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## THE TURKISH CINEMA BETWEEN ITS INCEPTION AND DOWNFALL: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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### Abstract

The study at hand relates to the history of Turkish cinema from 1895 to 1990 with respect to the accompanying political events and their analysis. Cinema's upcoming in Turkey was initially staged by non-muslims, continued by the military and came under the one-man rule of Muhsin Ertugrul after the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. From the 50's on it was generally referred to as *Yeşilçam*. This name followed the screening of an Egyptian film in Istanbul in the late 1940's as a label for a certain film genre and became a synonym for cinema itself. Tax cuts for domestic productions became a main reason for Turkish cinema's thriving. The 60's became its golden age and the 70's were characterized by Yılmaz Güney's work and art. Finally economic and socio-political circumstances lead to a crisis in the 80's and resulted in the demise of *Yeşilçam*.

**Keywords:** Turkish Cinema; *Yeşilçam*; Beginning; Rise; Downfall; Muhsin Ertuğrul; Yılmaz Güney.

### Introduction

Although cinematography made its way into the Ottoman Empire shortly after its inception in 1895, it remained unaffected by the necessary public interest and support for a long time. The continuance of cinema's very existence during this time is owed to the efforts of a few foreign people. All cinematic activities were carried out by non-Muslims. For example, the first resident theater in Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, Cinema "Pathe", was founded by Sigmund Weinberg in the Tepebaşı district of Istanbul. This event was remarkable because, in addition to its singularity as the first cinema, it was the first major investment in Turkey in the sector of cinematography (Scognamillo, 1998: 15-20).

In the following years further cinemas, like the Kino Palas in Beyoglu and the Kino *Majik*, were established in Taksim. These cinemas were opened by non-Muslims and aroused brisk interest just within this marginal society. "The interest of the Turks for cinematography began shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. The 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1914 witnessed the partners Murat Bey and Cevat Boyer opening in the *Fevziye Kiraathane'* Cafe, where the first film screening in Istanbul took place, the first accomodation of *Milli Sinema*, actually the first cinema hall operated by Turks" (Özön, 1962: 25) Thus, around 18 years after the discovery of cinema in the Ottoman Empire, for the first time a domestic investment was made in this sector. Then the number of investors, who made investments in opening new cinemas, increased slightly but steadily. But the outbreak of the First World War at this time brought hunger, poverty, lack of money and misery with it. Although cinematography managed to gain a foothold from 1896 on in the Ottoman Empire, it was limited just to the screening of films until 1914, i.e. in terms of film productions no

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efforts were made for about 17 years. As a result the state of war prevented or delayed the emergence of a cinema industry in the first years and the entry of investors in this business sector. According to the theater historian Oguz Makal "the war prevented from 1915 until 1922 the investment of major donors in this sector" (Makal, 1987: 11).

The first film recorded in Turkey that went down in history was the documentation of the destruction of a monument built by the Russians in Istanbul shortly after the beginning of the First World War. This documentary, *Ayastefonos Abidesinin Yıkılışı* - "The destruction of the monument Ayastefanos" (1914), was recorded by Fuat Uzkınay. The cinema in Turkey had its beginning on the basis of this film, according to historians. However, the film still sparks controversy in its special characteristic of being the first film, because of the most interesting paradox that no one has ever seen the mentioned movie to this day.

Two institutions, namely *Merkez Ordu Sinema Dairesi* (Military National Board of Cinema) (1915) and *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (Association for Homeland Defense) (1917), supported and continued the film production in these first phases of Turkish cinema. Thereafter, the Association for War Veterans and Invalids, *Malûl Gaziler Cemiyeti*, took over this task. (Özön, 1993: 1878). Both during the time of the Ottoman Empire and during the time of the Republic, it was always the state that realized the renewal and modernization works following a top-down logic. The military has always played a major role in this. The modernization in the Ottoman Empire, led by the military and supported by Western intellectuals and bureaucrats, had been steadily continued in the Turkish Republic by a group that had its origins in the military. In this sense, the first contract for film production had become possible in cooperation with military and government.

