

CHAPTER 6

EMPHASIS ON NATIONAL CINEMA AS A SOCIAL NECESSITY IN ISLAMIST JOURNALS IN TURKEY

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INTRODUCTION

Although the idea of Islamism in Turkey has been a subject that has been written about and talked with different aspects since the beginning, the journals in which this idea was produced, discussed and disseminated have not been studied much. However, magazines had an important function in the formation and development of Islamist thought from the last period of the Ottoman Empire to today's Turkey and constituted one of the most important components of Islamist publishing. The Islamist Journals Project (TIJP) started its activities under the umbrella of the Scientific Studies Association (SSA) in 2013 with the aim of unearthing and examining the Islamist journals published between 1908-2010 in order to fill this important gap (İslamcı Dergiler Projesi, 2013). We have prepared our study by making use of the database of TIJP, which is open to access via electronic media. Since the journal collections are currently being transferred to the electronic environment, we have developed an expression based on the limited number of journals that we can access. We need to express that many researchers like myself owe TIJP a debt of gratitude for providing this opportunity. Because the project should be perceived as a great initiative, as it sheds light on the present.

Considering the 20th century's Turkey, it is seen that the main issues that publishers discuss on cinema are based on Islamic cinema and national cinema. In fact, although it is known that Islamic cinema debates are at the forefront, it is not overlooked that the next stages continue as "us" and "from us". Because the efforts to create an alternative to the western cinema industry gain both a religious and a national appearance. At this point, along with the references of the sources we have accessed, it is observed that while the starting point of the views of Islamist journals on cinema in general is different, it is observed that the main issue is tried to be expressed in terms of national cinema, cinema as an ideological propaganda tool, the necessity of independent cinema and similar issues.

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Our aim in this study is to reveal under which headings the phenomenon of cinema, whose influence we have felt in all areas from the 1900s to the present, is discussed in circles with Islamist and conservative identities. For this purpose, in accordance with the document scanning and content analysis method, *Sebilürreşad*, *Tohum*, *National Struggle*, *Re-National Struggle* and similar journals were examined, the basic concepts extracted from the works were examined, the data obtained were tried to be expressed, defined and inferences were made considering the conditions of that day.

“CINEMA” AS A SOCIAL MODERN TRANSFORMATION DEVICE

Although cinema is the art of reflecting feelings, thoughts and observations or observations on the big screen, it has been a comprehensive art branch from its beginning to the present, which offers a developing field to many different disciplines, especially literature. Today, cinema has become an attraction that attracts attention with its social, technological, psychological, socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects in all venues it is hosted around the world. This phenomenon, which has completed its birth and started to grow in a very short time, continues to progress day by day, especially with technological developments. Cinema, which is accepted as the seventh branch of art by most thinkers, can be expressed as the biggest shareholder in social transformation and change. Because the propaganda power it contains has paved the way for ideas to be seen and heard by large masses. However, as Ünal states, “the fact that cinema is an art was not accepted very quickly and the films that are its product were not approached as works of art for a certain period of time. When it was understood that where the camera is positioned, the conscious use of camera angles, the contribution of lighting to the meaning created on the stage, and dozens of factors such as telling a story or conveying a reality, it was understood that a language was formed, and then it was accepted that cinema was an art.” (Ünal, 2011, s. 7). The fact that the categories of reality and virtuality are intertwined in today’s cinema is directly related to the development of technology (Çelebi & Gültekin, 2020, s. 1). In the study, which considers cinema as a mythological narrative in the modern period, cinema, which is explained as an element that expresses the ambiguity of ontological boundaries, is shown as a means of explaining technological developments and presenting some changes and transformations in the future. However, the way in which Cengiz T. Asiltürk describes the cinema and the cinema audience in his work “Dialectical Fiction in Cinema” is remarkable. According to him, the fact that the audience pays close attention to these magical rituals they are eager to participate in, as if they are in front of a temple they visit,

shows that cinema is a reasoned effective art (Asiltürk, 2008, s. 9). André Bazin expresses the reality in 1966 that Asiltürk expressed in the 2000s as follows:

“It is no longer necessary to prove the importance of cinema in contemporary life. Just remembering a few numbers is enough. Every day, tens of millions of people enter one of the 100,000 halls for the ritual of this new religion of shadows. Accordingly, the earnings figures are no less convincing. But statistics do not take into account the basic. The importance of cinema in terms of culture is that the cinema, together with the radio (but radio is first and foremost a broadcasting technique), the press (but the press is primarily a political communication, education or deception organ), the poster (but the cultural value of the poster is limited and doubtful) It constitutes almost all of its relations with art for the whole and the growing majority of the rural population (Bazin, 1966, s. 15).”

