab film industry. His first two films, "*Bâbâ Amîn*" (1950) and "*Ibn al-Nîl*" (1951), signalled the great influence of Elia Kazan on the young director. His greatest success was the film "*Bâb al-Hadîd*" (1958), in which he portrayed a railway station over a twenty-four-hour period through the eyes of Kanâvî, a schizophrenic character skilfully played by Chahine himself. Chahine became known in 1953 with the beginning of Omar Sharif's international career. Omar Sharif appeared in the film "*Sira' fî al-Wâdî*" (1954) directed by Youssef Chahine.⁹

In 1934, the largest Arab film company was established near Cairo and named "Stûdyû Mısır" (Studio Mısır). The Egyptian Studio had an important role in the history of high-quality film production in Egypt. He contributed to the promotion of Egypt's leading position in the field of art and proved that it deserves to be the capital of art in the East.¹⁰ Numerous cinema halls were built in cities and towns. In 1929, an American Consular report stated that there were fifty cinema halls throughout Egypt. In 1949 there were one hundred and ninety-four cinema halls. In 1952, the number of cinema halls increased to three hundred and fifteen. Seventy-six of these were open-air cinemas. The significant increase in the number of viewers, especially in the cities, was due to the fact that the average Arab film appealed to the temperament and tastes of the easily entertained, music-loving Egyptian city dwellers. In fact, both the state and the people united to give Arab cinema this chance.¹¹ The emergence of the film industry in Egypt was due to the important role played by the Egyptian economist and intellectual Mohamed Tal'at Harb in establishing "*Stûdyû Mısır*".¹² Egypt was the first country to produce cinema films and thus assumed the leading role in the Arab world. Egyptian cinema films, and especially commercial films, have established themselves with Arab audiences in each country and provided a model for these audiences to evaluate later Arab films.

⁹ Bernard Sabella, "Christian Contributions to Art, Culture and Literature in the Arab-Islamic World," *Secular Nationalism And Citizenship in Muslim Countries (Arab Christian in the Levant)*, Ed. Kail C. Ellis, (USD: Villanova University, 2018), 101; Marisa Farrugia, "*The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)*," 25; Ataa Elnaccash, "Egyptian Cinema: A Historical Outline," *African Arts* 2, No. 1, (1968): 52 and 71; Bidâyâtu's-Sinemâ fî Mısır kemâ Hakâhâ Jalâl al-Sharqâvî, accessed 17.08.2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220831174714/https://www.medinaportal.com/galal-el-sharqawy-history-of-cinema>

¹⁰ <https://elcinema.com/person/1052809/>, accessed 19.08.2024.

¹¹ Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 160.

¹² Mustafa el-Masnâvî, "Târihu's-Sineme'l-'Arabiyye (Medâhil li'l-Fehm ve't-Tefsîr)," *es-Sineme'l-'Arabiyye: Târihuhâ ve Mustakbeluhâ ve Devruhe'n-Nahdavi* (Merkez Dirâsâti'l-Vahdeti'l-'Arabiyye, 2014), 93; Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 23.

What is noteworthy here is that Arab films that differ from the Egyptian commercial model are not accepted by the Egyptian audience in the same way. This is because this model has shaped the audience and caused Arab cinema not to open up to other creative styles. Moreover, the priority of the Egyptian film's release in the Arab world and the accompanying distribution and screening structures in Egypt created a closed structure for later Arab films. For this reason, in Egypt, as in other Arab countries, film festivals were the only place where Arab films released outside the Egyptian commercial model could be seen. On the other hand, the presence of Egyptian, American, and Indian films in Arab cinema halls, as well as French films in the Maghreb countries, created a readiness for diversity in the audience.¹³

In Egypt, the government was twice as interested in the film industry. Cinema is one of the state's sources of cash. The government has finalised its indirect taxation through taxes on medium- and high-priced tickets. A semi-official Chamber of the Film Industry, Ğurfetu *Sinâ'ati's-Sînemâ* was composed of representatives of film studios, producers and owners of large theatres. It took initiatives for the coordination and development of various branches of the film industry. It has made efforts to contact similar institutions abroad for film distribution. Many Egyptian films have been shown in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, North Africa, Iran, Israel and Cyprus, and distributed among Arab communities in France, the United States, Brazil, and other South American States. Four years after the presidential council of the Internazionale d'Arte Biennale recognised cinema as an art (1932), Egypt participated in the Venice Film Festival with the film "*Vidâd*" (1936) and the following year with a documentary. Thus, Egypt was the only Arab country to participate in this festival before the Second World War. The Egyptian government naturally encouraged participation in international film festivals for reasons of foreign trade and national prestige. In 1946, the Cannes Film Festival screened "*Dunyâ*" by the pioneer of Egyptian cinema, Mohammad Karîm, and another Egyptian director, Youssef Wabhî, was appointed as a member of the jury. In 1952, the festival screened "*Leyle Ğarâm*" (1951) directed by Ahmad Badrhân from the pioneer generation and "*Ibn al-Nîl*" (1951) directed by Youssef Chahine from the third generation. Egypt's biggest success at the Venice Film Festival came in September 1951 with the film "*Ibn al-Nil*", written and directed by Youssef Chahine. The Berlin Film Festival presented the 1952 film "*Zeinab*", based on the famous novel "*Zeinab*" by Mohammad Hussein Heikal about life in the countryside and starring Râkiye Ibrahim and Yahyâ Chahine. In New Delhi, Egyptian films were repeatedly screened and praised. Egyptian cinema reached its heyday in the 1950s, especially in 1954, 1955 and 1956, when four masterpieces were shown. These

¹³ Mustafa el-Masnâvî, "Târihu's-Sîneme'l-'Arabiyye (Medâhil li'l-Fehm ve't-Tefsîr)," 95.

include: "*al-Wahsh*" by Salâh Abû Seyf (1954), "*Sira' fî al-Wâdî*" directed by Youssef Chahine (1954), "*Hayât aw Mawt*" by Kamal al-Sheikh (1954) and "*Shabâb al-Imra'a*" by Salâh Abû Seyf (1956). The international success of the Egyptian film industry was revealed at Cannes, where two melodramatic films, "*al-Wahsh*" by Salâh Abû Seyf and "*Sira' fî al-Wâdî*" by Youssef Chahine, were screened. Both films dealt with social issues, including the struggle of peasants against landlords. Salâh Abû Seyf's "*Bidâya wa Nihâya*" (1960) participated in the Moscow International Film Festival. Henry Barakât's film "*al-Harâm*" (1965) was nominated for the Palme d'Or at the 1968 Cannes Film Festival. The Egyptian government helped young directors and actors and organised film competitions. Government control was not only political and social, but sometimes also religious. Sometimes they also used the censorship mechanism to prevent foreign states from being offended or to prevent films from being made that would harm Egyptian interests. The new regime in Egypt, which began on 23 July 1952 when the armed forces took over, did not loosen its control of film in any way. The issue of film censorship in Egypt, imposed by the monarchy and maintained by the republic, has been one of the most debated topics by film critics. Some critics wanted Arab cinema to be true to life and reality, while others disliked its tendency to depict only the most current events. Critics accused the producer, director and supporting cast of each film of incompetence without offering constructive advice for the future. When talking about the development of Arab cinema, the following points come to the fore: Although it started much later than Arab theatre, Arab cinema has made remarkable progress, especially in Egypt. The development of Arab cinema has come to the fore more with its quantitative values rather than its qualitative values. The criticism is mainly about the plot, with artistic and technical problems taking a back seat. Except for a small Europeanised upper class, the general public was very interested in Arab cinema. People in rural areas were less likely to go to the cinema than those in urban areas. Both groups, however, enjoyed tear-jerking social films with a musical character.¹⁴