### **The Days of Muhsin Ertuğrul**

Launched as a modernization project the quick transformation of Turkey into a Republic between 1923 and 1938 brought together a large number of radical reforms and revolutions following a top-down logic, which had their origins mostly in the views and ideas of M. Kemal Atatürk. "The reform movements in certain administrative apparatus used in the Ottoman Empire provoked during the years of the Republic (1923-38) entirely a wave of modernization [...] The motto of the new government was modernization [...] All efforts were carried out following the motto "one identity, one nationality, one people, one religion, one guide and one party" and were modernized to these principles [...]" (Hayır, 2008: 16). The goal was to create a modern and civilized State of Turkey. Parallel to these events at the political level, Muhsin Ertuğrul was the "one man" on an artistic level. He coined the term One Director of Turkish cinema between 1922 and 1938. This period is called "The Muhsin Ertuğrul Period", in which nobody else besides him had the chance to make films. Because the majority of his films were adaptations of domestic and foreign theatrical plays and in almost all his films a theatrical atmosphere was felt, this period was dubbed the "period of the theater player".

According to film historian Nijat Özön, among all the films of M. Ertuğrul only three films deserve further attention. These are *Atesten Gömlek*, *Bir Millet Uyanıyor* and *Aysel, Bataklı Damın Kızı* ((Özön, 1962: 109). In his days (1922-1939) and thereafter, until 1953, when he directed his last film, Muhsin Ertuğrul was accredited for a total of 30 films. His films were largely influenced by western movies and were regarded as poorly-made copies (Scognamillo, 1998: 58). M. Ertuğrul tried to catch the atmosphere of the extensive modernization process in the political arena in Turkey and to transfer it to the level of cinema. However, as in his previous works he could not take it for more than imitation. Due to his theater background, he could not succeed in creating a cinematic narrative and his films still looked theatrical.

This attitude of Ertuğrul is commented in Sadık Battal's book in the following words: "In summary it can be stated first of all that Muhsin Ertuğrul did not convey a cinematic feeling in

Turkish cinema, it was more of a cinema that replaced the theater, so it did not provide opportunities in developing a film language and, as a result, it delayed the emergence of the Turkish film. Along with Ertuğrul, all the other filmmakers stemmed from the theater. Consequently, Ertuğrul worked with people who had no experience in film-making and so the difference between cinema and theater could not emerge in the time of Ertuğrul. It was certain that these theater artists - who considered the cinema as a sideline - not only failed in making a constructive contribution to cinematography but also transferred their habits from theater largely into their film careers. Under the disguise of cinematic creativity, theater plays have been brought to the screens with only a few changes. The result of this method influenced not only that time but also the times that followed. If the Turkish cinema is loaded with a certain theater-like atmosphere nowadays, then this is nothing else but due to those days. Not only Ertuğrul lacked in sense of the cinematic production but also all whom he trained, because they all were veterans of the theater. They were no filmmakers but people who pursued Ertuğrul's heritage -namely the theatrical film. Considering this point of view, they played a negative role in the history of Turkish cinema" (Battal, 2006: 108).

During these days two private production companies supported film production, first *Kemal*-film, then *Ipek*-Movie. However, their aim consisted only of profit-making. Muhsin Ertuğrul was the "only" director who produced films for both production companies between 1922-1939.

#### **A glimpse at the beginning of Yeşilçam Cinema**

Not only that up to this time no significant developments in the cinema sector had been recorded in Turkey, film productions during this period lacked in good quality, too. Muhsin Ertuğrul, who was more or less a pioneer of Turkish cinema, carried out his activities for 17 years just by himself. In 1939, when fresh people entered the cinema sector, the period ended and a new one was on the rise. Parallel to the political developments, there were new developments in the cinema sector. The rule of "The One Man" came to an end as more people started to produce films. And as well as in politics the democratic and pluralistic era in Turkish cinema witnessed its onset.

From the year 1939 on Turkey experienced important developments in the field of cinema. Faruk Kenç broke through the long-term monopoly of "one director" and "one production company" in Turkish cinema with his film *Taş parçası / Chip of Stone* (1939), which was filmed by order of Ha-Ka Film Production. Thus, the new era of pluralism was introduced in terms of both directors and production companies. The year 1939 marked the beginning of a period that covered the years 1939 to 1989 and rose to fame by the name of *Yeşilçam* cinema.