The feature of being “realistic”, which expresses a dimension of the cinema, freeing the frames from the opacity that is stuck in the main, allows filmic fictions and their dry materials to be perceived and accepted as real. Here it is revealed that cinema is a kind of illusion tool (Abinsel, 2003, s. 12). This illusion creates a magic effect on the audience and causes them to experience intense emotional attacks in their thoughts.

The intelligentsia, who knows these features of the big screen, has written different articles in many cultural and literary magazines, especially in Islamist magazines, in order to draw attention to this aspect of cinema. Today, countless academic and scientific works have been tried to be revealed on the deciphering of the aspects of cinema, which is known as an ideological transmission tool, leaving the artistic dimension aside. The fact that very different definitions come from every segment working on cinema to the question of what cinema is, stems from the multidimensionality of cinema. However, Abinsel, who has written some works on cinema and film, describes cinema and the cinema industry as follows:

“From the point of view of its functions, it can be said that it is a means of entertainment, education, propaganda or mass communication. When all the operations, processes and organizations between the production of films and their presentation to the audience are our starting point, cinema is an industry and a sub-sector of the entertainment and communication industry, which has parceled out the world market with its huge transnational companies aiming for huge profits. Cinema, which is a ritual in terms of the specific conditions and effects of

watching movies in movie theaters, can be seen as a form of narrative or meaning creation, a branch of art in terms of its original aesthetic values, when the whole thing called film is taken as a basis. In addition to these, there is another important point that should not be overlooked, which we can call the illusion-creating quality of cinema. This feature is due, on the one hand, to the nature of the cinematic apparatus, and on the other hand, what makes cinema as cinema, and what is often called “magic” (Abinsel, 2003, s. 11).

THE IDEA OF ISLAMISM AND ISLAMISM IN TURKEY

The idea of Islamism, which has recently found a response as a political and social strategy of the religion of Islam, which expresses a multidimensional system of revelation as a way of life and style, has an important period in world political history as a social identity and substance. The idea of Islamism, which represents a completely different revival in the world of classical and modern Islamic thought, has evolved into a new identity formation process by internalizing some western paradigms over time. In the following periods, the increase in the number of individuals with Islamist thought in private and public spaces has been instrumental in the social tissue to acquire an Islamic aspect. However, in the Middle East, which is almost entirely made up of Muslim peoples, the issue of what kind of difference there is between the word “Muslim” and the word “Islamist” is still an ongoing debate. Aside from the philosophical debates on this subject, it should be noted that the word “Islamism” is related to the modern period and that the phrase “Political Islam” today was developed to describe certain movements and personalities (Dağ, 2019, s. 15). On the other hand, Bozarslan defines Islamism and the Islamist movement as a form of resistance that emerged partially spontaneously among the Arab and Turkish intellectuals of the empire at the beginning of the 19th century, as a product of Westernization as well as opposing it (Bozarslan, 2015, s. 188). Defining Islamism in general as a collection of ideologies and movements aiming to create a kind of Islamic order, Bayat criticizes the development of primary ideas and projects such as social justice and raising the living standards of the poor after the establishment of the idea of an ideological community, which is the main interest of Islamism, and emphasizes the lack of this idea in its social dimension (Bayat, 2016, s. 23).

DEFINING CINEMA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIST THOUGHT

A common definition of cinema from the point of view of Islamists has not been clearly expressed. For many thinkers and intellectuals, cinema represents the moral extinction of the young generation, while for many, it is expressed as the most favorite element of conveying thought to the addressee in different ways. In the first lines of Ali Murat Güven's article titled "The Current Needs to Complete Its Infancy: "Islamic Cinema", which he carried to his column in Yörünge Journal in 1990, the mission of cinema from the perspective of an idea defined as Islamist was expressed with the following sentences:

"Cinema has always been a branch of art for Muslims, which pauses when it is mentioned and takes a distant attitude. So much so that, while Muslim intellectuals were able to produce successful universal products in these fields, including music as a means of expression, adopting cinema as a means of expression and making films were seen as an act that was feared due to the fear of moving away from the requirements of religion. Of course, this shyness and fear had good reasons for believers, given the "wild" image and ossified superstructure that the movie industry exhibits today (Güven, 1990, s. 42)."