Despite the fact that Egypt's colloquial Arabic is different from that of other countries, Arabic-speaking films shot in Egypt have been successful by adapting to the mind-set of the people in the Middle East. Egyptian films were very popular in Syria and Lebanon. About half of the cinema-goers flocked to Egyptian films. This

¹⁴ Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 161-163, 165-171; <https://www.festival-cannep.com/en/2011/egyptian-films-at-the-festival-de-cannes/>, accessed 16.03.2024; Egyptian Cinema, accessed 19.03.2024 <https://www.scribd.com/document/318934544/Egyptian-Cinema-History>; <https://goldenglobep.com/articles/century-egyptian-cinema>, accessed 26.05.2024; Bidâyâtu's-Sînemâ fî Misr kemâ Hakâhâ Jalâl al-Sharqâvî, accessed 17.08.2024 <https://web.archive.org/web/20220831174714/https://www.medinaportal.com/galal-el-sharqawy-history-of-cinema>

situation is remarkable considering the competition from foreign countries, especially the United States of America. Egyptian films were often shot in the wonderful landscapes of Lebanon. For example, the film "*Mısırî fi Lubnân*"¹⁵ (1952), starring Kamâl al-Shinâwî, Nûr al-Hudâ and Lûlâ Sidqî.¹⁶

The monopoly of Egyptian films in the Middle East has even attracted the attention of Hollywood financiers. It reached its peak during the Second World War due to the inability of Italian and German cinema to compete. Despite wartime restrictions, six new studios began operating during the war years, bringing the total number to eighteen. Due to increasing profits, the film industry became highly commercialised, and more emphasis was placed on quantity than quality. After covering all expenses, the big film companies bought new machines with part of their profits. The largest of these companies is *Stûdyû Mısır*, founded in 1934. The second is the *Celâl Studio* near Cairo, named after its founder. The directors were foreigners at first, but later became Egyptians. There was very little Arabic literature on production and directing. Most of the Egyptian directors had little or no specialised training as they had moved from acting to directing. It was customary for a producer to have his own artistic director and lead actor. The persistent demands of film critics for specialisation did not change this practice much. This attitude was one of the main factors that delayed the development of the Egyptian film industry. By the end of 1953, there were about forty film directors in Egypt. These directors tried to direct various films for a long time. A significant number of these failed due to lack of artistic and technical knowledge. Some of them succeeded. Among them are Youssef Wabhî, who studied in Italy, Ahmad Badrhân, a director of musical films, and Mohammad Karîm.¹⁷

Actors and Film Types in Egyptian Cinema

Since the Arab film industry was particularly developed in Egypt, the most famous Arab stars were also based in Egypt. Even the actors in films shot in Lebanon or elsewhere in the Middle East were mostly of Egyptian origin or had been educated there. In 1936, with the spread of sound cinema, films in the genres of farce, melodrama, and musicals began to be made. In these films, the actor and theatre director Youssef Wabhî, the comedian Najîb al-Rîhânî and the singers Umm Kulthûm, Mohammad 'Abd al-Wahhâb, Farîd al-'Atrash, Esmâhân, Shâdiya, Sabâh

¹⁵ <https://elcinema.com/work/1004829/>, accessed 27.09.2024.

¹⁶ Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 171-172, 179.

¹⁷ Jane Gaffney, "The Egyptian Cinema: Industry and Art in Changing Society," 55, 59, accessed 13.05.2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41857918>; Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 180-185.

and Leila Murâd collaborated. Youssef Wahbî is the most famous of these actors. He almost completely abandoned the theatre and spent huge sums of money on the production and management of Arab films. At the same time, he attached great importance to writing scripts and starring in his own films. In fact, his connection with Arab cinema dates back to his early childhood. This tireless master, admired by audiences, has been one of the pioneers of local themes and local actors, which is the main point of Arab cinema, even though he thinks that actors should study abroad and gain experience like him. While many Arab players based their talents on imitating certain foreign stars, Youssef Wahbî tried for years to develop a style based on Egyptian character. One of the famous artists of the period was Mohammad Salman. Salman, a Lebanese from a poor peasant family, left his country at the age of twenty-five and came to Cairo. He was known for his loud voice and successful acting in various Egyptian melodramas. The Lebanese melodies he sang in his films, which travelled as far as Brazil, were considered a valuable service to his country and in 1952 he was awarded by the Lebanese government. Even more recognisable among the artists is the famous comedian Ismail Yâsin, who has a unique ability to make the most absurd situation endearingly believable. Among the cinema actresses, Leila Murâd and Shâdia deserve to be mentioned. Born into a family of Turkish origin, Shâdia was a cabaret singer who quickly rose to prominence on the silver screen. Starting her acting career in 1947 with her role in the film "*al-'Aql fi'l-Ijâza*", Shâdia appeared in forty films over the next four years, most of which she starred in. Her most important characteristic was a good voice, a beautiful face and elegant acting. The Lebanese actress Nûr al-Hudâ stands out mostly with her character acting in her portrayals on the silver screen. Not only did she have an excellent voice in the parts where she sang, but she managed to add a touching tone to every role she played. As a charming young girl, Nûr al-Hudâ was perfectly suited to play the traditional role of the innocent-looking, music-loving girl facing life. In addition, another innocent-looking Egyptian actress is Fâten Hamâma.¹⁸

The themes of Arab cinema were not very different from those of Arab theatre. The most interesting common feature of many feature films is the musical score. This situation, which suited the taste of the audience, often made the film more pleasing to the ear than to the eye. There were two basic structures of thematic interpretation in Arab cinema. The first is realism, which requires a real, albeit exaggerated, depiction of everyday life, and the second is non-realism, which sees cinema as an art and wants it to depict the most fantastic situations while being

¹⁸ Dina Al-Mahdy, "The golden age of Egyptian cinema," Tuesday 7 Apr 2020, accessed 25.04.2024, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/366778.aspx>; Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 189-190.

thought-provoking. Realistic films are probably preferred because, in general, simple and natural characters are easier to understand. Therefore, films with a simple structure attracted a larger audience. The themes of Arab feature films are classified as farce, historical play, melodrama, drama, comedy, and political films. The farce genre was as popular as stage comedy among the rural masses and the less educated urban classes, probably because of their technical potential. An example of this is "*Lu'be al-Sitt*" an Egyptian romantic comedy drama film starring Tahiyya Kâriyûkâ, Bishâra Wâkim and Najîb al-Rîhânî, which was screened at the Cannes Film Festival at the end of 1946. Among historical films, the film "*Habbâba*" (1944), which perfectly presents life and etiquette in the palace of Caliph Yazid II, has a special place. The film depicts the silent progression of the caliph's lover Habbâba, amidst the dancing and musical entertainment in the palace, towards her tragic end amidst the endless rivalries between the ruler's family and the courtiers. Some historical films showed a deep longing and sincere enthusiasm for the past. Important films such as "*Salâhuddîn al-Ayyûbî*" (1941) successfully highlighted glorious periods in Islamic history. On the other hand, melodramas were probably the most popular films. There was a thrilling flow of events, often of an overly emotional nature, causing breath-taking and tear-jerking jolts. Some of the best examples of melodrama are the 1951 film "*Lailat Gharâm*", the 1952 films "*Zaman al-'Ajâ'ib*", "*Ke's al-Azâb*" and "*al-Ustâ Hasan*". Most of the dramas dealt with contemporary family life in Egypt, social relations and class conflicts. The 1944 film "*Ibn al-Haddâd*", the 1946 films "*Sirru Abî*" and "*'Awdat al-Kafîle*", the 1952 films "*Nâhid*" and "*al-Masâkîn*", and the 1954 film "*Kidtu Ahdimu Baytî*". As a result of Youssef Wahbî's not insignificant efforts, films with social content calling for reform became a favourite among audiences. Such films had a significant impact on education and social changes of large masses of people.¹⁹ In the field of comedy, Arab cinema had made better progress than Arab theatre. For example, the 1947 film "*Abû Halmûs*", written by Najîb al-Rîhânî and Bedî' Hayrî and starring Najîb al-Rîhânî, Hasan Fâyik, Zûzû Shekîb, is an important comedy film. In addition, the theme of the 1948 Egyptian musical comedy film "*Anber*", starring famous actors such as Anwar Wajdí, Leila Murâd, Ismail Yâsîn, is noteworthy. On the other hand, films with political themes were also made. Cinema played an active role in Egypt's political struggle with Great Britain and films such as "*Kilû 99*" (1955) were made.²⁰