*Yeşilçam* is a combination of the words "*yeşil*" (green) and "*çam*" (fir). In the 1950s in Turkey, as Turkish cinema showed growth as an economic sector and an artistic point was in the ascendant, offices were opened by many film production companies in Beyoğlu in Istanbul's *Yeşilçam* Lane. Derived from it, the term "*Yeşilçam Sineması*" has since then been used as a synonym for the Turkish cinema. For the film historian Rekin Teksoy, starting from the *Yeşilçam* Lane, the 1950s were "those years in which the foundations were laid for the domestic cinema, which will be referred to as *Yeşilçam* later on" (Teksoy, 2007: 27). Asli Daldal sets the origin of *Yeşilçam* to when a tax exemption was granted and states that it owes its existence to the policies of the Democratic Party. Asli Daldal: "In fact, the birth of *Yeşilçam* is quite in line with the ideal of the Democratic Party for a consumer society. Up to 70% cuts in the city taxes that supplied areas of the province with electricity and the sudden increase in the cinemas made the film production to a veritable gold mine. In 1950 a real rush to *Yeşilçam* took place. Dealers from all corners of Anatolia were on their way to Istanbul to produce films ... " (Daldal, 2005: 65). In contrast to the above-mentioned people who indicate the beginning of the *Yeşilçam* Cinema as the 1940s Zahit Atam says: "[...] If we may say so, sometime between 1939-49 - though not in this period an explosion in film productions was observed - some kind of films that contained narrative forms that need to be addressed to the

anticipated explosion of film productions. Consequently, this period was the beginning point of the *Yeşilçam* Cinema" (Atam, 2008: 507-508). As now has been made clear, there was the notion that *Yeşilçam* both united and separated the opinions.

Besides Faruk Kenç Turkish cinema won 14 new producers and directors who completed their education abroad during the years of 1939 to 1949. About 50 new films were produced during this time (Scognamillo, 1998: 131).

The outbreak of the Second World War prevented European productions. It was American movies that dominated the cinemas. These films made their way to Turkey mainly through Egypt together with some Egyptian productions. During the screening of the film "Tears of Love" - *Askin Gözyaşlari* (Damu'al hubb), an Egyptian melodrama from Muhammad Kerim, shortly before the war in 1938, the cinema hall in İstanbul was stormed by the spectators in the truest sense of the word. As Nijat Özön reported: "[...] at the beginning of the presentation the film *Aşkın Gözyaşlari* 1938 in Sehzadebasi the windows of the cinemas, which hosted the screening, were broken and traffic came to a virtual stand still [...]" (Özön, 1962: 25).

The great impression the film left with the viewers encouraged the domestic producers to import Egyptian films. After this film, the Turkish cinema could not escape from the clutches of Egyptian films during the 1940s.

You can say that, apart from Muhsin Ertugrul, the film *Askin Gözyaşlari...* was the pioneer for a new cinema - Cinema *Yeşilçam*. The historian Zahit Atam even marked this film as the first film of Cinema *Yeşilçam*. "We believe that the foundation of Yesilcam cinema was set largely in 1938 with the screening (oder: appearance - dem Auftauchen, Erscheinen) of the Egyptian film *Aşkın Gözyaşlari*. [...] Looking at the historical sources from the point of film language and the way other films reproduced its making on the one hand and from the point of the economic structure on the other hand, we come to the point that *Askin G...* initiated the change. [...]" (Atam, 2008: 486). Özön says that "the movies imported from Egypt between 1938-1944, and the films produced in Turkey during the same periode were almost equal in number [...] the number of Turkishfilms was 17, the number of the Egyptian 16". (Özön, 1962: 117).

#### **The Year of Destiny - 1948**

1948 was a fateful year for the Turkish cinema. A tax exemption on domestic cinema ticket prices this year due to a change in law turned filmmaking into a profitable business and caused a rise in domestic film production (Atam, 2008: 510). Thereafter a number of new film production companies were founded and produced within a short periode of time films at a low cost of production. This situation precipitated the development of a film industry in general and resulted in the growth period of the Turkish cinema. Parallel to these events in the field of cinema, a very important development evolved on the political scene in Turkey. For the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic there was a government change. As part of the liberal policies of the new government the infrastructure was widely expanded throughout the country and power poles were erected to reach even the furthest corners. This development had a significant impact on the cinema. Through the opening of cinema halls in Anatolian cities, cinema became accessible for the masses. Later on the distribution of films in Anatolia from the 1950s on provoked a further rise of the cinematic market. The film productions according to the desires of the audience in Anatolia in the following years effected the appearance of a phenomenon, which rose to fame under the name of "regional film production companies" in Turkish cinema. Consequently, the film production under Yesilcam was bound to the rule of the regional cinemas for a long time.

