COMPANION ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

Middle Eastern and North African Film

Edited by **Oliver Leaman**

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Notes on contributors

Roy Armes received his Ph.D. in Film at the Slade School of Art, University College London, and is Professor of Film at Middlesex University. Over the past thirty-five years he has written widely on European and, more recently, African cinemas. His sixteen books include *Arab and African Film Making* (co-written with Dr Lizbeth Malkmus), a bilingual *Dictionary of North African Film Makers* and a recent study of the Algerian film, *Omar Gatlato*. His work has been translated into a dozen languages.

Gönul Dönmez-Colin received her Masters Degree from the McGill University of Montreal, Canada and taught in Montreal for fifteen years and in Hong Kong for one year. She is the author of *Paylasilan Tutku Sinema*, a collection of her interviews with prominent filmmakers, published in Turkish and co-author of 'Die Siebte Kunst auf dem Pulverfass' (Balkan-Film) published in German. She has served on the juries of international film festivals and has also been artistic advisor to film festivals. As an international film critic and writer specialized in Asian cinema, she travels extensively in Asia to research for her writing. Her work, which is regularly published in eight languages, includes *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Paris), *Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul), *Cinemaya* (New Delhi) and *Blimp* (Graz).

Nezih Erdoğan teaches film theory and screenwriting at Bahcesehir University, Istanbul. He has mainly published on Turkish popular cinema. He has forthcoming chapters on the reception of Hollywood in Turkey after the Second World War from BFI, and on Turkish trash and Hollywood from Hampton.

Deniz Göktürk teaches German and Film Studies at the University of Southampton (UK) and at UC Berkeley (USA). She collaborates in an interdisciplinary research project on 'Axial Writing: Transnational Imagination and Cultural Policy' (funded by the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council 'Transnational Communities' Programme). Her publications include a book on literary and cinematic imaginations of America in early twentieth-century German culture: *Künstler, Cowboys, Ingenieure: Kultur- und mediengeschichtliche Studien zu deutschen Amerika-Texten 1912–1920* (1998) as well as articles on migration, culture and cinema. As a translator from Turkish into German she co-edited an anthology of contemporary Turkish literature and translated novels by Aras Ören and Bilge Karasu. She is currently working on *The German Cinema Book* (BFI, co-edited with Tim Bergfelder and Erica Carter) and other book projects on 'Transnational Cinemas', 'Multicultural Germany' and 'Ethnic Role-Play in Immigrant Comedies'.

Kiki Kennedy-Day received her Ph.D. from New York University in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, specializing in Arabic, in 1996. She focuses on medieval Islamic philosophy, and has a deep background in art, having travelled widely in the Middle East and Central Asia visiting Islamic monuments. She studied Arabic in Syria one summer, leaving her with an interest in Syrian culture. She has taught in New York City and Istanbul, Turkey. Currently she is working on a book about the history of Definition in Islamic Philosophy.

Oliver Leaman is a philosopher and cultural theorist with a longstanding interest in the Middle East. He is author of *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy* (1997), *Brief Introduction to Islamic Philosophy* (1999) and co-editor of *History of Islamic Philosophy* (1996) and *History of Jewish Philosophy* (1997). He was the co-editor of the Jewish philosophy section and the editor of the Islamic philosophy section in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Hamid Naficy is a Professor of Film and Media Studies and Chair of the Department of Art and Art History at Rice University in Houston. He has published extensively about theories of exile and displacement; exilic and diasporic cultures, films and media; and Iranian, Middle Eastern, and Third World cinemas. His English language books are *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton University Press, 2001), *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place* (edited, Routledge, 1999), *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), *Otherness and the Media: the Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged* (co-edited, Harwood Academic, 1993), and Iran Media Index (Greenwood Press, 1984). He has also published extensively in Persian, including a two-volume book on the documentary cinema, *Film-e Mostanad* (free University of Iran Press, 1978–9). His forthcoming book is *Cinema and National Identity: A Social History of Iranian Cinema* (University of Texas Press). His works have been translated into many languages.

Judd Ne'eman is Associate Professor at the Department of Film and Television at Tel-Aviv University. He has produced and directed feature films and documentaries for cinema and television, among which are *Maasa Alunkot / Paratroopers* (1977); *Mered Hayamaim / Seamen's Strike* (1981); and, *Streets of Yesterday* (1989). Recent articles include: 'The Metallurgic War Machine in Schindler's List' (Hebrew); 'Fields of Dominant Fiction' (Hebrew); 'The Death Mask of the Moderns – A Genealogy of *New Sensibility* Cinema in Israel'; 'The Empty Tomb in the Postmodern Pyramid: Israeli Cinema in the 1980s and 1990s'; 'Jew and Arab Chronicles in the Israeli Cinema'. He is the co-editor of an anthology: *Fictive Looks – On Israeli Cinema*.

Viola Shafik, German-Egyptian film-maker and scholar, received her Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies at Hamburg University, teaches Cinema Studies at the American University in Cairo. She is the author of *Arab Cinema. History and Cultural Identity* (1998). She directed experimentals and documentaries, among others *The Lemon Tree* (1993) and *Planting of Girls* (1999).

Amal Sulayman Mahmoud al 'Ubaydi is Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Garyounis, Benghazi, Libya.

Preface

I should like to thank my colleagues for having worked hard on producing what we hope will be a useful source of information about a variety of cinema which is not as well known outside the area as it ought to be. It was not an easy task to collect information on what was often little discussed in some of the countries we have included, and a lot of effort has been spent on trying to gain access to facts which are useful in throwing light on the topic. We have tried to be objective and not to allow our aesthetic and political preferences to distort the text. But of course we have had to select and that involves leaving many things out which are no doubt important, and we hope that readers will forgive us if they find that their favourite films have been omitted or little discussed.

The authors of each section are clearly indicated. I have edited all the sections, written some of the entries and helped translate the entry on Libya. I am also responsible for the preliminaries, the structure of the volume as a whole, the indices and the selection of the images, the latter with the assistance of the contributors, of course.

Oliver Leaman
April 2000

Introduction

The first question to be raised here is why some countries have been included and others excluded. The geographical area in the title is so vague that it is difficult to justify any such exclusions, but it was necessary to limit the coverage in order to make possible a degree of precision and focus in the treatment. We could have included Sudan, Somalia, Chad and so on, but had we done so there would have been arguments for extending coverage to many other North African countries, and then we would have been entering what has tended to be referred to in the literature as specifically 'African' cinema. By contrast, what we have referred to here as the 'Middle East' has been interpreted quite widely to extend to Iran and Turkey, and even further to Central Asia. In many ways the cultural background of Central Asia is far more closely linked with the former Soviet Union, of which it was until quite recently a part. On the other hand, the cultural and linguistic ties between Central Asia, on the one hand, and Turkey on the other made it reasonable to include Central Asia in this volume.

There is no attempt here to argue that there is any essential core to the different traditions of film which have been included here. It is always tempting to try to find some idea around which a whole variety of cinema is constructed, but this is not feasible. Readers will be interested to find that the histories of film in all these different regions are often very distinct. Of course, there are degrees of resemblance on occasion, but there are no useful generalizations which can be drawn to cover the whole area. What is understood as a constant presence in many of the treatments here is the significance of film as part of popular culture. For example, it is interesting how the Egyptian film industry, so dominant for so long in the Arab world, should have for a time succumbed to the pressures of satellite television and video; yet lately there has been something of a revival of interest in Egyptian films of an earlier time through the growth of video and retrospectives on television. To go to Iran, another country with a very strong film tradition, it is intriguing that the reforming President Khatami should have done so much to foster the modern Iranian cinema during his period in charge of cultural affairs, at a time when to act in this way was regarded as provocative by the more conservative religious forces. The cinema is the perfect vehicle for a gentle widening of the options offered by the state, since it seems both of little political significance and yet capable of making surreptitious announcements of independence from local political restrictions. Those who would argue that film is an insignificant cultural force clearly know little of the Middle East. In the two years before the 1979 revolution in Iran, for instance, there were numerous attacks on cinemas, which were regarded as representatives of Western and hence Pahlavi values;

after the revolution the number of cinemas in the country almost halved. To give another example, many films produced in Israel have adopted a critical attitude to Zionist ideology, representing ironically the clichés in earlier and more ingenuous cultural products.

Having claimed that there is no common factor in the traditions of film-making in this region, I should like to point to one factor that might come close to serving as such a common factor. This lies in the ways in which film has advanced the acceptability of the colloquial languages and idioms of the area. There are often vast inequalities in the region between levels of income and education, and the formal kinds of language which are used in high culture can be very different from those in general use. Film also allows for the representation of 'ordinary' ways of life, which has no doubt been the source of much of its popularity. It is difficult to explain to a Westerner the gasp of admiration and surprise from an audience in the Middle East in reaction to films that represent ordinary forms of life and speech. This is hardly surprising in what is after all popular culture, but for many in the Middle East and North Africa even popular culture is quite distant from the general population in both form and content, yet with film the audience is invited to identify with what is portrayed. It is this emphasis on the ordinary that has led some Iranian and Turkish films to become popular in the West, along with the desire (perhaps influenced by orientalism) to portray the exotic and the 'other'. How films from the area are viewed outside the area is an interesting issue, but not one dealt with here except in so far as communities from the Middle East and North Africa now live outside the region and work in film there. Another interesting issue is how the Middle East and North Africa are represented in films made outside the area, and there is a growing campaign (especially in the United States) to try to challenge the stereotype of the Arab and Iranian as terrorist and/or criminal. We do not touch on these issues in this volume. The concentration here is entirely on how film in the Middle East and North Africa sees itself. The aim is to present an account of this important area of film-making as much from within as we could. I hope that readers will find this as fascinating a topic as we obviously do.

How to use this book

The book is organized in terms of areas, and topics are discussed within the context of those areas. Film names are in *italics*; the names of directors, actors and others involved in the cinema are to be found in the Index of Names; the titles of films are to be found in the Index of Films.

Transliteration

Many of the films in this volume have Arabic titles and these have not been presented here in line with any consistent form of transliteration. This is because in many of the existing works of reference and the magazines which refer to these films, a whole variety of forms of transliteration is used; it was felt to be better to use a system in this book that comes closer to that used in other texts, rather than one according with a consistent system that is to be found nowhere else. I have tried to use a system which gives some indication of pronunciation.

Films from the Francophone Maghreb tend to use French forms of transliteration, which I have sometimes altered to make it easier for English readers to pronounce. So, for example, I have represented 'ch' with 'sh' (that is, *Weshma* as well as *Wechma*). I have not done this for names of people or for French spellings of the titles of films.

The letter hamza is generally represented by ', the letter ayn by '.

No effort has been made to distinguish between alef and ayin in Hebrew.

The pronunciation 'ch' in Persian is roughly similar to the English and is distinguished from 'sh'.

Turkish is presented in its full form, since it is now written in Roman characters.

Acknowledgements

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Many thanks to the Plato Film Production Co. for permission to reprint the still from *Propaganda.*

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Central Asian cinema

Gönul Dönmez-Colin

Central Asia's first known screening was in 1897 in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. The first documentaries were shot in Uzbekistan in 1920, in Kazakhstan in 1925 and in Tajikistan in 1929. Studios were first established and feature films first made in Uzbekistan in 1925, in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan between 1931 and 1932, in Kazakhstan in 1938 and in Kyrgyzstan in 1955.

From the time cinema was nationalized in 1919 by a Lenin decree, film production and distribution had been regulated by a government institution, the State Committee for Cinematography (Goskino), which gradually gained control over the film industry.

The majority of the films of the early period were didactic and directly linked to the problems of the times. The struggles against the rulers, landowners and religious traditions, and for women's freedom, were some of the predominant themes explored using cheap orientalism, Asian folklore, parades and, when sound became possible, oriental music. The language used was Russian.

World War II played an important role in the relocation of most studios to Alma Ata and Tashkent. The end of 1950s and the beginning of 1960s proved crucial for Central Asia, as for the rest of the USSR. A new generation of film-makers arrived in a climate that saw the dismantling of the ideological principles of Stalinism. However, a truly nationalist fervour did not manifest itself before 1960.

In 1986, the Fifth Congress of Soviet Film-makers challenged the lawlessness of the methods used by the bureaucracy to control the arts and proposed the principles of the free market as an alternative. It also undertook the responsibility of defending non-commercial, *auteur* cinema. The Soviet Film-makers' Union announced the end of Goskino's hegemony over the film industry and its intention of introducing new, independent economic and cultural policies. The real base of power gradually shifted from Goskino offices to the studios, now run by the film-makers themselves.

In the first phase of *perestroika* (1986–7), the newly created Conflict Committee released hundreds of films banned by the censors. The second phase (1988–90) eliminated censorship and the monopoly of the state altogether. Independent studios and co-operative film companies began to mushroom everywhere. The overall annual production tripled, despite the sharp increase in the number of films imported from the West, the video black market and a general loss of public interest in cinema.

A new horizon was opened up for young film-makers of Central Asia, most of whom were trained in VGIK (Vserossiyski Gosudarstvenny Institut Kinematografii – the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography) in Moscow and shared the same concerns and difficulties – such as the conservatism of their respective local authorities, poor equipment and inadequate working conditions. Despite the diversity of their

backgrounds, they converged on a common film language. Abandoning the epic tradition and orientalism for a more Western outlook, they tried to develop a sociological and psychological approach in the treatment of their characters, as well as in reflecting their destabilized cultural roots. Subject matter was diverse, but fashionable themes (such as purging of the Stalinist past, sex and violence in youth subcultures) or obscure avant-garde narratives were deliberately avoided. Natural décor and non-professional actors were favoured. Native languages were employed instead of Russian.

Following independence, social, economic and ethnic turmoil swept all of the former republics – except perhaps Kazakhstan, whose capital Alma Ata (Almaty) had become the largest film centre of the USSR after Moscow, Leningrad (St Petersburg) and Kiev. Under the liberal policies of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the country moved to a free-market economy faster than Russia, and banks and co-operatives did not miss the opportunity to publicize themselves through high-profile investments, which included investment in cinema. However, private capital soon lost interest when investments did not show the expected profit. In the old regime, films were made according to formulas dictated by Moscow, but Moscow supplied the finance and took charge of distribution; today state studios are not able to function due to lack of funds and film production has fallen considerably throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Many film-makers have settled in Moscow or abroad, others are in search of co-productions, while still others are trying to push the limits of their disadvantageous circumstances.

Women directors

It is still difficult to compete with men in the Muslim states. Kazakh Roza Orynbasarova, after her successful debut with *Jhertva Dlya Imperatora* / *Sacrifice for the Emperor*, moved to St Petersburg. So did Kyrgyz Dinar Asanova, whose *Klyuch Bez Prava Peredachi* / *The Non-Transferable Key* and *Patsani* were very popular in the 1970s. Tajik film-makers Margarita Kassymova, Maryam Yusupova and Gulbakhor Mirzoeva, who all began as documentarists, have moved to greener pastures. Kamara Kamalova continues to work successfully in Uzbekistan.

AZERBAIJAN

Cinema had a relatively early start in Azerbaijan. Projections began in Baku three years after Paris. The first film – *V Tzarstve Nefti i Millionov* / *In the Kingdom of Oil and Millions* in two episodes by Boris Svetlov (based on a work by Ibrahim Bek-Musabekov) – was made in 1916. Popular folk operas, such as Svetlov's *Archin Mal Alan* / *The Cloth Peddler* (1917), soon found their way onto the screen. In the 1945 version, which was the first film realized after the war, Rza Takhmassib and Nicolas Lechenko painted a very exotic city with narrow alleys and a bustling bazaar as the background for intrigues of love.