Golden Age of Cinema of Egypt

¹⁹ Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 197-200.

²⁰ Bidâyâtu's-Sînemâ fî Mısır kemâ Hakâhâ Jalâl Sharqâvî, accessed 17.08.2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220831174714/https://www.medinaportal.com/galal-el-sharqawy-history-of-cinema>; Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 201.

Cinema entered the Arab world early. In the last years of the 19th century, a large number of photographers from the Lumière Foundation travelled to Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, returning in the second half of the 19th century with dozens of photographs. After the First World War, many films were made at low costs in the Arab world by European or North American film-makers, who were attracted above all by its exotic nature, its folklore, the beauty of its ancient monuments and the possibility of collecting many scenes in one place. French film producer Marcel Vandal directed four silent films between 1926 and 1928. In 1928, he made "*Miyâh al-Nîl*", the first French sound drama film in Egypt. Although nearly a hundred feature films were made in the Arab world between 1919 and 1930, they were made exclusively by Western filmmakers and actors. The roles of the Arabs were played by the Westerners. For example, the Irish-American Rex Ingram played the role of a Tunisian man in the 1924 film "*al- 'Arabî*". However, in the following years, silent feature films directed and starring Arabs were made in Tunisia (1924), Egypt (1927) and Syria (1928).²¹

Sound cinema was born in Egypt, and for the first twenty-five years it developed and spread almost entirely there. Literary Arabic was used only in historical films. The spoken language was the Cairo dialect. Egyptian words and expressions spread throughout the Arab world through cinema, radio and television.²² On 16 November 1927, the first Egyptian feature film, "*Leila*", produced and starring Azîza Amîr, was released. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Egyptian cinema was born ten years before this date. However, all the films before "*Leila*" were actually immature experiments. The film industry, which went through several phases, was initially based on artists seeking fame and adventure, and brave pioneers who were small company owners. The films up to that time were adaptations of foreign plays made by foreigners and had little to do with the life of the Egyptian people.²³

Between 1927 and 1930, more than twelve silent Egyptian films were made. These silent films include Stephan Rûstî's "*Keshkesh Bek*" (1931), Togo Mizrahî's first film in Cairo, "*al-Kukâyîn*" (1930), and most importantly, "*Zeinab*" (1930), directed by Mohammad Karîm. The first attempts at sound films were Shukrî Mâdî's "*Tahte Daw al- Qamar*" (1930), followed by "*Unshûdat al-Fu'âd*" (1932) shot in Paris by Italian director Mario Volpe. These films failed. The first success came with

²¹ Cûrc Sadûl, *Târîhu's-Sînemâ fi'l- 'Âlem*, 513-514, 516.

²² <https://academic-accelerator.com/encyclopedia/cinema-of-egypt>, accessed 22.07.2024; Biğâliye Ahmad, "Mikyâsu's-Sîneme'l-'Arabiyye," *Dirâsât Sînemâ iyye (el-Muhâdaratu'l-Ûlâ)*, accessed 15.05.2024, <https://elearn.univ-oran1.dz/pluginfile.php/86636/course/overviewfiles/>

²³ Biğâliye Ahmad, "Mikyâsu's-Sîneme'l-'Arabiyye," accessed 15.05.2024, <https://elearn.univ-oran1.dz/pluginfile.php/86636/course/overviewfiles/>; Ataa Elnaccash, "Egyptian Cinema: A Historical Outline," p. 52.

the 1932 film "*Awlâd al-Zawât*", directed by Mohammad Karîm, who also acted in the film, based on a play by Youssef Wahbî. Between 1932 and 1939, about 80 films were made in Cairo and its then rival Alexandria, an average of 10 films a year. After 1935 this number increased to 13 films. In the same year, the first film "*Vidâd*" starring the famous singer Umm Kulthûm was released. The technical training of the director Ahmad Badrhân made the film completely different from the simple techniques of M. Karîm. "*Vidâd*" was a historical film about the events of the Mamluk period. The treatment of the subject mainly reflected the romantic attitude of the director and the famous poet-writer Ahmad Râmî.²⁴

In 1933, Mohammad Bayyûmî founded the first Egyptian Cinema Institute in Alexandria to train Egyptian students in cinema techniques free of charge. This cinema institute was financed by wealthy and influential Egyptians, including Prince Omar Tosun Pasha. Bayyûmî is regarded as the pioneer who laid the foundations of true Egyptian cinema. He was among the first Egyptians to receive European qualifications in cinema studies. In 1923, filming Sa'd Za'ğlûl's return from exile, Mohammad Bayyûmî directed his first short film, "*Barsûm Yabhath 'an Wazîfa*" (1923). He has worked in all areas of cinema, including documentary, fiction and journalistic activities. Bayyûmî was quite innovative and ambitious for his time. His goal was not to make a few films in the amateur category like many of his contemporaries, but to create an international Egyptian cinema. For him, the camera was the eye, witness, and memory of current events in Egypt.

Before 1926, short films were important initiatives in film production. These were very useful and instructive in giving experience and enabling both technicians and actors to practise their work. In a short five-year period (1926-1931), fourteen feature films were made, six in Cairo and eight in Alexandria. Well-known filmmakers, actors and actresses who pioneered the silent cinema era were Azîza Amîr, Vedâd Orfî, Ahmad Jalâl, the Lama brothers, Togo Mizrâhî, Mohammad Karîm, Assia Dagher, Fâtima Rushdî and Behiyye Hâfiz. The feature films of the silent era were mostly melodramas and Bedouin love affairs in the desert. The first Egyptian feature films with this model helped to emphasise cinematic stereotypes about Arabs and Bedouins in particular. The 1928 film "*Qubla fî al-Sahrâ*" is almost a remake of Ramon Novarro's "*The Arab*" (1924) or Rudolph Valentino's "*The*

²⁴ Cûrc Sadûl, *Târîhu's-Sînemâ fi'l-Âlem*, 523-524; Ataa Elnaccash, "Egyptian Cinema: A Historical Outline," 54; Bidâyâtu's-Sînemâ fî Mısır kemâ Hakâhâ Jalâl al-Sharqâvî, accessed 17.08.2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220831174714/https://www.medinaportal.com/galal-el-sharqawy-history-of-cinema>; Jean Aleksan, *al-Sînemâ fi'l-Watani'l-'Arabî* (Kuwait: al-Majlis al-Wataniyya li's-Sekâfe wa'l-Funûn wa'l-Adâb, 1982), 26.