Until 1948 the distribution and screening of films was limited to the Turkish film industry. Afterwards this system was overcome. In the context of film production a new period started. The increasing amount of cinema halls in the 1950s in Anatolia was accompanied by the audience's

growth as well. Many of the earlier import-oriented companies in Anatolia were replaced by production companies. The rise of equity investment led to a significant increase in the amount of films produced in an average year. "The average amount of films per year from 1916 to 1944 was about 1.46. From 1945 to 1959 it rose to 41.46. From 1950 to 1959, it rose to 56.70" (Makal, 1987: 15). Figures presented by Oguz Makal showed a significant growth in this sector. In 1950 23 films were produced. 12 new production companies were founded. The year 1959 brought up 95 films. In the same year 50 new production companies initiated their activities. During this period a total number of 126 companies were founded. However, many of them were not able to survive for a long time. Because of the introduction of rural-urban migration in the 1950s, the potential of a broader audience increased a lot. Obviously this potential had been exhausted. Movies for this set were produced. In the last days of 1940 the audience accounted for 20 million, but in the years of 1958 to 1959 the number rose to already 60 million viewers. The amount of cinema seats increased from 175,000 to 400,000 (Erkılıç, 2003: 68).

The Turkish cinema, which lacked in real presence up to the 1950s, began to show a development in economic, artistic and commercial terms. The directors who formed the foundation of the Turkish cinema, Lutfi Ö. Akad, Metin Erksan, Atif Yılmaz, Osman Seden and Memduh Ün, began their activities at this time. In those years the process of institutionalization returned to the Turkish cinema. Turkish cinema creators succeeded for the first time in developing a film language and a cinematic narrative style. The true identity of the *Yeşilçam* cinemas could emerge at this time. Further developments in this period were that many successful films were produced. For the first time Turkish films participated in international film festivals and the first domestic Turkish film festivals were established and organized. Finally, towards the end of this period, more movie reviews in newspapers and magazines were continually published.

#### **The Rise of *Yeşilçam* Cinema**

This phase, which was initiated by the coup of the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1960, marked a period in Turkey and brought up important changes and developments in the political, social and cultural history and most notably within the film industry. The following developments in the film industry, which had reached its zenith in the 1960s, can be mentioned: The new Constitution of the 27<sup>th</sup> of May (Constitution of 1961), which allowed artists for the first time to address social problems in the framework of their art. This led to a movement called "Social Realism". In connection with this movement the issues and problems of the workers and labourers, which were caused by industrialization, rural-urban migration and the problems associated with the emergence of slums, their struggle with rural poverty, the relationship of intellectuals to and alienation from society, the decadent lifestyle of the bourgeoisie as well as everyday problems of society, were addressed for the first time. The representatives, who banded together in the context of the Social Realism movement in 1960-1965, unfortunately separated after the takeover of the government by the right-wing leadership. They tried to express themselves in a national cinema, a revolutionary cinema, a popular cinema or similar identity creating forms. The amount of films they produced on these grounds did not go beyond a few examples. At the end of the decade, however, the Social Realism movement steadily lost more and more of its former influence.

In this period, in which the film production unit of *Yeşilçam* cinema came under the control of the system of the so-called regional farms, the films reached broad masses and the *Yeşilçam* cinema reached its hey day in the 1960s. With the establishment of many factories in different regions, a competitive situation was created, the audience numbers were growing rapidly and the annual average of film productions in the mid-60s exploded to an amount of over 200 films. These events were accompanied by the opening of cinema halls in many districts and provinces and the expansion of seating capacity. Also, films targeting a female audience were produced. This happened in a time when no other entertainment medium existed besides films and TV had not

yet found access to the living rooms. Another target group, namely the audience for the family cinema, became also a major aim. This situation lasted until 1972. From then the cinema halls were flooded by sex movies.