Mavi Danizin Sahilinda / *On the Shores of the Blue Sea* (1935), the first Azeri talkie, was shot by Russian Boris Barnet and Azeri Samed Mardanov. Armenian Amo Bek-Nazarov was a link among the Transcaucasian Republics: *The House on the Volcano*

which he shot in Baku in 1929 is considered to be one of the first Azeri films on the multinational proletariat of the city at that time. With the fervour of revolution, such collaborations were quite common and undoubtedly beneficial to the formation of young film-makers such as Samed Mardanov, who made *Kandlilar* / *The Peasants* (1939) – a propaganda film about the peasant revolt of 1919 – using a new cinematographic language, evidently influenced by Eisenstein.

Political jargon became increasingly pronounced in the 1950s, as in *Bir Mahallali Iki Oglan* / *Two Boys from the Same District* (1957) by Ajdar Ibraguimov (scenario by Nazim Hikmet), but gave way to the dramatic films of the 1960s. *Bir Djanoub Sharinda* / *In a Southern City* (1969) by Eldar Guliev was a turning point, marking the change from the earlier comedy musicals and propaganda-laden *kolkhoz* (collective farm) stories. These new endeavours had serious difficulties with censorship.

With the emergence of good screenwriters, such as Rustam Ibrahimbekov (*Bir Djanoub Sharinda*), the themes of identity crises, conflict between the old and new orders, and social evils such as the mafia and corruption began to find their way into the films, as evidenced by *Hamyerli* / *The Fellow Countryman* (1987) by Valeri Kerimov and *Sud Dichinin Agrisi* / *The Pain of a Baby Tooth* (1988) by Gussein Mekhtiyev.

Following a period of typical *perestroika* films, almost all production stopped when the newly independent Azerbaijan cut all ties with Moscow. Seven years of war with Armenia left the country in an economic shambles. Film-makers of the new generation are now free to express their opinions, but private sources are reluctant to invest in unknown talents. Ayaz Salayev's *Yarasa* / *The Bat* (1995) was the first independently produced film to come out of Azerbaijan. The government began financing projects from 1994, but this has not been enough. A further problem is how to give

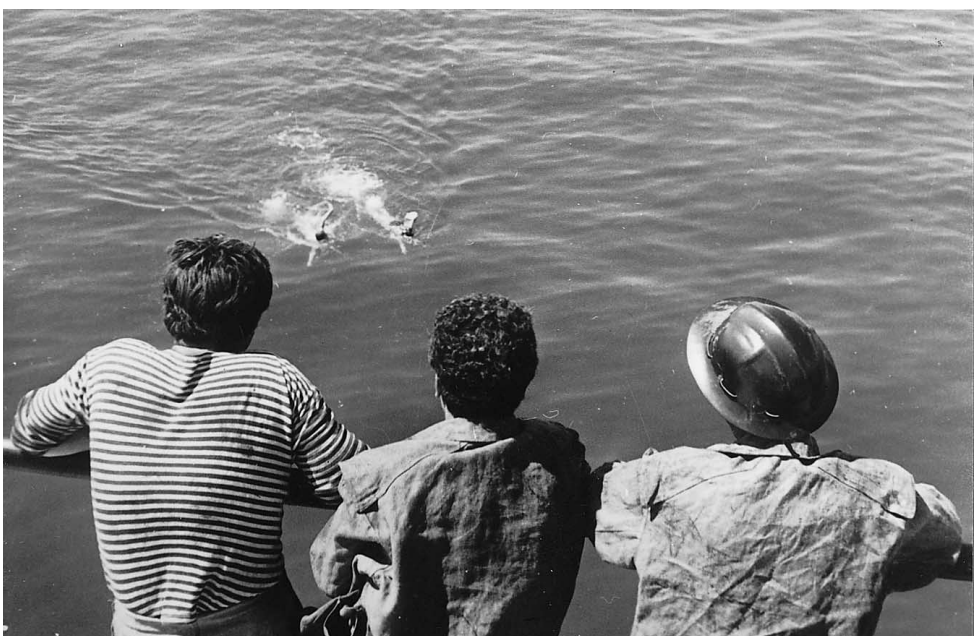

Figure 1 Bir Djanoub Sharinda / *In a Southern City*

future film-makers the sound education that was provided by Moscow in the old regime. Baku's seventeen cinemas (and the seventy of the whole republic) mostly show Hollywood films. There is also a video market. For the majority of the population, television is the most popular form of entertainment.

Filmography

Bir Djanoub Sharinda / *In a Southern City*

1969, 75 mins, black and white, Russian

Director:	Eldar Guliev
Producer:	Azerbaijanfilm
Screenwriter:	Rustam Ibrahimbekov
Cinematographer:	Rassim Odjagov
Editor:	Tamara Narimanbekova
Music:	Faradj Garaev
Sound:	Vladimir Savine
Leading Players:	Gassan Mamedov, Eldaniz Zeinalov, Gadji Mourad, Malik Dadachev

A young man is caught between the lifestyle of a big industrial city and the patriarchal ways of a provincial suburb, in this drama about friendship and betrayal.

Gumuchvari Furgon / *The Silver Truck*

1982, 61 mins, colour, Russian

Director:	Oktay Mirkassimov
Producer:	Azerbaijanfilm
Screenwriter:	Eltchin
Cinematographer:	Alesker Alekperov
Music:	Rafik Babev
Leading Players:	Gamida Omarova, Mamed Mamedov

A young woman, mentally strong despite marital problems and barrenness, makes carpets to express her feelings. One day, she meets a man working in the circus. He gradually helps her to improve her relationship with her husband and the carpets she creates.

Mavi Danizin Sahilinda / *On the Shores of the Blue Sea*

1935, 67 mins, black and white, Russian

Director:	Boris Barnet, Samed Mardanov
Producer:	Azerfilm, Mejrabpomfilm
Screenwriter:	Klimenti Mintz
Cinematographer:	Mihail Kirilov, M. Mustafaev
Music:	Niyazi
Leading Players:	Nicolai Krutchkov, Lev Sverdine, Elena Kouzmina

Story of unrequited love of two shipwrecked comrades, the blond Aliocha and the dark Youssouf, for beautiful Masha, the head of the 'Fires of Communism' *kolkhoz*, who loves yet another. The film renders blatant propaganda with delightful naïvety.

Yarasa / *The Bat*

1995, 87 mins, black and white / colour, Azeri

Director:	Ayaz Salayev
Producer:	Akhmedov, Inter-Turan
Screenwriter:	Kamal Aslanov, Ayaz Salayev
Cinematographer:	Baguir Rafiyev
Editor:	Rafiga Ibragimova
Music:	Nazim Mirichli
Sound:	Teimour Abdoullayev
Leading Players:	Mariya Lipkina, Rassim Balayev, Tolib Khamidov

A young woman is shot in a theatre while she is absently watching a film on which she finds herself reflected. An allegorical reflection on art and life, the film alludes to death in film (as subject), death through film (as theme) and the death of film (as idea), with the bat symbolizing blindness caused by exposure to too much light / beauty.

List of directors

Babayev, Arif (1928–83); Guliev, Djamil (1963–); Guliev, Eldar (1941–); Ibraguimov, Ajdar (1919–93); Kerimov, Valeri (1945); Mardanov, Samed (1911–39); Mekhtiyev, Gussein (1945–); Mirkassimov, Oktay (1943–); Odjagov, Rassim (1933–); Salayev, Ayaz (1960–); Seidbeyli, Gassan (1920–80); Takhmassib, Rza (1894–1980)

Major director

Guliev (Kuliev), Eldar (b. 1941, Baku, Azerbaijan)

Guliev won fame working in several film studios in the USSR, as well as in former Czechoslovakia. He explored the theme of old and new values in *Bir Djanoub Sharinda* / *In a Southern City* (1969) and *A Scoundrel* (1988), and made documentaries about recent events in Azerbaijan.

Selected feature films: *Bir Djanoub Sharinda* / *In a Southern City* (1969); *Esas Gorusma* / *The Main Interview* (1971); *Schastya vam Devochki!* / *Girls, the Happiness is for You!* (1972); *Babek* (1979); *Nizami* (1982); *Gumus Gol Efsanesi* / *A Legend of Silver Lake* (1984); *Vatana Yuruyus* / *A Stroll Outside the City* (1986); *A Scoundrel* (1988); *Sapma* / *Diversion* (1989)

KAZAKHSTAN

The origins of the Kazakh Film Studios go back to the 1930s. The first documentary was released in 1929, under the historical title *Pribytie Pervovo Poezda v Alma Atu* / *The Arrival of the First Train in Alma Ata*, followed by Victor Turin's *Turksib* / *Stalnoi Put* / *The Steel Road: On the Building of the Turkish–Siberian Railway* (also 1929). A documentary film studio was set up in 1934, where newsreels under the title *Soviet Kazakhstan*, documentaries and a few feature films began to be made. During the war, Mosfilm and Lenfilm were evacuated to Alma Ata and a centralized studio was set up (1941). This was merged with the documentary studio after the war and came to be known as Kazakhfilm. Sergei Eisenstein shot two parts of *Ivan Grozyj* / *Ivan the Terrible* there between 1943 and 1945. *Djamboul* (1952), by Efim Dzigan, was the first Kazakh film in colour. Until *perestroika*, most Kazakh films were propaganda pieces, historical dramas stressing Communist views or love stories with predictable endings.

Well-known Russian film-maker, Sergei Solovyov, organized a workshop at VGIK in 1984 with promising Kazakh talent such as Rachid Nugmanov, Serik Aprimov, Ardal Amirkulov, Amanjol Aituarov, Talgat Temenov and Darejan Omirbaev. The collective effort of the workshop, *Belij Golub* / *The White Pigeon*, was awarded the Special Prize of the Jury in the 1985 Venice Film Festival. Nugmanov's diploma film, *Ya-Ha* (1986), became an underground cult classic that foreshadowed the 'new wave' of Kazakh cinema. With his first feature, *Igla* / *The Needle* (1988), which dealt with drug addiction, Nugmanov emerged as the aesthetic voice of a counter-culture. Omirbaev's short film *Letnaya Zhara* / *The Summer Heat* (1988) laid down the model for Kazakh 'new wave', balancing the feature-film and documentary modes.

Most post-independence films reflect an innate pessimism about the future. Talgat Temenov's *Byegushaya Mishen* / *The Running Target* (1991), Bolat Kalimbetov's *Ainalayin* / *Darling* (1991) and all of Darejan Omirbaev's films are pessimistic portraits of youth who are victims of the times they live in.

Filmography

Ainalayin / *Darling*

1991, 72 mins, colour, Kazakh

Director:	Bolat Kalimbetov
Producer:	Kazakh TV, Kazakhfilm Studio
Screenwriter:	Alisher Souleimenov
Cinematographer:	Talgat Taishanov
Leading Players:	Sana Zhetpisbaeva, Farkhad Saifullin, Erbulat Ospankulov

Adolescents try to grow up in a society that has turned into a desert. Their teacher is a cynical drunk. Military planes violate the tranquillity of their village. Lake Aral is drying up. The loss of a culture and a civilisation is effectively symbolized by a scene in which the lovers sit inside the skeleton of a rusted truck and discuss life and death.

Figure 2 Amanjol Aituarov's *Kanchu Ikial* / *The Light Touch*: the 'new wave' of Kazakh cinema

Kairat

1991, 72 mins, black and white, Russian
Director / Screenwriter: Darejan Omirbaev
Producer: TO 'Alem' Kazakhfilm Studio
Cinematographer: Aoubakir Souleiev
Leading Players: Kairat Makhmedov, Indira Geksembaeva

In this psychological love story a young man, Kairat, is caught cheating during the university entrance examinations and loses his chance of a better life. The girl he loves chooses another. He is beaten up by a lout, whom he has masochistically provoked. He dreams of death.

Kardiogramma / *Heartbeats*

1995, 73 mins, colour, Russian
Director / Screenwriter: Darejan Omirbaev
Producer: Kazakhfilm Studio
Cinematographer: Boris Troshev
Editor: Rima Beljakova
Sound: Andrei Vlaznev
Leading Players: Jasulan Asauov, Saule Toktybaeva, Gulnara Dusmatova

Figure 3 Byegushaya Mishen / The Running Target

The problems faced by linguistic minorities are portrayed through the experiences of a monolingual Kazakh boy from the country. He is sent to spend a month in a sanatorium in the capital where the majority speak Russian.

Poslednie Kanikuli / Last Holiday

1996, 65 mins, colour, Russian

Director:	Amir Karakulov, Shinju Sano
Producer:	Studio 'D', Almaty
Screenwriter:	Amir Karakulov, Elena Gordeeva
Cinematographer:	Murat Nugmanov
Editor:	Yuliya Nilovaya
Sound:	Andrey Vlaznev
Leading Players:	Sanzhar Iskakov, Shalva Gogoladze, Anatoly Gapchuk

Kazakh Karim, Jewish Jacob and Russian Valera are classmates. Things take a bad turn when they steal an electric guitar from the bar of a famous Soviet skating rink. Valera's stepfather informs on him and he is badly beaten up by the police. The only medicine his friends can find to ease his pain comes from drug dealers.

Qijan / *Konetschnaja Ostanowka* / *The Last Stop*

1989, 77 mins, colour, Kazakh
Director / Screenwriter: Serik Aprimov
Producer: Kazakhfilm Studios
Cinematographer: Murat Nugmanov
Designer: Sabit Kurmanbekov
Leading Players: Sabit Kurmanbekov, Murat Akhmetov, Nagimbek Samayev

Erken returns to his native village after military service and becomes aware of the pitiful lives of the people he loves. He decides to leave the steppes forever. In seemingly random episodes, fragments of daily rural life are presented with documentary-style realism that borders on the surreal.

List of directors

Aituarov, Amanjol (1957–); Amirkulov, Ardak (1955–); Aprimov, Serik (1960–); Bolisbaev, Yedigue (1950–); Kalimbetov, Bolat (1955–); Karakulov, Amir (1965–); Nugmanov, Rachid (1954–); Omirbaev, Darejan (1958–); Shinarbayev, Ermek (1953–); Suleimenov, Timor (1959–); Temenov, Talgat (1954–)

Major directors

Karakulov, Amir (b. 1965, Alma Ata, Kazakhstan)

Karakulov's first film, *Razlouchnitsa* / *Woman Between Two Brothers* (1991), was based on a Jorge Luis Borges story applied to contemporary Kazakh life. The almost non-existent dialogue accentuated the personal isolation of the characters, caught in a love triangle. His second film, *Golubinyi Zvonar* / *The Dove's Bell-Ringer* (1994), was a reflection on the precarious nature of happiness as manifested through the personal tragedy experienced by the protagonist. His third feature, *Poslednie Kanikuli* / *Last Holiday* (1996), drew a non-judgemental and compassionate portrait of youth in Kazakhstan.

Karakulov's simple, unpretentious films run like a visual dialogue in which images let the imagination work out what is left unsaid. He is often compared to Robert Bresson.

Selected feature films: *Razlouchnitsa* / *Woman Between Two Brothers* (1991); *Golubinyi Zvonar* / *The Dove's Bell-Ringer* (1994); *Poslednie Kanikuli* / *Last Holiday* (1996)

Nugmanov, Rachid (b. 1954, Alma Ata, Kazakhstan)

Leader of the Kazakh 'new wave', Nugmanov's diploma film *Ya-Ha* (1986) was a kaleidoscopic diary of the underground rock scene in Leningrad just before *perestroika*. His first feature, *Igla* / *The Needle* (1988), alternately burlesqued, embraced and rejected the conventions of the thriller genre. *Diki Vostok* / *The Wild East* (1993),

which is reminiscent of John Ford westerns, was shot just as the Soviet empire was collapsing. Nugmanov now lives in France.

Selected feature films: *Igla* / *The Needle* (1988); *Diki Vostok* / *The Wild East* (1993)

Omirbaev, Darejan (b. 1958)

Omirbaev's first feature film *Kairat* (1991), about the irrationality of existence and the impact of unforeseeable events on one's inner life, was inspired by Kafka's *Castle* and won him the Silver Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival in 1992. *Kardiogramma* / *Heartbeat* (1995) depicted the pains of adolescence and the adolescent sense of total isolation with remarkable insight. His latest film, *Tueur à gages* / *The Killer* (1998), a co-production with France, is a realistic depiction of contemporary life in Kazakhstan.