Son of Sheik" (1926). The same influences can be seen in the films "*Leila*" (1927) and "*Ghâdat al-Sahrâ*" (1928)²⁵.

"*Leila*" is the first feature film produced by actress and producer Azîza Amîr. Thus, as early as 1927, the feature film history of Egyptian cinema began with a female pioneer. "*Leila*" is considered by critics to be historically the first full-fledged Egyptian film for two reasons: First, previous attempts, which required less effort, were not taken into account. The second one was created and filmed by Egyptian stars and technicians with local investment capital. While cinema activities were in full swing under the leadership of Azîza Amîr in Cairo, the brothers Badr and Ibrahim Lama established their own company for cinema production under the name "Condor Films" in Alexandria in 1926. Their first film, "*Qubla fî al-Sahrâ*' ", shown in January 1928, was the second film in the history of Egyptian cinema. The Egyptian press criticised the Lama Brothers for limiting the roles of women in their films and considered the film "*Qubla fî al-Sahrâ*' " as a regression in Egyptian cinema, especially when compared to the film "*Leila*" in which Azîza Amîr appeared in many scenes. After the release of Azîza Amîr's "*Leila*" and Lama Brothers' "*Qubla fî al-Sahrâ*' ", Fâtima Rushdî entered the field of cinema. Another woman pioneer who followed in the footsteps of Azîza Amîr was the Lebanese actress Assia Dagher, who arrived in Egypt in 1923. Assia Dagher founded his own film company "Lotus Film" in 1927. His first film "*Ghâdat al-Sahrâ*' " was directed by Vedâd Orfî (1900-1953), who wrote the screenplay and played the lead role with Assia Dagher. After its release in Cairo, Assia took a copy of his film to Syria. The Syrian government recognised Assia's efforts in cinema and gave him a prestigious award. However, "*Zeinab*" (1930), directed by Mohammad Karîm (1896-1972), remained the most important silent film of all the productions of this period, considered to be representative of Egypt. This film was the first screen adaptation of an Arabic literary work in the history of Egyptian cinema, based on the novel of the same name by Mohammad Hussein Heikal. Like "*Leila*", this film was a peasant melodrama reflecting Heikal's intense romanticism, influenced by French literary romanticism, which was very popular among Egyptian intellectuals and middle classes in the interwar period. "*Zeinab*" dealt with the problems underlying the conditions of young women living in the rural tradition and the problem of young love in the face of economic difficulties. Before the production of "*Zeinab*" in 1918, Mohammad Karîm played a supporting role in two short films and then studied cinema in Europe in 1920. He went to Rome and Berlin to study film production and returned to Egypt

²⁵ Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)", accessed 15.04.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/naissance-et-developpement-du-cinema-egyptien-1922-1970>; Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 23-25.

in 1928, where he began work on "*Zeinab*". In this film, Mohammad Karîm has treated the problem superficially, stating that the main reason for the failure of love was economic and class problems from the beginning. Karîm's attitude essentially represented that of the Egyptian bourgeoisie of the time. This approach would largely dominate the Egyptian film industry in later years, defining the industry as the birth of the bourgeoisie and representing their attitudes and perspectives. In short, the films "*Leila*" and "*Zeinab*" were the beginning of both the Egyptian film industry and a movement called "*white telephone cinema*".²⁶

Turkish actor Vedâd Orfi was closely associated with the beginning of Egyptian cinema. During his long stay in Egypt, Orfi's main passion was film production. The economic boom in Egypt after the First World War made the cinema industry the best investment for quick gains and success. Unlike other pioneers of cinema, Vedâd Orfi's career was marked by setbacks and problems. Another important figure at the beginning of Egyptian cinema was Togo Mizrahî, who was born in Alexandria to a wealthy Jewish family of Italian origin. After completing his business education, Mizrahi travelled to Rome, France and Germany to visit cinema studios. In 1928, when he returned to Egypt, he bought a theatre in Alexandria. He transformed it into a film production studio and founded the film company *Shirkat al-Aflâm al-Misriyya*, where he wrote, produced and directed most of the films. His first silent film was "*al-Kûkâyîn*", released in 1930. Togo Mizrahî produced a number of films with the famous comedians Ali al-Kassâr and Fawzî al-Jazaerlî. These films were closer to the theatre, with exaggeration and comedy. In addition to the theatrical comedies that were filmed, Mizrahî also produced some musicals featuring famous singers such as Leila Murâd and Umm Kulthûm. In 1948, the activities of *Shirkat al-Aflâm al-Misriyya* came to an abrupt halt and Togo Mizrahî left Egypt.²⁷

When talking about the birth and growth of Egyptian cinema, it is worth mentioning the courageous efforts of the famous Egyptian economist and thinker Tal'at Harb (1867-1941) in 1924, who embraced this new art and tried to Egyptianise filmmaking by all possible means. Tal'at Harb was the dynamic force behind the establishment of the company "*Shirkat Mısır li't-Tamsîl wa al-Sînemâ*".

²⁶ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 25, 27-29; Ataa Elnaccash, "Egyptian Cinema: A Historical Outline," 53-54; Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)," accessed 15.04.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/naissance-et-developpement-du-cinema-egyptien-1922-1970>; Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 158-159; Cûrc Sadûl, *Târîhu's-Sînemâ fi'l-Âlem*, 523-524; <https://www.alqabap.com/article/409817>, accessed 09.08.2024; Bidâyâtu's-Sînemâ fi Mısır kemâ Hakâhâ Jalâl al-Sharqâvî, accessed 17.08.2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220831174714/https://www.medinaportal.com/galal-el-sharqawy-history-of-cinema>

²⁷ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 29-30.

Shirkat Mısr li't-Tamsıl wa al-Sînemâ was a film production company founded in 1925 by Tal'at Harb. The company was founded as part of the Egyptianisation movement, which aimed to create new cultural formations in Egypt after the 1919 Revolution. The Egyptian cinema industry, born in the mid-twenties with the establishment of this company, became the oldest and largest film industry in the region. This choice was not a coincidence and Tal'at Harb was a person who recognised the importance of words and art as well as money. With the company he founded, he claimed that he could produce high quality Egyptian films with Egyptian themes, Egyptian literature and Egyptian aesthetics, which could be shown in Egypt and other Arab countries. Stûdyû Mısr is an Egyptian film studio founded in 1935 by economist Tal'at Harb. It is the leading Egyptian equivalent of Hollywood's major studios. So, this studio started working with a number of qualified Egyptian technicians who gained valuable experience by assisting foreign producers in many films for several years. Later, when World War II was declared, foreigners left Egypt and Egyptians finally had a chance to prove themselves. It should be noted that Stûdyû Mısr, which was financially dependent on Bank Mısr, was a step forward in improving the quality of film productions and creating a team of professionals. The second stage in the development of the cinema sector began with the opening of *Stûdyû Mısr* in 1935, which was one of the projects of the Shirkat Mısr li't-Tamsıl wa al-Sînemâ Company, which Tal'at Harb founded in 1925 as one of the Bank Mısr companies. With the existence of Stûdyû Mısr, the Egyptian film industry experienced a period of prosperity in which the number of cinema halls rose to over one hundred and the average film production increased from ten to twenty films per year in the four years after its opening. In the nine years until the end of the Second World War, 140 films were made during this period. After the Second World War, a new phase in the history of the film industry in Egypt began, as film production became easier and became a way to earn faster profits. For example, in the period between 1945 and 1951, the average film production increased to fifty films each year and the number of films reached 341. After the 1952 revolution, the average number of films per year increased to 60, and the increase continued at a rapid pace year after year.²⁸