Güven continues his thoughts on this subject with the following sentences, in the continuation of his article, about the problems in the construction of the Islamic community's perception of cinema through a concept in which it is identified with unpleasant spaces rather than an artistic perspective:

"In a country like Turkey, where cinema was never, ever perceived as an "art", taxed by being put in the same category as bars, pavilions and casinos, and exhibiting unbelievably shoddy products (!) a Muslim's use of the screen as a means of expression even at the design stage it was making a largely hopeless effort. For a Muslim film artist, struggling to exist from the Kingdom of Yeşilçam in a cinema environment where actor or actress, which film directors identify with the bedroom stories of the reciter, is taken into the hands of those who escaped from his village to become an artist, this experiment will have no meaning other than that he deliberately imprisoned himself in a vicious circle (Güven, 1990, s. 43)."

ON THE IDEA AND NEED OF NATIONAL CINEMA

With the development of cinematic narration in Turkey since the 1950s and the movements created by the political and social situation in the 1960s, some formations have emerged in the field of cinema. Some concepts such as “Social Realism”, “People’s Cinema”, “National Cinema”, “National Cinema”, “Revolutionary Cinema” have been put forward and denominations have been made to describe the films made in Turkey in this period and later periods (Coşkun, 2009, s. 8). The idea of national cinema bases its claim of dominance on the political and social mobility experienced in the specified dates. The fact that the world was stuck between two poles of power and that the neutral ones were forced to be chosen around a power were effective in gaining the sense of nationality. Concerns about the production of independent and national works in the cinema sector necessitated protection from cultural imperialism.

It is seen that the writers of the Journal of Re-National Struggle, which we see at the beginning of the publications that had a great impact on the youth of the 60s and 70s, with the world of thought that met their readers in the field of writing for many years, also wrote articles on National Cinema. Taner Atilla, in his 1978 article, emphasizes that the society is weak especially in the cultural disinformation attacks of western origin and that some measures should be taken for this. Atilla states that although visuality has only recently entered the country, it causes great changes in society, so a special nationality mobilization in this area should be started in cinema first. According to him, the rapid metamorphosis of our society as a result of an economy and culture policy that is unconsciously open to the West and the urbanization it brings, creates an unbalanced society in every aspect. But from this troubled period, a period of cinema worthy of Turkish society will pass. The foundations of this newly created socialist cinema will be laid with the participation of people with national personality who have adopted the national culture, and the issues of the Turkish people will be revealed through the language of art. Only the issues of the Turkish people will be presented in a realistic and constructive style that will not be provocative. The issues of the Turkish people, the suffering of the Anatolian people, the just causes that will find their place in the socialist cinema, the problems of our workers, peasants and all layers of the society will be revealed and solutions will be shown and efforts will be made to raise the moral value of our nation. Socialist cinema will be unifying, not divisive. Socialist cinema will enable the cinema to act in a national direction that will not degrade and distract the society, but will elevate it. The reason why we have not come to a necessary point and we are living in a period of depression is that we

do not follow a national cultural policy. The reason for this is the mentality of those responsible for viewing cinema as a profit tool, not a cultural tool. However, cinema needs to take the place it deserves in the state cultural policy (Atilla, 1978, s. 16).

In an article in the Journal of Initiative, dated 1985, İhsan Işık states that national cinema is a misconception beyond necessity. According to Işık:

“National Cinema, as a movement in the history of Turkish cinema, which was discussed theoretically in the 1970s and seen in a few applications in practice, is a sincere event of some talents who are in search of Islam in our country, but it is a “mistake” event that breaks their hopes. Those who produced films that expressed their views within the general framework of this movement, basing their understanding of cinema on the fuzzy concept of “National Culture”, and defended the structuring of “National Cinema”. With this understanding, films such as Birleşen Yollar, Zehra, Çile, Doğarken Ölmüşüm, Oğlum Osman, Kızım Ayşe, Garip Kuş, Gençlik Köprüsü, Lanet, Rahmet ve Gazap have been made since 1970. The subject of these films is “guidance” and the environment is the wealthy. In these films, which do not delve deeply into any social problem, some people suddenly become Muslims without knowing why or how, and thus, the absurd task of forcing an abstract life to be perceived is done. As the defined Islam is formal, there is a need to bring witnesses from outside the film to the experiences of the film heroes in Turkish society. Even though it was made with good intentions, Islamic concern was forced into a nationalist mold with the National Cinema approach. It is not possible to understand Islamic culture from National Culture. With the Islamic approach, the nation is within the scope of the Ummah. The historical accumulations of not only Turks but all Islamic tribes are included in the framework of our culture. (Işık, 1985, s. 23).”