Selected feature films: *Kairat* (1991); *Kardiogramma* / *Heartbeat* (1995); *Tueur à gages* / *The Killer* (1998)

Shinarbayev, Ermek (b. 1953, Alma Ata, Kazakhstan)

Shinarbayev's diploma film, *Karalisulu* / *A Beauty in Mourning* (1982), was a psychological drama about a young nomad widow. Its allusions to female sexual urges caused a scandal. He collaborated with the Korean novelist Anatoly Kim for both his first feature film, *Sestra Moia Liussia* / *My Sister Lucy* (1985), the story of a friendship between a Kazakh and a Russian woman, and in *Meist* / *Revenge* (1989), a multi-layered film epic about the tragedy of Koreans living in the Soviet Union. His fourth feature, *Azghyin Ushtykzyn' Azaby* / *The Place on the Tricone* (1993), was a psychological portrayal of youth in the former Soviet Union.

Selected feature films: *Sestra Moia Liussia* / *My Sister Lucy* (1985); *Meist* / *Revenge* (a.k.a. *The Reed Flute*) (1989); *Azghyin Ushtykzyn' Azaby* / *The Place on the Tricone* (1993)

Temenov, Talgat (b. 1954, Kazakhstan)

A former actor, Temenov's short film, *Toro* (1986), was praised internationally as a classic of Kazakh cinema in the style of Italian neo-realism. *Volchono Sredi Lyudei* / *A Wolf Cub among Men* (1988), a children's film focusing on the crisis of values in times of social and economic difficulties, narrated the friendship between two outcasts: a boy and a wolf cub. *Byegushaya Mishen* / *The Running Target* (1991) chronicled the aftermath of the bloody 1986 demonstrations in Alma Ata through a story of friendship between a hunted adolescent and a persecuted German woman (magnificently played by the Russian actress Nonna Mordjukova of *The Commissar* fame).

Selected feature films: *Volchono Sredi Lyudei* / *A Wolf Cub among Men* (1988); *Byegushaya Mishen* / *The Running Target* (1991)

Figure 4 *Meist* / *Revenge* (a.k.a. *The Reed Flute*)

KYRGYZSTAN

Film production began late in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzfilm Studio was founded in 1942, but only got its name in 1961. During and immediately after the war, standardized documentaries were made. Important film-makers like Tolomush Okeev and Bolotbek Shamshiev began their careers in documentary. Between 1954 and 1960, Mosfilm Studios sent many film-makers to Kyrgyzstan: Vasili Pronin's *Saltanat* / *Sovereignty* (1955), for example, was produced there. Others from neighbouring countries with more developed cinema also arrived, which did not give Kyrgyz cinema a chance to develop its own identity.

Although *perestroika* arrived actively and in a democratic way, the road to a market economy proved to be difficult.

The Kyrgyz miracle of creation of a national cinema is attributed to Shamshiev and Okeev, whose protagonists are common men with everyday joys and sorrows. Another important figure is writer Chingiz Aitmatov. Many of his books were made into films and he often collaborated in writing the scripts.

A new generation of Kyrgyz directors is emerging, dealing with the problems of youth trying to break away from tradition. *Beshkempir* / *The Adopted Son* (1998) by Aktan Abdykalykov, a co-production with France, discusses the dramatic effects on a young village boy of the ancient custom of offering babies from large families to childless couples.

Filmography

Bakajdyn Zajyty / *The Sky of Our Childhood*

1967, 78 mins, black and white, Russian

Director:	Tolomush Okeev
Producer:	Kyrgyzfilm
Screenwriter:	Kadir Omurkulov, Tolomush Okeev
Cinematographer:	Kadircan Kidiraliev
Music:	Tashtan Ermatov
Leading Players:	Aliman Cankorozava, Muratbek Riskulov, Nasret Dubashev

An old groom's children have deserted their home for the big city. He tries to teach his youngest son how to herd horses to hold him back. But there is a new road being built.

Belyi Parakhod / *Ak Keme* / *The White Ship*

1975, 102 mins, colour, Russian

Director / Screenwriter:	Bolotbek Shamshiev
Producer:	Kyrgyzfilm
Cinematographer:	Manasbek Moussaev
Music:	Alfred Chnitke
Leading Players:	Nourgazy Sydygalieva, Sabira Koumouchalieva, Orozbek Koutmanaliev

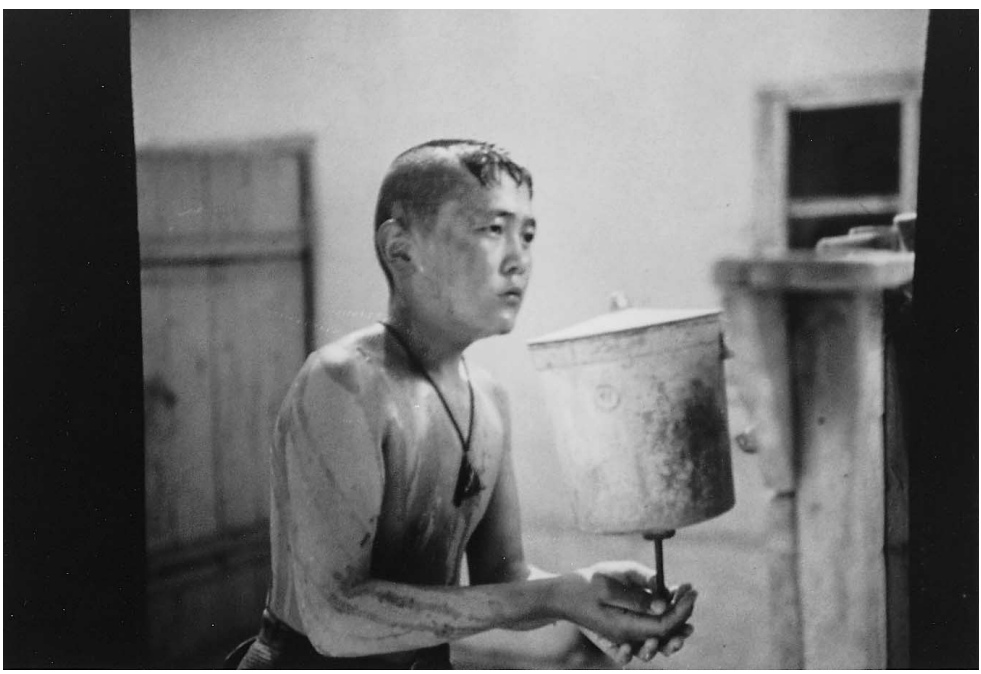

Figure 5 Beshkempir / *The Adopted Son*

In this adaptation from a Chingiz Aitmatov novel of the same name, a shepherd boy dreams of a white ship on the lake Issyk-Koul.

Boranly Beket / *Snowstormy Station*

1995, 90 mins, colour, Kyrgyz

Director:	Bakyt Karagulov
Producer:	Kyrgyz National Fuel Company, Katarsis
Executive Producer:	Talat Kulmendeev
Screenwriter:	Chingiz Aitmatov, Marat Sarulu
Leading Players:	Kauken Kenshetaev, Abdrashit Abdrakamanov, Gulshara Ashibekova, Gulzinat Omarova, Ersaim Golobaev

Two former fishermen from the Aral Lake had spent World War II at a remote railway station in the steppes. When one of them dies, Soviet guards do not allow the other to bury him according to ancient Islamic rites and at a place sacred to Kazakhs that is now a military rocket-testing zone. Memories of his friend, a teacher and partisan who was persecuted during the Stalin era for the diaries he kept, haunt the hero. In his mind, he links the period of Soviet totalitarianism, which had threatened cultural and ethnic identity, with the Mankurts who, in ancient times, robbed conquerors of their memory by means of torture. Based on Aitmatov's novel, *The Day that is Longer than the Century*.

List of directors

Asanova, Dinara (1942–); Bazarov, Gennady (1942–); Karagulov, Bakyt (1950–); Kydyraliev, Kadyrjan (1936–); Okeev, Tolomush (1935–); Shamshiev, Bolotbek (1941–); Ubekeyev, Melis (1935–)

Major directors

Okeev, Tolomush (b. 1935, Bokonbaevo, Kyrgyzstan)

Okeev worked as sound engineer, scriptwriter and actor, staged plays and made documentaries, before becoming a feature-film-maker in 1965. A deputy and an ambassador, he is also the founder of Future, the private company that realized the multi-national super-production *Cenghiz Khan* (1991).

Selected feature films: *Bakajdyn Zajyty* / *The Sky of Our Childhood* (1967); *Al Alma* / *Red Apple* (1975); *Oulan* / *Ulan* (1977); *Altin Guz* / *Golden Autumn* (1980); *Potomok Belogo Barsa* / *The Descent of the White Leopard* (1984); *Cenghiz Khan* (1991)

Shamshiev, Bolotbek (b. 1941, Frunze, Kyrgyzstan)

An actor and a director, Shamshiev founded the co-operative Salamalek Film in 1990.

Selected feature films: *Karas-Karas Okujasy* / *Fireshots at Karach Pass* (1968); *Alye Maky Issik-Koulia* / *Red Poppies of Issyk-Koul* (1972); *Belyi Parakhod* / *Ak Keme* / *The White Ship* (1975); *Voshozdenie Na Fudzijamu* / *Ascent of Fujiyama* (1988)

TAJIKISTAN

The first film was made in Tajikistan by three Russian pioneers. It was about the arrival of the first train in the capital, Dushanbe, and was screened in November 1929. The first film studio, Tadjik Kino, was set up in 1930 to produce newsreels and films on collectivization. The newsreel *Soviet Tadjikistan* was started in 1935. The first significant feature film was *Pochetnoe Pravo* / *Honorary Right* (1934) by Kamil Yarmatov, dedicated to the Red Army. It mixed fiction and documentary, focusing on the period of collectivization when a 'middle' landowner ran away to Afghanistan but, unable to come to terms with the exploitative life there, returned to join a collective farm. The first talkie, *Syn Dzhigita* / *The Garden*, was made by Nikolai Dostal in 1939.

In the late 1930s, film-makers and actors were victimized. Production was negligible for nearly fifteen years. Only propagandist documentaries and newsreels were made. However, the late 1950s brought a new era with the Twentieth Party Congress' critique of the cult of personality. From 1965 onwards, new directors aimed at creating a new cinema – as had already been done in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. Davlat Khudonazarov was the shining star of the period between 1965 and 1985.

With *perestroika* and the slackening of ideological controls, a variety of genres and styles began to be used to define an identity, to forge links with the past and to examine repressed cultural roots. Documentaries on Stalinist repression, on the plight of village women and on religion came to the fore. Feature films also began to take up similar themes: Anvar Turaev's *Bol Iyubvi* / *The Pain of Love* (1990) deals with Stalinist repression in the context of a collective farm.

Following independence, a civil war and economic crisis brought film-making to a halt. The Ministry of Culture, Press and Television, which is in charge of the film department, was left with no money. Private companies were left to seek sponsors at home and abroad, while many film-makers have emigrated.

Filmography

Bratan / *Brothers*

1990, 100 mins, colour / black and white, Russian

Director:	Bakhtiyar Khudoynazarov
Producer:	Tajikfilm, Soyuzfilm
Screenwriter:	Leonid Mahkamov, Bakhtiyar Khudoynazarov
Cinematographer:	Gheorgy Dzalaev
Editor:	Tatyana Maltseva
Music:	Ahmad Bakaev
Leading Players:	Timur Tursonov, Firuz Sabzaliev

Bratan is a road movie with a number of heterogeneous characters. It brings together love, tenderness, solidarity, betrayal and sexual awakening on a long train journey through the stunning landscape of the Pamir Mountains.

Mavsimi Alafkhoi Zard / *Times of Yellow Grass*

1991, 65 mins, colour, Russian

Director:	Maryam Yusupova
Producer:	Tajikfilm, TPO, Soyuztelefilm
Screenwriter:	Aleksei Katounine, David Tchoubinichvili, Saif Rakhimov
Cinematographer:	Okil Khamidov
Music:	Pavel Toursounov
Leading Players:	Roland Makarov, Bobadjan Kassadov, Cherali Abdoulkaissov

The people of a small village in the Pamir mountains are tired of the hardships of daily life. The day a dead body is found near the village is a cathartic event, revealing the diversity of characters, mentalities, traditions and morals of the village people. The film was shot on the eve of civil war.

List of directors

Aripov, Marat (1935–); Hamidov, Suvat (1939–); Khudoynazarov, Davlat; Khudoynazarov, Bakhtiyar (1965–); Kimjagarov, Boris (1979–); Mahmudov, Mukadas (1926–); Rahimov, Abdusalom (1917–); Sabirov, Tahir (1929–); Sadykov, Bako; Turaev, Anvar (1934–); Yusupova, Maryam (1949–)

Major director

Khudoynazarov, Bakhtiyar (b. 1965, Dushanbe, Tajikistan)

Scriptwriter, director and producer, Khudoynazarov came into the limelight with *Bratan* / *Brothers* (1990), a fresh approach in its choice of non-professional actors and an improvised style, owing much to Italian neo-realism. *Kosh Ba Kosh* / *We Are Quits* (1993), a fragmented story of a love affair set in a city divided by civil war, also used improvisation and authentic locations, giving it the realistic qualities of a documentary.

Selected feature films: *Verish Nje Verish* / *Believe It or Not* (1989); *Bratan* / *Brothers* (1990); *Kosh Ba Kosh* / *We Are Quits* (1993); *Luna Papa* (1999)

TURKMENISTAN

In Turkmenistan, cinemas began with newsreels. Elections, the inauguration of a monument to Lenin and the anniversary of the Revolution were the events that were

filmed by the first chroniclers in the 1920s, followed by a number of educational films like *Sholk* / *Silk*, *Khlopok* / *Cotton* and *Karakul*.

The first fiction film was made by A. Vladycuk in 1929 (*White Gold*). Yuli Raizman made *Zemlya Zhazhdyot* / *The Earth is Thirsty* for Vostok-kino in 1930: the first version was silent, but a few months later it was given a soundtrack and presented to the public. During World War II, the Kiev Studio was evacuated to Ashkabad where war 'notebooks' were made. An earthquake destroyed the studio in 1948. In the post-war period, documentaries were made reflecting the main themes of socialist reconstruction, the reclaiming of the desert, the construction of the Karakum Canal and the new freedom of Eastern women. Turkmen cinema reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s; the most renowned Turkmen director, Khodzakuli Narliev, releasing his best film, *Nevestka* / *The Daugher-in-Law*, in 1972.

Following government regulations, all Turkmen films are now made in the Turkmenian language, even though half of the country speaks Russian. Sergei Shugarev broke the tradition and introduced a Russian voice-over in *Ham Hyyal* / *Aromat Dzhelany* / *Fragrance of Wishes* (1996) – a film that drew attention, despite its obvious technical flaws, not only with its fresh perception of the world, but also with its refined depiction of events.

There is a tradition of children's films. Usman Saparov's *Angelotchek Sdelai Radost* / *Little Angel, Make Me Happy* (1992) received the most prestigious award in the children's category at the Berlin Film Festival in 1993.

How is it possible to produce films in Turkmenistan, where the Communist regime still seems to be preserved? Although the government has promised to finance five art films each year, as was the case in Soviet times, many good film-makers – from Narliev to Shugarev – have found themselves in conflict with the present regime.