²⁸ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 32-33 and 40; Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)," accessed 15.04.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/naissance-et-developpement-du-cinema-egyptien-1922-1970>; Biğâliye Ahmad, "Mikyâsu's-Sineme'l-'Arabiyye," *Dirâsât Sînemâ İyye (el-Muhâdaratu'l-Ûlâ)*, accessed 15.05.2024, <https://elearn.univ-oran1.dz/pluginfile.php/86636/course/overviewfiles/>; Dina Heshmat, *Egypt 1919: The Revolution in Literature and Film* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2020), 109; <https://goldenglobep.com/articles/century-egyptian-cinema/>, accessed 26.05.2024; Dina Al-Mahdy, "The golden age of Egyptian cinema," accessed 24.05.2024,

Egyptian film critic and writer Osama 'Asal states that "*Egypt is where people from all over the Arab world go to become stars and make a name for themselves*". The actresses and actors all became Egyptians as they learnt and adopted the local dialect. Some even became citizens. When a film was successful in Egypt, it was also successful in the Arab world. Big names were often compared to Hollywood stars. Hind Rostom was the Marilyn Monroe of Arabia, Rushdî Abâza was the Arab Clark Gable, Mahmoud al-Melejî was the Anthony Quinn of the East, Anwar Wajdî was the Arab Robert Taylor and Su'âd Husnî was the Cinderella of Egyptian cinema. Alexandria played a leading role in establishing the Egyptian cinema industry. The first cinematographers were amateurs experimenting with this new art form and were often a combination of scriptwriters, directors, actors and producers. The first studios and films belonged to Alexandria. As the art and industry developed, filmmakers gradually moved to Cairo, where there was a larger audience and the newly created Stûdyû Mısır provided sophisticated equipment.²⁹

In late 1931, the great theatre actor Youssef Wabhî announced the release of the first Arabic sound film, "*Awlâd al-Zawât*", in which Egyptian audiences would be delighted to see and hear Egyptian actors and actresses speaking in their own language. On 14 March 1932, "*Awlâd al-Zawât*" was released. The film was directed by Mohammad Karîm and produced by Ramses Film Company, owned by Youssef Wabhî. The story of the film was adapted from Youssef Wabhî's play of the same name. The film was about a character from the Egyptian aristocracy who abandons his belief in the values and traditions of his own country and adopts some of the lowly features of Western life.³⁰ Produced by Behnâ Brothers and directed by Mario Volpe and Stephan Rûstî, "*Unshûdat al-Fu'âd*" (1932) was, according to Egyptian film historian and critic Samir Farid, Egypt's first sound film since it was shot before "*Awlâd al-Zawât*". It was the first Egyptian film with lyrical music, and the songs were written by the famous writer 'Abbâs Mahmoud al-'Akkâd. "*Unshûdat al-Fu'âd*" was shown at the Diana Cinema on 24 March 1932, ten days after "*Awlâd al-Zawât*". The film featured the famous singer Nâdira and the famous actors George Abyad and Abdurrahman Rushdî. Both films were characterised by a lack of dynamism. It was mainly based on dialogue and songs, with no attention paid to visual effects. Its function was only aurally descriptive, the visual element was static. The success of "*Awlâd al-Zawât*" reflected the theatrical trend in the Egyptian film

<https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/366778.aspx>; Jane Gaffney, *The Egyptian Cinema: Industry and Art in Changing Society*, 55; Jean Aleksan, *al-Sînemâ fi'l-Watani'l-'Arabî*, 21.

²⁹ Dina Al-Mahdy, "The golden age of Egyptian cinema," accessed 24.05.2024, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/366778.aspx>

³⁰ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 34.

industry, and the failure of "*Unshûdat al-Fu'âd*" made it clear that traditional Arabic song could not sustain a film.³¹

In 1929, the arrival of American sound films dealt a blow to Egyptian cinema, but Egyptian filmmakers did not give up. The directors and actors went to Paris to work on their sound films, like the two films mentioned above. Until early 1932, sound recording was done abroad, which was very expensive. In 1932, a new trend in Egyptian cinema history began with the appearance of sound films in Egypt, starring famous Egyptian theatre actors and singers. Local producers realised that what could not be achieved in a short time in foreign films could be done in local films with Arabic songs and dances.³² The Egyptian musical owes its success to the actor, singer, and musician Mohammad 'Abd al- Wahnâb. 'Abd al-Wahnâb recorded his first film "*al-Warda al-Baydâ*" (1933) in Paris. This film was a huge success with profits exceeding even the best foreign films shown in Egypt. The film was only broadcast in Alexandria for about 56 weeks.³³ The success of the film made it clear that the future of sound films lay in songs. Among the famous cinema singers are Umm Kulthûm, Farîd al-'Atrash, 'Abdel Halîm Hâfez, Leila Murâd and Shâdia. Umm Kulthûm starred in six films between 1935 and 1948, which contributed greatly to her fame throughout the Arab world. In the second half of the 1940s, a new generation of actresses-singers emerged, among whom Farîd al-'Atrash's sister Esmahân was the brightest. The 1950s and 1960s were dominated by Farîd al-'Atrash and 'Abdel Halîm Hâfez. In most of his films, Farîd al-'Atrash was perfectly suited to the roles of the melancholic lonely young man who played the singer-composer. In the 1960s, cinema began to move away from the song and the song found its place in television. With the advent of the 1970s, the musical became more modernised and less used.³⁴

In the 1930s and 1940s, the cinema industry developed from silent films to sound films, with musicals making up the majority of productions. It was a period of light films, love, songs and mostly about the rich class and what their lives were like. From the late 1940s to the 1960s, Arab actors from all over the Middle East climbed the ladder to fame in Cairo in what is known as the golden age of Arab cinema. Between 1930 and 1936, small studios produced at least 44 feature films. In 1935,

³¹ Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)," accessed 15.04.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/naissance-et-developpement-du-cinema-egyptien-1922-1970>; Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 34; Ataa Elnaccash, "Egyptian Cinema: A Historical Outline," 54.

³² Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 34-35.

³³ Khémaïs Khayati, "Les fondements culturels du cinéma égyptien," accessed, 15.04.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/les-fondements-culturels-du-cinema-egyptien/> ; <https://goldenglobep.com/articles/century-egyptian-cinema/>, accessed 26.05.2024,

³⁴ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 37, 39.