Işık speaks of a nationalism in which the idea of nationalism was imposed instead of Islamic elements, and therefore could not reach its goal. Because, while the Islamic situation of the society in the period he mentioned was not very heartwarming, the fact that the institutions and organizations that should take responsibility and take responsibility for the issues that are not very essential from the Islamic point of view shows the other dimension of the discussion, which perhaps expresses what can be understood from nationality. However, if society is to pursue something, it must embrace ideas that contain these Islamic elements. According to him, the judgments of value that Muslims will respect are definitely divine judgments. These universal provisions cannot be limited to those adopted by a nation or to their synthesis with other understandings. Likewise, when we examine our past history, it is wrong to start with the prejudice that we will only

come across Seljuks and Ottomans. It is against the Islamic interpretation of history. As the history of the Seljuks and Ottomans is only a part of the history of Islam. It is not the formal signs of Islam in the films that will bring cinema to its Islamic identity, but above all, the Islamic approach based on the Islamic essence that dominates the film (Işık, 1985, s. 24). As can be seen, Işık emphasizes that Islamic concerns should be pursued as the core element of National cinema rather than formalism.

On the other hand, Bölükoğlu, who sees the concept of national cinema as a goal to be achieved, in his article written in 1975: "National Cinema is an indispensable goal required by our luck and socio-cultural conditions, and it is an inseparable part of the nationality phase of science, culture, art, economy and politics that Turkey has reached today, within a certain development process. And national cinema is the expression of the fact that the national point of view determines, interprets and analyzes in the language of cinema (Bölükoğlu, 1975)." he stated that this phenomenon is a part of other social needs and that they will preserve their value as long as they are integrated. In the continuation of the sentences on which the author emphasized that he should not be content with only the emphasis on nationality, he explained that the concept of nationalism should also be expressed at this point as follows:

"First of all, I am in favor of making a change on the concept, I think cinema should be nationalist, not national. Because, regardless of its intention, message or purpose, if a film is made with the people and capital of the country it belongs to, it is the national cinema of that country. Therefore, all films made within the borders of a country are national. Regardless of its subject, element and message, a film is a product of the national cinema of that country. It is possible to list the elements of nationalist cinema as follows. Nationalist cinema is the cinema that brings solutions based on our own social structure, our social and individual material and spiritual relations, and the characters born from our religion and nationality synthesis. Because practice and theory go hand in hand. Sometimes theory comes after practice (Bölükoğlu, 1975)."

Based on Bölükoğlu's sentences in the context of the above statements, it is understood that it is necessary to produce alternatives to counter-ideas by bringing a nationalist spirit to cinema. On the other hand, according to Salih Gökmen, at this point, if a national cinema is to be developed and presented, it is necessary to discuss all aspects of cinema and to know every point of the subject down to the smallest detail. In fact, it is conveyed to the reader throughout the article that ignoring the frightening side of cinema, which has been remembered as an enemy

in many media, and submitting it to the command of Islam in the unique sea of ideas, will be the greatest maneuver that can be done.

Gökmen, in the January issue of the journal of National Struggle in 1975, puts a cinema scale in front of his readers and points out the importance of making an assessment by looking at the pros and cons of the issue. In his article, Gökmen emphasizes that old habits have disappeared, especially from a political point of view, the old electorate is replaced by a mass that can look at issues from different perspectives and sometimes can be guided by the imposition of manipulation, so it is necessary to consider all available materials and tools from this point of view. Therefore, Gökmen states that it is a necessity of Islamic and national necessity to determine modern ways of struggle instead of classical methods.