Additional, at this time, when the regional companies prevailed and films were produced according to the preferences of the audience, the phenomenon of the "stars" emerged. The film is no longer advertised with the name of the director but with the name of the main character, which means that the main character possesses a greater importance than the director. For Bükcr and Uluyađcı the "stars" phenomenon indeed is connected with the acting talent of the stars, but the deciding factor for this is the direct or indirect reflection of the wishes of the companies (society) towards them: "In this system, the spectators have created the star, then the producer is geared to the choice of the crowd" (Bükcr, 1993: 11-16). Nijat Özön evaluates the situation at this time, which has led to an increase in spending on film productions: "[...] the constant increase in production expenses made other factors entirely accelerate. One of these factors was that the 'Stars' method assumed dimensions that could not be observed in almost any other country. The result was that almost half of the production expenditure was spent on the stars and their commitment" (Özön, 1985: 369).

Actors like Türkan Soray, Belgin Doruk, Hülya Koçyigit, Ayhan Işık, Gursel Arsoy, Edizhun and Filiz Akın from the 1960s are among them. Yılmaz Güney, however, resides outside this star system due to the fact that he had his roots in heart of Anatolia, stemmed from the common people, and went on his acting adventure entirely on purpose and due to his skill. Therefore especially viewers from the slums and from Anatolia were fond of him. The "Ugly King" term, created by him, shattered the myth prevalent of the *Yeşilçam* "Beautiful Stars" period.

The 1960s became relevant in terms of film production, one's views and thoughts concerning the cinema and the institutionalization of *Yeşilçam*. In 1962 the first private cinema culture club, which was dubbed *Kulüp Sinema 7*, was founded as a student association by Sami Sekroglu in the Academy of Applied Arts in Istanbul. Because of its extensive, pioneering activities in the area of the film archive in Turkey in 1967 the club was honoured by its naming as *Türk Film Arşivi* and is affiliated to the State Academy of Applied Arts for many years. In 1963 Sinema İscileri Sendikası (Union of Cinema Employees) was founded with the aim to improve the conditions that came up in the film industry. With the founding of the Association in Sinematek in *Yeşilçam* in 1965 a wind of change started to blow. Through the gathering of enlightened intellectual people in this club serious discussions took place. The film critic Onat Kutlar contributes the following quote about the founding of this association: "The people who lived at this time in Turkey but wanted to know everything possible about cinema events all over the world have joined forces and founded Sinematek. Their primary aim was to transfer the knowledge of the cinema of the past into the future. This could only be done through the organization of events, discussions and programs" (Kutlar, 1985: 18).

In the 1960s it came to a rural exodus and consequently to a strong urbanization inside Turkey. This also brought a change in the consumer's behavior and the ever increasing industrialization changed. Since there were no televisions and video equipment in the apartments, the cinema attracted the interest of the people of and became an important medium of communication in everyday society (Biryıldız, 1993: 14-16). Consequently *Yeşilçam* experienced a golden age in these years in many ways, e.g. in film language, aesthetics and form, technology and industrialization.

#### **The Era of Yılmaz Güney in *Yeşilçam***

The liberal atmosphere that prevailed after the 1960 coup followed by a new constitution in 1961 was displaced by anti-democratic practices and a chaotic atmosphere in the upcoming years of

the 1970s and a second coup took place in Turkey. The Regime of the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, which set its overtaking with the memorandum of the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1971, lasted until April 1973. A series of events that took its course in 1968 and reached its peak in the 1970s, materialized in student riots including cases of death, the division of society into a "right" and a "left" wing, clashes, deaths and protests by students and workers due to economic problems, caused that the political order became increasingly out of control. The political developments in the Parliament goaded these events even more. Consequently, the Parliament has to be blamed for the economic, political, social and civil unrests in this period. This bipolar phase accompanied by conflicts and struggles covers the period of the 1970s.