Stûdyû Mısır, financed by the industrialist Tal‘at Harb, emerged as a centre of cinematic creativity, producing many of Egypt's film classics and becoming the Egyptian equivalent of Hollywood's major studios, a role the company maintained for three decades.³⁵

The 1940s, 1950s and 1960s are generally considered the golden age of Egyptian cinema. In the 1950s, Egypt's film industry was the third largest in the world. "Hollywood of the East" and "Hollywood on the Nile" were the names given to the film industry in Egypt at that time. This industry had grown after World War II due to difficulties in obtaining American and European films. Films responded to the popular imagination, with many actors making careers out of playing strictly defined roles. In the words of one critic, "*If a mass-market Egyptian film does not have any of these prerequisites, it is a betrayal of the unwritten contract with the audience, and the consequences will show up at the box office.*"³⁶

Entrepreneur Anis Ebeid founded Anis Ebeid Film in 1940 as the first subtitling company in Egypt and the Middle East, bringing hundreds of American and world films to Egypt. He then entered the film distribution business. Until the late 1950s, it was difficult to distinguish between Egyptian, American, Italian and French films on a technical level. Egypt established a leading position as the capital of the Arab film world with the support of international stars such as the powerful Stûdyû Mısır, the young Omar Sharîf and Fâten Hamâma. The 1960s saw the emergence of a new generation of filmmakers, led by Hussein Kamal's "*al-Mustahîl*" (1965), "*al-Bustajî*" (1968) and "*Shi' min al- Khawf*" (1969), and Shâdî ‘Abdel Salâm's masterpiece "*al-Mûmyâ*" (1969). Some of these films did not make money at the time, but they were internationally recognised and have stood the test of time. The romantic relationships between the prominent stars of the silver screen may also have had a significant impact on the success of the industry at that time. This is because the romantic couples, the icons of classical Egyptian cinema, who starred in many of the films were either married or living their own love stories. For example, in the 1940s, the couple Anwar Wajdî and Leila Murâd and the films "*Leila fî al-Zalâm*" (1944) and "*Leila bint al-Fuqarâ*" (1945), Hussein Fawzî-Na‘ima ‘Âkef and the film "*Fatât al-Sîrk*" (1951) (Hussein Fawzî directed and produced nearly fifteen musicals starring ‘Âkef), The couple Shâdia and Salâh Zulfiqâr (Shâdia began her long career playing heavy melodramatic roles, such as the role of a simple girl who is seduced by a male protagonist and faces a series of tragedies and injustices) and in romantic comedies such as "*Karâmet Zawjatî*" (1967) and "*İfrît Merâtî*" (1968). Another

³⁵ Dina Al-Mahdy, "The golden age of Egyptian cinema," accessed 24.05.2024, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/366778.aspx>

³⁶ <https://academic-accelerator.com/encyclopedia/cinema-of-egypt>, accessed 22.07.2024.

immortal cinematic and romantic couple was Omar Sharif and Fâten Hamâma. They appeared together in many films such as "*Sirâ ' fî al-Wâdî*" (1954) and "*Nahr al-Hubb*" (1960). On the other hand, according to the well-known film critic Samîr Farîd, the golden age of Egyptian cinema was between 1933 and 1963. The state began to play a much greater role in the economy and society and used all the tools of the time, including films, to express the ideas that were developing within the population. The burgeoning film industry benefited from wider Arab markets. The distribution of the films provided political support for Egypt and its leaders at the time.³⁷

It was impossible for Egypt to establish a cinema industry without studios to shoot films. When Stûdyû Mîsr opened in 1935, it was literally the first Arab film studio not only in Egypt but also in the entire Arab world. The company's first film was "*Vidâd*" (1936), starring Umm Kulthûm. The huge facilities at Stûdyû Mîsr had a positive impact on Egyptian cinema. The majority of Egyptian films made before the 1939 film "*al-'Azîma*" directed by Kamâl Salîm were melodramas, comedies or Bedouin films. It depicted desert or palace scenes filled with songs and dances, while also representing aristocratic lifestyles.³⁸ *Al-'Azîma* can be considered the first manifestation of realistic Egyptian cinema with which the public could identify. This film marked the beginning of a new trend in Egyptian cinema, similar to the trend known as "Neo-realism" adopted by Italian filmmakers during and after the Second World War. During the period considered to be the artistic golden age of Stûdyû Mîsr, the school of realism emerged in cinema, which first appeared in Kamâl Salîm's "*al-'Azîma*" and Niyâzî Mustafa's "*al-Tabîb*" (1939) and "*Masna ' al-Zawjât*" (1941).³⁹

Before the war, the screens in Cairo and Alexandria were mostly monopolised by American and French films. But the war had completely changed the situation. The Egyptian cinema industry experienced a boom during and after the Second World War, partly due to the difficulty of obtaining European or American films from abroad. Of the thirteen cinema halls in Cairo, seven showed Arab films, five showed American films and one showed French films. In the suburbs, American films had

³⁷ Dina Al-Mahdy, "The golden age of Egyptian cinema," accessed 24.05.2024, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/366778.aspx>

³⁸ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 40-41; Bidâyâtu 's-Sînemâ fî Mîsr kemâ Hakâhâ Jalâl al-Sharqâvî, accessed 17.08.2024, <https://web.archive.org/web/20220831174714/https://www.medinaportal.com/galal-el-sharqawy-history-of-cinema>

³⁹ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 43-44; Ataa Elnaccash, "Egyptian Cinema: A Historical Outline," 54; Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)," accessed 15.04.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/naissance-et-developpement-du-cinema-egyptien-1922-1970>

completely disappeared. During the war period, Egyptian cinema was subjected to strict censorship. However, despite the harsh censorship restrictions and the tensions of war, directors such as Ahmad Badrhân, Niyâzî Mustafa and Henry Barakât emerged. Salâh Abû Seyf others managed to make good films such as "*Intisâr al-Shabâb*" (1941), "*Salâhuddîn al-Ayyûbî*" (1941), "*al-Sharîd*" (1942), "*Râbiha*" (1943), "*al-Sûq al-Sawdâ*" (1945). This period saw the rise of famous musicals and melodramas, as well as the promotion of new genres in Egyptian cinema. In the post-war period and until the 1952 Revolution, cinema in Egypt became the easiest and fastest way to make a fortune. The annual average of feature films produced increased from twenty to fifty. Other Egyptian film stars, such as Leila Murâd, Umm Kulthûm, Shâdia or Farîd al- 'Atrash, not only became famous during this period, but also earned huge profits. The majority of the films of this period were in fact stereotypical, and their predictable scenario hindered the progress of emerging artists and the search for creative productions. The established Egyptian film industry did not slow down with the July 1952 Revolution. On the contrary, from 1952 onwards, the average annual production of feature films reached sixty. The revolution of 1952, which saw the overthrow of King Farouk and the inauguration of Gamal 'Abdel Nasser as president, had a major impact on the sector. Nasser was a film fan and knew how to politicise it for his purposes. He nationalised the film industry. With the government providing financing, Egypt became the third largest film producer in the world. The 1952 Revolution did not immediately change the rules of film production. As before, the same type of films continued to flood the Egyptian and Arab markets. Hussein Sidqî's "*Yaskut al-Îsti'mâr*" (1952) and Ahmad Badrhân's "*Mustafa Kâmil*" (1952) were released. Ahmad Badrhân's 1955 film "*Allah Ma'anâ*" was one of the first films about the revolution. From 1954 onwards, since the army came to power, a series of films began in which the protagonist was always an officer. 'Izzeddîn Zulfîqâr's "*Rudda Kalbî*" (1957) is a good example. Later on, a mixture of films about the revolution and films filled only with patriotic sentiments, such as Mustafa al-Badawi's "*Dahâyâ al-Îqtâ'*" (1955), Niyâzî Mustafa's "*Sicn Abû Za'bel*" (1957) or Kamâl al-Sheikh's "*Ard al-Salâm*" (1957). The influence of the army officer was also reflected in the successful comedy film series *Ismail Yâsîn*, Starring Ismail Yâsîn who was the comedy star of the 1950s. "*Ismail Yâsîn fî al-Jaysh*" (1955), "*Ismail Yâsîn fî al-Bûlûs*" (1956), "*Ismail Yâsîn fî al-Ustûl*" (1957).⁴⁰

The most prominent artistic trend in Egypt is the realist movement, initiated by Kamâl Salîm and Kâmil al-Tilmîsânî in the 1940s and brought to its peak of maturity