Filmography

Yandim / *The Soul is Burnt Out*

1995, 75 mins, colour, Turkmenian

Director:	Bairam Abdullaev, Laura Stepanskaya
Producer:	State Cinema Viceo Co. of Turkmennistan, Turkmenfilm
Screenwriter:	Bairam Abdullaev, Laura Stepanskaya
Cinematographer:	Vladimir Spariskhov
Music:	Aman Agajikov
Sound:	Chali Annachalov
Leading Players:	Aman Channdurdiev, Aguljan Nijazberdieva, Artik Jalliev

Two brothers who live in Turkmenistan at the time of the Soviet Union have very different attitudes towards life and ways of behaving: one is a loyal supporter of the Soviet Union, the other – Sadik – questions everything. What does it mean and what does it take to be a human being? How can you remain loyal to your principles and not lose faith in the meaning of life? Before his death, Sadik contemplates the events of his life. Why have he and his brother chosen such different paths in life? Where did he go wrong? Did he choose the right path or could he have acted differently?

Yashlygymyn Destany / *Destan Mojej Junosti* / *Legend of My Youth*

1992, 70 mins, colour, Russian

Director:	Biul-Biul Mamedov
Producer:	Turkmenfilm, IO 'Ecran'
Screenwriter:	Biul-Biul Mamedov, V. Lobanov
Cinematographer:	Bayram Kovusov
Music:	Redjep Redjepov
Designer:	Ada Kutliev
Leading Players:	Bairam Koboussov, Baba Annanov, Iusup Kuliev, Indira Quseinova

In the late 1930s, Maskat, a Red Army soldier, is in love with Ainabat, Achir's young wife. Achir is Maskat's class enemy. The young man's good-heartedness is troubled by the hate he feels for his rival. Intolerance mingles with a struggle for love which turns into a tragedy that Maskat is obsessed by for the rest of his life.

List of directors

Narliev, Khodzakuli (1937–); Mamedov, Biul-Biul (1950–); Saparov, Usman (1938–); Shugarev, Sergei

Major director

Narliev, Khodzakuli (b. 1937, in railway station no. 30, near Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan)

A public figure and artist, Narliev started to work in Turkmenfilm Studios as a cameraman for Bulat Mansurov. His first feature, *Nevestka* / *Daughter-in-Law* (1972) – the story of a young woman who is waiting for her missing husband – was a study in suffering, dignity and devotion in a harsh, inhospitable terrain. The fight of the new against the old in the field of morals, the value of a human life and the triumph of spirituality are some of Narliev's recurring themes, the motif of water playing an important role.

Selected feature films: *Nevestka* / *Daughter-in-Law* (1972); *You Must Dare to Say No!* (1977); *Derevo Dzamal* / *Jamal Tree* (1981); *Mankurt* / *Manwolf* (a.k.a. *Bird-Memory*) (1990)

UZBEKISTAN

The first Uzbek documentary was made in 1923. With the establishment of Boukhino, first feature films – *Pakhta-Aral* / *Pahta Aral* (N. Scerbakov), *Minaret Smerti* / *The Minaret of the Dead* (Viatcheslav Viskovski) and *The Muslim Woman* (Dimitri Bassaligo) – were realized in 1925. The following year, a big mosque was transformed into a studio.

Nabi Ganiev and Kamil Yarmatov are considered to be the founders of Uzbek

Figure 6 Yashlygymyn Destany / Legend of My Youth

cinema. Social and political issues gained importance with committed film-makers such as Ganiev and Soleiman Khodjaev. The latter's silent film, *Tong Oldidan* / *Before Sunrise* (1933) – which evoked the spontaneous rising of Central Asian workers against the Tsarist mobilization in 1916 – was his first and last, as it sent him to the gulag where he perished.

Sound appeared in 1937. During World War II, Russians came to Tashkent to realize their films, which resulted in very few prominently Uzbek films being produced. Post-war films were propaganda. For a long time, Uzbek cinema alienated people because of its schematic and superficial conceptions. The main aim was to make it to Moscow, which resulted in compromises regarding theme and casting, and a condescending attitude to everything national.

In 1961, Uzbek Film Studios became independent. The Uzbek 'new wave' was born in the mid-1960s following the Khrushchev thaw and the emergence of 'new wave' elsewhere in the world. Ali Khamraev, Shukrat Abbasov and Elyor Ishmukhamedov set out to create personal films about their country and culture. With the arrival of *perestroika*, a new dynamism manifested itself with provocative works from young directors such as Jahangir Faiziev and Zoulfikar Moussakov. Kamara Kamalova showed her determination to create works showing a woman's point of view.

Freedom also created confusion. In the effort to reach the new audience, some directors began to lean towards gimmicks. Thrillers and action films surfaced. Although narrative cinema with strong local social and political themes remains popular, there is a variety of genre and style today: irony and farce, traditional heroic folk tale, even science fiction.

Initially Uzbekfilm Studio did not make a fast transition to market economy. When the state reduced aid, film production began to decline. The public lost interest in local productions and many cinemas were closed. With renewed aid from the government through Uzbek Kino, a joint venture with the state, at least six films are made each year and these attract a large audience. Several directors are also involved in co-productions, which often favour historical themes.

Filmography

Atrof Qorga Burkandi / *All Around was Covered by Snow*

1995, 75 mins, colour, Russian

Director:	Kamara Kamalova
Producer:	Snod, Uzbekistan
Screenwriter:	Kamara Kamalova, Asap Abbasova
Cinematographer:	Rizcat Ubzagimov, Khasan Kadiealiev
Editor:	Olga Moova
Sound:	Zoija Pzedtechenskeja
Music:	Michael Jariverdiev
Leading Players:	Rano Shadieva, Seidulla Maidorhanov

Asal, a sensitive teenager, lives alone in a game reserve after her mother's death, which she believes was caused by a ghost who wanders the reserve in the shape of a wild dog.

Kamil, a hunter, works in the reserve and tries to understand the girl and the way she lives. The growing affection between them strengthens her and deeply touches Kamil.

Belye, Belye Ajsty / *The White, White Storks*

1966, 89 mins, black and white, Russian

Director:	Ali Khamraev
Producer:	Uzbekfilm
Screenwriter:	Odelcha Aguichev, Ali Khamraev
Cinematographer:	Dilchat Fatkhouline
Music:	Ravil Vildanov
Leading Players:	Bolot Beichenaliev, Sairam Issaeva, Mokhammed Rafikov

In a village called 'White Storks', a married woman, Malika, falls in love with Kaium. Their passion is misunderstood and rejected by the villagers. Some of them, like Malika's father, are torn between understanding the attitude of a beloved daughter and the burden of tradition.

Neznost / *Tenderness*

1967, 76 mins, black and white, Russian

Director:	Elyor Ishmukhamedov
Producer:	Uzbekfilm
Screenwriter:	Odelcha Aguichev
Cinematographer:	Dilchat Fatkhouline
Music:	Bogdan Trotsiouk
Leading Players:	Maria Sternikova, Rodion Nakhapetov, Gani Agzamov

An ordinary teenager in Tashkent sails down the canal that crosses the city on a tyre tube. One day he sees a fair-haired girl and falls in love with her, which changes his life. But she loves someone else. It is a film made up of three stories with the same characters, dedicated to adolescence.

Siz Kim Siz? / *Who Are You?*

1989, 85 mins, colour, Russian

Director:	Jahangir Faiziev
Producer:	Uzbekfilm, ASK
Screenwriter:	Iouri Dachevski, Jahangir Faiziev
Cinematographer:	Khamidulla Khassanov
Music:	D. Ianov-Ianovski
Leading Players:	Bakhtiar Zakirov, Elier Nassyrov, Toulkoun Tadjiev

Two intellectuals get arrested on a provincial road after they steal a watermelon. At the police station, tough negotiations start between the urban intellectuals and the country people, each group misunderstanding the other. The use of different dialects

by various characters adds to the comic aspect of the film, which keeps going back and forth between the tragic and the comic.

Tashkent, Gorod Hlebnyji / Tashkent, Bread City

1966, 104 mins, black and white, Russian

Director:	Shukrat Abbasov
Producer:	Uzbekfilm
Screenwriter:	Andrei Mikhalkov-Kontchalovski
Cinematographer:	Khatam Faiziev
Music:	Albert Malakhov
Leading Players:	Vova Vorobei, Vova Koudenkov, Bakhtiar Nabiev, Natalia Arinbassarova

Based on the work of Alexandr Neverov. During the famine following the civil war, ten-year-old Misha is the only breadwinner after the death of his father. He leaves his village for Tashkent with his seven-year-old friend. Their journey is packed with trials and disastrous encounters with Bolsheviks, thieves and White Russians. In Tashkent, Misha works hard to earn the wheat to take back to his family. On his return, he discovers that his brother and sister have died. His weakened mother welcomes him with a resigned smile.

List of directors

Abbasov, Shukrat (1931–); Faiziev, Jahangir (1961–); Ganiev, Nabi (1904–52); Kamalova, Kamara (1938–); Khamraev, Ali (1937–); Malikov, Rachid (1958–); Yarmatov, Kamil (1903–78)

Major director

Khamraev, Ali (b. 1937, Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

One of the leaders and the most versatile directors of Uzbek cinema, Khamraev has left no genre untouched – opera, musical, western, children's film, comedy and history – to satisfy his curiosity and the demands of the authorities. In 1989, he founded a co-operative of independent films, Samarkandfilm, which co-produced *The Great Timur* (1997) with an Italian company.

Selected feature films: *Belye, Belye Ajsty / The White, White Storks* (1966); *The Red Sand* (with Akmal Akbar-Hodjaev) (1967); *Dilorom* (1968); *Crezvysajnyj Komissar / Extraordinary Policechief* (1970); *Celovek Uhodit Za Pticami / Man Follows the Birds* (1975); *Triptih / The Woman of Mevazar* (1978); *Telohranitel / Bodyguard* (1980); *Ja Tebja Pomni U / I Remember You* (1986); *Bo-Ba-Bu* (1999)

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Egyptian cinema

Viola Shafik

Egypt developed the first Arab-speaking local film industry, whose products were also consumed by the neighbouring Arab countries during and after colonial times. With a total output of more than 2,800 full-length films between 1924 and 1999, the Egyptian film industry created a commercial and export-oriented genre cinema which is based on a local star system and on private investment. Often referred to as 'Hollywood on the Nile', it has been repeatedly criticized for its low-standard commercialism and alleged plagiarism, and was moreover accused of hampering the development of other Arab film industries. However, its different stages reflected on all levels the specific cultural and socio-political conditions of the country.

Encounter with a new media (1896–1925)

In 1896, only a few months after the initial screenings in Europe, films by the Lumière brothers were shown in Egypt, first in the Tousson stock exchange in Alexandria and then in the Hamam Schneider (Schneider Bath) in Cairo. As early as 1897 the Cinématographe Lumière in Alexandria started to offer regular screenings. The construction of special sites for screenings followed soon. In 1906 the French company Pathé constructed a movie-theatre in Cairo. Three other *cinématographes* were run at that time in the capital and in Alexandria. It became, moreover, common to include the presentation of films in theatre performances. In 1911 eleven movie-theatres already existed in these two major Egyptian cities. Starting from 1912, they provided foreign films with an Arabic translation.

In general, the first cinematic activities, like elsewhere in the Arab world, were undertaken by foreign (mostly European) residents. Louis and Auguste Lumière ordered shootings in the so-called 'Orient', among others in Egypt. Their *Place des Consuls à Alexandrie*, by M. Promio, was the first film shot in Egypt in 1897. In 1906 the French-Algerian (*pied-noir*) Felix Mesguich travelled with his camera to Egypt and recorded its monuments. In 1907 the first 'native' Egyptian documentaries were shot by two acknowledged photographers from Alexandria: 'Aziz Bandarli and Umberto Dorès.

Before and after World War I the number of newsreels and short fiction films produced in Egypt increased steadily. In 1917 Umberto Dorès established (with the assistance of the Banca di Roma) the SITCIA film company in Alexandria, directed by Dorès. They considered the World War I period to be a good opportunity to exploit the native market, as well as the pleasant local weather conditions. Yet, after the creation of a studio and the production of three short films, the company went

bankrupt. Its failure was due to the poor quality of the films and the producer's lack of cultural sensitivity. Their film, *al-Azhar al-Mumita* / *Mortal Flowers* (1918), for example, was banned by the authorities because it showed Arabic Qur'anic verses upside down.

Purely native interest in the media developed alongside foreign productions. In 1909 an Egyptian is said to have shot the funeral of the Egyptian leader and patriot Mustafa Kamil. Many short fiction films made in the following years by Europeans were realized in co-operation with Egyptian actors. The actor-turned-director Muhammad Karim starred in two films produced by SITCIA and was thus one of the first Egyptians to perform on screen. Others soon followed: Fawzi Gaza'irli starred with his troupe in Léonard La Ricci's *Madame Loretta* in 1919; Amin Sidqi and the popular theatre actor 'Ali al-Kassar performed in Bonvelli's short, *al-Khala al-Amirikaniyya* / *The American Aunt*, shot in 1920. The year 1923 witnessed the screening of Victor Rosito's full-length fiction, *Fi Bilad Tut 'Ankh Amun* / *In the Country of Tutankhamun*, shot by the native Egyptian director and cameraman Muhammad Bayyumi. Bayyumi, who was based in Alexandria, became one of most prolific film pioneers: In 1923 he founded his newsreel *Amun*, shot numerous documentaries and directed his short fiction, *al-Mu'alim Barsum Yabhath 'An Wazifa* / *Master Barsum is Looking for a Job*. Furthermore, in the following year Bayyumi adapted the popular play, *al-Bash Katib* / *The Chief Secretary* (1924) – taken in turn from *Charley's Aunt* and performed by Amin 'Attallah and his troupe.

The emergence of national cinema (1925–35)

In 1925 the first national attempt at organized investment in the realm of cinema was undertaken by Talaat (Tal'at) Harb, member of a nationalist-oriented group of entrepreneurs. As the founder and director of Misr Bank, he established in 1925 the Sharikat Misr li-l-sinima wa al-tamthil (Egyptian Company for Cinema and Performance), which was put in charge of producing advertising and information films. The company hired Bayyumi as its director, bought his equipment, founded a laboratory and issued the newsreel *Jaridat Misr* / *Egypt Journal*. The latter was directed by Hasan Murad and not by Bayyumi, who soon left the company.

The first feature film, *Layla*, was produced (not directed though) by a native Egyptian and released in November 1927. The Turkish director Wedad Orfi had persuaded the theatre actress 'Aziza Amir to finance the film. After a quarrel, Amir put Stéphane Rosti in charge of directing the film. (For a long time the appearance of *Layla* was considered the birth of Egyptian cinema, not least because the existence of Victor Rosito's full-length *Fi Bilad Tut 'Ankh Amun* fell into oblivion until the 1980s.) Only two months later, in January 1928, another full-length feature, *Qubla Fi-l-Sahra'* / *A Kiss in the Desert* appeared. It was directed by Ibrahim Lama, a South American of Lebanese origins who had settled in Egypt with his brother, the actor Badr Lama.

As production rates increased steadily following the release of these two movies, the years 1927 and 1928 may be considered the genesis of Egyptian cinema. Three full-length films made their way to the audience in 1928, including the adaptation of Amin 'Atallah's popular play, *al-Bahr Biyidhak Lih?* / *Why Does the Sea Laugh?* by Rosti. From 1927 to 1930 two full-length films were produced a year, five films were released in 1931 and six in both 1933 and 1934. Production in these years was, of course, still

independent and not institutionalized – dependent on individual interest and moderate investment.

This is one reason why film-making was dominated at first by a considerable number of foreign residents, by indigenous minorities and, in particular, by women. ʻAziza Amir, Assia Daghir, Fatima Rushdi, Bahiga Hafiz and Amina Muhammad acted, produced and / or directed one or two films each. The Lebanese actress Assia Daghir, for example, produced her first film *Ghadat al-Sahra'* / *The Young Lady from the Desert* (by Wedad Orfi and Ahmad Galal) in 1929. For decades she remained Egypt's largest producer, with *al-Nasir Salah al-Din* / *The Victorious Saladin* (directed by Youssef Chahine in 1963) her most acclaimed and spectacular production.