Just during this eventful period, the year of 1970 marked a turning as well as a starting point for the Turkish cinema. The reason leading to this was the production of the film *Umut* (1970) by Yılmaz Güney. Güney, who has been active in many stages of the cinema, rose in the year 1960 as an actor to the "Ugly King". His popularity grew with time. At the end of the 1960s he exercised in directing activities. After *Seyyit Han*, which was produced in 1968, he proved all his cinematic skills and abilities in the film *Umut*. Based on a true story, the life of a coachman from Adana is told in *Umut*. With this film, the traditional form of *Yeşilçam* cinema has been shattered. The film was credited as "the film closest to reality among all other films made up to that point in terms of storytelling, technology or content and marked a vivid starting point for the upcoming films" (Güçhan, 1992: 87). Güney shaped the *Yeşilçam* cinema in the 1960s as an actor and in the 1970s as a screenwriter and director. He proved his cinematic skills with the films *Umutsuzlar*, *Aci*, *Agit* and *Baba* from 1971 and *Arkadaş* from 1974. The start of his work as a director was an important event in 1970 in Turkey. Additionally this event resulted in a change in *Yeşilçam* cinema. About the importance of Yılmaz Güney, Sadık Battal argues in his book as follows: "[...] The traditional Turkish cinema, which continued its existence until the 1970s, experienced in the 1970s a change and authentic productions began to shape the Turkish cinema. The designer of this change is unquestionably Yılmaz Güney [...]" (Battal, 2006: 117).

In this period social problems (such as domestic and foreign immigration, the increasing labor problems due to the increasing industrialization and the related problems in the suburbs of the big cities, the problems in the rural areas) found their way - both due to the political identity of Yılmaz Güney as well as to the then socio-political circumstances - far more into *Yeşilçam* productions. Besides Yılmaz Güney, it was Lutfi Akad, who shot some of his most important films, such as *Gelin*, *Düğün* (1973) or *Dişet* (1974), during this time. While on the one hand, due to the socialistic-realistic works by Yılmaz Güney and their effects, a discussion about the "revolutionary cinema" was ignited and a period of "militarization" was experienced, there was on the other hand, under the leadership of Yücel Cakmaklı, a different discussion concerning the "national cinema".

Consequently, the 1970s were a turning point for *Yeşilçam*. A "chaotic" situation prevailed, in which liberties were restricted and economic problems caused a wave of domestic and foreign immigration. Both the sum of all these factors as well as the advent of television sets in homes additional to the economic plight of Turkish cinema caused on one side the coming up of a different kind of low quality productions in the form of sex-, arabesque- and karate movies, which resulted in the degeneration of the Turkish cinema. On the other side the works of directors such as Lutfi Akad and Atıf Yılmaz, which were pioneering for the *Yeşilçam* cinema, and Yılmaz Güney and his successors, the alternative young directors (such as Şerif Gören, Yavuz Özkan, Erden Kıral, Zeki Ökten, Ali Özgentürk, Ömer Kavur, Tunç Okan, Korhan Yurtsever) and their qualitative works endured, which allowed a more hopeful outlook on the future of the Turkish cinema.

### **The Downfall of *Yeşilçam***

The Turkish military came into power by the military coup on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1980 for the third time. The consequences of this military coup turned out to be even more devastating

and worse compared to the previous coups of the 27th of May and the 12th of March. As a result, the coup-related economic, political, social, cultural and personal changes caused a turning point in Turkey in every aspect of life. "On the one hand, there have been discussions about the liberal economy, civil society and feminism, on the other hand, there were the increasing hostile reactions of various Muslim intellectuals against the elites of the Republic, the official left-wing ideologies, cultural norms and habits of thought" (Bozbodan, 2005: 129-130). Meantime on the level of world politics Reagan and Thatcher set new political and economic directions. In Turkey Turgut Özal attracted attention with his liberal expressions. The state and national policies disappeared from the agenda. In the cultural sector the policies of modernization and international ideals were abandoned and concepts such as cultural identity, diversity, and regional differences appeared on the agenda (Bozbodan, 2005: 130).

In this critical period in the 1980s, which was shaped by generals, a major change took place as has been mentioned above. This change, which could be witnessed at its starting point mainly within the urban population, spread its influence all over the country in a short time. It made its presence being felt in everyday life and changed a broad range from clothing, music, architecture even to the various sorts of entertainment (Kasaba, 2005: 13). Clearly the Turkish cinema was affected by this change, too. The cinema of *Yeşilçam* tried to "keep step with this era, which witnessed a period of rapid social changes" (Güçhan, 1992: 94).