⁴⁰ Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)," accessed 15.04.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/naissance-et-developpement-du-cinema-egyptien-1922-1970>; Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 47-51, accessed 26.05.2024, <https://goldenglobes.com/articles/century-egyptian-cinema/>

in the late 1950s and early 1960s by Salâh Abû Seyf, Tawfîq Sâlih and Youssef Chahine. After many years of absence due to fear of prohibition, "realism" reappeared in Egyptian cinema in 1953 in impressive numbers. The censorship rules of the revolution were more flexible. Therefore, it provided artists with a wider field of expression. Among the realistic films premiered from 1953 onwards are: Salâh Abû Seyf's "*al-Ustâ Hasan*" (1952), Youssef Chahine's "*Sira ' fî al-Wâdî*" (1954), Âtîf Sâlim's "*Ce 'âlûnî Mucrimen*" (1954), Kamâl al-Sheikh's "*Hayât aw Mawt*" (1954). These films dealt with the exploitation of peasants by feudal landlords, the problems of poor people and class conflicts.⁴¹ Youssef Chahine directed the film "*Jamîla*" (1958), which tells the story of Algerian Jamîla Buheyrad, a famous figure in Algeria's struggle for independence, and "*al-Bâb al-Meftûh*" (1963), adapted by Henry Barakât from Latîfa al-Zayyât's novel of the same name, tells the story of Leila, a young girl from Cairo who decides to join the popular resistance in Port Said. Salâh Abû Seyf's adaptation of a story by Yusuf Idris, "*Lâ Waqt li'l-Hubb*" (1963), reveals the important role played by Fawziyya, a young teacher in Cairo, in the anti-British resistance of the early 1950s. These films systematically linked romantic and nationalist structures.⁴² The generation of Youssef Chahine and Tawfîq Salih was the generation of the Nasserist revolution of July 1952. His films reflected the ideology, slogans and achievements of this revolution. Abû Seyf represented a mixture of realism and naturalism, Kamal al-Sheikh mainly a mixture of mystery and suspense, while Henry Barakât represented the romantic side. However, Barakât's talents were fully realised when he turned to folklore and literature. "*Hasan wa Na 'îma*" (1959) was the first film he made using existing materials from the country's folklore and literature instead of adapting foreign materials. Barakât's handling of a simple story so close to the hearts of the audience with actors was his best performance.⁴³

Another new feature of Egyptian cinema that emerged in the late fifties was the combination of literature and cinema. In the 1950s, when a strong bond was established between cinema and the novel, the works of writers such as Tahâ Huseyn, Ihsân 'Abd al-Quddus, Najîb Mahfûz, Yahyâ Haqqî, Latîfa al-Zayyât, Youssef al-Sibâ'î and Youssef Idrîs were adapted for cinema. The contribution of great national writers such as Najîb Mahfouz and Ihsân 'Abd al-Quddus to film scripts was a rare

⁴¹ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 52; Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)," <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/naissance-et-developpement-du-cinema-egyptien-1922-1970>; Jean Aleksan, *al-Sînemâ fî'l-Watani'l- 'Arabî*, 46.

⁴² Dina Heshmat, *Egypt 1919: The Revolution in Literature and Film*, 121.

⁴³ Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)," accessed 15.04.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/naissance-et-developpement-du-cinema-egyptien-1922-1970>; Ataa Elnaccash, "Egyptian Cinema: A Historical Outline," 52-55, 70-71.

chance at a time when no talented screenwriter had emerged in Egypt. In 1956, the Egyptian cinema took a close interest in the novels of Ihsân ‘Abd al-Quddus and adapted his famous novel "*Eyne ‘Umrî*" (1956) to the cinema, blending it with the psychological climate of the time. After "*Eyne ‘Umrî*", fourteen more films were made based on Abd al-Quddus' novels, inspired by the breath of freedom and expressing the hopes of the sixties. These films include "*al-Wisâdat al-Hâliye*" (1957), "*al-Tarîk al-Mesdûd*" (1958) and "*Ene Hurre*" (1959). Although ‘Abd al-Quddus's novels were essentially naturalistic, they always contained romantic elements that made him the writer of a teenager. Najîb Mahfouz continued to come to the forefront as a name who had established a close connection with cinema. The number of films for which he wrote the script or screenplay is over twenty-five. He also wrote many novels for filmmakers, although some of them were adaptations of novels written by other authors. Adapted from the novels of Najîb Mahfouz, the films blended realism and naturalism with a social mix and portrayed many characters who effectively expressed the difficulties faced by the middle class in Egypt from the 1919 Revolution to the mid-1980s. For the first time, the Egyptian middle class heard its own voice in cinema through the works of Najîb Mahfouz. "*Bidâya wa Nihâya*" (1960), "*al-Liss wa'l-Kilâb*" (1962), "*al-Kâhire 30*" (1966), "*Qasr al-Shawq*" (1967), "*Mîrâmâr*" (1969) are some of Mahfouz's novels adapted for cinema. Although the association between literature and cinema strengthened especially in the 1960s, this relationship may have determined the fate of cinema. This is because this relationship, while implanting a literary mode of thought in some films, also restricted the design of other themes.⁴⁴ On the other hand, Hassan al-Imam, who directed one of Mahfouz's novels, "*Bayna al-Qasreyn*" (1964), established himself as a master of Egyptian melodrama.⁴⁵ After 1952, the mood changed. In the words of the film critic ‘Asel, Egypt and the Arab world have reinvented itself, ushering in a period in which the cultural and artistic scene has reached a remarkable level of creativity in every sense, with a new Pan-Arabism. Cinema also became more intellectual with the inclusion of well-known literary figures such as Nobel laureate Najîb Mahfouz. Laws were passed to support the film industry and to establish the Higher Institute of Cinema. Since its inception, Egyptian cinema has consistently presented remarkable films that have become milestones in the history of cinema.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 53-54; Jean Aleksan, *al-Sinemâ fi'l-Watani'l-'Arabî*, 56.

⁴⁵ Dina Heshmat, *Egypt 1919: The Revolution in Literature and Film*, 110; Ataa Elnaccash, "Egyptian Cinema: A Historical Outline," 70.

⁴⁶ Dina Al-Mahdy, "The golden age of Egyptian cinema," Tuesday 7 Apr 2020, accessed 24.05.2024, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/366778.aspx>.

The political turmoil in Egypt following the overthrow of King Farouk in 1952 initially had little impact on Egyptian cinema. The nationalisation of the film industry by the Nasser regime in 1961 made room for both great directors and young artistic talents, leading to many great productions. In addition, by the end of the 1960s, when censorship was introduced in cinema, some professionals left Egypt. Following Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war, the country entered a phase of self-criticism and reassessment of the factors that led to the defeat. Egyptian cinema of the time produced films critical of the regime, such as "*al-Qadiyya 68*" (1968), "*Mirâmâr*" (1969) and "*al- 'Ard*" (1970). Then the film industry began to decline.⁴⁷ The "heavy hand of the government" that accompanied the nationalisation of Egyptian cinema suppressed innovative tendencies. However, most of the 44 Egyptian films in the list of the 100 best Egyptian films of all time were made during this period. Noteworthy films include: "*Bâb al-Hadîd*" (1958), "*al-Ayd al-Nâ'ime*" (1963), "*Aghlâ min Hayâtî*" (1965), "*al-Bustajî*" (1968).⁴⁸