Another characteristic of the genesis of Egypt's cinema was the close relation to popular theatre. The first genuine Egyptian production owed a lot to the activities of theatre actors, actresses and directors. It was not just that popular plays were among the first Egyptian films – like Muhammad Bayyumi's, *al-Bash Katib* / *The Chief Secretary* (1924), which starred Amin ʻAtallah and his troupe – but also that many theatre actors and actresses invested in cinema – among others ʻAziza Amir, Fatima Rushdi and the actor, producer and director Yusuf Wahbi.

In the course of the 1930s, the stars of popular Egyptian theatre – Nagib al-Rihani, ʻAli al-Kassar and Yusuf Wahbi – attained great influence in the developing art of film-making. During and shortly after the pre-World War II era, they appeared in a large number of feature films which were developed to feature popular theatre characters. After the introduction of sound, these performers contributed to the formulation of film dialogue and partly also the script. Yusuf Wahbi even directed numerous films.

Sound, like elsewhere, was a decisive turning point for Egypt's film-making. It gave a unique chance to local production to use native language and music, and to develop film genres (such as comedy and the musical) which rely essentially on them. In 1932 the first two sound films appeared almost simultaneously: *Awlad al-Dhawat* / *Sons of Aristocrats* by Yusuf Wahbi and *Unshudat al-Fu'ad* / *Song from the Heart* by Mario Volpi. Although Mohsen (Muhsin) Szabo, an engineer of Hungarian origin, had succeeded in 1931 in constructing his own recording machine, the sound of the first Egyptian talkies was recorded in Europe. In 1935, however, with the inauguration of the fully equipped Studio Misr, films started to be entirely fabricated in Egypt. Hence, the following decade witnessed the rapid development of the national film industry.

Consolidation of the film industry and its heyday (1935–52)

The proper foundation of the Egyptian film industry was laid in 1934 when Misr Bank, under the management of Talaat Harb, established the Studio Misr. This studio, inaugurated in 1935, was actually not the first one to be established. The cameraman Alvise Orfanelli had already created a small studio in Alexandria in 1926, while in 1930 the tireless Yusuf Wahbi furnished a very modest studio in order to produce the literary adaptation *Zaynab* by Muhammad Karim. Moreover, in 1931 other places – like the studio Catsaros, as well as the Studio Togo in Alexandria – were used for shootings.

After 1935 and up to 1948 six further studios were built and a total of 345 full-length features had been produced since 1924. Moreover, the foundation of Studio Misr was responsible for shifting all film production from Alexandria to Cairo, which

now became the main cultural metropolis of the country. New directors, mostly native Egyptians, appeared. The star system, as well as a variety of film genres – first the musical, then melodrama, farce and comedy, and the historical and the Bedouin film – emerged in this period.

Unlike the major studios in the United States, Studio Misr was not able to dominate the Egyptian film industry as a whole. It seems rather to have functioned as a catalyst for the rest of Egyptian cinema, as it set new technical and artistic standards. Its first production (released in 1936) was the musical *Widad* by Fritz Kramp, with the 'Star of the Orient' (singer Umm Kulthum) in the leading role. This film was the second historical spectacle produced in Egypt. It turned out to be a huge success, ran in cinemas for five weeks and represented Egypt in the Festival of Venice in the same year. The studio's next production, *Salama Fi Khayr* / *Salama is Fine* (1937) by Niazi Mustafa (starring the popular comedian Nagib al-Rihani), was also very successful at the box office. Moreover, in 1939 the Studio Misr produced *al-'Azima* / *Determination* by Kamal Selim (Salim), which has been considered by the Egyptian critics to be one of the earliest attempts at realism in Egyptian cinema. Directors who emerged through their work for the studio were Ahmad Badrakhan (later known for his melodramatic musicals) and Niazi Mustafa (the most prolific Egyptian director so far), as well as Kamal Selim (whose promising debut was terminated by an early death).

In contrast to earlier establishments, the Studio Misr was equipped with various workshops, a laboratory and sound studios that gave the opportunity to record sound and music. Moreover, it employed several European specialists, including (among others) two Germans – director Fritz Kramp and set designer Robert Scharfenberg – along with the Russian photographer Sami Brel. At the same time, it took care to provide native Egyptians with the required qualifications by sending them on scholarships to Europe. The directors Ahmad Badrakhan (Badr Khan), Niazi Mustafa and Salah Abu Seif (Saif) were some of the beneficiaries.

In spite of its importance, Studio Misr never became the strongest producer in the country, probably because of the sudden boom which started after World War II with the end of import restrictions and increased investment (undertaken by war profiteers among others) which transformed cinema into the most profitable industrial sector apart from the textile industry. Between 1945 and 1952, the Egyptian output doubled to reach an average of forty-eight films per year, an amount which was more or less maintained until the early 1990s. An industrial consciousness developed at that time which was reflected in the establishment of the Film Industry Chamber in 1947. Cinematic styles and techniques grew in sophistication. In 1950 colour was introduced to Egyptian cinema, with Husain Fawzi directing the first colour film, *Baba 'Aris* / *Daddy is a Bridegroom*. However, it took another fifteen to twenty years until the majority of Egyptian productions were shot on colour material.

Among the most important directors to appear during the 1930s without being linked with the Studio Misr were Muhammad Karim and Togo Mizrahi. Karim started his career with the literary adaptation *Zaynab* (1930) and later specialized in romantic musicals, while Mizrahi directed farces and comedies (and also some musicals). Yusuf Wahbi stuck almost entirely to melodrama. Other productive directors of that time were Mario Volpi, Alvise Orfanelli, Ahmad Galal and Fawzi al-Gaza'irli.

Melodramatic musicals, comedy / farce and, to a smaller extent, Bedouin films were the most prevalent genres of the time. Directors who appeared during the late 1930s

and early 1940s and helped to develop these genres – apart from the Bedouin film which was primarily the speciality of Ibrahim Lama and Niazi Mustafa – were Husain Fawzi, Ibrahim 'Imara and Henri Barakat. The latter remained until the 1970s one of Egypt's most industrious and talented directors, known for some outstanding melodramas, musicals and realist films. Kamil al-Tilmissani and Ahmad Kamil Mursi showed a realist – if not socialist – orientation in works dealing with the economy and the working class, whereas Anwar Wagdi (who directed his first film in 1945) contributed a dozen light musicals to Egyptian cinema. He was one of those who introduced the rather syncretic genre that was so characteristic of the post-war boom, operating with a multitude of contradictory elements – such as comic acting in a basically melodramatic plot – thereby creating a light and entertaining pot-pourri.

National independence and the nationalization of cinema (1952–71)

In 1952 the Free Officers, led by Muhammad Nagib and Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir (Nasser), seized power, abolished the Kingdom and declared the end of British interference in Egypt. This also marked a new era in the Egyptian film economy, which was characterized by state interference in the arts and industry, and the advent of new genres and topics, including a 'Third Worldist' realist cinema.

This development can be traced back to the time before the nationalist *coup d'état*, when works with a clear nationalist anti-colonial stamp made their appearance – among others *Fatat Min Filastin* / *A Girl from Palestine* (1948) by Mahmud zu-l-Fiqar, dealing with the occupation of Palestine, *Mustafa Kamil* (1952) by Ahmad Badrakhan and *Yasqut al-Isti'mar* / *Down with Colonialism* (1952) by Husain Sidqi. Nationalism and the need for post-colonial cultural purification also generated a wave of religious films, initiated by *Zuhur al-Islam* / *The Appearance of Islam* (1951) by Ibrahim 'Izz al-Din and *Intisar al-Islam* / *The Victory of Islam* (1952) by Ahmad al-Tukhi. Both portrayed the appearance of a victorious Islam in the seventh century.

While the Bedouin film practically vanished during the two decades of the Nasserist regime, light music-hall comedies, gangster films and thrillers came to the fore. A small number of Egyptian film-makers, notably Youssef Chahine, Salah Abu Seif and Taufiq Salih, showed an inclination towards what came to be called 'Third Worldist' realism, and tried to realize it both within and outside the public sector. Their political and artistic commitment tried to raise issues ranging from foreign domination and social injustice to rationalism and gender equality, and created a kind of Egyptian 'Middle Cinema'. This realist cinema became highly appreciated at home and abroad. During the 1960s the production of realist and political films spread to a certain extent among mainstream directors, such as Henri Barakat and Kamal El-Cheikh (al-Shaykh): Barakat directed some of the most accomplished musicals and melodramas, as well as realist films, of the era; El-Cheikh's work also moved between the poles of gangster and political films.

Hasan al-Imam was entirely oriented towards the mainstream and specialized in musical melodramas, mostly featuring belly dancers. Director Hilmi Halim's name became linked to the popular musicals starring the singer 'Abd al-Halim Hafiz, whereas 'Izz al-Din zu-l-Fiqar, Ahmad Diya' al-Din and later Sa'd 'Arafa directed mostly romantic love stories. Hilmi Rafla and Fatin 'Abd al-Wahhab became known for their light comedies, and Kamal El-Cheikh for his sophisticated thrillers. In

contrast, Husam al-Din Mustafa, who was described as the most vulgar Egyptian director, started his career with dramatic literary adaptations and ended it in the 1990s with espionage films. The commercial orientation of most of these directors persisted, despite increasing state interference in the cinema industry.

In 1953 the state created the al-Nil Society for film production and distribution, supervised by the officer Wagih Abaza. In 1954 a special information administration was founded, which in turn put the Service of the Control of Technical Affairs in charge of producing shorts and information films. Three years later even more concrete measures were taken. Special decrees were issued to reorganize the taxation on imported films in favour of national production and to found the Organization for Film Aid, whose objective was to raise the artistic standard of cinema and to support its distribution abroad. This organization laid the basis for the later national film organization. Eventually, in 1958, it changed its name for the first time to become the Public Egyptian Film Organization.

In 1960 the Misr Bank was nationalized, so were the Misr Company for Cinema and Performance, the Studio Misr itself, along with all the other private studios in the country and around one third of the movie theatres. The studios were placed under the supervision of the film organization which was encouraged to start production. It released the first public full-length feature film in 1963 after the organization had been restructured under the General Film Organization. It comprised four different societies, which held responsibility for the production of feature films and documentaries, for international co-production, for the administration of the studios and for the administration of movie theatres and film distribution.

The period of state ownership did not bring about a real rise in artistic or technical standards. In spite of the efforts in particular of Tharwat 'Ukasha during his period in office as minister of culture to promote national film culture, production remained dominated by commercial viability. In order to prevent the loss of foreign markets, the products of the General Film Organization followed the same commercial guidelines as the private sector, which meant that it lacked neither stars nor popular and entertaining formulas. Yet the nationalization policy led Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian producers and distributors to withdraw from Egypt and invest in Lebanon instead. This resulted in a temporary increase of Lebanese production during the 1960s, which in turn made extensive use of Egyptian stars and technical talent.

The total number of productions decreased continuously after the foundation of the General Film Organization and reached its lowest level since the 1940s with thirty-two films produced in 1967. Eventually the total number of feature films settled at around forty films per year and did not increase until 1974. The film organization did not manage to produce more than thirteen feature films a year; the rest were private productions. Corruption and nepotism contributed to the wasting of public money. In 1971, the time when the Sadat government started reprivatization, the debts of the film organization supposedly reached seven million Egyptian pounds. This forced the public sector to withdraw completely from the production of full-length feature films that year. Only the production of shorts was kept on.

Under these unfavourable conditions, art films like *al-Mumya'* / *The Mummy: The Night of Counting the Years* (1969) by Chadi Abdessalam (Shadi 'Abd al-Salam) – striving for the development of a specific national film language and produced by the public sector – remained absolutely exceptional. In fact, some of the most talented

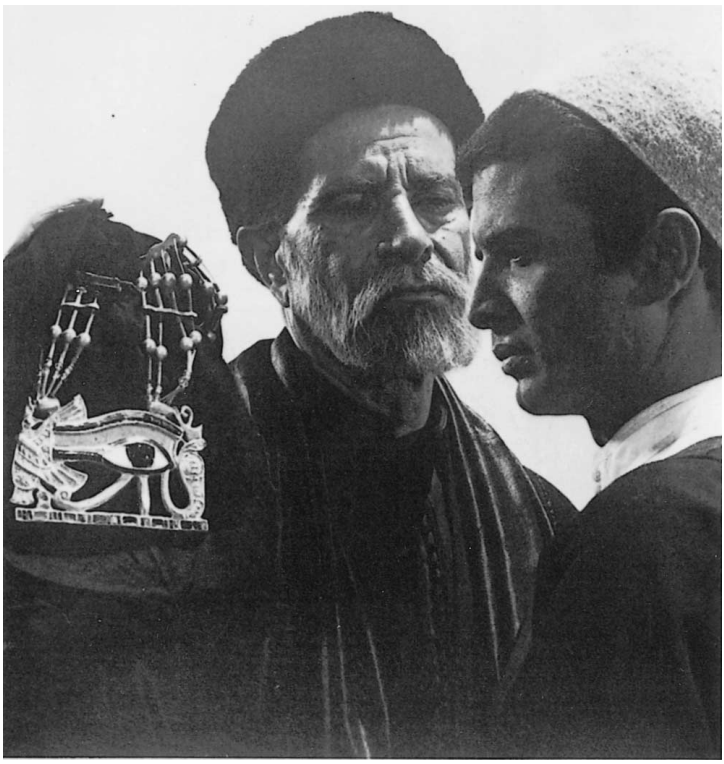

Figure 7 al-Mumya' / The Mummy: The Night of Counting the Years

and at the same time politically committed directors – primarily Taufiq Salih, Youssef Chahine (Yusuf Shahin) and also Henri Barakat – had such negative experiences with the public bureaucracy that they decided to leave Egypt as a whole; Salih went to Syria, and Chahine and Barakat to Lebanon. Thus, unlike the situation in Syria and Algeria, the Egyptian public sector did not become the godfather of a politically committed, modernist, anti-colonial Third Worldist cinema that was, in other Arab countries, consciously creating a distance from the products of the commercial so-called 'dream factory'.

Advent of electronic media (1971–91)

Although the reprivatization of the film industry has been discussed in Egypt since the 1970s, when Anwar al-Sadat came to power in 1970 and started the *infitah* or 'open-door policy', thus putting an end to Egypt's socialist orientation and its isolation from the West, one of the first steps towards reprivatization was the 1971 decision to terminate public feature-film production. On the other hand, the General Organization still invested in the industry: it inaugurated a colour laboratory in 1973 and started establishing a modern sound centre in the Film City in Giza. In the following years additional attempts at privatization were made, which did not amount to more than

the selling of some movie theatres. The rest of the technical infrastructure, including laboratories and studios have remained public property through to the late 1990s and are being privatized gradually. This situation represented, on one hand, a serious obstacle for the updating of technical equipment and infrastructure but ironically, on the other, served the interests of private producers who profited from the low fixed prices offered by state-run laboratories and have therefore always objected to further privatization.

Apart from the *infitah* and the accompanying attempts at privatization, two other factors shaped Egypt's cinema decisively during the 1970s and 1980s: the introduction of national television and the spread of the video cassette recorder (VCR). Egyptian public television – run by the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU) – started broadcasting in July 1960. It is not clear how much its introduction contributed to the drop in production mentioned above (ten to fifteen films less than the preceeding decade) and also to the closing of movie theatres. However, one of its positive effects was that it contributed to the preservation and dissemination of old Egyptian movies by constantly airing them, so it helped to transform them into a cultural legacy for following generations of film-makers.

In contrast to television, the introduction of the VCR doubtless had a strong economic and cultural effect on cinema. It did not only change habits of spectatorship, encouraging particularly women and families to stay at home instead of going out to the movies; the spread of the VCR in the Gulf region, primarily in Saudi Arabia where public theatres are still prohibited, also opened new markets for Egyptian cinema, leading eventually in 1984 to a boom of the so-called *muqawalat* or entrepreneur film. Directed by mediocre directors and featuring second-rate actors, these films were mostly shot and distributed on video.