From this point of view, according to Gökmen, although the phenomenon of cinema is not as effective as television and other mass media in terms of effect, it can appeal to a considerable audience in the eyes of the producers. Because, when the number of target audience in the world of writing is compared with the audience ratio of visual broadcasts, a difference emerges. Sinemanın farklı perspektiflerden tanımını ve etkisini Gökmen şu şekilde ifade etmiştir:

“Cinema is undoubtedly not as effective as TV and radio. However, the appeal of a normally working film to over 800,000 and a well-run film to more than 1,500,000 must be hundreds of times the capacity of our current means of struggle. First of all, it is a being who goes to the people’s feet, grabs him/her directly and imprisons him/her for an hour and a half by hitting him/her on the head. In addition, it is a tool where the struggle can be given by camouflaging and adjusting the effect dose according to what kind of effect it is desired to create on the public. It is also a tool that does not require the concern of constantly retaining a certain reader, such as the press.

If we need to step out of the issue for a moment and think objectively, all kinds of modern influence and broadcasting tools, at least as a result of influencing a very large social environment and being affected to a certain extent in return, cause some erosion, especially in the environment and people who are engaged in that business. Cinema is a branch that outweighs this aspect because it is an art that gathers all the last and previous ones. However, it is always beneficial to look at both sides of the scale and to reach a decision that way. It is probably necessary to renew the means of struggle, at least by looking at the lost time in the face of a rushed counter-front (Gökmen, 1975, s. 36-37).”

When we look at Gökmen’s other writings, it will be seen that the idea that Islam should be understood rather than a cheapened ideology such as nationalism

comes to the fore from the expression “National”. In the end, it is one of the only conclusions on which there is a consensus on the period when every national thought away from the idea of Islam will be simplified and even have no equivalent.

CONCLUSION

Islamism, a movement that emerged in the nineteenth century and struggled against modernism intellectually and practically, refers to completely different groups, which are characterized by a common name both at the time it first emerged and today. Although the common name of Islamism seems to gather each under a common umbrella, there is no collective unity and common method among them (Dağ, 2019, s. 16). However, from the perspective of Islamism and cinema, the cinema industry is a field of war and struggle invented for the West to impose a hegemonic paradigm for the Islamist thought that has taken its place in the historical process in Turkey. The resistance, which was continued with the 20th century Islamic ideological perspective, had to be in the field desired by the westerners. Since cinema is a weapon of imposition for inventors, resisting the geographies of the world that are not ready for this and being able to preserve the local characteristics in all aspects have often resulted in defeat. Anatolia, which is one of the leading geographies hosting Islamist thought, considered it essential to keep Islamic and national elements alive as a solution to cultural and political attacks. Being aware of the fact that if Anatolia loses this identity in its essence, there will be only a mass of imitators, it has shaped its point of view towards cinema as it is. Because modernization movements have shown themselves as imitation and hollowness in all geographies except the West. When you look at its essence, this non-self, which has built a hateful past, has had to give up many of its features by becoming open to all external attacks in the following periods. The aforementioned modernization developed as a European style in almost all areas of society and turned into western worship after keeping a distance from the transition. Most of the counter-resistances were despised and despised by the regulars of the geography and moved away from creating a unique identity. Therefore, the idea of nationalization and localization has taken the center of cinema discussions and for many years, a solution has been sought under the Islamic supremacy. Because, as non-Islamic was considered the main intention in the export of cinema thought of the period, obscenity enabled the audience to normalize and internalize them in the next stages. The Western cinema industry has managed to enter the houses with the consent of the host, not an uninvited guest, by mobilizing all its possibilities for a uniform society that eats and drinks like itself, thinks, has fun, dresses like them, and adopts their lifestyle.

The claims of nationalization in the cinema, which were discussed by the magazines published by the Islamist movement for a while, should actually be accepted as a reflection of the statements of Islamic thinkers to be completely independent in the cinema sector. Because the claim of being national should be seen as a case of reflecting our own color on the white screen and should be approached from this dimension. The idea of nationalization and localization, which entered a period in which the country's desire for total nationality and full independence as a nation and society was reflected outside, took the center of cinema discussions and for many years, it was tried to find a solution under the Islamic supremacy. Because, as non-Islamic was considered the main intention in the export of cinema thought of the period, obscenity enabled the audience to normalize and internalize them in the next stages.

For this reason, all social organizations that care about the preservation of identity and culture, especially Islamic communities, have attributed it as a great duty to struggle with this in their own writing world. However, this entrepreneurial mindset, who is aware that action speak louder than words in this field, which they are unfamiliar with, did not hesitate to produce alternative ideas and made great efforts to bring people who are interested in this field to the forefront.

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