The regime of Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser was keen to encourage the production of cinema and therefore established national organisations and cinema clubs to enrich it. In 1956, cinema clubs were opened all over the country. From 1956 to 1962, it became common for Egyptian films to be shown at the Cannes Film Festival. In the following years, the participation of Egyptian films in international festivals decreased. In 1959, the Higher Institute of Cinema was established in Cairo for the study of filmmaking, directing, editing and art education. For the first time in the history of Egyptian cinema, the state started to produce its own films in 1963. In 1970, when Anwar Sadat succeeded Gamal 'Abdel Nasser, the state's film production was stopped. In the 1970s, after the sector was taken out of state control, the quality of films began to decline as films were produced cheaply in order to make higher profits. In addition to the 1952 Revolution, the history of Egyptian cinema was intertwined with other important political events such as the 1956 Suez War, the 1967 June War and the 1973 Arab-Israel War. 'Izzeddîn Zulfîqâr's "*Bûr Sa 'id*" (1957) and Hasan al-Imâm's "*Hubb min Nâr*" (1958) are some of the best films about the Suez War. The 1967 defeat was a dominant theme in the 1970s in films such as "*al-Hawf*" (1972). However, the best film about the 1967 war was Ali 'Abdulhâlik's 1972 film "*Ughniya 'alâ al-Mamarr*" (1972). Youssef Chahine's film "*al- 'Usfûr*" (1973) is one of the best films dealing with this subject.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ <https://academic-accelerator.com/encyclopedia/cinema-of-egypt>, accessed 22.07.2024.

⁴⁸ Afif J. Arabi, "The History of Lebanese Cinema 1929 – 1979: An Analytical Study of The Evolution and The Development of Lebanese Cinema," (Doctoral Thesis, Ohio State University, 1996).

⁴⁹ Marisa Farrugia, "The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema (1940s- 1960s)," 54-56; Dina Al-Mahdy, "The golden age of Egyptian cinema," accessed, 24.05.2024, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/366778.aspx>; Magda Wassef, "Le cinéma égyptien au bout du

By the 1970s, Egyptian cinema tried to balance politics and entertainment with films such as the 1972 film *"Hallî Bâlek min Zûzû"* starring Su'âd Husnî, the Cinderella of Arab cinema.⁵⁰ After Egypt's victory in October 1973, war films were released, including *"al-Rasâse Lâtezâl fî Jaybî"* (1974) and *"al-Wefâ' al-'Azîm"* (1974), which depicted military victories. The 1970s and later saw the emergence of cinematic masterpieces such as Youssef Chahine's *"al-'Usfûr"* (1974), but for many, a more profit-driven commercial era began, bringing an end to the golden age of Egyptian cinema.⁵¹ Among the important films of the 1970s, we can mention *"Ghurûb wa Shurûq"* (1970), *"Sersere fawqa al-Nîl"* (1971), *"al-Rajul al-Âhar"* (1973), *"al-Rasâse Lâtezâl fî Jaybî"* (1974), *"Urîdu Hallen"* (1975), *"Shafîqa wa Mitwellî"* (1978), *"Iskandariya Lîh?"* (1979).⁵²

CONCLUSION

Cinema is unique as an artistic genre due to its mass popularity and reach to a wide audience. When the word *"Arab cinema"* is added to the history of cinema, the most important and biggest position belongs to Egyptian cinema. The film industry in Egypt was and remains the largest and most influential of its kind in the Arab world.

The history of Egyptian cinema, which is the largest of its kind in the Middle East and accounts for about three-quarters of the films in the Arab world, can be summarised as the emergence of cinema (1896-1926), the initial period (1927-1930), the golden age (1930-1970) and the modern period until today. In the period between 1926 and 1970, we aimed to examine Egyptian cinema's efforts to become a popular cinematographic creation, a competent, indigenous cinema capable of standing firmly on its own strength, and the structural changes that the Egyptian film industry underwent.

The beginning of the passion for cinema dates back to the late 19th century, when the first cinema film was shown in Alexandria in 1896. In 1896, various venues in Alexandria and Cairo hosted the world's first short film directed by the French Lumière Brothers. Beginning with the first cinema projection in Alexandria, Egyptian cinema was for decades the only country in the region with a film industry.

tunnel (1970-1980)," A propos du cinéma égyptien, *Les dossiers de la cinémathèque* 13, (Juillet 1984), accessed 21.03.2024, <http://collectionp.cinematheque.qc.ca/articles/le-cinema-egyptien-au-bout-du-tunnel-1970-1980>.

⁵⁰ <https://academic-accelerator.com/encyclopedia/cinema-of-egypt>, accessed 22.07.2024.

⁵¹ Dina Al-Mahdy, "The golden age of Egyptian cinema," accessed 24.05.2024, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/366778.aspx>

⁵² <https://academic-accelerator.com/encyclopedia/cinema-of-egypt>, accessed 22.07.2024.

After 1919, with the country's special political status, the British recognition of Egypt's independence and the new constitution, Egypt was now the most productive country in the Middle East in terms of cinema and the most developed media system.

Known for being the only country in the Middle East to produce feature films, Egyptian cinema has been called the "*Hollywood of the Arab world*". There are different opinions about the beginning of Egyptian cinema. According to some cinema historians, the beginning date is 1896, when the short films of the Lumière Brothers were shown in Alexandria, according to others it is 1907, the year of production of the first short documentary film of Egyptian cinema, and according to others it is 1927, the year of production of the first feature film titled "*Leila*", directed, produced and scripted by the famous female director and actress of Egyptian cinema, Azîza Amîr. Azîza Amîr, who has produced about twenty films, has inspired many female actresses in the film industry in Egypt to establish their own film production companies. Then, in 1932, sound films appeared on the scene and this ushered in what is considered the "golden age" of Egyptian cinema from the 1930s to the 1960s. Egypt made its first musical in 1933 with the film "*al-Warda al-Beydâ*' " directed by Mohammad Karîm and featuring the famous Egyptian singer Mohammad 'Abd al-Wahhâb. The musical film genre was on the rise and became famous in Egypt throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Egyptian cinema enjoyed its golden age in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Hundreds of films were made during the golden age of Egyptian cinema, and many of these films are among the most important classic Egyptian films today. The 1939 film "*al-'Azîma*" by Kamâl Salîm is considered one of the most important films of Egyptian cinema. The 1958 film "*Bâb al-Hadîd*" directed by Youssef Chahine and the 1965 film "*al-Harâm*" directed by Henry Barakât and starring the artist Fâten Hamâma are among the most important films of the golden age. Many Egyptian films have achieved great success in the history of Egyptian cinema for decades and have played an important role in establishing Egypt as an internationally recognised film industry. As one of the largest film exporters in the region, Egypt has become an undeniable reference for popular culture in the Arab world. Between 1956 and 1970, politics significantly influenced the Egyptian film industry. The Egyptian censorship had some prohibitions on cinema. Many changes took place in cinema between these years. After these fluctuations, the Egyptian film industry was nationalised in 1966 and a balance between politics and entertainment was established in 1970.

Egyptian cinema has passed through important stages until it has reached the stage of producing directors, screenwriters and actors trained in cinema who are capable of capturing social transformations and expressing them in an advanced artistic language. The film productions, which were produced until both itself and its

audience reached a certain level of maturity, conquered the hearts of not only the Egyptian audience but also the entire Arab world. Egyptian cinema, which became a mirror of Egyptian society by mostly dealing with social and economic problems, sometimes with newly written scripts, sometimes with adaptations of other countries' films and sometimes with adaptations of literary works.

In this study, in which the development process of Egyptian cinema from 1927 to the 1970s is examined and evaluated in detail, we meet Egyptian cinema, which has an important place and identity in the history of world cinema with its own special language, style, expressions, rich vocabulary, unique style, and attitude.

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