Cinematically, the early 1970s were marked by various attempts at artistic innovations. Third Worldist cinema gave way to more individualist cinematic expressions. Young directors – like Husain Kamal, Khalil Shawqi, ʻAli ʻAbd al-Khaliq, Ghaleb Chaath (Ghalib Shaʻth), Mamduh Shukri, Saʻid Marzuq and Muhammad ʻAbd al-ʻAziz – made their first interesting experiments, though they were later to be absorbed by commercialism. In 1972, the huge success of *Khalli Balak Min Zuzu* / *Take Care of Zuzu* by the master of Egyptian melodrama, Hasan al-Imam, signalled the temporary economic revival of Egyptian mainstream cinema and a new increase of production rates, mounting to around fifty films a year.

At the same time, the composition of genres changed. The traditional musical and melodrama decreased in favour of action and gangster films, and a few low-quality karate imitations. Furthermore, more sexually permissive films, such as Saʻid Marzuq's *al-Khawf* / *Fear* (1972) or Abu Seif's *Hamam al-Malatili* / *The Malatili Bath* (1973) were released. This tendency, however, led to a clash between film-makers, public opinion and censorship in the early 1980s.

As during the late 1940s, some genres tended to merge in this period. Now it was melodrama, realism and the gangster film which combined and became a kind of 'social drama' that is still prevalent today. Nonetheless, the realist genre experienced a second revival during the 1980s. Heavy criticism of the *infitah* was expressed by the so-called 'New Realism' of Atef El-Tayeb (ʻAtif al-Tayyib), Khairy Beshara (Khayri Bishara), Mohamed (Muhammad) Khan, Daoud Abd El-Sayed (Dawud ʻAbd al-Sayyid), the screenwriter and director Bashir al-Dik and, to a certain extent, ʻAli

Figure 8 Khalli Balak Min Zuzu / Take Care of Zuzu

Badrakhan, who had already made a name for himself in the 1970s. Screenwriter Ra'fat al-Mihi, who also directed a few realist-oriented films, later specialized in a kind of black and absurd comedy that was described by Egyptian critics as 'fantasy'.

Muhammad 'Abd al-'Aziz was one of the few directors who, after the demise of Fatin 'Abd al-Wahhab, still contributed light comedies of some quality to mainstream cinema. Sa'id Marzuq, Muhammad Radi and Ahmad Yahia worked on mainly social drama films, mixing action, realism and melodrama. In contrast, Nadir Galal and Samir Saif specialized primarily on action and gangster films – in the case of the latter, combined with comedy and farce. Muhammad Fadil appeared during this period too, but soon switched to television, for which he directed social and historical dramas.

The satellite era (since 1991)

The Egyptian film industry experienced a new serious crisis in the early 1990s. Production rates decreased dangerously: eighteen films were released in 1994, twenty-five in 1995, twenty-two in 1996, sixteen in 1997 and twenty in 1998. This development started first with the beginning of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, which affected Egypt's foreign distribution to the Gulf countries for a few months. However, the major setback was the advent of satellite television at the same time, leading to a sudden growth of the electronic entertainment industry.

The number of Arab satellite channels – including those of the Egyptian ERTU, which are broadcast all over the Arab world and Europe – increased rapidly and have multiplied the need for new Arab serials, talk-shows and other television productions. Egypt's own first satellite channel started broadcasting during the Gulf War and was quickly followed by other foreign-language channels. Since 1992, the ERTU has also co-financed the pay-television Cable Network Egypt (CNE). In addition to that, it has increased the number of Egyptian satellite channels, profiting from the ministry's most recent investment: the first Egyptian satellite, Nile Sat, which started operating in 1998. Surprisingly, the film industry was unable to profit from this development. Due to insufficient trade regulation, Egyptian movies are still sold and shown for ridiculous prices, mostly not exceeding a few hundred US dollars.

Furthermore, the ERTU, supervised by the Ministry of Information, started competing with the private film sector. In addition to the large number of shows and serials (which are exported all over the Arab world), it financed expensive feature films, thus competing with the private film industry. In 1994 alone, five television productions were released in movie theatres. This boom has led to a serious shortage of studios, equipment and technicians. In 1995, for example, 80 per cent of cinema studios were rented to television and advertising productions. The ERTU has therefore invested millions in the construction of a huge studio complex outside Cairo – in the City of October Seven – which was partly operating by 1999.

The ERTU has only recently started to put cinema producers in charge of producing television feature films that are meant for cinematic distribution first. In 1998 and 1999 the first co-production between a private producer and national television was undertaken, resulting in Youssef Chahine's film *al-Akhar* / *The Other* (1999). The 1990s also saw an increasing tendency towards European co-productions. Apart from Chahine's most recent historical spectacles, *al-Muhajir* / *The Emigrant* (1994) and *al-Masir* / *The Destiny* (1997), young directors (such as Yousri Nasrallah, Asma' al-Bakri, Radwan al-Kashif, Khalid al-Haggar and 'Atif Hatata) have received Western support for their projects. However, none of the co-productions (except for Chahine's) have been really successful with Egyptian audiences.

The late 1980s saw the revival of old genres, such as the musical, along with the emergence of some new directors – among others Muhammad Shibl (Shebl) (who died in 1997) and Hani Lashin – who, despite their attempts to innovate and achieve a certain standard, remained marginal. Contrary to that, Sharif 'Arafa, as well as the female director Inas al-Dighidi, became the most successful mainstream directors of the present. 'Arafa's work stretches from light musicals and comedies to social dramas, including several box-office hits, whereas al-Dighidi focuses more on social drama. New Realism still found some followers in the 1990s, as expressed in the work of Muhammad Kamil Qalyubi, Usama Fawzi, Munir Radi and Radwan al-Kashif. Tariq al-'Iryan contributed two fast-paced police and gangster films, and the Sudanese Sa'id Hamid presented comedies starring Mahmud al-Hinidi, which became the greatest box-office hits of the late 1990s.

One of the peculiarities of the 1990s is the appearance of a 'Coptic' Christian cinema. Professional Coptic directors – among others Khairy Beshara and Samir Saif – have started since 1987 to direct devotional films produced largely by the Coptic orthodox church and some Protestant institutions. The majority of these videos – sixteen full-length films by the end of 1996 – feature the lives and ordeals of native

Egyptian saints and martyrs, thus echoing even in their *mise-en-scène* the Muslim religious films of the 1960s and 1970s. By law, they are supposed to be distributed only within the churches, thus creating a sort of confessional counter-audience.

Censorship and taboos

Every feature film produced in Egypt passes censorship twice. First the screenplay or, in the case of a documentary, treatment has to be submitted to the censor to receive approval. The latter is a prerequisite for acquiring shooting permission from the Ministry of the Interior. After completion, another official licence – a so-called 'visa' – is required in order to screen the film in public and to export it. Both steps leave much space for interference, as well as negotiation.

The most important taboo zones kept under state surveillance are religion, sexuality and politics. The latest censorship law, issued in 1976, forbids criticism of heavenly religions, justification of immoral actions, positive representation of heresy, images of naked human bodies and inordinate emphasis on individual erotic parts, sexually arousing scenes, alcohol consumption and drug use, obscene and indecent speech, and disrespect to parents, the sanctity of marriage or family values. Most importantly, the law does not allow films 'to represent social problems as hopeless, to upset the mind or to divide religions, classes and national unity'.

Vague notions like the prohibition of things 'that do not correspond to the normal' and 'embarrass the audience' open the door to official arbitrariness and unpredictability. This applies also to the question of national unity. Although many Christian directors work in Egypt, Christian characters rarely appear on screen and, if they do, it is mostly in minor secondary roles. Censors tended to reinforce this discrepancy by trying to secure national unity first of all through the exclusive representation of Muslim customs and convictions on the screen.

Of course not all prohibitions are respected. Film-makers do represent alcohol consumption, although it is often associated with immorality. Some restrictions are circumvented through negotiation with the censors. Another strategy is the codification of messages and actions by symbolic or stylistic means. For example, in his films *Iskandariyya, Lih? / Alexandria, Why?* (1978) and *Iskandariyya Kaman Wa Kaman / Alexandria Now and Forever* (1991), Youssef Chahine veils his protagonists' homoerotic inclination by representing sexual desire as murderous hate or, in another case, by replacing a man with a woman with masculine behaviour.

State interference in the realm of cinema dates back to the birth of cinema. A law issued in 1904 to regulate the press was also applied to cinema. In 1911 the Cairo governorate charged the chiefs of police to control strictly whatever was screened in the movie theatres. In 1918 the first case of censorship occurred, prohibiting *al-Azhar al-Mumita* because of wrongly reproduced verses from the Qur'an.

Official censorship was eventually begun in 1921 with a decree stating that all imported films had to pass the General Security Department of the Ministry of the Interior before projection. The religious-oriented censorship led by the al-Azhar institution (and university) interfered for the first time in 1926, when Yusuf Wahbi was asked by Wedad Orfi to represent the Prophet Muhammad on the screen. The al-Azhar protested so heavily that Wahbi withdrew his earlier acceptance of the role. Since then the representation of the Prophet, as well as the four righteous Caliphs, has

Figure 9 Iskandariyya, Lih? / Alexandria, Why?

been forbidden. This decision was underlined again in 1976 by the prohibition of representation of all the other prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, including 'Issa (that is, Jesus Christ).

The first cases of political censorship occured in 1937 and 1938. Bahiga Hafiz's *Layla Bint al-Sahra' / The Daughter of the Desert*, completed in 1937, was banned and only released in 1944 under the title *Layla al-Badawiyya / Layla the Bedouin*. By an unlucky coincidence, the film had presented the story of an unjust rapist Persian king in the same year that the Egyptian Princess Fawzia celebrated her wedding to the Shah of Iran. The second film affected was the Studio Misr production, *Lashin* (1938) by Fritz Kramp. It was also centred around a tyrannical sultan. After basic changes to the story and the addition of scenes that transformed the vicious ruler into a good one, the film was released at the end of the same year.

In general, the representation of the lower classes, social injustice and leftist or nationalist topics had to fear censorship in pre-Nasserist Egypt. The censorship law – the so-called 'Faruq Code', issued in 1949 by the Ministry of Social Affairs – excluded realism by equating it with subversive leftist trends and prohibited even the representation of 'oriental habits and traditions'. These regulations could be neglected by Egyptian cinema only after the abolition of the monarchy in 1952. In 1955 the revolutionary government issued a new censorship law, annulling some of the restrictions of the 1947 law. However, it declared also the new law's objectives: 'to protect public morals, to preserve security, public order and the superior interests of the state'.

In spite of the new limits set to democracy during the reign of Nasser, censorship was relatively permissive regarding foreign films. Many provocative art-films – like some of Pasolini's and Fellini's works – passed. Only a few cases of censoring local productions occurred, concerning among others *Allahu Ma'na / God is with Us* (1952)

by Ahmed Badrakhan (released in 1955) and *Shay'un Min al-Khawf* / *Something Frightening* (1969) by Husain Kamal. Both were released after President Nasser had watched them with approval.

The most severe political censorship occured during the reign of Sadat, particularly before the October or Yom Kippur War in 1973. From 1971 to 1973, after Sadat's seizure of power, all films which addressed the Egyptian defeat by Israel were prohibited, including *Zilal 'Ala al-Janib al-Akhar* / *Shadows on the Other Side* (1971) by Ghaleb Chaath and *al-'Usfur* / *The Sparrow* (1972) by Youssef Chahine. Moreover, political films – like *Za'ir al-Fajr* / *Visitor in the Dawn* (1973) by Mamduh Shukri, addressing the abuses of the state security service – did not receive permission until 1975. *Al-Mudhnibun* / *The Culprits* (1976) by Sa'id Marzuq, which identified corruption and nepotism, was forbidden under a moral pretext. No film has actually been banned since 1984, but changes were sometimes requested: for example, the images of a Central Security Service (*al-amn al-markazi*) soldier protesting with a machine gun in his hands against the authoritarian and inhumane methods used in an internment camp had to be removed from the final scene of Atef El-Tayeb's film, *al-Bari'* / *The Innocent* (1986).

In general, the 1980s and 1990s were marked by a new morality on screen (in dress, behaviour and so on) and off screen (in public opinion). An important factor in this morality was Egyptian cinema's dependency on the Gulf States. Together with petrodollars, prudishness moved into Egyptian movies. While Husain Kamal's film, *Abbi Fawq al-Shajara* / *My Father Up the Tree* (1969), had been an attraction in 1969 because of its allegedly 100 kisses, today hardly a kiss passes on the screen. Female clothing has become more moderate in what it reveals.

The new morality reached one of its peaks in 1983 with an outraged debate sparked off by the prohibition of two mediocre productions of the same year: *Darb al-Hawa* / *Alley of Love* by Hussam al-Din Mustafa and *Khamsa Bab* / *Gate Five* by Nadir Galal.

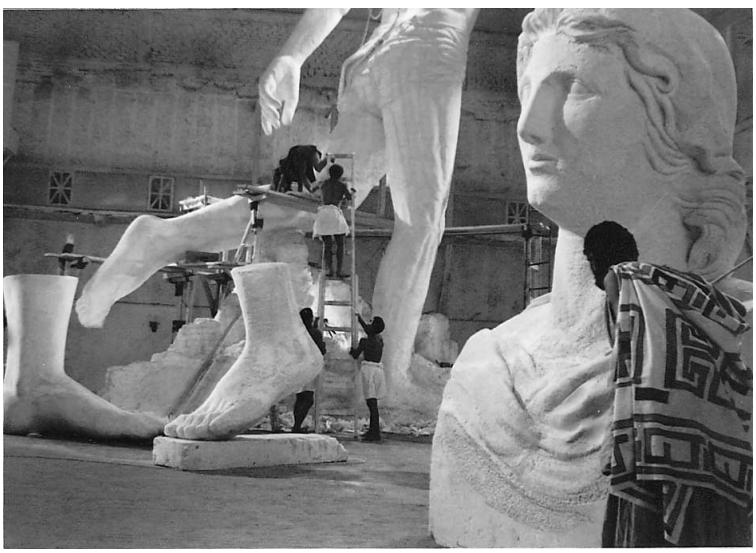

Figure 10 Iskandariyya Kaman Wa Kaman / *Alexandria Now and Forever*

Most journalists and officials spoke in favour of the verdict and demanded more respect for traditions and good morals. In fact, since that time the press and the courts started to excel themselves in censorship, initiating furious media campaigns by suing certain films and their makers. In 1984 lawyers instituted proceedings against *al-Afukatu* / *The Advocate* by Ra'fat al-Mihi. Another spectacular process was initiated in 1994 by Muslim fundamentalists against Youssef Chahine after the screening of *al-Muhajir* / *The Emigrant* (1994), which was accused of representing one of the Qur'an's prophets. Noteworthy in these cases is the silence of concerned institutions, such as the Chamber of Industry and the Cinéastes' Syndicate – the latter being politically controlled since 1987.

A complementary phenomenon related to the new morality is the veiling of two dozen Egyptian actresses working in cinema, theatre and television. From 1987 to 1994 up to twenty-five actresses declared their retreat from show business and veiled themselves, complying with the calls of Muslim fundamentalist teaching. The reasons were various: a growing sense of morality, increasing family pressures, age and maybe even (as some newspapers suspected) bribery. Since 1994 cases of veiling have been rare.

Women

Egyptian women played a major role in founding national cinema, yet they were later gradually neglected and marginalized. Numerous artists and actresses such as 'Aziza Amir, Assia Daghir, Fatima Rushdi and Bahiga Hafiz worked at the end of the 1920s and through the course of the 1930s as producers, screenwriters and directors. The first full-length feature, *Layla*, to be considered entirely Egyptian was co-directed in 1927 by theatre actress 'Aziza Amir, who also produced and starred in the film. Amir had been trained in Yusuf Wahbi's theatre troupe Ramsis. In 1933 she directed her second and last film, *Kafarry 'An Khati'attik* / *Atone for Your Sin*.