The dominant role of regional companies in *Yeşilçam* since the 1950s came to an end in the 1980s. The directors now freed themselves from the "made to order" film productions and were finally able to produce their own films. With this development the traditional narrative form of *Yeşilçam* dissolved slowly. In contrast to the theatrical production for commercial purposes, the films directed by young directors brought artistic concerns to the fore. Through symbolic narratives and aesthetic precautionary, the young artists tried to develop their own cinematic language. They therefore produced rather nuanced oeuvres. The search for new ways led to the production of films which addressed the identity and aspirations of individuals and seriously discussed the position of women in society, female sexuality, the political system and the military coup of the 12th of September. The damage caused by the military coup to society had been attempted to be explained in these productions. As in previous periods, many directors engaged themselves in their films with emigration and immigration.

In the 1980s, plenty of upcomers began their directing activities. Among them, Sinan Çetin, Kurçenli Yusuf, Yavuz Turgul, İrfan Tözüm, Başar Sabuncu, Orhan Oğuz, Zülfü Livaneli, Engin Ayça, Nesli Çölgeçen, Nisan Akman, Şahin Kaygun, Mahinur Ergu and Tevfik Başer realized their first works in this time. Another development in this period was the institutionalization of the field of cinematography. "With the 12<sup>th</sup> of September, all institutions were closed in the field of cinema and several court proceedings were initiated that lasted for years. *Yeşilçam* could overcome this shock only until after 1985 and it was then when the organizational efforts began properly" (Dorsay, 1995: 22). Many foundations took place in the 80s, e.g. in 1987 the "Union of long-term workers", in 1984 the "Association of Film Producers", in 1988 the "Club of the Actor" and in 1989 the "Association of Film Directors". The *Antalya Film Festival* was celebrated again after a break in the years of 1979 and 1980. Since 1982 the *Istanbul Film Festival* is hosted. In 1988 the first film festival was organized in Ankara. Several film schools were founded. There was an increase in cinema magazines and books. Turkish filmmakers achieved international success in 1985 and promotional prizes were awarded by the Ministry of Culture. In 1986 the law of *Sinema, Video ve Müzik Eserleri Yasası* was passed which regulated copyright issues and took action against video piracy (Dorsay, 1995: 22-24).



In addition to the above mentioned positive developments on the way to institutionalization, the economic difficulties in the 1980s more and more surfaced. In conjunction with other factors the decline process of *Yeşilçam* Cinema was increasingly accelerated.

In the end it can be said that the *Yeşilçam* film producers, who had experienced its "golden era" in the 1960s, attempted to overcome the economic crisis in the 1970s through the production of sex film productions. The result was that more and more family film viewers avoided the cinemas. Towards the end of the 1970s the dominance of the regional film production companies came to an end. At the beginning of the 1980s operators of video films emerged and towards the end of 1980 the proceedings and sales of video films served as a source of income for *Yeşilçam*. However, their existence did not last long. The companies disappeared towards the end of this time slowly from the surface of the market. In the meantime colour televisions were circulating throughout the country. With the domination of American film productions on the market the domestic film productions entirely lost their competitiveness to Hollywood productions. Cinema operators were no longer willing to show domestic products. All the factors listed above led to an accelerated decline of *Yeşilçam*.

### Conclusion

In its early stages the first cinematic activities of non-Muslims have been implemented and remained until 1914 limited to screening. In the fall time of the Ottoman Empire, the first cinematic steps from the two military institutions, *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* and *Merkez Ordu Sinema Dairesi*, were made and supported therefore film productions in these first phases of Turkish cinema. Later two private production companies - initially *Kemal Film* and then *İpek Film*- provided support to film productions. Muhsin Ertuğrul was the only director who was shooting films for both production companies between 1922-1939. Muhsin Ertuğrul, who is more or less seen as a pioneer of Turkish cinema, continued his activities alone for 17 years. The *Yeşilçam* Cinema had its start-up phase in the 1940s, entered a development phase in the 1950s, reached its peak in the 1960s and was run over in 1970 by the crisis. It ceased to exist during the years of the downfall in the 1980s. In the 1990s a new era for the Turkish cinema began.

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