In 1929 *Ghadat al-Sahra'* / *The Young Lady from the Desert* was screened. It starred the Lebanese actress Assia Daghir, who also produced the film. Later, she did not only act in many films, but until the 1980s also remained one of Egypt's important producers. The popular actress Fatima Rushdi, too, in 1933 directed her only film, entitled *al-Zawaj* / *The Marriage*. Bahiga Hafiz (who was a musical composer as well) starred in, produced and directed the 1932 *al-Dahaya* / *The Victims* and the lavish 1937 costume drama *Layla Bint al-Sahra'* / *The Daughter of the Desert*. Furthermore, the actress and belly dancer Amina Muhammad acted in, produced and directed her first and only film, *Tita Wung* / *Tita Wung* (1937). This was the last Egyptian feature film directed by a woman until 1966, when the actress Magda al-Sabahi realized the not very successful film *Mann Uhibb* / *Whom I Love*. Al-Sabahi had started acting in 1949, largely representing naïve spoilt girls. Her most interesting role was as a *mujahida* (resistance fighter) in Youssef Chahine's *Jamila al-Jaza'iriyya* / *Jamila the Algerian* (1958). She still works as a producer today.

For a long intermediate period that ended in 1984 with the appearance of Nadia Hamza's *Bahr al-Awham* / *Sea of Illusions*, no women succeeded in directing films for the film industry. But the following year, a total of three films by women were released: Nadia Salim's trivial comedy *Sahib al-Idara Bawab al-'Imara* / *The Doorkeeper Became the Building's Manager*, the odd *al-Nisa'* / *Women* by Nadia

Hamza and Inas al-Dighidi's '*Afwan Ayuha al-Qanun* / *Excuse Me Law!*. Subsequently, al-Dighidi has become the most prominent and talented Egyptian female director – though she is often dismissed as commercial and vulgar. Less successful were Nadia Hamza and Asma' al-Bakri. The latter's first film *Shahadhun Wa Nubala'* / *Beggars and Noblemen* (1991), adapted from an existentialist novel by Albert Cossery (Qusairi), was primarily well received abroad. So far, the most prolific of these directors have been Nadia Hamza and Inas al-Dighidi – in the case of al-Dighidi, directing more than a dozen feature films.

Most of the new female directors were trained at the Higher Film Institute and work according to the conditions of the film industry or, in the case of An'am Muhammad 'Ali, 'Ilwiyya Zaki and Sandra Nash'at, in the framework of television. They direct films covering a variety of topics and do not necessarily focus on women's issues. 'Ali, for example, directed the spectacular male-dominated war film, *al-Tariq Illa Aylat* / *The Way to Eilat* (1995). In fact, it is mainly Inas al-Dighidi who, although exploiting all the genres of cinema (ranging from crime to comedy), concentrates in her work on gender relations and abuse, as in her *al-Qatilla* / *The Murderess* (1992), *Lahm Rakhis* / *Cheap Flesh* (1995), *Istakusa* / *Lobster* (1996) and *Dantilla* / *Lace* (1998).

During the 1990s, female directors have still remained under-represented in fiction films. The reasons are various. Apart from the general lack of balance of women's representation in many professions, morality is certainly a decisive element. Cinema, showbusiness and, in particular, dancing and acting are followed with fascination (particularly by the lower and middle class) but are basically associated with immorality. A factor which might have facilitated the presence and activity of female pioneers in early cinema is their mostly privileged social backgrounds, which enabled them moreover to invest their own private money.

Hampered by traditional morality and lack of money, today's female film-makers have only succeeded in entering in large numbers the less expensive and more marginal field of short film- and documentary-making. One of the first women to direct documentaries for television was Sa'diyya Ghunim. Others followed in directing films for the National Film Centre, including Zaynab Zimzim, Farida 'Arman, Munnna Migahid, Firyal Kamil and Nabiha Lutfi. Documentary film-maker 'Attiyat al-Abnudi was even able to make a name for herself abroad and is considered one of Egypt's most important directors. Apart from that, numerous women have worked as screenwriters for television and ERTU employs many women in leading roles.

Education

One of the main opportunities to acquire the necessary expertise in film directing and other professions was through travel to Europe. For example, the first native Egyptian directors, Muhammad Bayyumi and Muhammad Karim, both went to Germany in search of training. At the same time, some local scholarly attempts were made to fill the gap. In 1924 Mahmud Khalil Rashid, author of several textbooks for correspondence education, published his book *The Dawn of Cinema*. The first attempt to institutionalize film education was undertaken by Muhammad Bayyumi, who in 1932 established his Egyptian Film Institute, offering courses free of charge in zincography, photography and film-making. One of the Institute's collective productions was

Bayyumi's feature film *al-Khatib Nimra 13 / Fiancé No. 13* (1933). However, the Institute had to close down after two years – probably for financial reasons. In 1945, another private film school opened in Cairo, but it too existed only for a short while.

The most fruitful contribution was made by Studio Misr, which proved to be very conscientious about educating its professionals. At the time of its foundation in 1935, it employed foreign specialists, such as the German director Fritz Kramp, the German set designer Robert Scharfenberg and the Russian photographer Sami Brel, who in turn trained Egyptian assistants. Another policy was to send aspiring young Egyptian talents abroad, mainly to France, for further training. Beneficiaries of this system included the directors Ahmed Badrakhan and Niazi Mustafa, the set designer Wali al-Din Samih and, later, the directors Kamal Selim, Salah Abu Seif, Kamal El-Cheikh and Sa'd Nadim. Many of them trained further generations, partly while working in the industry as teachers at what later became the Higher Film Institute. Until the opening of this school, film-makers and technicians were mostly educated by assisting others first. Only a few had the opportunity to travel abroad, such as Youssef Chahine (who studied in the United States) and Taufiq Salih and Husain Kamal (who graduated in France).

Eventually, in 1957, the Ministry of Culture started establishing the Higher Film Institute; it opened in 1959 and has until the present day provided the country with the necessary professionals, offering training in all relevant areas: screenwriting, directing, editing, production, sound, photography, animation, design, costumes and make-up. Almost all the Egyptian directors who started working since 1959 have graduated from this school.

In spite of an overloaded curriculum and deficient equipment, during the last decade the Institute has become the main producer of interesting and innovative short films (largely graduation projects), some of which were able to participate in and received awards from international festivals. As a whole (and seen together with the limits set by a commercial and industrial orientation) the Film Institute has certainly contributed to the relative homogeneity and continuity of Egyptian film-making, both in form and content.

Apart from the Institute, there are only a few other places in Egypt to study film-making: principally the public Television Institute and the private American University in Cairo. The studies at the latter are on a predominantly theoretical level.

Audience and movie theatres

Some of the major economic problems of the Egyptian film industry are related to its unbalanced distribution system. Although the number of movie theatres in Egypt has grown constantly since the construction of the first cinema in 1906, it remained always insufficient in relation to the population. It pushed, moreover, the Egyptian producer into a strong dependency on foreign distribution. Even in 1954, when the number of cinemas reached its peak, it did not exceed 454 theatres. Other sources speak of only 350 cinemas in the same year. In the course of 1960s – due to the introduction of television, on one hand, and the nationalization in 1963 of around one third of all cinemas, on the other – the numbers decreased continuously, as did revenues. In 1960, 80 million tickets were sold per year, whereas only 65 million were purchased in 1966. Although the General Film Organization tried at the same time to open up more

cinemas, it could not prevent the technical decline and eventually the closing of theatres, particularly in the provinces. There public cultural centres started to fill the gap by hosting non-commercial cinemas. Eventually, in 1992, only 19 million tickets were sold in the remaining 208 theatres. A quarter of all cinemas were concentrated in the major Egyptian metropolises, Alexandria (sixteen theatres) and Cairo (fifty-two theatres).

Going to the movies in Egypt is, first of all, an urban means of entertainment. No movie theatres exist in the countryside. Film consumption in villages is confined to watching television and the VCR. In general, movie theatres are divided into three categories. The third class differs in programme and equipment from the first and second class: it does not present any first releases, but rather film packages that usually comprise one Egyptian and one or two foreign films; this package is repeated for days and the largely male audience enters the screening at any time, often knows the films by heart, interacts vigorously with the action and even repeats or comments on it during the projection.

First releases are offered only by first- and second-class theatres. They differ in ticket price, in the choice of programme, in furnishing and in the technical standard of its equipment and projection. The bulk of first-class theatres are in Cairo and Alexandria. They represent around 50 per cent of all cinemas there and around one third of the country's total. Since the late 1980s, the decline of movie theatres came to a temporary halt, expressed in the renovation of older cinemas (leased or sold to private entrepreneurs) and the construction of a small number of modern first-class theatres, equipped according to the most modern standards, with theatres in Cairo's affluent suburbs installing Dolby stereo and digital sound. Some of them are placed in the new shopping malls that have spread all over town. A ticket costs up to £E20 (around US$7), four to five times more than in a third-class cinema, yet they attract a highly mixed audience including many women.

The class system of movie theatres was further emphasized by the introduction of the VCR in the late 1970s. Already by 1982 some twenty-five VCRs were said to have been sold per 1,000 inhabitants. The middle-and upper-class audience – and in particular women – have tended since that time to consume films at home. This development was accelerated by the bad condition of the old first- and second-class movie theatres, particularly in the inner city areas of Cairo and Alexandria. After the revolution and nationalization, their condition deteriorated to such an extent that they were avoided by the middle class, who also stayed away because these theatres attracted a predominantly male working-class audience.

One setback for profitable theatrical exploitation in Egypt was the restrictive measures taken to support national Egyptian production, including the prohibition on releasing a foreign film in more than one theatre at a time, the heavy taxation of imported films and the obligation to show at least three Egyptian movies per year. In 1974 an extraordinary regulation was issued that prohibited the import of any karate and samurai films. In 1987 a law dating back to 1971 was finally implemented, requiring one Egyptian film to be exported to India for each imported Indian film, a regulation that resulted in an almost total halt in Indian imports.

Distribution

The existence of an international film distribution circuit represents a constant source of crisis for the Egyptian film industry. Foreign monopolies over international distribution and deficient domestic distribution prevent the investment of sufficient money in production, even though Egyptian cinema's growth was originally due to its opening up of foreign markets.

The export of Egyptian feature films started with the introduction of sound. One of the first films distributed in the neighbouring countries was Muhammad Karim's musical, *al-Warda al-Bayda'* / *The White Rose* (1933–4), starring the singer and composer Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab. His participation was certainly one of the reasons for the work's success in the Arab world. Like the other popular Egyptian singers of the time – Sayyid Darwish, Munira al-Mahdia and Umm Kulthum – 'Abd al-Wahhab's music had already been distributed on disc and radio outside Egypt before the rise of cinema, thus preparing fertile ground for its reception.

The songs surmounted one important obstacle in film distribution: the immensely distinct dialects of the Mashriq and Maghreb (*maghrib*) – that is, the Eastern and Western parts of the Arab world. The continuous consumption of Egyptian songs and films led the audiences of other Arab countries to acquire at least a passing knowlege of the Egyptian dialect. This process supported the distribution of Egyptian films and was an advantage that competitors from Tunisia, Algeria and Syria could attain only in exceptional circumstances. As a matter of fact, from the beginning film-making gave priority to the local Cairene dialect. With films directed at a partly illiterate mass audience, the use of sophisticated classical Arabic (primarily the language of the Qur'an, sciences and culture) would have been inappropriate. It was therefore only used for historical or religious films. Unlike the classical language, dialect offered an additional advantage in its ability to transport elements of popular culture. Thus representatives of popular Egyptian theatre used the colloquial in an imaginative way by introducing a popular and sometimes burlesque verbal comedy into early cinema.

The traditional markets for Egyptian films have been the Arab world and, to a certain extent, Muslim West Africa. In North Africa, Egyptian cinema did not only play an entertaining role, but also at times an ideological one. During the 1940s French productions in Morocco tried to compete with Egyptian products by releasing Arab-speaking orientalist films. In Algeria the distribution of non-Western films was marginalized until the 1950s by over-taxation and the concentration of theatres in French neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, Egyptian cinema remained popular, not least because of its symbolic meaning as an industry developed by an Arab people in spite of having been colonized. However, as a whole, export to the Maghreb has remained secondary, because of strong competition from Indian films and from Western films dubbed into French. In the 1980s the demand for Egyptian movies declined rapidly in some places due to increasing home production in these countries.

Until the 1970s the main market for Egypt's films was concentrated on the Fertile Crescent (that is, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Jordan), a fact which had enabled Lebanese and Syrian distributors to monopolize Egyptian distribution. This monopoly was challenged, on one hand, by nationalization and eventually terminated by the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon in 1975 and, on the other, by the Syrian boycott of Egyptian production. The latter was launched after the Camp David

Agreement with Israel in 1979 and lasted for more than a decade. In the 1990s the situation changed again: Iraq had to curtail its imports completely because of the Gulf War trade boycott, whereas the trade with Syria and Lebanon was revived in 1991 (although it never attained the importance of former times).

Today it is Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Gulf States which represent the main customers. Half of all export revenues originate there. It is also companies from the Arab peninsula which monopolize Egypt's current distribution. This dependency developed during the video boom of the 1980s, when the introduction of the VCR resulted in an increasing consumption of the Egyptian mass product. Already in 1959, 155 of a total of 222 exported 16-millimetre prints were sent to Saudi Arabia. These films had been designed for private screenings only, as no movie theatres exist in the country. This increasing interest resulted in the development of the so-called *'sinima al-muqawalat*' or 'entrepreneur cinema', which was primarily used as a vehicle for advertising spots.

The most serious problem which arose from this foreign distribution system was the lack of reinvestment and the small margin of profit left for producers. It is due to a special financing system through which the producers take up production loans offered by the international distributors and in turn sell off the complete rights to the film. The loan's amount usually corresponds to the popularity of the involved stars. This system minimizes the financial risk for the producer, but reduces the profits to the limited and risky national box office revenues. As a result the budgets of Egyptian movies remain relatively constant and likewise small. Even the budget for a film starring the currently most expensive Egyptian star, 'Adil Imam, does not exceed approximately £E2 million (US$600,000). As a result, production tends to be dominated artistically, thematically and economically by the stars.

Stars

In Egypt the film industry lives like Hollywood on the creation of stars who exercise a quasi-mythical attraction. The Egyptian star system is organized pyramidically. A dozen highly popular and well-paid actors and actresses are positioned on top of scores of second- and third-rate performers. Today top stars hold a very powerful position in the film industry's economy, not only because the audience usually identifies films through the names of the stars and not directors, but also because of the production-loan system which depends essentially on a star's participation. As distributors turn out to be reluctant to finance a film which does not feature a known star, the whole star system suffers from constant stagnation. Meanwhile aged stars have to perform parts of much younger characters and younger actors age until they attain main parts. Moreover, stars interfere in the process of screenwriting in order to adapt narratives to their favourite persona and / or exclude stories which do not fit their age, like those centred around adolescents, for example. In addition, star wages are enormous in comparison to the total film budget. The average expenses for an Egyptian feature film are currently around £E1 million (about US$300,000). Up to 50 per cent may have to be spent on star wages (in a few particular cases even more), which means that little remains for props, set, costumes, transport and crew wages.

The first movie stars were taken from other branches of entertainment, either theatre or music. Some of them actively contributed to the formation of early

Egyptian genres – for example, the popular comedians Nagib al-Rihani and ʻAli al-Kassar, who decisively influenced comedy and film farce during the 1930s and 1940s. Each of them developed a specific persona, ranging from ethnic to social stereotypes – such as the average working-class little man and the naïve Nubian. The same applies to ʻAbd al-Salam Nabulsi, representing the capricious aristocrat, Bishara Wakim the funny Lebanese and Mary Munib the terrorizing mother-in-law. They were substituted during the 1950s by the clumsy and ignorant gorilla-like Imaʻil Yasin, the hot-tempered and sometimes vicious cross-eyed ʻAbd al-Fatah al-Qusairi and the *Karagöz* Shukuku (an Egyptian Mr Punch), among others. During the 1960s and 1970s a more burlesque and silly performance style prevailed, presented by Muhammad Rida, the couple Shuwikar and Fu'ad al-Muhandis, and the Thulathi adwa' al-masrah (Theatre Lights Trio), comprising of George Sidhum, Samir Ghanim and Ahmad al-Daif. During the late 1970s ʻAdil Imam, a theatre actor like most of the other comedians, introduced the nihilist young urban underdog. Denounced as trival, he remained the best-paid Egyptian star actor until the mid-1990s. His position is currently challenged by a younger sucessor, Muhammad Hinidi, in his role as the harmless, funny and pragmatic character. It is noteworthy that the comedians who appeared since the late 1960s were far less strongly characterizd in terms of specific roles and masks.

In contrast to their male colleagues, comic actresses rarely made it to the top. Mary Munib, for example, appeared in the 1930s and was followed by Zinat Sidqi and Widad Hamdi during the 1950s and 1960s. They used to represent female dragons, fat and far from attractive. Either dominant or silly, they always played supporting roles. Leading parts in comedies were usually performed by actresses who also possessed a melodramatic or realist repertoire, like the singer Layla Murad in the 1940s, Fatin Hamama, Shadia, Sabah and Su'ad Husni between the 1950s and 1970s, and Layla Ilwi and Yusra in the following two decades.

The stars of the early Egyptian musical coincided with the major representatives of contemporary Arab-Egyptian music – first the Kawkab al-Sharq ('Star of the Orient') singer Umm Kulthum, as well as the congenial singer and composer Muhammad ʻAbd al-Wahhab. They were mostly involved in melodramatic plots. Layla Murad appeared during the late 1930s and embodied often charming and innocent aristocratic girls. She replaced – together with Sabah, Shadia, Farid al-Atrash and Asmahan (who died as early as 1944) – the first generation of singers. Farid al-Atrash continued to star in film serials throughout the 1950s, at a time when new singers like Muhammad Fawzi and Huda Sultan appeared. Sabah (Lebanese like Farid al-Atrash) performed mostly in light comedies during the 1950s and 1960s, as did Shadia, who was moreover a good-looking and talented actress.

The singer ʻAbd al-Halim Hafiz was the idol of teenagers thoughout the 1960s and early 1970s, uniting an attractive appearance with musical and dramatic talents. He remained the last really adored music star of Egyptian cinema. His demise in 1977 and Umm Kulthum's death in 1975 terminated the golden era of the Egyptian musical. No remarkable singers appeared during the 1970s and 1980s. Commercially succesful, Ahmad ʻAdawiyya (who starred in a few films during the 1980s) was considered vulgar and associated with the taste of the Gulf States. Eventually, during the 1990s, new singers and representatives of the new 'world music' – such as Muhammad Munir, ʻAmr Diab and Muhammad Fu'ad – made their way onto the screen, largely performing young urban men aspiring for fame and a better life.

The most famous dancers of the Egyptian screen were Badi'a Masabni, Tahiyya Carioca, Samia Gamal and Na'ima 'Akif. During the 1940s and 1950s they elevated the belly dance to a respectable art form, whether on or off screen. Starting from the 1970s a general decline took place, however, with the appearance of Suhair Zaki, Nagwa Fu'ad and finally Fifi 'Abdu and Lucy, who gave belly dance an air of seduction and vulgarity that made it a complementary opposite to the new morality spreading in public. Some actresses – like Hind Rustum during the 1960s, Su'ad Husni during the 1970s, as well as Nabila 'Ubaid and Nadia al-Gindi throughout the 1980s and 1990s – who embodied at times the *femme fatale* persona, often performed the characters of belly dancers. A more positive film image had dancers who specialized in music hall, such as the little girl Fayruz (in the 1950s), her charming relative Nelly (since the 1970s) and more recently Sharihan.

Up to the 1960s the angels of the screen were Layla Murad, Layla Fawzi, Magda, Shadia, Camelia, Lubna 'Abd al-'Aziz, Mariam Fakhr al-Din and the megastar, Fatin Hamama. They starred in dozens of melodramas and their characters remained, particularly in Hamama's case, incorrigible even when they alienated spouses and spoiled other women's marriages. Stocky bourgeois-looking Mimi Shakib often played their vicious counterpart, mostly seducing others into immoral actions. In spite of the decline of classical melodrama since the late 1970s, endangered virtue remains an important theme to the present day, mostly represented by Ilham Shahin, Suhair Ramzi, Mervat Amin and Nagla' Fathi – the last two sometimes represented bourgeois or academic women as well. These actresses were often supported by Fardus Muhammad and Amina Rizq, playing less-attractive yet caring mothers and servants.

A subcategory of the virtuous girl developed to become the Arab Bedouin girl, mostly represented in Bedouin films and costume dramas – first by 'Aziza Amir or Bahiga Hafiz and later by Koka – and characterized as outspoken, courageous, generous and righteous, similar to the *bint al-balad* (literally meaning 'girl of the country'). This character appeared first in realist films and can be summarized as a loyal and kind-hearted but clever woman from the popular neighbourhoods, who supports herself independently but resepects traditional morals. This role was convincingly introduced by the dancer Tahiyya Carioca during the 1950s. More contemporary actresses who have at times performed this type are Ma'ali Zayid, Layla 'Ilwi and 'Abla Kamil.

Characters representing passive and endangered virtue have remained popular to this day (currently enacted by Ilham Shahin, Athar al-Hakim, Layla 'Ilwi and Nagla' Fathi), although they are now presented in a less melodramatic manner, instead appearing in the framework of social drama or gangster films. On the other hand, Berlanti 'Abd al-Hamid, Huda Sultan, Tahiyya Carioca and Hind Rustum (who starred between the 1940s and 1960s) and in particular Nadia al-Gindi (since the late 1970s) relied primarily on female charms and sex-appeal, expressed in dresses and manners, and were thus liable to by negatively characterized in the role of the vamp. Many actresses (like Nadia Lutfi, Su'ad Husni, Nabila 'Ubaid, Madiha Kamil and Yusra) have been flexible enough, however, to represent both sides – innocent despite their vices, mostly in the role of reluctant prostitutes or belly dancers.

The romantic lovers of the Egyptian screen were first represented by Badr Lama, 'Imad Hamdi, Husain Sidqi, later in the 1950s by Ahmad Mazhar, Kamal al-Shinawi and Omar Charif ('Umar al-Sharif) and in the 1970s by Husain Fahmi and Mahmud

Yasin. Their decent, slightly effeminate *noblesse* made them excellent romantic lovers, suitable for melodramatic victimization, in contrast to their strict, powerful and paternalistic counterparts – in other words the pashas, fathers and husbands, played by Yusuf Wahbi, Zaki Rustum, Yahia Shahin and later Mahmud Mursi. At the same time, Husain Riyad and Sulayman Nagib used to represent positive and tender fathers.

Physically strong, rude and rebellious men (among others Farid Shauqi, Rushdi Abaza and Shukri Sarhan) came to the fore with the gangster films of the 1950s and dominated the 1960s. Their agressive masculinity associated them sometimes with criminality and women of ill repute, but they also took positive roles as fighters who secure right and order. Pure villains were, in general, less attractive: for instance, Zaki Rustum and Stéphane Rosti (up to the 1950s), Taufiq al-Diqn (up to the 1960s) or the congenial Mahmud al-Miligi (who starred in many thrillers and gangster films from the late 1940s until the 1970s).

Some male actors were also primarily associated with virtue, like the 1940s actor Husain Sidqi and his slightly sour mimic, the always concerned-looking Salah zu-l-Fiqar, who appeared in the late 1950s. During the 1980s, with the appearance of New Realism, a new type of positive male character developed: 'heroes in blue jeans', young working-class men, roughly attractive and courageous, real social underdogs, best represented by Mahmud 'Abd al-'Aziz, Ahmad Zaki, Nur al-Sharif and, to a certain extent, 'Adil Imam, Mahmud Himida and Faruq al-Fishawi.

The most prevalent characters of Egyptian mainstream cinema are constructed according to a largely conservative moral system which is ruled by clear binary oppositions – good and evil, virtuous and vicious. The essential conflicts are often engendered by cathartic threats and dangers. In this context, males are likely to be threatened socially, whereas females are often exposed to moral dangers. Therefore, as Roy Armes and Lizbeth Malkmus noted, many film titles concerned with women 'imply the illegal (using such words as morals, licit, proof, law, arrest) and many of those concerned with men imply the asocial (bully, smoke, hashish, beasts, bums)' (Malkmus and Armes 1991: 106). Accordingly, women are more associated with emotions, love, passion and the body, and men with strength, power and violence.

Genres

All popular genres created by Egyptian cinema throughout its history shared the absolute determination to entertain and the permanent readiness to compromise in line with the oft-cited motto '*al-gumhur 'ayiz kidda"* (a colloquial phrase meaning 'the audience wants it that way'). Moreover, the Egyptian film industry favoured certain genres due to cultural as well as economic conditions, mainly the musical, melodrama, gangster films, thrillers, farce, comedy and realist films. Science fiction, horror, independent art-movies and even the historical spectacle were, by contrast, rarely produced.

In early cinema the musical played a major role, along with melodrama and farce which were temporarily joined by the Bedouin films. In the course of the boom that started at the end of the 1940s, a new popular formula crystallized. It was shaped by an entertaining mixture of genres that borrowed from all kinds of films, ranging from farce to melodrama, and was furnished with the obligatory happy ending. Dance, in

particular belly dance, as well as music and songs in general, were considered indispensible. Elements of the American music-hall film moved into Egyptian cinema during the late 1940s. The adaption of successful Hollywood productions was quite common and, during the 1950s and 1960s, the spectrum widened further as new genres (like the thriller, gangster films, religious films, political films and melodramatic realism) made their appearence. During the 1970s and 1980s the latter, which was considered more serious than other mainstream genres, developed to become 'social drama' – mostly a mixture or gangster films and melodrama, furnished with social critique. In the same period, characteristics of the Asian karate film were adopted by some second-rate directors, while the old genres (like classical melodrama and the musical) increasingly retreated or were altered.

The musical

The Egyptian musical has contributed decisively to the success of Egyptian cinema. It has recycled both traditional native and Western forms of music and dance, and has thus developed a novel and genuine form of these arts. As a genre, the musical appeared always in alliance with other prevalent genres, be they melodrama, comedy or even realism.

The introduction of sound to cinema was an important factor in promoting the Egyptian musical specifically and the development of a national cinema as whole, not least because of the dominance of European and American products in the film market. Sound established a linguistic barrier between imported films and the regional audience that could be overcome only by dubbing or subtitling. Dubbing is still uncommon in Egypt, mainly because of the expense, and subtitling is problematic because of the high illiteracy rate.

Thus the soundtrack opened a new possibility for spectators to relate to their culture expressed in native music and speech. Therefore it is no wonder that one of the two first Egyptian sound films which appeared in 1932 was a musical: entitled *Unshudat al-Fu'ad* / *Song from the Heart*, it was directed by Mario Volpi and starred the singer Nadra. The first Egyptian movie to be successfully exported to other Arab countries was likewise a musical: *al-Warda al-Badha'* / *The White Rose* (1933). It was performed by Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab and directed by Muhammad Karim. The success of this film, in contrast to *Unshudat al-Fu'ad*, was not only due to 'Abd al-Wahhab's popularity (the same applied to Nadra) but also to a far better integration of the music into the narrative. Advised by his director, 'Abd al-Wahhab gave up the long instrumental introductions traditional to Arab songs and instead confined their total length to six minutes.

Although 'Abd al-Wahhab starred only in seven films, he remained a source of musical inspiration for cinema until his death in 1991, composing the songs for innumerable films. In his works he introduced new rhythms, both European and Latin American, which included the rumba, samba, tango and foxtrot. Moreover, he enlarged the traditional Arab *takht* (orchestra) – which consists of only a few instruments – adding Western instruments and increasing the number of all instruments, which gave him the opportunity to achieve bigger volumes and more musical variation.

He experimented also with the operetta-style in his films *Yahya al-Hubb* / *Long Live*

Love! (1938), co-starring Layla Murad, and *Yawm Sa'id* / *Happy Day* (1940), both by Muhammad Karim, by presenting the musical duet. Farid al-Atrash developed this kind of performance further in (among others) *Intisar al-Shabab* / *The Victory of Youth* (1941), with his sister Asmahan, and *Lahn Hubbi* / *Melody of My Love* (1953) – both films were by Ahmad Badrakhan.

Early musicals were mainly melodramas centred around a romantic love story, often featuring a young musician striving for recognition. This applies to 'Abd al-Wahhab and to the singer Umm Kulthum, who starred in the first Studio Misr production, *Widad* (1936), which was also a musical. She largely represented a musically gifted faithful slave in love, as she did in not only *Widad* but also *Dananir* (1940) and *Sallama* (1945). Her mediocre acting was compensated for by her striking voice. Soon, however, other more attractive female singers appeared: first Layla Murad, who was discovered by 'Abd al-Wahhab in their only common film *Yahya al-Hubb* (1938), and second Asmahan, who appeared in 1941. The latter's promising career came to an end with her sudden death only three years later. Her last film was *Gharam Wa Intiqam* / *Love and Revenge* (1944) by Yusuf Wahbi.

Al-Atrash continued performing on his own. He enriched his films with all sorts of music, ranging from Lebanese folksongs to Viennese waltzes, as can be heard in *Intisar al-Shabab* (1941) and '*Afrita Hanim* / *Lady Ghost* (1949) by Barakat, for example. Apart from him, few other singers and composers left a peculiar musical mark on their films, with notable exceptions being Kahlawi (the specialist in so-called 'Bedouin' rhythms), 'Abd al-'Aziz Mahmud and the composer and singer Munir Murad, Layla Murad's brother, who starred in Kamal al-Tilmissani's *Ana Wa Habibi* / *Me and My Beloved* (1953), among other films.

The songs presented were meant to convey the feelings of the heroes and heroines, although at the beginning they were poorly integrated into plot and action. The singers' musical performance was often static and retarded the flow of the action considerably. Niazi Mustafa was one of the first to provide a better integration of songs into the action with his film *Masna' al-Zawjat* / *Factory of Wives* (1941); 'Abbas Kamil made similar progress in his '*Arusat al-Bahr* / *Mermaid* (1948), which starred Muhammad Fawzi. The coherence of plot, action and performance was developed further, particularly in backstage musicals like Barakat's melodrama *Lahn al-Khulud* / *Song of Eternity* (1952), which relied on parallel action and cross-cutting to create sufficient visual variety and secure a steady film rhythm.

Music was considered indispensable to early cinema. Between 1931 and 1961 Egyptian cinema produced 918 films, of which nearly a third were musicals (exactly 270 films). In some years, for example from 1944 to 1946, up to 50 per cent of the films belonged to that genre, with the result that the 1940s were seen as the decade of the Egyptian musical. Forty-six singers – including Huda Sultan, Sabah, Shadia, Nur al-Huda, Sa'd 'Abd al-Wahhab, Muhammad Fawzi, Ibrahim Hamuda, Najat 'Ali and Fathiya Ahmad – are said to have appeared in them as main characters. Some singers starred in up to 100 films, among them Shadia, whose career lasted for almost thirty years.

Thus the initial attachment of the musical to melodrama slackened from the late 1940s onwards and opened up to cheerful musical comedies that often presented music-hall performances. Many of these films cannot be classified according to strict genre categories, as they rather form a *mélange*. The words of a typical film advertise-